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**Spaces after modernity: a systems based analysis of creativity,
community and narrative formation**

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University of Sussex

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work and Social Care

April 2017

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

This thesis is dedicated with love to my daughter Cara and to the memory of my brother Ollie

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Abstract

Drawing on principles from systems theory, critical health psychology and narrative analysis, this research sought to examine the relationships between environments that facilitate creative arts-based group work, and notions of self-governance and self-determination that they may give rise to; exploring whether such processes are discernible in speech, language and narrative formation. The research constituted an eleven month, qualitative community-university project that examined ways in which the 'Centre user and volunteer led' organisational ethos of the Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project (BUCFP) - a charity working to relieve poverty and hardship based in the south of England - related to the forming of a creatively working and self-managing group. This sought to better understand the emergence of the group; the ways in which participation was experienced; and what (if any) effects participation may have had on sense-making and narrative formation surrounding the topic of food poverty. Using arts-based and participatory methods, the research was carried out with a group of twenty Centre users with experience of food poverty. It culminated in the production and display of an art exhibition on this topic as part of the Brighton Festival in May 2015. The research suggests that using participatory and arts-based approaches in the exploration of food poverty in the facilitative environment of the BUCFP enabled participants to examine and contest societal discourses surrounding poverty. The research describes how, through a complex interplay between group discussion and the material and semiosis of art-making, participants developed and symbolised a counter narrative that deflected stigmatising narratives surrounding food poverty, instead developing a collectivised narrative of resistance. The ability to 're-narrativise' forms of social discourse and to signify the taking of a position in the socio-cultural and political landscape through creative methods may be tied to notions of wellbeing that are important to consider within a community health milieu.

Chapter One: Introduction and context

In this chapter I begin by introducing the rationale for the research and my positionality in coming to it. Following this, I explore the BUCFP as the research site and discuss how a particular political and philosophical outlook shaped the emergence of the BUCFP's organisational culture and has been maintained over a thirty-six year period. The chapter continues with an examination of 'arts for health' agendas and explores that agenda within the context of the BUCFP as a charitable and third sector organisation delivering creative and holistic approaches to community health and wellbeing during a time of austerity. Reduced Local Authority budgets and the increasingly restricted financing of public services have placed an expectation on third sector organisations such as the BUCFP that they deliver forms of community care, and this section explores how ideas of art, health and wellbeing are interpreted and enacted by the BUCFP within wider policy contexts. The chapter continues with a discussion and presentation of the research questions, formulated in response to the issues outlined, and concludes with a signposting of the chapters that follow.

1.1 Rationale

This thesis forms the culmination of many years' work and an abiding interest in questions of health and wellbeing. My research questions began to formulate in 2010 when I was studying part-time for a BA in Cultures and Communities at the University of Sussex as a mature student. My interest in community health and ways in which creative processes might be considered 'health giving' prompted me to volunteer at an art group at a local community centre - The Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project (BUCFP). The BUCFP is a charity that aims to alleviate poverty and hardship in the Brighton area through providing a social space, activities and services delivered predominately by Centre users and volunteers. When I arrived at the Centre I found the environment lively, colourful and dynamic. The Centre operates an open-door policy which means that people are able to come and go as they please. Various groups and activities take place at the Centre; from welfare rights and housing advice to a magazine group that publishes Centre user stories, a crèche, language classes and a daily low-cost hot vegan meal. The Centre appeared to play an important role in the lives of its users and I enjoyed the camaraderie and good humour that accompanied the art groups. I noticed how the focus of an art project - however modest - affected those that took part; it was without a doubt beneficial, including for me. New friendships were made, problems and opinions were

shared and difficulties appeared less insurmountable. I became further involved in art group activities over time, organising the Art of Resistance exhibition as part of the Brighton Festival 2011. This involved the creation of a large Trade Union style banner, handmade by approximately twenty participants using various materials and celebrating 30 years of the BUCFP. It was through organising and taking part in the art project that I began to develop the ideas that would inform my academic research. My undergraduate dissertation explored community art and mental health and the idea that the non-prescriptive ethos of the BUCFP enabled self-directed creative activity that impacted positively on Centre user sense of wellbeing. It was from this initial research and the formulation of ideas that I moved to studying for a Masters in Social Research Methods followed by my doctoral study.

As part of an ethos of user-management, and a stipulation that trustees be drawn from Centre user and volunteer groups, I had been asked in 2011 if I would consider taking up a position as a trustee. Although at the time I knew little about what this involved I nonetheless took the opportunity and received training and gathered invaluable experience. I stepped down when I was awarded a grant to carry out my doctoral research in partnership with the BUCFP in 2013. As a trustee I gained a great insight into the organisational culture and dynamics of the BUCFP and its position as a third sector and charitable organisation in a wider landscape of community and social care. I developed a further interest in the interrelations between the BUCFP's political philosophy of self-organisation and the way in which this materialised as an organisational practice. The BUCFP's ethos appeared to give rise to a culture that enabled Centre users to move into power-holding and decision-making positions, able to affect meaningful change. In the BUCFP model, 'services' were not delivered as top-down interventions, but rather were developed in response to community need together with those that used them. People who used the BUCFP were not defined as 'service users' or problematised because they were unemployed, but were instead able to embrace and enact different and multifarious identity constructions and move into positions of genuine power-holding. The BUCFP model appeared to acknowledge that people do not exist in structurally differentiated, compartmentalised terms, but are complex, and that a sense of wellbeing is best achieved through an environment that responds to this human complexity, the 'whole person' rather than siloed aspects of it. For example, the Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project (Government Office for Science 2008) defines wellbeing as 'a dynamic state, in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others, and contribute to community'. The authors continue by suggesting that wellbeing 'is enhanced when an individual is able to fulfil their

personal and social goals and achieve a sense of purpose in society'. This understanding arguably draws on Marmot's (2015, 2004, 1998) social determinants of health and wellbeing in recognising the importance of environmental, social and cultural factors and the ability to exercise agency in relation to one's life. The BUCFP model seemed to embody an approach to wellbeing that is becoming more widely recognised as valuable wherein people that used the BUCFP were able to do in ways they themselves determined and were able to find their own routes to self-sufficiency (Walker 2012). Through these reflections, and encouraged by my tutors at Sussex, I developed a research proposal and was awarded an ESRC grant to carry out a community-university project in partnership with the BUCFP proposing that we explore ways in which creative group work impacts sense of wellbeing. It is this research that I document here.

1.2 The Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project (BUCFP)

Community and charitable organisations are increasingly expected to play a role in the provision of support for health and wellbeing (HM Treasury 2005; Department of Health 2014; 2016), including through arts-based approaches (Staricoff 2004; Camic 2008; White 2009; National Voices 2016; Buckley 2016; Daykin and Joss 2016). In this thesis, I offer a case study of a community arts group within a charity based in Brighton at a particular historical moment in order to examine what this might offer in terms of understanding health, community and wellbeing. As a practitioner with a history of involvement with the BUCFP I can be considered in many ways an insider and practitioner-researcher. In the following section I describe the BUCFP in greater detail in order to contextualise the research and explore the argument that an organisational culture of non-prescription might enable the emergence of self-directed groups that are important to consider in their ability to support health and wellbeing.

Established in 1981, and based on Marxist and Anarchist principles of self-organisation, the BUCFP describes itself as offering:

Practical user-run services which help families and individuals to challenge the effects of poverty and deprivation...the Centre sets out an ethos of empowerment and self-help; people disadvantaged by unemployment, poverty, ill-health, lack of opportunity, discrimination and poor housing can access our services...at the same time we ask people to volunteer to deliver those services.

(BUCFP 2013)

This political philosophy, embedded as part of a system of user-management, appears to have set up a recursivity that has sustained the Centre for thirty-six years. As a worker co-operative with links to the Workers Educational Association (WEA), the BUCFP established itself as a place for unemployed people to gain access to work opportunities, information and, equally importantly, gather socially to combat the negative effects associated with unemployment (Bjarnason and Sigurdardottir 2003, cited in Maynard et al 2011: 69). The ethos of self-organisation and self-empowerment, as promoted by BUCFP founder Dudley Edwards, is one that remains fundamental to the Centre:

It provides a set of potential options that allow the different centre users to find their own route to self-sufficiency...the hands-off approach, that is, providing a space where people are not pushed into behaving in certain ways or doing certain activities, is key to the popularity of the Centre.

(Walker 2012: 13)

In 1994, following differences of opinion between campaigning and non-campaigning factions concerning the direction of the Centre, the BUCFP became a charity. Those that wished to campaign on unemployment and poverty issues established another centre in a different area of Brighton. The move to charitable status could be argued to have been strategically depoliticising (Burnham 2014; Foster et al 2014) - financial support was more readily available as a charity working to alleviate poverty than as a radical Marxist social centre. The ethic of self-management arguably evolved into the principle of volunteerism. This development perhaps signalled a reaction to a political and policy climate wherein the BUCFP's continuation was dependent upon its changing some of its political rhetoric. In the new landscape of community care and an increased role for third sector organisations, a more instrumental approach was understood by the BUCFP's small group of paid workers to be the way forward. Self-organisation and ideas of collective action were replaced with the language of volunteerism, and this met the new requirements of the community care landscape and the promotion of a model that placed emphasis on improving entry into the jobs market. This altered organisational narrative was in contrast to previous understandings that had proposed recursivity and communitarian work as a form of community support as was intended by the BUCFP's founders. It also demonstrated the BUCFP's adaptability to wider socio-political and policy changes occurring at that time.

The BUCFP is currently supported through a combination of funding from bodies such as the Big Lottery, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Tudor Trust and other philanthropic organisations, while at the start of the research in November 2013 approximately 40% of the BUCFP's funding

was provided by the Local Authority. The BUCFP engages in fundraising activities and evaluation and monitoring exercises in order to evidence the efficacy of what they do and gain financial support. Despite the adaptations outlined above, the non-hierarchical and flat-management structure, consensus-based decision-making, regular Centre-wide meetings and a board of trustees pooled from Centre user and volunteer groups, are features of an earlier BUCFP incarnation which remain as a form of organisation that can claim to be in many ways genuinely participatory. The BUCFP's open door and drop-in policy is one of the few remaining in Brighton wherein community members are able to come and go as they please and decide for themselves how they use the BUCFP space. A small management group - the Paid Workers Group (PWG) - oversee the day-to-day running of the Centre and their own designated areas of: education, kitchen, participation, crèche, welfare rights, housing advice and the office and the management of volunteers within these. People volunteering, for example, in the area of welfare rights, are able to learn about current government policy and how it impacts Centre users through working alongside a staff member who is trained in this area. PWG members are accountable to trustees who, being also Centre users and volunteers, have greater insight into the issues facing Centre users and are thus better placed to make decisions about the Centre's management.

Autonomy and agency are increasingly recognised as important to health and sense of wellbeing (Putnam 2000; Marmot 2004, 2015). As Stacey and Stickley (2010: 73) suggest: 'an important factor in promoting participation and empowerment of those taking part in arts activity is to enable them to determine their own goals and actions'. Similarly, Walker (2012: 2) states:

The capacity of people to reconnect with their communities and for some to redefine their identities, skills and sense of self through being with others, undertaking health and creative classes at their own speed, is an essential part of what the centre offers to users.

That self-determination and agency, when held within responsive and supportive frameworks, are tied to notions of wellbeing reflects arguments made by scholars such as Bateson (1972), who suggests that individuals can only be properly understood when it is recognised that they are part of wider social, psychical and affective systems. Ecological and systemic perspectives are recognised as important in moves towards notions of community, participation and citizen involvement, as I discuss in the proceeding sections, though it is important to note that these must also be considered in the context of wider political and policy agendas. A non-prescriptive environment that provides routes to decision-making ability and multiple and

diverse opportunities for involvement, including educational and training opportunities as well as social supports, rather than top-down and siloed forms of intervention, enables the consideration of agency in relation to wellbeing that may be missing from current political, policy and media discussions.

1.3 Arts for health

Further to considerations of the BUCFP as being important to community wellbeing through the provision of an organisational ethos that supports ideas of self-determination, are questions of arts and creativity. It is increasingly acknowledged that the arts have a role to play in relation to health (Staricoff 2004; Camic 2008; White 2009; Daykin and Joss 2016). In January 2014 an All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) Inquiry into the Arts, Health and Wellbeing stated its recognition that:

The arts can offer a professional, value-for-money contribution to mainstream health and social care and offer personalised non-medical health strategies that support priorities identified in the NHS Five Year Forward View, in particular the focus on: prevention, self-management and greater individual control over health and wellbeing, an integrated approach to health and care and the move towards combining primary and secondary care as well as greater community provision, parity of esteem between mental and physical health and a more personalised and person-centred approach to healthcare that recognises the diversity of our populations.

(Daykin and Joss 2016: 1)

Established in recognition of 'a need to develop a coherent framework for commissioning, delivery and evaluation of arts interventions that contribute to specific NHS and Public Health England priorities within recognised care pathways', the Inquiry drew on Daykin and Joss's (2016: 4) evaluation framework which aimed to:

...provide guidance on appropriate ways of documenting the impacts of arts for health and wellbeing, whether through small-scale project evaluations or large-scale research studies. It suggests a standard framework for reporting of project activities that will strengthen understanding of what works in specific contexts and enable realistic assessment and appropriate comparisons to be made between programmes.

Daykin and Joss acknowledge that arts activities are complex and require models of evaluation that draw on qualitative and quantitative approaches. The evaluation frameworks that they propose attempt to straddle economic 'value for money' and social return on investment (SRI) questions, as well as addressing questions of community, citizen involvement and

empowerment. The challenge that such evidencing places on third sector organisations has been raised by Staricoff (2006: 119):

The importance of demonstrating the value of art projects in healthcare cannot be underestimated. Funding organizations, government, health authorities and politicians take into account the results of published research and are influenced by strong and meaningful results. This approach helps to create the basis for developing the right strategies for arts in health programmes and helps to make decisions on funding of well thought out art projects with clear aims, achievable objectives and a commitment to a rigorous evaluation of the results.

A utilitarian approach to arts in community health perhaps sits in contrast with arguments such as that made by Bishop (2012: 5) who expresses a 'profound ambivalence about the instrumentalisation of participatory art as it has developed in European cultural policy in tandem with the dismantling of the welfare state' and casts a sceptical eye over the current participatory and community 'arts for health' landscape. Indeed, narrowly economic models and understandings of arts and health initiatives may conflict with participatory and user-led approaches, not least if they are individually problematising and hence depoliticising.

1.4 Community care

The BUCFP, and growth in interest in community based arts for health and wellbeing initiatives, need to be understood within wider policy and political contexts. Community and social care provision is currently delivered through a mixture of charitable, non-for-profit, for profit, Local Authority and social enterprise organisations and is funded either through the NHS, Local Authorities or philanthropic and charitable sources. In the current political and policy model - introduced by the Government in 2010 (Office for Civil Society 2010) - a commitment to 'opening up public services' has meant that service providers have been encouraged to bid competitively for funding as part of a commissioning landscape and marketised approach. However, cuts to Local Authority budgets of 27% between 2010/11 and 2015/16 in real terms (Hastings et al 2015: 6) has meant that without sufficient financial support commissioners have found it difficult to fund the cost of services. The introduction of a marketised model has also meant that service providers are under increasing pressure to evidence their efficacy, leading to arguably reductive evaluation methods that do not capture the complexity and nuance involved in health and wellbeing and arts-based approaches. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO 2016: n.p.) states:

The sector receives income from two main sources – individuals and statutory bodies. Individual donations and purchases are the sector's main source of income, providing over 40% (around £16.5 billion) of the sector's total income. Contracts and grants from statutory bodies generate almost as much of the sector's income. However – three quarters of all voluntary organisations do not receive any income from the State.

The voluntary and charitable sector is increasingly caught between various and sometimes diverging interests and demands. Treasury documents state that 'the role of the third sector in public services is a key strand for the drive to improve public service delivery' (HM Treasury 2005: 11) and wider integration between the community, voluntary sector and social care is supported by a recent Government review (Department of Health 2016) and embedded in the Care Act 2014. Indeed, since at least the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 ever closer union between the community sector and more formalised approaches to healthcare have been in motion. Yet, as the NCVO document outlines, three quarters of all voluntary organisations do not receive financial support from the State. Attention to the role of the third sector has formed a key driver in notions of the Big Society (Office for Civil Society 2010) however, as O'Hara (2015: 19) argues, 'this 'localism' agenda coincided with the drastic reduction in funding to local authorities' and 'has been criticised as simply a means of justifying reduced government spending on services'. An ideological drive towards small State and waning financial government support for third sector has been suggested by some as a means through which social and community care is delivered independently of government spending and statutory support (Macmillan 2010; Brennan et al 2012; Aiken 2014; Eichler 2016). As a proposed form of devolution and a multi-agency approach to working, ideas of 'patient empowerment' are cited as an important factor. Yet for the more sceptical, this language again signals the increasing marketisation of the social care landscape through contentious ideas of consumer choice (Beresford 2007, 2016).

Alongside the language of patient empowerment also lie ideas of social prescribing and citizen involvement. Describing social prescribing as a 'community-based primary care model' and drawing on Marmot's (1998, 2004, 2015) notion of the social determinants of health, chair of Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group and Bromley-by-Bow Health Partnership, GP Sir Sam Everington (2016: n.p.), states:

If you ever hear Professor Marmot, he will tell you that only 30% of health and wellbeing is managed by us in the NHS. The determinants of health are critically important to people's health and wellbeing and often much more important. And what do I mean by that? I mean people's jobs, education, their environment and their creativity.

Acknowledging the social dimension of health and wellbeing enables the inclusion of environmental, political and community aspects as part of our understanding. Citing the work of the Bromley-by-Bow Centre, Everington suggests that social prescribing is an approach to sustainable, healthy communities that moves health beyond the hospital and secondary care and into the community and primary care. In this model patients are directed - often via their GP - to voluntary and community services regarded as preventative measures. Everington states 'as a Clinical Commissioning Group chair I love it because anything that diverts a patient from the NHS has to be good value for money'. However, in order for such a system to be effective it inevitably relies on a functioning community and third sector. When this sector is dependent on an unpredictable and competitive bidding landscape its ability to support the health service and secondary care in ways that Everington suggests, inevitably becomes questionable.

Alongside the expectation that the community and third sector exists as an important and underutilised public health asset lies another problematic issue concerning differing conceptions of community and community work, as Mayo (2002: 159) states:

Community work has generally been associated with holistic, collective, preventative and anti-discriminatory approaches to meeting social needs, based on value commitments to participation and empowerment.

Bringing such value-based and often intuitive forms of community work into highly systematised, economically driven and technocratic (Dominelli and Hoogvelt 1996) processes might be fraught with challenges, while questions of evaluation, quantifiability, efficacy and outcome measures are ever present. Encroaching upon the third sector as a form of community health care provision may effectively eradicate the very things that make them valuable, highlighting contrasting narratives between 'professional' approaches 'which seek to promote self-help and improve service delivery within a wider framework of existing social relations' (Mayo 2002: 163) and 'radical' approaches that 'seek to go further, contributing to shifting the power balance of existing social relations through empowering the relatively powerless to question the causes of their deprivation and challenge the sources of their oppression' (ibid: 163). The ability to contest existing power structures and associated narratives, and develop alternatives that are acceptable to self and others through group based community work and the organisations that support such activity, is a vital consideration in examining the role of community in relation to wellbeing. As Bandura (1997: 153) suggests, 'the inability to influence events and social conditions that significantly affect one's life can give rise to feelings of futility and despondency as well as anxiety', a notion

similarly supported by Derges et al (2014) and arguments for the importance of the political in the lives of citizens. Arguing in support of the autonomy of civil society and voluntary organisations, Burawoy (2005), Cairns et al (2010), Macmillan (2010) and Aiken (2014) suggest their independence is also crucial to the workings of healthy democratic societies. An independent Government review examining the role of third sector organisations (Department of Health 2016: 9) highlights the conflicting narratives at play:

Some in the Voluntary Community Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector are more comfortable in traditional campaigning mode, highlighting a problem, than constructing and testing pragmatic solutions and there is a view in some parts of the sector that VCSE groups have to keep their distance from government in order to remain 'true' to their mission. VCSE organisations need to consider the most effective way of influencing positive change for those they represent, considering the range of voice work approaches including advocacy, self-advocacy, critical friend roles, co-designer, co-commissioner, peer reviewer, campaigner and lobbyist.

The question arises as to whether the attempt to outsource statutory care to the third sector should be considered a form of depoliticisation (Burnham 2014); a marketisation that colonises third sector organisations through bureaucratic and financial procedures, or whether it might be considered an empowering opportunity to highlight alternative approaches to wellbeing and healthcare. In the context of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, which 'requires public authorities to have regard to economic, social and environmental wellbeing in connection with public services contracts', the challenge facing providers in an increasingly marketised landscape is how to evidence the 'social value' of what they do, including in the case of somewhere such as the BUCFP, how it is possible to achieve participant-led approaches where they are under increasing pressure to show effectiveness in a climate of austerity.

1.5 Research questions

This research is concerned with understanding how a community arts group functions and how it might provide a self-managing space in which participants are able to represent themselves in ways that resist forms of stigmatisation. As a practitioner I had observed how pursuing creative tasks in a group, in the environment of the BUCFP, had enabled participants to enter into processes that appeared to be experienced in many cases as positive. The creation of a physical, material and embodied group space, somewhere for people to gather and develop semiotic, i.e. meaning-bearing, art objects and the conversations and discussions this process gave rise to, appeared to engender a positive group self-concept and I became interested in the ways in which such changes were discernible in the group's talk. Examining ideas of art-

making, the spaces that make it possible, and the ability to resist stigmatisation led to a consideration of narratives as the stories and processes of sense-making that exist, and are available, in a culture (Bruner 1991; Holstein and Gubrium 2000; Squire 2005; 2013; Bamberg 2007; Andrews et al 2013). Questions of whether, and if so in what ways, participation in a creatively working group might enable processes of *re*-narrativisation surrounding the topic of food poverty, and the emergence of alternative ways of making sense of experience for those whose lives did not fit dominant hegemonic narrative constructs, thus developed.

My research focus was on the potential of groups to make sense of experience, and so was explored through group work, with methodological and substantive issues inextricably interwoven. A longitudinal approach to the analysis of qualitative data (Thomson and McLeod 2015) enabled me to examine the group, their development over time, and to address overlaps between the methodological approaches and questions the research sought to address. Taking a longitudinal approach enabled me to examine, for example, relationships between the wider environment of the BUCFP and the group's working and how the topic of food poverty or the art materials were, at different times, by different participants and for different reasons, drawn upon during particular moments (Thomson et al 2002). The research questions are as follows:

1. What is the relationship between the non-prescriptive and user-led ethos of the BUCFP and the experience of the creatively working and self-managing group?

The research explored the nature and quality of the relationships between a group working creatively and using arts-based methods, and the wider BUCFP environment. Rather than attempting a causal analysis of the impact of the BUCFP ethos on the development of the group, what emerged were questions of the purposefulness, intention and directedness involved in 'making an exhibition on the topic of food poverty' and how a group working in such a way related to the BUCFP environment and whether the group could be considered self-managing. The methodological and analytical approaches allowed me to explore the group's development over time and factors that affected it, including the relationship with the environment in which it was nested. Bringing various differing theoretical constructs to bear on the data enabled me to better understand the relationships between the BUCFP's organisational narrative and groups working within the Centre in practice. This enabled me to highlight, for example, the ways in which art-making played an important role in the group's boundary formation, informed subsequent ideas of self-determination, and how conflicts between the group and wider environment were negotiated. Had I not organised the data in

such a way, or had not used such a wide scope of theoretical constructs, these connections would perhaps have not been so apparent. As I have explored previously, while elements of the BUCFP's organisational narrative and functioning may have changed over time, and adapted to wider political and policy regimes, this research question sought to examine how the ethos of user self-management was enacted in practice and what its relationship was to a group working within its environment.

2. How might a group working creatively enable a process of sense-making and narrative re-formation surrounding the topic of food poverty?

This question had developed primarily through my interest in Ehrenzweig's (1967) notions of art-making as a movement between primary non-conscious and secondary conscious processes. In his exploration of creativity, Ehrenzweig suggests that art-making enables access to an 'undifferentiated' non-conscious wherein ideas that might not otherwise be brought into relation to one another are able to merge in interesting and important ways. Through the act of art-making, and the externalisation of the creative process, Ehrenzweig suggests that the insights made in the primary, non-conscious stage are brought into consciousness, enabling the discovery of new ideas. In this formulation art-making provides a bridge between the two spheres of the non-conscious and conscious. This second research question thus asked what - if the process described by Ehrenzweig was indeed taking place - the effects might be in the context of the group. A group taking part in art-making and talking together might thus discover new ways of approaching and understanding the topic under discussion through the generative affordances of the non-conscious, made accessible through the art-making process. Might such activity, in a group context, enable new ideas and ways of thinking about food poverty and the formalisation of these ideas into new narrative constructs? If the non-conscious is less differentiated and enables the bringing together of seemingly disparate concepts and ideas, then group based creative arts activity with a focus on the topic of food poverty might offer new ways of thinking about, discussing and making sense of it.

3. How might engagement with a group working in this way offer a form of resistance to stigmatising societal discourse?

While the second research question focused on whether and how the creative process gave rise to the emergence of new ways of thinking about food poverty, the third research question

was concerned with the narrative content of a possible alternative. This asked whether, if an alternative narrative did emerge, in what ways it might be considered as resisting the stigma surrounding food poverty. In conceptualising resistance, I draw on Bamberg and Andrews' (2004) notion of the counter-narrative, which they use to explore divergence from dominant forms of discourse. Counter-narratives offer an alternative to dominant discourses, and in this way, Bamberg and Andrews suggest that they simultaneously invoke ideas of resistance. Through close analysis of my data, I examine the ways in which participants resisted wider, stigmatising discourses through their communication and practices. Throughout the banner project a group of Centre users had regularly gathered to sew and make the banner and it appeared that in sharing an objective, working creatively to meet that objective, and producing something together, group members had enjoyed a sense of purpose and cohesion. Whilst making the banner, participants had discussed and shared their ideas, experiences and opinions on issues that were important to them and there appeared to have developed a supportive group culture that lessened the negative effects associated with experience of poverty (as documented by Bjarnason and Sigurdardottir 2003). Group discussion enabled alternative narratives to emerge wherein it was not the individual's fault that they were having a difficult time but was the effects of government policy, lack of employment opportunity or adequate training, for example. These group supports shifted the blame away from individuals who had been made to feel miserable or worthless, things that in some cases exacerbated existing mental health issues associated with unemployment and poverty, and instead created a group culture that was supportive and protective. It appeared that part of what Centre users found positive about the art groups was the reduced sense of isolation and a shared outlook that they afforded. Much societal discourse surrounding food poverty has drawn of the image of 'shirkers and scroungers' (Tyler 2013; McKenzie 2015; O'Hara 2015), demonising those living in poverty as victims of their own making. In this third research question, I sought to examine the ways in which creative and self-determined group work might enable processes of re-narrativisation that were able to resist such stigmatisations.

Combined, the research questions explored how the provision of a space in which to work relatively unimpeded, the physical material and semiotic affordances of art-making and reflexive space for group discussion, as well as the focus of a topic, might enable the emergence of alternative narratives surrounding food poverty. The three research questions can be seen as building upon each other. My initial attraction to a Bronfenbrennerian (1979) ecological systems model in order to address my research is perhaps reflected in these questions. The nestedness - the relationship between the BUCFP space, the emergence of the

group, use of art materials and language and narrative in relation to these - sought to address the research holistically. A holistic approach enables an exploration not only of a group using arts-based methods, but also a consideration of the importance of the contexts in which this is able to happen and the qualities and characteristics of those contexts as well as broader societal and cultural landscapes in which such activity takes place. The methodological formalisation of elements of the BUCFP's working, in using arts-based and participatory methods, blurs boundaries between existing aspects of the BUCFP and ideas of the research as an intervention. As I discuss at greater length throughout the thesis, these recurring issues pose challenges both for the use of arts-based and participatory methods as approaches to community research, as well as for community organisations that use art as part of their practice.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

In order to examine the BUCFP as an organisation that gives rise to a particular use of space and to ask what the effects of this might be on ideas of community, creativity, groups and narrative formation, Chapter Two takes a chronological view of changing notions of community and art from the beginning of the 20th Century onwards. This temporal dimension examines differences between pre-modern and non-utilitarian notions of community and their replacement by rationalistic and utilitarian notions as discussed by Weber (1930/1965) and Habermas (1985/1998, 1996, 1997) among others. In framing and contextualising the research in this way, Chapter Two introduces the broader lineage in which the BUCFP sits and enables a closer examination of the particular moment in which the research takes place. Chapter Three details the methodological approach, research design, methods of data collection and analysis. In Chapter Three I set out the project, the eleven-month data collection process, the narrative analytic approach and ethical considerations. I also discuss the BUCFP as a research site and provide key demographic data. Chapters Four, Five and Six present the main findings of the research, organised longitudinally in relation to themes that emerged over the course of the fieldwork. Chapter Seven reflects on substantive and methodological learning from the study in relation to the over-arching research questions as set out above, and concludes by considering how creative group work in a non-prescriptive environment might carry with it implications for policy, practice and future research.

Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Conceptualising the BUCFP as a 'space after modernity', the literature review begins with an exploration of Weber (1930/1965), Tonnies (1963), Habermas (1985/1998, 1996, 1997) and Delanty's (2003) notions of modernity as a shift away from non-formalised and locally embedded social relations to the formalisation of these, the growth in institutions and movements and towards symbolically mediated forms of identity. Exploring changing understandings of community enables a contextualisation of the BUCFP's organisational narrative as one that arguably resists rationalistic uses of space. In that it adheres to and maintains a narrative of user-led participation, the BUCFP arguably eschews top-down instrumentalisation and instead enables the emergence of grassroots and locally responsive sense-making activity that is important to consider. Giddens's (1984) concept of structural differentiation is examined alongside Luhmannian (2013) systems conceptualisations in order to explore how organisations, communities and groups in modernity function and communicate with one another and what the effects of differentiation might be. Drawing on Kester (2004) and Bishop (2012), the literature review continues by considering the theoretical positions outlined in relation to art and changing notions of aesthetic value during the mid-twentieth century, exploring in particular the socio-political and historical moment in which ideas of 'community art' emerge. The chapter closes with an examination of the current socio-political landscape and notions of community art as important for health and wellbeing, as well as to questions of economy and regeneration in the form of, for example, the 'social dividend' (Henley 2016). Differing ideas of the purpose and function of art in the public sphere are important to consider, particularly in their utilisation in the current moment of austerity. As such, this chapter provides a comprehensive examination of literature relating to questions of the use of space and importance of creativity through changing socio-political and historical landscapes and enables a consideration of current ideas surrounding what constitutes a healthy society.

2.2 State, society and community: a changing relationship at the beginning of the twentieth century

The period following the First World War proved a time of significant social change during which a movement away from informal types of association that had provided an unofficial

'social service' and towards greater formalisation was underway. Williams (1948: viii) suggests that the First World War - the first modern war - began a blurring between ideas of community as existing in voluntary and informal clubs and associations versus a need for statutory forms of provision:

The problems thrown up by the war were a challenge to voluntary effort as well as to statutory provision and not only did the existing social agencies undergo considerable changes in their response but also completely new organisations had to be established to deal with unprecedented situations.

(Williams 1948: viii)

Writing in 1947, Mess (1948: 3) states:

The State has taken over a great deal of social work initiated by voluntary organisations. To some extent, not entirely, work which was previously performed by voluntary associations, but which has now been taken over, is regarded as statutory social service.

In the aftermath of the First World War and the realisation of the extent to which forms of assistance were needed in the care of, for example, war widows, orphans and the disabled and infirm, lines were recast between the State and civil society. Ideas of voluntary membership of a club or association that provided informal supportive networks and perhaps carried out 'good works' were shaped by a more prescient need for systematised forms of social service. It is possible to identify the State increasingly appropriating voluntary and community services as a result of the war and the social and economic effects it engendered. The movement towards systematisation was arguably symptomatic of the larger forces of modernity, as Delanty (2003: 33) suggests:

With modernity, society replaces community as the primary focus for social relations. Community is 'living', while society is mechanical. The former is more rooted in locality and is 'natural', while the latter is more a 'rational', 'mental' product and one that is sustained by relations of exchange.

In this account, the rationalisation of previously informal relations was indicative of an encroaching modernity wherein relations came to be determined by processes of economic exchange, arguments similarly made by Polanyi (1944/2001). Delanty (2003: 29) states:

Community came to be seen as the residual category of social, namely that which is left when society becomes more and more rationalised by the State and by economic relations.

The move from voluntary, community and informal 'social service' towards its appropriation by State and social institutions altered a version of community that was arguably negotiating

between pre-modern and modern conceptualisations. This engendered a dichotomy between Habermasian (1985/1998, 1997) systems and life worlds, wherein things that evaded rationalisation - kindness and friendship, the quality of social relations - became in some sense 'pre-modern' in their inability, indeed perhaps their resistance, to quantifiability. Tonnies (1963) suggests that this process created a demarcation between community as organically forming and society as mechanised and based on processes of economic exchange, raising questions of where, on what basis, by who and for what purpose 'value' was assigned.

Arguably building on the work of religious organisations such as the Charitable Organisations Society founded in 1869, the formation in 1919 of the National Council of Social Service served as the secular continuation and formalisation of previously informal and voluntary organisations, deepening relations between the State and civil society. Bringing a closer allegiance with government departments, it is possible that the effect of this was that actions carried out by community groups and organisations became increasingly directed towards specific means and ends. Community members and organisations became intermediaries between a type of economic rationality - utility maximisation - and a substantive approach as described by Polanyi. This encroachment of the life world by the systems world might be thought of in terms of a structural differentiation as suggested by Parsons (1966), Giddens (1984) and Luhmann (2013). In this view of modernity, society becomes increasingly differentiated and, Luhmann suggests, actors are only able to 'enter' the various differentiated parts if they agree to the terms of those systems, a reductive 'yes' or 'no'. For those who do not adhere to the simplistic binaries - 'agree or disagree' - exclusion is inevitable and organisations, practices and people that do not subscribe to the classical neoliberal narrative become marginalised. Delanty's (2003: 3) argument that in modernity sense of community is no longer 'underpinned by 'lived' spaces and immediate forms of social intimacy' but is instead 'shaped by cognitive and symbolic structures' highlights how community and sense of belonging become dependent on the symbolising of allegiance to certain social spheres. Supporting this argument, Young (1999: 164) suggests that 'just as community collapses, identity is invented'..The notion of the dislocation of community from the geographical and lived everyday is interesting to consider. The structural differentiation of systems in modernity arguably determined that community members came together for conscious, shared purposes. 'Community' came to be based around purposeful activity and identification - and ability to symbolise identification - with a certain group. No longer was membership dependent on a shared sense of everyday experience, rather it was based on a conscious claim to a particular activity or organisation. This created a dichotomy between ideas of community as symbolic

and cognitive, in Delanty's terms 'not underpinned by 'lived' spaces', and community as rooted in geography and a shared sense of the everyday. Delanty's (2003: 12) highlighting of the 'ambivalence between, on the one side, locality and particularness - the domain of immediate social relations, the familiar, proximity - and on the other the universal community in which all human beings participate' illustrates this tension. Attempting to 'think through the relationship of universality to particularity in terms other than those that are starkly oppositional', McKenzie (2009: 353) suggests 'Human capabilities are located and realised only in embodied subjects, and the form such embodiment takes is profoundly influenced by the form of sociality in which it is situated.'

The argument for the importance of location, embodiment and 'the social' in the realisation of human capabilities, perhaps provides a bridge between the dislocated and disembodied narratives associated with identity and belonging in modernity, and those associated with the embodied, material, particular and every day. Herein perhaps we detect a call for a return to the local and particular of 'the community' as opposed to the universalising 'grand narratives' of society. Cameron (2012: 588) suggests:

The point is not that the small and specific are not political, of course they are. It is, instead, that they may be political in ways that have not been sufficiently fleshed out. It may be that it is precisely in small, local storytelling that political transformation becomes possible, even if we cannot know in advance where our stories will lead.

The turn to 'the local' – particularly in the fields of human geography (e.g. Anderson and Tolia-Kelly 2004; Edensor 2010; Askins and Pain 2011; Cameron 2012) and new materialism (e.g. Coole and Frost 2010; Barrett and Bolt 2013) – enables us to think anew about subjectivity and narrative formation as it arises in relation to context. This positions the 'grand narratives' associated with universalism and 'society' in relation to the so-called 'small stories' of community, the local and the everyday. If we consider that organically forming community - the human social relations that develop a shared sense of being in the world - has, in modernity, been subsumed into formalised organisations that adhere to universal grand narratives that have been combined with forces of economic rationality, we might view the turn to questions of locality, embodiment and context as forms of radical response. If one begins to sense an inapplicability of grand universalising narratives to everyday life, then questions of dissatisfaction, isolation and 'social exclusion' inevitably arise. It becomes possible to consider the call for a return to the materiality and community of the everyday as a form of resistance to the rationalism of modernity that Tawney (1930/1965: I (e)) describes as:

...an economic system based, not on custom or tradition, but on deliberate and systematic adjustment of economic means to the attainment of the objective of pecuniary profit [which] triumphed over the conventional attitude which had regarded the *appetitus divitiarum infinitus* - the unlimited lust for gain - as anti-social and immoral.

These considerations are particularly pertinent to my research focus on the BUCFP as a space that aims to enable the development and emergence of relations premised on values other than processes of economic exchange, particularly through arts-based practice.

2.3 Art and institutions in modernity

Continuing an examination of relations between ideas of embodiment, locality, universalism and the role of institutions in modernity through the prism of the arts, I start with an exploration of Lee's (1965: 6) government white paper on art and culture. In this paper Lee stressed the importance of access to physical spaces in which to make and 'do' art (ibid: 12), suggesting that 'in any civilised community the arts and associated amenities, serious or comic, light or demanding, must occupy a central place.' Widening access to the arts, particularly in a mechanised age, thus became a central feature of the government's aims (ibid: 19):

In an age of increasing automation bringing more leisure to more people than ever before, both young and old will increasingly need the stimulus and refreshment that the arts can bring. If one side of life is highly mechanised, another side must provide for diversity, adventure, opportunities both to appreciate and to participate in a wide range of individual pursuits. An enlightened government has a duty to respond to these needs.

In Lee's assertion, art in modernity was valuable because it provided an antidote to the mechanisation of society and formed an essential part of 'civilised society' in its ability to resist systematisation. It is possible to detect ambivalence; while 'increasing automation' freed people from manual labour it also posed a threat to 'diversity and adventure' and the leisure time it afforded needed to be filled with 'stimulus and refreshment'. In what perhaps formed the beginning of a sense of the social purpose and function of art, Lee's paper viewed it as the responsibility of government to protect its citizens from a 'highly mechanised' side of life, implying a dualism that was to be if not countered then at least endured. However, as Mirza (2005) notes, attitudes surrounding art, value and aesthetic taste were changing at this time and through the auspices of the Arts Council in the 1970s Regional Arts Associations (RAAs) signalled the devolution of decision-making surrounding public art, culture and heritage to Local Authorities. While the arts were indirectly supported by government, it was seen as

important that involvement was kept at arm's length. Moore-Gilbert (1994: 1917) cites Arts Council chairman Patrick Gibson's report of 1973 (Arts Council 1973: 12) as stating:

One field which seems to offer real scope for the involvement of a wide range of people, some of whom have known little of the arts in the past, lies in what is loosely called community arts. These are attempts to engage people, especially young people, in the creative use of their time through artistic activity.

As Moore-Gilbert (1994: 1917) notes, Gibson's formulations offered 'an essentially pastoral and welfare model' which combined with one of the Arts Council's long-standing aims to increase the audience for the arts, noting that 'although these were not the primary objectives for much of the newer experimental work' born of the 1960s fringe and counter culture movements, a Community Arts Working Party was nevertheless established. The Community Arts Working Party sought to examine 'the extent to which the Arts Council should be directly involved in the subsidising of arts work' and what the relationship was between 'experimental work and community arts projects and whether a distinction needed to be drawn between these two fields of activity' (Moore-Gilbert 1994: 1917).

Through the trail of meeting minutes, Arts Council and government documents, it is possible to detect the emergence of a changing attitude concerning the role of arts in contemporary society and a questioning of the 'aesthetic boundaries' of the Arts Council. There followed something of a divergence in the stated aims of both the Arts Council and the newly created Community Arts Committee between, on the one hand, the supposition that 'the cultural dynamism of the people will emerge only if they can be liberated from the cultural values hitherto accepted by an elite' (Moore-Gilbert 1994: 1918) and the Arts Council's aims which were chiefly educational. In 1980 chairman Roy Shaw stated that 'community art is not simply an artistic movement, but is closely allied to community and other aspects of social work' (ibid: 1918; Arts Council 1980: 12). What followed was an apparently growing chasm between Arts Council ideas of culture and where art and value lay, and a community arts movement keen to reject a supposed imposition of ideas that belonged to so-called 'bourgeois culture' (Moore-Gilbert 1994: 1919). It appeared that community art groups were resisting their positioning by the Arts Council as forms of either social work or educational activity. If we consider the proposition made earlier that in order to 'be modern' and 'enter society' community had to subscribe to certain codifications, it is interesting to note the ways in which these were resisted. It is also worthwhile to consider that folk art, arguably an earlier cousin of community art, had never been formally accepted as part of 'the academy' in England and had always been seen as rough-edged, provincial and of low value, as Kenny et al (2014: 126) state:

The appeal of the folk arts is often framed in defiantly anti-intellectual terms. Seen to demand an emotional rather than academic response, they apparently promise a form of direct communication that fine art, with its assembled experts and complex theoretical frameworks, does not. In this sense, they are not simply on the periphery of high culture but actively pitched against it, their celebration veiling disdain for the machinations of the contemporary art world. They are understood to be indifferent to the changing winds of fashion and somehow out of time, tapping into a fundamental and innate creativity. Such narratives are central to the value of these objects and their status as the 'real thing', created not for economic or strategic benefit but for other, less worldly motives.

While the growing disenfranchisement with established notions of art and value gained traction, Moore-Gilbert (1994: 1919) suggests that the threat posed to the Arts Council also lay in whether, for example, to consider 'high-quality Marxist plays' as art that could be assessed by conventional methods. Thus, discovered in the arguably well intentioned devolution of decision-making and authority to regional and local arts organisations was not only a question of aesthetic judgement and taste, but also of political content. A Community Arts Working Party report (1974: 8) highlighted the ways in which 'community artists' were distinguishable from other forms of art and art-making 'by their attitude towards the place of their activities in the life of society'. What became clearly identifiable at this time was the emphasis that a newly emerging community art movement placed on ideas of process and art as enhancing community and social bonds, an activity that was viewed, as the report states, 'as a means of change, whether psychological, social or political, within the community'.

Emerging, therefore, during the 1970s was a community art movement that sought to challenge perceived notions of art and quality and address issues not being addressed through conventional art approaches. This 'split', if it can be described as such, seemed to symbolise a divergence that Hebdige (1979/2007: 432) identifies between notions of 'high art' and an idea of cultural value appearing through anthropological conceptions. While the answer to the problems that modernity brought with it was seen by organisations such as the Arts Council as lying in a widening of participation of the traditional art forms, an alternative notion of cultural value was emerging through the Left's rising interest in 'how the individual's relationship to society is mediated through culture' (Mirza 2005: 265). Hebdige (1979/2007: 432) suggests:

Traced back by Williams (1976) to Herder and the eighteenth century this was rooted in anthropology. Here the term 'culture' referred to a 'particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour. The analysis of culture, from such a definition, is the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture' (Williams 1965).

Thus a different set of principles became available through which to assign value, including, as Hebdige (ibid: 433) suggests drawing on T.S. Eliot's (1948) notions of what were essentially folk art traditions:

All the characteristic activities and interests of a people; derby day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the 12th August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart-board, Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut into sections, beetroot in vinegar, 19th Century Gothic churches, the music of Elgar...

Everyday life became recognised as 'part of culture' and with it a distortion of the hegemonic structure. Borrowing from Williams (1959), Mirza (2005: 265) emphasises the discovery that 'culture did not exist in rarefied spheres, but was a product of social and material relationships; in other words, "ordinary"'. As Millar (2008: 151) states 'what has come to be known as folk art shares much with what has come to be known as everyday life, and they are often similarly defined as that which escapes or lies outside specialised activities.'

2.4 The self, group and community: interpretation and representation

While a revolutionary zeal for the overthrowing of the bourgeois art institutions swept through much of European and American society in the mid-twentieth century, it is useful to explore further the narrative constructs that were deployed in the development of alternative ideas concerning aesthetic value. Having begun wrestling notions of value away from the institutions, recourse had been in many cases to Leftist and Marxist narratives and philosophies. However, as Kester (2004: 39) suggests, in the wake of the Second World War:

The only refuge for the artist disenchanted with socialism and disgusted by capitalism was to draw into a resistant subjectivity and reject "comprehensibility" entirely. The artist's individuality becomes the primary context of the work - both the artwork and the artist must be rendered opaque and inscrutable...the artist emerges as an exemplary subject, showing viewers how to live an authentic life, in touch with their individual creative energies, in the midst of the grey flannel conformity of the 1950s.

Mirza (2005: 266) highlights that 'ambivalence towards the Communist Party spurred Left-wing radicals to seek out new terrain of political activism that did not focus on class struggle over means of economic production'. The 'cultural turn', and rise of what would become identity politics, heralded the 'individual' as a site of resistance to the anomie of the post war years, detectable perhaps in the rallying cry 'the personal is political'. As Lasch (1978) and Heelas (1996) discuss, a blurring between public and private life occurred wherein the 'self' - disembodied from community - was utilised as a counter narrative to prevailing notions of art,

aesthetic judgement and politics. However, it is possible to consider this 'self' as nonetheless constrained by the demands of a structurally differentiated modernity, as Goffman (1959 cited in Lasch 1978: 90) argues:

As human beings we are presumably creatures of variable impulse with mood and energies that change from one moment to the next. As characters put on for an audience, however, we must not be subject to ups and downs...A certain bureaucratization of the spirit is expected so that we can be relied upon to give a perfectly homogenous performance at every appointed time.

In this scenario the apparently liberated and creative individual finds that he or she cannot exist free of the functional binary codes of structurally differentiated modernity, the context in which he or she appears, having no option but to reduce narrative complexity to singular, conscious statements. Lasch (1978: 90) suggests:

The self-consciousness that mocks all attempts at spontaneous action or enjoyment derives in the last analysis from the waning belief in the reality of the external world, which has lost its immediacy in a society pervaded by "symbolically mediated information".

Lasch suggests that a disembodied and 'symbolically mediated' self in modernity inevitably means that the nuances of human experience are reduced to self-conscious statements and claims. 'I feel' becomes a commodified and empty cry, painfully meaningless in its inapplicability to 'the reality of the external world'. Giddens (1991: 83) similarly suggests that the self in this structurally differentiated state exists as a series of disconnected 'lifestyle sectors'. Applied to artistic endeavour, the artist in a symbolically mediated and disembodied modernity becomes endlessly self-referential and removed from the material conditions that he or she sought to address. It is perhaps no coincidence that the Romantic and Impressionist art movements appeared during times of expanding scientific rationality, both placing the artist 'self' front and centre, albeit in different ways.

Mourning the apparent failure of the Left's utopian and communitarian dream, Sennett (2006: 2) argues that the dismantling of the institutions, rather than producing 'more community' has instead left many people's lives in a fragmented state: 'the places they work more assembling train stations than villages, as family life is disorientated by the demands of work...migration is the icon of the global age, moving on rather than settling in.' The realisation that the dissolution of institutions had created a symbolically mediated self predicated on a self-referentiality appropriated by a capitalist agenda, brought with it a new movement in ideas of community art. Drawing on Debord (1967) and arguing for the humanising potential of participatory art, Bishop (2012: 11) states:

For many artists and curators on the Left, Debord's critique strikes to the heart of why participation is important as a project: it re-humanises a society rendered numb and fragmented by the repressive instrumentality of capitalist production.

Two interpretations of politically engaged art thus emerged; one wherein the self as political agent adhered to the universalising yet disciplinary - and arguably inapplicable - narratives of modernity, only legible as a 'performance', and a second wherein the political as art is able to challenge instrumentality through its collectivist efforts. The prevailing question asks whether collectivist political art suggests conformity or whether it is able to pose a challenge to the existing order. Borrowing from Bakhtin's (1982) notion of dialogics, Kester (2004: 10) suggests participatory art is important because it engages co-produced dialogue which can be 'viewed as a kind of conversation - a locus of different meanings, interpretations and points of view.' The introduction of notions of dialogue and interpretation can be considered essential to community arts capacity to challenge narratives in a structurally differentiated modernity. Utilising the post-structuralist and Barthesian concept that 'the author is an abstraction of the text and meaning is determined by the reader' (Lamarque 2004: 457), participatory art re-engages ideas of artist, audience and meaning through a consideration of the role of interpretation. As Lamarque (ibid: 456) notes, participatory arts' encouragement of dialogue and generative processes that resist differentiation must also be understood in the wider context of a changing modernity and 'the rise of hermeneutical methods in the human sciences...and also the intellectual currents of psychoanalysis and Marxism.'

Drawing on a Habermasian 'model of human interaction that retains the emancipatory power of aesthetic dialogue without recourse to a universalizing philosophical framework', Kester (2004: 14) highlights feminist literature that develops a concept of a 'contextually grounded "connected knowledge"' that enables considerations of problems described earlier between the universal and particular. Providing the examples of Rachel Whiteread's 'House' installation, and community art project 'West Meets East', Kester asks how we might understand the aesthetic significance of the collaborative process itself (ibid: 25). In that collaborative, dialogic and community art invariably strive for consensus between participants, Kester finds a tension between this conception of art's purpose and that embedded within the notion of the singular artist looking out upon and critiquing the world. The dichotomy raised by Kester highlights whether there exists an assumed purposefulness within community and participatory art that ought to be considered. Framed as socially cohesive and located within narratives of community building, the purpose is one of stability whereas 'high art' is apparently free to pose questions and be more elusive and provocative. Where, we might ask, is community art's ability to make itself available for interpretation when the narrative is already prescribed in its

need to be 'socially cohesive'? This concern is perhaps echoed in Bishop's (2012: 13) comment that:

Participatory art is perceived to channel art's symbolic capital towards constructive social change...there can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved, or boring works of participatory art, because all are equally essential to the task of repairing the social bond.

Bishop suggests that, denied its artistic agency through the demand and expectation that it 'repair social bonds', the underlying narrative in community and participatory art becomes relentlessly unoriginal. Using participatory and arts-based methods, Askins and Pain (2011: 807) however offer a differing analysis to Bishop's:

There exists a long tradition in community development of using art as a method for participant self-representation, within a framework of co-production of knowledge for social justice: working with participants to capitalise on the "unique communicative and social power that the arts can exert in the public sphere."

These two conceptions differ on an important point. What Bishop describes is the 'meta' communication of community and participatory art and that, no matter the content; it is nonetheless 'community art' and has placed upon it certain expectations. In contrast, Askins and Pain highlight the importance of the message contained within the works - the 'unique communicative and social power that the arts can exert in the public sphere' - despite the 'meta' message and the constraints of the medium. For Askins and Pain, as for others in the fields of participatory and community art, questions of 'participant self-representations' and the variations of these are crucial. Their argument echoes Matarasso's (1997: 7) observation that 'in some cases...people feel they have gained more control over how they are seen by friends and family'. In this formulation, participatory and community art offers a space through which people are able to represent themselves collectively and in self-determined ways. While attention is focused on the community, it is also lifted beyond it and enables a re-positioning through re-representation in a wider socio-cultural milieu; there is a fluidity of movement between the micro and macro mediated by the visual. It is possible to question however, the extent to which, disconnected from locality, physical space and access to institutions and decision-making, symbolically mediated forms of group and community self-representation alone are able to affect change beyond the boundaries of the art group. Herein lies a perhaps vital difference between therapeutic notions of community art, focused primarily on individual behavioural change, and political and activist forms of community art which seek to affect social change, not (only) individual. Thus much participatory and community art finds itself straddling ideas of both community, that is, the parochial, micro, embodied and every day, and

the macro, societal, symbolic, grand and universal. It is caught between the demands and expectations - and in some cases desires - to address issues of modernity while also valuing as important those of the arguably pre-modern.

In a review that set out to examine the contribution that grassroots arts groups make to wider society, Ramsden et al (2011) highlighted transitions to employment and further education as important outcomes of participation as well as the ways in which community art activity benefited local economic infrastructure through, for example, the leasing of village halls, equipment hire and the management of assets. In this analysis, community art is assigned value in much the same ways as described by the Arts Council in the 1970s; as economically advantageous and improving health and wellbeing, highlighting Gray (2000) and Mirza's (2005) critique of commodification of community art and the underlying instrumentalist and utilitarian approaches it alludes to. Analyses such as Gray and Mirza's raise the question of community art's ability to critique systems and processes that may have made its members marginal in the first place, and seeks to find a different set of criteria by which to measure the value of participatory art other than in narrowly defined terms of health, economy or (passive) inclusion. Highlighting intersections between place, infrastructure, economy and identity, Ramsden et al (2011: 21) discuss a community art initiative that engaged in the design and creation of local postcards and the relation this had with the development of local identity and forms of economy:

What began with residents' desire to put their community on the map has developed over a period of twenty years into a local small arts industry which offers individual and local views of Ravensthorpe distinct from the images on commercial postcards. In addition to creating revenues for themselves and the community, the 'lay' or amateur postcard production has contributed to the creation of a local rural place identity, for residents and tourists alike, putting Ravensthorpe on the map.

The Ravensthorpe example highlights the relation between symbolic capital, materiality, economics and the ability to enact agency. As research by Putnam (2000) and Marmot (2004, 2015) suggests; sense of control and an ability to be self-determining are closely tied to health and wellbeing. Implicit in working with marginalised groups are issues of stigmatisation and lack of agency in terms of representation. If community art does enable participants to regain control over how they are represented, and this is considered 'healthy', it is also important to consider the means through which it is possible to enact agency that are other than only symbolic. The question of the 'material turn' (Coole and Frost 2010; Barrett and Bolt 2013) engages with the importance of the material, physical, embodied and economic aspects of the everyday that challenge the idea of the singular power of the symbolic. Art practice and

community art in particular, are interesting to consider in relation to such arguments. In a study that explored the effects on sex workers of enabling forms of self-representation through photography, Desyllas (2014: 479) draws on a Frerian (1970) approach that suggests 'the visual image is a tool that enables people to think critically about their communities and reveals the everyday social and political realities that influence their lives'. Acknowledging that semiosis is fundamental to sense of identity, self, community and being in the world and that visual methods can reveal interrelations between the symbolic and the material, Desyllas's (2014: 479) use of arts-based methods puts representation in the hands of participants themselves:

The idea of codifying language and experiences into visual images is seen as a way to stimulate people “submerged” in the culture of silence to “emerge” as conscious makers of their own culture.

The approach offered by Desyllas is two-fold; it 'makes visible' and available for interpretation, the relationships between political, symbolic and material conditions, and in so doing enables participants to become conscious of these and to develop physical, material cultures that are able to affect political change.

2.5 Arts for health?

The ways in which community art might improve the health and wellbeing of those that take part - as numerous studies suggest they do (Starricoff 2006; Camic 2008; Hacking et al 2008; Clift et al. 2009) - might lie in their ability to enable alternative forms of representation and develop agentic cultures, as discussed above. The 'purpose' of art when thought about in such ways, is not only to promote passive inclusion in the status quo but to discover, articulate and develop alternative self and community narratives and representations. As Marmot (2015: 230) suggests, developing and maintaining cultural and community identity has an important bearing on ideas of resilience and wellbeing. Similarly drawing on the personal, cultural and social dimensions of wellbeing, Daykin et al. (2016) state:

The personal dimension includes confidence and self-esteem, meaning and purpose, reduced anxiety and increased optimism; the cultural dimension includes coping and resilience, capability and achievement, personal identity, creative skills and expression and life skills such as employability; the social dimension includes belonging and identity, sociability and new connections, bonding and social capital, reducing social inequalities and reciprocity.

It would appear that crucially processes that enhance resilience and wellbeing also involve the development of forms of political voice, access to and influence upon decision-making, and inclusion in society in ways that are self-determined. The buck does not stop at symbolic representation; rather the challenge is the materialisation of alternative narratives into embodied forms of political (in the widest sense) practices. Interconnections between political identity and narrative formation, art-making, power-holding and wellbeing, while dealt with individually and sometimes overlapping, are not widely brought together in literature surrounding arts and health currently. In a scoping review that examined relationships between resilience and community art practice across disciplinary fields including art therapy, social work, community health, visual art practice and geographies of health, Macpherson et al (2015: 8) state that 'wider structural, institutional and socio-economic determinants of an individual's capacity to be resilient also need to be addressed' and that 'further work needed to be done in order to construct a measure that distinguished between psychological (individual) empowerment and genuine social empowerment' (ibid: 6). While acknowledging wider, structural and systemic aspects, Macpherson et al suggest resilience as the ability of individuals and communities to withstand debilitating and adverse forces through adopting certain practices, some of these involving the arts. Based initially on therapeutic principles, and developed over time to incorporate participatory elements, the resilience model suggested by Macpherson et al does not directly address questions of political agency, despite taking a systemic and ecological approach. Citing a study of mental health, social inclusion and the arts by Secker et al (2007), Macpherson et al acknowledge that while resilience based art interventions are useful and important for individuals, creating methods and tools that enable them to manage the adversity they face, more needs to be done to explore relationships between art, resilience and social empowerment. This means looking beyond individual behaviour change and instead towards systemic and environmental aspects and the sites of the original disadvantage and, as Hart (2013: n.p.) suggests 'overcoming adversity, whilst also potentially subtly changing, or even dramatically transforming, (aspects of) that adversity...beating the odds whilst changing the odds.'

Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky (2005: 89) argue for the need to 'redefine resilience as the ability to not only cope with conditions related to adversity and injustice but also to challenge their very existence'. As Taylor et al (2011: 6) warn, 'otherwise building resilience is nothing more than putting a sticking plaster over the wound caused by macro-structural inequalities in power and resources'. In a paper that attempted to address the question 'what is resilience?' Herrman et al (2011: 258) explored that, despite there being 'no consensus on an operational

definition of resilience', fundamentally the term refers to 'positive adaptation, or the ability to maintain or regain mental health, despite experiencing adversity', they state (2011: 260):

...community factors, such as good schools, community services, sports and artistic opportunities, cultural factors, spirituality and religion, and lack of exposure to violence, contribute to resilience.

Macpherson et al (2015: 7) suggest five key components of resilience of which the ability to 'foster a sense of identity' is just one that leads to improved sense of wellbeing. In terms of communities affected by food poverty, as in my research, questions of stigmatisation, social exclusion and identity form vital aspects, as Tyler (2013) suggests, citing Bauman (2000/2013):

Within a consumer society 'non-shopping' represents 'the jarring and festering stigma of a life un-fulfilled - and of [one's] own nonentity and good-for-nothingness. Not just the absence of pleasure: absence of human dignity. Of life meaning.

My research has been concerned with understanding how a community art group might develop a self-managing space through which participants are able to represent themselves in ways that resist stigmatisation and instead enable the regaining of a sense of dignity. Stigmatisation is understood by Goffman (1963) to constitute a process whereby the expectations surrounding certain social codes and value systems are not met. Goffman (ibid: 14) describes stigma as born of the difference between an attribute, that is, a person's 'social identity' and a stereotype, i.e. what we believe and expect of them. When certain expectations are not met, stigmatisation occurs. The detrimental effects of stigmatisation are recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO 2013: n.p.):

Stigma is a major cause of discrimination and exclusion: it affects people's self-esteem, helps disrupt their family relationships and limits their ability to socialize and obtain housing and jobs. It hampers the prevention of mental health disorders, the promotion of mental wellbeing and the provision of effective treatment and care. It also contributes to the abuse of human rights.

Dignity and the ability to view oneself with positive self-regard (Rogers 1951) can be considered essential aspects of a healthy life. Bamberg and Andrews (2004) suggest that the ability to develop counter narratives - and with them the cultures and communities that Freire (1970) suggests - can be thought of as a form of resistance to stigmatisation, highlighting the availability of political narratives and their potential as empowering in relationships between self, identity, stigmatisation and resistance. Squire (2013) similarly highlights the complexity of the relationships between personal story-telling as a sense-making activity and wider, political discourses through her explications of HIV in South Africa. Drawing on ideas of a movement from personal sense-making to the sphere of 'the political', Squire (2005: 97) suggests that 'it

could be helpful to view other personal narratives as strategies for explaining events that are partially represented, or outside representation, and that stories drag into representation [and] some form of theoretical coherence'. Squire suggests that bringing into representation things that have previously been 'unspeakable' makes them available as narrative devices with the power to develop 'considerable cultural and moral impact' and shape culture in new ways, generating acceptability where previously there had been stigmatisation. Squire notes too that the ability of personal stories to become political, cultural and moral stories also has a relationship with ideas of wellbeing (Squire 2005: 97). Discussing the positive health benefits of 'good stories' - that is, the narratives that we develop, hold and tell in relation to ourselves - Ramirez-Esparza and Pennebaker (2007: 249) suggest that 'There is a sense that the ability to transform personally upsetting experiences into stories can result in improved physical and mental health.'

Ramirez-Esparza and Pennebaker highlight that it was not the particular quality or objective marker of 'good' or 'bad' writing that seemed so beneficial to the health of those who took part in their research, rather it was the sense-making process that was important to consider. Spaces in which to develop alternative ways of 'making sense' - embodied in the notion of counter narrative - have health-giving effects. Particularly relevant to my research focus on narrative formation within the art group, Ramirez-Esparza and Pennebaker suggest that 'constructing a story is more powerful than having a story' (ibid: 253), giving credence to ideas of co-production and the importance of discussion in group art-making and the construction of visual and other forms of dialogue. Thus the community art group space can be thought of as a sense-making space in which new stories are developed through verbal and non-verbal methods. The process of representation of the story, and the inclusion of personal and experiential narratives, has an empowering effect in its ability to defy hegemonic and normative discourses and make acceptable an alternative version of the truth as it is experienced by those whose lives do not necessarily fit the status quo. The ability of these stories to become alternative cultures that resist stigmatisation however depends in part on the receptivity of the environments in which they are nested, as Mirza (2005: 266) states, 'this is not only a question of material egalitarianism, but of recognition'. Not only might stigmatised communities become 'resilient' but they might also become political and activist. Citing the use of participatory action research in community settings, Fine et al (2003) argue that access to 'real world' information and channels through which to speak and tell alternative narratives is important for community justice and social transformation. The gathering of data in the co-construction of alternative narratives can be thought of as

legitimising forms of political action and community 'self-knowledge' that enables the emergence of alternative understandings of the world. Through cycles of action and research and identifying and utilising information related to their communities, members were able to construct valid counter arguments and narratives that were located in their geography, representing selves in ways that defied hegemonic constructions. We might suggest that community and participatory art is a vital initial step in conceiving an alternative narrative, but equally important are the material conditions, means and channels through which to exercise and grow them.

It is possible to argue that, within the neoliberal State, community art activity is viewed as a form of individualised intervention, a solution to a problem created by residualisation and premised on the technological knowledge of 'expert knower's' (Schmidt and Marratto 2008). This view of community art arguably removes knowledge and knowledge-building capability from the community. Participatory, activist and communitarian approaches can be viewed as a form of resistance to such processes. Indeed, the medicalisation and individualisation of community art is argued by some to perpetuate, rather than solve, the problems it seeks to address. As Walker et al (2015: 1) suggest:

The activities and technologies of the psychology (psy) disciplines, in the process of privileging professional understandings of distress, could be seen to be potentially facilitating corrosion in the capacity of the lay public to understand and ameliorate their distress.

These comments highlight the need to attend to arguments in the art and health debate that call for the supporting of conditions through which members of communities are able to develop their own best routes to wellbeing. Writing the introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1972/2013: 8), Seem states:

Like Deleuze and Guattari (1972), Illich (1973) also calls for a radical reversal of the relationships between individuals and tools or machines: "this reversal would permit the evolution of a life-style and of a political system which give priority to the protection, the maximum use, and the enjoyment of the one resource that is almost equally distributed among all people: personal energy under personal control". All three authors agree that such a reversal must be governed by a collective political process, not by professionals and experts. The ultimate answer to neurotic dependencies on professionals is mutual self-care.

Propositions such as Seem's that argue for forms of self-governance free from 'professionals and experts' sets up an interesting dynamic between professional knowledge, arguably residing in society, and local knowledge, residing in community. Experts and professionals are viewed as denying the health-giving and vital agency of 'personal energy under personal

control'. A wider question comes into view concerning governance, locality and sense-making and a return to arguments between the universal and particular. Discussing the rise of 'the therapeutic State' and citing Furedi (2003), Mirza (2005: 269) states:

The key determinate factor that emerges in the last quarter of the twentieth century is the declining significance of collective identities and political ideologies. Whereas such ideologies in the past had mediated the individual's relationship to society and attributed it with a framework of meaning, the end of the twentieth century saw the "loosening" of these social connections and a more individuated and atomised social fabric. The therapeutic ethos emerged as a new cultural script to explain and manage relations between the individual and social, and private and public experience.

In an examination of the BUCFP as a model of community care that works within ideas of community and society, Walker (2012) suggests that the Centre is effective precisely because of its ability to enable its members to enter into forms of self-management due to its 'hands off' approach. Overseen by a small team of paid workers whose task is to be responsive to community need, this model enables those that use the Centre to behave largely as they wish, including the option to form self-determining groups. The positive effects of this are evident in the BUCFP's continued success over thirty-plus years.

As an alternative to an individualising 'illness model of health care where patients seek out physicians and mental health professions', Camic (2008: 294) draws on research by Everitt and Hamilton (2003) that focuses on the environmental and contextual aspects of art and health initiatives and argues for a turn towards holistic learning models. In that they propose collaborative, co-produced and 'whole community' understandings of health, creativity, agency and wellbeing, as opposed to intervention-based, individual behaviour change models predicated on prescriptive top-down and 'expert' notions of 'what works', holistic approaches to creativity, art and wellbeing may pose a significant challenge to the current paradigm. As Miles (1997: 160) suggests:

Evaluation of art in healthcare remains problematic, perhaps there is a more important question - can art contribute to a change in the ethos of health care, a move away from the combination of eighteenth century rationalism and nineteenth century technology, towards an approach in which patient's sense of self is restored?

The 'problematic' nature of arts and health evaluation is similarly highlighted by Staricoff (2006). The stubborn refusal of art to fit into neat quantifiable health care compartments arguably serves as a constant reminder of the inadequacy of the methods that modernity uses to understand human subjectivity. Discussing an evaluation of the BUCFP, Walker (2012: n.p.) draws on empowerment, efficacy and social capital theories to highlight the possibility of 'different criteria of worth' through which to measure wellbeing and suggests that

environments which are experienced as accepting rather than berating, and contribute to a sense of congruence between self and community, can be thought of as 'healthful'.

When Camic (2008: 294) suggests that 'participation in the making of political decisions' ought to also be considered as part of the landscape of an alternative approach to community health, he raises an important question of politics and agency. Similarly Andrews (1991: 32) states 'If one comes to adopt a politicised world view, accurately locating one's position in the social structure, no matter how low that position might be, can itself be an act of empowerment.' Political identity, and the adoption or discovery of political narratives and ideas of empowerment and their relation to health and wellbeing, have a long lineage in social, political and psychological thought (Cowen 1994; Bandura 1997; Marmot and Wilkinson 1998; Kawachi et al 1999; Putnam 2000; Sanders 2001). If we are to understand community art as enabling a blurring between ideas of the personal and political, able to give voice to the experiential and respond to local and contextual factors through spaces for discussion in which community members are able to gather in embodied forms of response, we can begin to develop a sense of how the spheres of art, empowerment, community and health might intersect. White (2006: 129) suggests a change occurring in this field with a move away from a medicalised and prescriptive model and towards one of social capital:

The communique that issued from the second Windsor conference on arts and humanities in medicine in 1999 stated that: whilst social and other health scientists have demonstrated various positive correlations in this area, the underlying causal mechanisms remain to be explored. The link between art and health is now recognised to be a social process requiring new and fundamental research.

The task in White's view is to build and develop communities in which creative art practices are part of a community culture rather than a prescribed activity that individuals 'do' because they are told that it is good for them by health professionals, arguably the approach taken in a social prescription model (Bungay and Clift 2010). Similar calls for engagement with ideas of co-production are apparent in the work of Beresford (2016) for example, who recognises that the agency and self-determination of community members are vital in ideas not only of recovery, but of healthy communities and societies more generally.

2.6 Conclusion: context, community art and civil society

For an increasingly restricted, neoliberal and managed self, spaces in which to make sense of one's life in ways that are alternative to macro-societal narratives - be they experienced as

liberating discourses of human rights or stigmatising discourses of 'failed citizenship' (Tyler 2013) - seem few and far between. As Sennett (2006: 188) argues 'In the new institutions, people can frequently succumb to feeling they have no narrative agency; that is, that they lack the power to interpret what is happening to them.'

Voluntary and community spaces seem caught in a difficult double bind in their desire not to stigmatise their community members and to instead acknowledge the complexities of the lives they live, while also needing to gain funding and support through evidencing - and thus labelling - those who use the spaces. Such dilemmas give rise to questions about evaluation practices and methods of capturing what it is community art does. Rather than rich and varied life stories and narratives being squeezed into pre-defined categories determined by a systems world conceptualisation, alternative approaches call for recognition of complexity. The prevailing narratives surrounding community art seem to draw either on medical and economic models or universalising and identity politics narratives of rights, respect and diversity. The risk of recourse to an economic, 'social return on investment' and 'arts for health model' is that it does not (yet) address questions of agency and environment and assumes that the act of art-making divorced from contextual factors will restore health. While it may be the case that art-making and participation improves sense of wellbeing, it is acknowledged in the literature that more research needs to be carried out in this area. The danger with a universalising narrative is that, as Rectenwald (2016: n.p.) suggests 'it merely represents an extension of reification...the logic of difference and containment to the level of the individual'. Removed from embeddedness in and responsivity to locality, the identity politics of universal narratives do not reach into and address the complexities of lives, narratives and communities, instead becoming punitive, reductive and ultimately, divisive. Arguably what is necessary is something closer to Kester's (2004: 14) position and 'a model of human interaction that retains the emancipatory power of aesthetic dialogue without recourse to a universalising philosophical framework' and the development of a language that addresses both the embodied, local and particular as well as the universal, rather than drawing on damaging oppositional binaries.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical positions underpinning my methodological approaches before describing their application to the research field and methods of analysis applied to the data that they generated. As the research was focused on understanding relationships between the BUCFP environment, art-making and group narrative formation, there was a considerable over-lap between the methodological approach taken and the questions the research sought to answer, and in this section I address some of these issues. This chapter also discusses my positionality as insider and researcher-practitioner with a history of involvement with the BUCFP as well as the ethics involved in carrying out research with vulnerable adults. The BUCFP as a research site has been introduced in Section 1.3, though in this chapter and Section 3.5, I add further demographic data in order to contextualise the research. The chapter concludes with the structure of the data analysis chapters that follow.

3.2 Methods

3.2.1 Arts-based and participatory methods: underlying framework

The research sought to investigate the relationships between a facilitative and non-prescriptive environment and a creatively working, self-determining group asking how a group working in this way might enable the re-narrativisation of societal discourses surrounding food poverty and with what effects (Nelson 2001; Ochs and Capps 2001; Georgakopoulou 2006, 2007; Andrews et al 2013). I proposed using arts-based and participatory approaches as they were felt to be reflective of the ways in which groups ordinarily worked at the BUCFP. At the start of the fieldwork in November 2013, food poverty was becoming increasingly acknowledged by charities, the media and other bodies as a concern (Cooper and Dumpleton 2013; Monroe 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). While newspapers such as the Daily Mail and programmes like Benefit Street cast those reliant on State financial support and food banks as 'scroungers and shirkers' (Lansley and Mack 2015: 142; O'Hara 2015: 87, 98) a counter narrative (Bamberg and Andrews 2004) was arguably emerging that suggested resistance and sought to examine systemic issues associated with food poverty (Monroe 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; Cooper et al 2014; All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger and Food Poverty 2014; Garthwaite 2016). As Garthwaite (2016: 136) notes, there was a growing disparity between

government notions that food bank use was a 'lifestyle choice' and evidence that suggested otherwise. My research questions sought to explore how Centre user participants might re-conceptualise narratives surrounding food poverty through creative, self-determined group art-making in the BUCFP environment.

As both a methodological and theoretical question my research interest had initially developed through my appreciation, developed as a practitioner, of Ehrenzweig's (1967) notion that art-making enables a movement between conscious and non-conscious - primary and secondary - processes. Ehrenzweig suggests that, accessed through art-making, the 'undifferentiation' of primary, non-conscious thought enables the making of connections between seemingly unconnected concepts and ideas. Exploring the idea that creative methods utilise 'analogic communication...which has its roots in more archaic periods of evolution' Watzlawick et al (1967: 62) similarly support ideas of the undifferentiation of arts-based practices. Ehrenzweig and Watzlawick et al suggest that in enabling engagement with primary processes, arts-based methods of inquiry offer arenas for the discovery of new material, echoing Eisner's (2006: 11) statement that 'the arts provide access to forms of experience that are either un-securable or much more difficult to secure through other representational forms'. Building on this idea, and bringing aspects of participatory research to bear as I discuss, I began to develop a theoretical and methodological position that suggested that the art-making processes that Ehrenzweig and others describe, when brought into the group context, might make available for discussion and interpretation things discovered in the creative process and that this would aid the development of a co-constructed sense-making space and the emergence of alternative narrative formulations.

The ability to 'make meaning' through art-making is discussed at length by scholars such as Dissanayake (1992) and Rose (2014, 2016) for example, who examine the complex interplay between material, sense-making, semiosis and human development. The importance of the material basis of meaning-making reflects recent debates in new materialism (Bennett 2010; Coole and Frost 2010; Iovino and Oppermann 2012). As Bennett (2010: 31), citing Stiegler (1998), states:

Humans...can experience themselves as forming intentions and as standing apart from their actions to reflect on the latter. But even here it may be relevant to note the extent to which intentional reflexivity is also a product of the interplay of human and non-human forces. Bernard Stiegler does just this in his study of how tool-use engendered a being with an inside that is, a psychological landscape of interiority. Stiegler contends that conscious reflection in (proto) humans first emerged with the use of stone tools because the materiality of the tool acted as an external marker of a

past need, as an "archive" of its function. The stone tool (its texture, colour, weight), in calling attention to its projected and recollected use, produced the first hollow of reflection. Humanity and non-humanity have always performed an intricate dance with each other. There was never a time when human agency was anything other than an interfolding network of humanity and non-humanity; today this mingling has become harder to ignore.

The immediacy and 'thingness' - the phenomenological experience - of art-making is also echoed in Reason's (2002: 170) explications of experiential and presentational knowing:

Experiential knowing is through face-to-face encounter with a person, place or thing; it is knowing through empathy and resonance, that kind of in-depth knowing which is almost impossible to put into words; presentational knowing grows out of experiential knowing, and provides the first form of expression through story, drawing, sculpture, movement, dance, drawing on aesthetic imagery.

These theories suggest human agency, creativity and participation in relation to materiality and semiosis that find a methodological foothold in arts-based and participatory approaches. Emphasis is placed on the subjective experience of group members as a vital initial stage that moves towards formalisation and the development of a shared meaning system. Drawing on participatory research processes described by Heron and Reason, Marshall (2008: 687) suggests of an early non-formalised stage:

I am seeking to notice presentational knowing arising, to catch it in process before it is overtaken, discounted, devalued by conventionalized forming. And I appreciate that this process may not be fully accessible to the conscious mind.

The setting up of a spectrum with the non-conscious, less formalised and 'experiential' at one end, and the formalised, presentational and that which is more visibly 'fixed' and culturally located at the other, raises pertinent questions for arts-based methodology. Lang (2016: 101) suggests 'Sequentially, human beings employ the non-deliberative as their earliest problem-solving modality, with the deliberative modality evolving with growth and development, speech, and education'. Elaborating on this dynamic, Barrett (2013: 65) states 'In creative practice the subject can be viewed as a passageway where there is a struggle between conflicting tendencies or drives in response to external stimuli and matter as it is felt.' Describing a process wherein 'external stimuli' are the more formalised 'stuff' of culture - that which has already been ascribed meaning - and opposing this to 'matter' which is 'felt' and less formalised, Barrett returns us to Ehrenzweig's ideas of non-conscious processes that are less 'differentiated' and offer scope for the emergence of new narrative forms. The idea that these become 'formalised' over time - as fixed and enduring narratives or culturally meaningful sign systems for example - raises the question of whether art functions to replicate and reinforce cultural norms and values or whether it offers potential disruption to them. Bringing systems

conceptualisations to bear, it is also possible to consider Ulanowicz's (1997) notion that all systems strive instinctively for cohesion and that this might also be applicable to ideas of narrative formation. From these anthropological, developmental and new materialist perspectives, it is possible to see the centrality of material, its relationship with semiosis and human sense and meaning-making, and how they combine to create narrative understanding.

3.2.2 Art in the research context: what does doing art do?

There is a growing body of work that uses arts-based and visual research methods (Reavey 2011; Pink 2012; Rose 2014, 2016; Kara 2015; Mannay 2015) to explore relationships between health, wellbeing, representation and identity. However, as Rose (2016: 3) argues, while the rise of visual methods is arguably reflective of the increasing ocular-centrism of modernity, there sometimes exists an uneasy relationship between visual methods of research and wider concepts of visual culture. Highlighting her experience of arts-based methods as appearing in something of a vacuum, Rose (2014: 31) states 'there is an almost total neglect in the literature using visual research methods of research participants' 'symbolic and communicative' competencies in that culture'. It is useful to draw on Rose's discussion as my research was in many ways located at the intersections of art-making as an individual, personal activity, a group activity, a research method and questions of its relationship to wider cultural meaning systems. As an art group facilitator with a history of involvement in producing art exhibitions with BUCFP Centre users, as well as being an academic researcher, the intention that we produce an art exhibition as part of the research project was established at the outset. Producing an art exhibition for the Brighton Festival meant that the research had within it an aspect that was located firmly within the landscape of wider 'visual culture' and was not using arts-based methods only for the purposes of doing research.

Discussing relationships between art-practice and art as a research method, Crouch (2007: 105) suggests that framing art-practice within the research paradigm moves it away from potential accusations of narcissism and introspection, and instead towards the social:

Building on Habermas's ideas of a performative attitude in inter-subjective communication and Giddens' distinction between self-actualization and narcissism, it is suggested that research into creative self-expression can avoid claims of narcissism if it is located in the social realm through the adoption of reflexive and performative research methods.

Indeed, that my research aimed to explore ideas of participant re-positioning through semiotic and discursive practices, an underpinning theoretical framework that addressed questions of participant relations to wider society - and how relations are mediated through the visual - was vitally important. The research was not only using art-practice as a method of data collection, but was also asking what arts-based methods were 'doing' and what participants did with them in relation to culture and society. As I have discussed in the previous section, part of the impetus for using arts-based methods had developed through my interest in Ehrenzweig's notions of a generative, creative and undifferentiated non-conscious. But there was also another aspect to the research in that the group were creating an art exhibition, which meant that there was an inevitable encounter with ideas of representation, social semiosis (Hodge and Kress 1998; van Leeuwen 2005; Jewitt 2009), performativity (Law 2009) and, notably, conscious purpose. In a symbolically mediated modernity (Lasch 1978) ideas of representation - and vitally the power and agency to determine one's own representation - become ever more important to consider. The potential of arts-based practice to disrupt the order of representation (Foucault 1966/2005; Berger 1972; Debord 1983) means that we must consider that order and questions of the place of arts-based research within it. How the group wanted to represent their thoughts, experiences and ideas surrounding food poverty, indeed how participants wanted to represent themselves, came to play a significant role within the research, making Rose's (2014) questions of arts-based research methods and their relationship to society and wider visual culture even more pertinent.

3.2.3 Art in the group context: participatory methods

In devising and developing a research method that could address questions of art-making and group narrative formation, I also drew on methods borrowed from participatory action research (Kemmis and McTaggart 2005; Reason and Bradbury 2008) and with it the underlying principles of systems theory (Senge 1990; Schon and Argyris 1995; Juarrero 2002; Ison 2007; Flood 2010). Participatory action research has a long lineage as an exploratory and emancipatory approach to research that has the enabling of participant voice as a central tenet. At its root, it could be argued that participatory action research methods are interested in the creation of meaning. Reason and Heron (1999: 123) state:

The model of co-operative inquiry was originally based on an extended epistemology including three kinds of knowledge 1. Experiential knowledge is gained through direct encounter face-to-face with persons, places and things 2. Practical knowledge means knowing 'how to' do something, demonstrated in a skill or competence 3.

Propositional knowledge is knowledge 'about' something, expressed in statements and theories.

As an applied method, participatory action research proposes a patterning of movements between phases of 'action' and 'reflection' argued by some practitioners to invoke movements between generative and creative chaos, and orderly narrative sense-making. Kemmis and McTaggart (2005), Ison (2007) and Flood (2010) describe in various ways the cyclical nature of participatory action research as phases of observing, responding, implementing, acting, observing and so on. During the creative 'action' stage participants seek and gather information and data on the topic under scrutiny; these can range from the community gathering of local police records (Fine and Torre 2011) to educational settings wherein practitioners learn about, scrutinise and develop their own practices (Roberts et al 2015) to organisational and management contexts (Weick 1995). In contrast, the 'research' stage constitutes a reflexive process of ordering the data and information gathered. The reflexive cycle is suggested as the stage during which participants start to 'make sense' of the data they have gathered and begin to shape their own understandings of what it means in relation to the problem or issue that they are exploring. Through a participatory action research methodology, knowledge building is understood as co-constructed by participants, generating alternative perspectives and in some cases proposals to particular problems regarding certain issues. It is for these reasons that this methodology has been adopted as a transformative approach to research, often carried out with marginalised and disadvantaged groups and communities as a self-learning and emancipatory exercise.

3.2.4 Bringing arts-based practice and participatory methods together

In thinking about arts-based practice and research methods, I began to see parallels between art-making as Ehrenzweig describes it - as a movement between primary and secondary, conscious and non-conscious, processes - and participatory action research methods and movements between generative 'action' and reflexive 'research' cycles. My methodological approach suggested that the creative, art-making process might be considered in similar ways to that of the generative 'action' stage of action research wherein things discovered there, when brought into the reflexive group discussion stage in the form of monthly group meetings, might enable the emergence of new narratives surrounding food poverty. Sturken and Cartwright's (2009: 3) suggestion that 'the visual is a perceptual field profoundly shaped by symbolic and communicative activities' makes it possible to explore the ways in which group

discussion intersects with the semiosis of art-making and how through the praxis of movements between action and reflection new meanings might emerge. A key theoretical underpinning in this methodological proposition was the idea that art-making, when brought into the group sphere, enabled processes of interpretation and that such processes contributed to the generation of new narrative forms. Highlighting the role of interpretation in meaning-making Eco (1978) and Barthes (1977) offer important contributions to the devising of this methodological approach. In this analysis, participants sharing their art-work in the group context make their work available for interpretation. In doing so difference is encountered which, I suggest, has the capacity to contribute further to group narrative formation. Although it is perhaps not made explicit in much of the arts-based and visual methods literature, the role of interpretation in the participatory art context arguably underlies much of the art elicitation approach (Packard 2008; Bagnoli 2009; Margolis and Pauwels 2011; Mannay 2016) wherein participants are asked to elaborate upon the particular choices they made in the creation of their art-work. I suggest that as a methodological approach, the cyclical processes outlined by Kemmis and McTaggart (2005), Ison (2007) and Flood (2010), when combined with arts-based methods as a form of creative exploration as well as research practice, offer an innovative approach to carrying out research.

3.3 Researcher positionality

Quoting Wittgenstein, Ison (2007: 146) asks 'either to see myself as a citizen of an independent universe, whose regularities, rules and customs I may eventually discover, or to see myself as the participant in a conspiracy whose customs, rules and regulations we are now inventing?'. This quote expresses for me the difficulty in finding a position as a researcher who aims to uncover, or discover, something about the way the world works and the choice of a participatory and action research methodology. In adopting a participatory approach, I was adhering to an ontological position found within the interpretative social science tradition (Delanty and Styrdom 2010: 85) that acknowledges the role of the researcher and the effect that he or she may have on the research. Directly applied to a participatory methodology and systems theory philosophy, the importance of considering the effects on the system of all within it is similarly examined through second-order cybernetics (Bateson 1972). This proposes the impossibility of objectivity and specifically acknowledges the influence of the observer on that which is observed. As I have discussed elsewhere in the thesis, my research and questions had developed through my role as an art group facilitator and it was proposed that I continue

to work in this way and that the research form an art group. As such, the research was responsive to the BUCFP environment, and could be considered as emergent from it. Declaring my positionality as an insider and practitioner-researcher (Fox, Martin and Green 2007) meant that I acknowledged that I was affecting, and was thus included in, the group and the research. Discussing the importance of acknowledging the practitioner's effect on the research, and the importance of reflexivity within this, Kemmis (2006: 94) suggests:

Such approaches...cast the practitioner as both subject and object of research, at different moments, by adopting and alternating between the contrasting attitudes of practitioner and critical and self-critical observer of his or her own practice.

In acknowledging my role as an insider and practitioner-researcher it was vital that I adopt a reflexive attitude in attempting to be aware of, and understand, my position and its effect on the group. Accordingly, I kept extensive reflexive fieldwork journals as part of the research process. This reflexivity, particularly my understanding of Lather's (1991: 150) notion that we 'develop a kind of self-reflexivity that will enable us to look closely at our own practice in terms of how we contribute to dominance in spite of our liberatory intentions', helped me to manage issues that emerged during the fieldwork process, particularly surrounding the duality of the roles I occupied.

Perhaps the most challenging of these issues was the realisation half-way through the fieldwork that the 'closed' group rule - established at the outset of the fieldwork as part of an ethical concern regarding working with vulnerable adults and my ability to manage the research, as I discuss in data analysis Chapter Five, Section 5.3.1, was becoming detrimental to the group's ability to work in ways they wanted. Not only did working as a closed group compromise the group's ability to 'be self-managing', and hence for me to address my research questions, but it also raised questions of BUCFP groups, inclusivity and ethics. Similarly, group members wanting to carry on with art-making during times when I could not be at the Centre revealed a tension between my role as a researcher needing to maintain a certain degree of control over the project in order to collect data, and participants taking ownership of it as a participatory endeavour (Smith et al 1999: 122). Despite feeling that I was able to resolve these issues through collaborative approaches and group discussion to some extent, I nonetheless felt I occupied a sometimes peculiar liminal space between facilitator, researcher and participant and staff member. This sometimes ambiguous positionality was perhaps made manageable because of my experience of the BUCFP as a space in which others also occupied less well defined roles and positions: participants moved freely between, for example, being a user of BUCFP services, a volunteer and participation in the project. As a space, the BUCFP was

able to tolerate a certain amount of 'un-fixity' and maybe this was part of its strength as an organisation. However, it was my reflexive practice that enabled me to acknowledge this situation, respond to it and incorporate it as part of the research data. In including myself in the research process I was able to acknowledge the effect I might be having on the group's working and was able to adopt an approach to the research that adhered to a more participatory paradigm. I was able to account for my impact rather than assume that I had none. As Kemmis (2006: 95) suggests regarding the importance of reflexivity:

Practitioners aim not only to improve their practices in functional terms, but also see how their goals, and the categories in which they evaluate their work, are shaped by their ways of seeing and understanding themselves in context.

Given that questions of conscious purpose through the setting of the task and 'creation of an art exhibition on the topic of food poverty' came to play a fundamental feature of the group's working, my ability to reflect on my role and how my actions might influence the group became of central importance. Adhering to ideas of reflexive practice, I wrote almost constantly during the fieldwork period, keeping a reflexive journal with me at all times. I dated and numbered the journals (started in January 2013 and continued until March 2016) and copied them as Word documents onto my PC and they proved an invaluable source of data. My reflexive notes thus enabled me to consider the day-to-day experience of being 'in the field' as well as providing reference and data clarification points. In total six observational reflexive fieldwork journals covered the fieldwork period [see Appendix 8 for an example of these].

3.4 Ethics

As I discuss at greater length in Sections 3.5.2 and 3.5.3, findings from the BUCFP's Annual Survey 2013 [see Appendix 2] revealed that 52% of Centre users reported having had mental health issues over the twelve months previous to the survey being circulated. Similarly, in their study of the BUCFP as a community mental health resource carried out in 2012 Walker et al (2015) found that 33% of Centre users stated that they had used mental health services. The BUCFP's participation worker and my BUCFP supervisor during fieldwork, Ellie Moulton, suggested that it was likely that a high proportion of those attending the group would have mental health issues. As I was familiar with the Centre and had worked with groups there over several years, often with people who suffered from mental health issues, this was not something I envisaged as being problematic. I had received training in working with people

with challenging behaviour and in interpersonal communication, and had close family members who had been affected by mental health issues. As such I felt I had adequate experience in this area. I applied for ethical approval to carry out the research through the University Cross-School Research Ethics Committee for Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities (CREC) in October 2013 and received ethical approval in February 2014 [see Appendices 3 and 4]. Following the ESRC's Research Ethics Guidebook (Economic and Social Research Council 2011) I ensured that participants were fully informed about the research and what it would entail and provided participants with information sheets detailing all aspects of the research [see Appendix 5]. Centre users who decided they wanted to take part were asked to sign a participant consent form [see Appendix 6] and I emphasised that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, including withdrawing any information that they had provided. It was also made clear that, despite using pseudonyms in the thesis in order to protect participant identities, due to the nature of the group, and the research and the public art exhibition element in particular, I could not guarantee participant anonymity. As such, participants were given clearly and fully all information relating to the research and this was reiterated throughout the fieldwork period. All Dictaphone recordings of the interview sessions and photography of participant artwork were stored on my home PC and password protected, and interview transcripts were shared with no-one other than my university supervisors.

When asked how I would ensure the safety of the participants I would be working with as part of the ethical approval application and due to the fact that the research involved working with vulnerable adults, I had stated that the group would work as closed and would adhere to the BUCFP's Safe Centre Policy [see Appendix 11]. The idea behind working as a closed group was based on the notion that this would create a 'safe space' and enable the development of a sense of security and continuity in having the same participants attend each week. This approach was approved by CREC in February 2014 and was later agreed to by participants recruited to the study in June 2014. However, as I discuss in detail in the data analysis chapters, the notion of the closed group was challenged by participants' mid-way through the fieldwork who found the rule to be exclusionary and as such not cohesive to a sense of wellbeing, and this posed an ethical concern. In response I re-applied in November 2014 for amended ethical approval requesting that the group henceforth work as open. This request was granted by CREC in December 2014, and in January 2015 the group underwent a period of re-recruitment wherein new members were able to join. In March 2017 I applied for and

received a further amendment to my ethical approval in order to include the BUCFP survey data [See Appendix 4].

3.5 Data collection

Given the focus on art-making and group narrative development over time, the research took a qualitative longitudinal research approach (Thomson and McLeod 2015) and was carried out over an eleven-month period. Participatory and art-based methods were obvious methodological choices, while narrative approaches formed the basis of analysis. My methodological approach proposed working with a group of BUCFP Centre users who were experiencing food poverty in a cyclical movement between immersion in weekly two-hour art-making sessions as a form of 'action', interspersed with monthly two-hour group meetings as a form of 'research' and reflection. As an insider and practitioner-researcher I gathered data through a form of participant observation (Reason and Bradbury 2008: 187) which included taking extensive field notes based on observations of the sessions, photographs of art-work as it was produced, and the recording and transcribing the two-hour monthly group interviews. Section 3.6 discusses the use of narrative analysis and visual analysis of the data to illuminate ways in which the group's actions and working affected narrative formation surrounding food poverty. In summary, my methodological approach brought together participatory and arts based methods and applied these with a group of twenty BUCFP participants who self-identified as experiencing food poverty. We worked together, with the aim of producing a public art exhibition, over an eleven-month period moving between cycles of weekly two-hour art making sessions, which I documented through participant observation and photography, and monthly, also two-hour, semi-structured focus group interview sessions which I recorded and transcribed. I used narrative analysis to explore participant experiences surrounding food poverty and to examine intersections between macro and micro discourses in order to address my research questions.

Figure 1: Table of fieldwork timeline

Phase 1: Nov 2013	Establishing of research topic with BUCFP staff and inclusion of questions relating to this in the BUCFP Annual Survey 2013
Phase 2: Jan 2014-May 2014	Collection and analysis of BUCFP Annual Survey 2013 results
Phase 3: Jun 2014-Jul 2014	Fieldwork Recruitment
Phase 4: Jul 2014-May 2015	Weekly two-hour group art-making interspersed with monthly two-hour focus group/semi-structured group interviews
Phase 5: May 2015-Jun 2015	Month-long exhibition as part of Brighton Festival Fringe
Phase 6: Jun 2015-Aug 2016	Analysis and writing up of research data

3.5.1 Phase 1 November 2013: Establishing a research topic and inclusion of questions relating to this in the BUCFP Annual Survey 2013

The research process began in November 2013 and involved meeting with my supervisor at the BUCFP, Ellie Moulton, to discuss the research and possible themes for the art-work. In a spirit of community-university research we agreed that the theme would be decided upon in response to issues that were affecting Centre users currently. As I have discussed elsewhere in the thesis, the issue that was felt to be most pressing at that time was food poverty [see Section 3.2.1]. The BUCFP Annual Centre Survey [see Appendix 2], circulated in November 2013, included three questions relating to this topic:

1. How much on average do you spend on food each week?
2. Do you feel that you are able to adequately feed yourself and your family?
3. Please tell us your thoughts surrounding food and eating, for example, do you feel that you are able to keep a healthy diet or are you concerned that you might not always be able to afford to buy food?

Established in 2010, the Annual Survey had been designed by BUCFP staff to gain an insight into how the Centre was used by its population. It was comprised of 39 questions of various types; Likert, scale, open-ended, yes/no and multiple choice. The Annual Centre Survey was not the focus of my research, but in setting out the rationale for working with the art group on food poverty, it is worth presenting here a brief summary of relevant survey analysis.

3.5.2 Phase 2 January 2014 - May 2014: BUCFP data collection/analysis of existing data and survey results

The Annual Survey formed a useful way to gain a sense of the people and community that used the BUCFP space, their reasons for doing so, and the ways in which the Centre worked to alleviate poverty. In January 2014, 88 of 100 surveys distributed at the Centre were returned. I analysed these within SPSS using a combination of basic descriptive statistics and thematic content analysis of open-ended questions (Braun and Clarke 2006), appropriate to the different approaches taken in the survey. Results revealed that on average respondents reported spending £36.80 per week on food, a figure well below the UK household average of £58.80 as cited by the ONS (2013). In total, 81 people responded to my second question, and while this revealed that 69% felt that they were adequately able to feed their families and did not consider food poverty to be an issue, further responses by the same people revealed the lengths to which they went in order to be able to feed their families. Feeding the family often involved considerable forfeiting elsewhere and, for some, the making of stark choices between, for example, paying utility bills and buying food. A selection of respondent comments made this clear:

"I have to choose between food and other expenses (including laundry, heating, and utilities). I am not always able to eat healthily or buy food."

"Could be better if had more income, eat fairly well, spend quite a lot on food but then don't spend so much on other stuff like going out or clothes."

"I have no concerns about the food, thank goodness to the BUCFP now I have a balanced diet."

"You can keep a healthy diet if you shop around, if you're looking for work, you can't do both!"

While one respondent answered that they felt able to feed their family adequately, it was revealed in the next response that "meat and fish are too expensive, I often can't buy them", implying that meat and fish were not considered necessities of a healthy diet in that household

and lack of them did not infringe on the perceived ability to feed the family. This makes it possible to concede that while people may have answered 'yes' to a straightforward question of whether they could feed themselves and their families, qualitative responses revealed the constraints within which they managed to do so.

The survey also revealed the extent to which the provision of the BUCFP daily hot vegan lunchtime meal played an important role in bringing people to the Centre. When asked 'what first brought you to the Centre?' 'Food' was the second highest response after 'courses' with comments such as:

"Hot food and somewhere out of the cold."

"Free clothes and cheap lunch."

"Food, bedding, advice, courses, computer."

"Need advice, crèche, hot food."

Comparing responses to the question of what first brought them to the Centre, with responses to a question in which 47% said that training at the BUCFP had led to finding employment, it may be reasonable to consider the provision of food as a gateway to engagement with other aspects of the Centre, arguably demonstrating the 'holistic' way that it works. Food for the BUCFP lunches is provided by the organisation FareShare¹, a not-for-profit focused on reducing food waste by collecting in-date excess food from supermarkets and redistributing it to charities. The BUCFP has a yearly contact with FareShare who, in exchange for a small annual fee, deliver four or five crates of food to the Centre several times a week. Responding to a question that asked whether they felt they had benefited from regular access to hot food, 34 people who filled in the survey stated that they had benefited. The Centre also supports and offers volunteering opportunities in the whole-food organic co-op based at the Centre, All-Organics, and this was cited by 15 respondents who described it as 'excellent' and a reason for coming to the Centre.

In other findings, the Annual Survey revealed that of 87 of those that responded to the question of whether they were parents, 29 stated that they were a parent to a child under 18 and 13 of these were lone parents, three of whom were unemployed. Of 79 respondents to the question of ethnicity, 24 described themselves as belonging to a minority ethnic community. Unsurprisingly the highest demographic in terms of employment situation were these who were unemployed (32 people); second to this were people in part-time work (23

¹ <http://www.fareshare.org.uk/>

people); and thirdly those who were on sickness or disability benefits (17 people). Just over half of respondents to the question of mental health described themselves as having had, or having on-going, mental health problems with 45 out of 84 having experienced mental health issues in the past twelve months, most citing anxiety and depression. Of 83 that answered the question of support with their condition, 58 stated that they were not receiving help or support. 'Money, housing, health and unemployment' were cited as the 'most important issues' affecting self and family, alongside other factors such as:

“Getting suitable employment and paying off debts.”

“Trying to find affordable childcare so I can return to part-time work.”

“Housing uncertainty, no telephone/internet to support my self-employment.”

"Being a single mother and finding a job that is in the same hours that my son is in school."

"Unemployment."

The Centre Survey had not been running for a sustained period, 2013 being only the third annual attempt at Centre-wide large-scale data collection. There was limited potential for comparisons over time because the survey had been altered each year, and a more detailed analysis of patterns of Centre use over time was beyond the scope and core focus of this study. However, survey responses accorded with my own experience of the Centre in indicating that there was, alongside a more transient Centre user population attending for things such as benefit advice, laundry or a short course, a more established and longer-term Centre user group. Many of the longer-term Centre users did not see themselves as necessarily being in need, or disadvantaged, rather they viewed the Centre as a place to meet, socialise and share food and activities. This mixed demographic provided a useful insight into the workings of the Centre and how it is used by different groups, at different times and for different needs. The provision of a crèche for parents who wanted to take a language course or learn IT skills, for example, sat alongside support for people who might be in more severe crisis situations, facing imminent eviction and needing advocacy and advice. It is possible to argue that the drop-in and open door policy works to soften the more urgent needs of some Centre users, and that part of the strength of the Centre lies in its diverse demographic and the close proximity in which people with often differing needs find themselves. The multi-faceted approach to community care seems to resist a systematisation whereupon accessing a particular service is dependent on the display of sufficient and specified needs, as illustrated in some of the Survey comments of people describing why they come to the Centre:

"Spare time, at the time, i.e. filling my day."

"Crèche and yoga, possibly more courses."

"Volunteering."

"Crèche, food, friends, courses, clothes."

"Wanted to expand my horizons and do something useful."

"Wanted to contribute, volunteered in office following retirement."

"Meeting new people."

The devising of a survey that has both qualitative and quantitative elements meant that it was possible to draw out a more diverse picture of the BUCFP than would have been possible in using solely more reductive, quantitative methodologies, an important consideration in relation to the need for complex measures of evaluation if we are to capture the nuances of what certain small charities do. This brief account of the Centre Survey indicates that while people use the Centre for diverse reasons, the proposed focus on food poverty is consistent with a Centre population who manage food on low incomes, who are often reliant on benefits and/or work only part-time, and for whom food is an important feature of the Centre's provision.

3.5.3 Phase 3 June 2014 - July 2014: Fieldwork recruitment

Fieldwork recruitment began in Phase 3 (June 2014). At the beginning of the month I distributed fliers and posters at the Centre inviting Centre users who were 'interested in food and art' if they would like to take part in a research project, this proposed:

...forming a small group to explore the topic of food and food poverty using creative arts based methods with the aim of producing an exhibition in May 2015...this project will run for a year as part of research into arts, creativity and health.

[Recruitment poster May 2014 see Appendix 7]

As such, participants were self-selecting on the basis that they were affected by issues of food poverty and had an interest in 'food and art'. In her role as participation worker, Ellie Moulton also encouraged Centre users to join the project. The first recruitment meeting was held on 17th June 2014. My university supervisors and the BUCFP and I had agreed that once the desired number of participants had been reached (ten to twelve being the usual size of BUCFP groups and a number deemed manageable as a qualitative research project) the group would close and not admit new members. This decision was made because it was anticipated that

participants might be sharing personal stories and vulnerabilities and the university's ethical approval process had asked how I would ensure the safety of participants, as I have discussed in Section 3.4. In response, I had stated that the group would work as closed to ensure a sense of a safe space. However, in practice things worked slightly differently. Despite more than twelve participants signing up in the second week of recruitment, and with those that had signed up keen to make a start of the project, Ellie suggested that the recruitment period be kept open for longer as there was likely to be a significant drop-out rate, and accordingly it was extended for another four weeks. Twenty participants had signed up to take part in the project before I suggested that we close the group.

This blurring between an official recruitment period, a need to adhere to ethical research protocol and the start of the fieldwork proper, revealed certain tensions. As a result of the staggered recruitment and delayed closing of the group there was for me a slight sense of unease in the project having started before the group was formally closed, highlighting the realities of community-university research and the need to be responsive to the environment. Doing things this way meant that I gathered informed consent from participants as and when they presented themselves at the sessions, all the time aware of the closed group stipulation and the need to protect vulnerable adults. Members that had signed up at the start were keen for the project to begin rather than wait for an 'official start date'. In the second recruitment meeting I drew an action research diagram as an example of a template that we might work to as a group, moving between cycles of action and reflection starting with 'identifying the problem'. As I document in the data analysis chapters [see Chapter Four, Section 4.2.1], it was participant Pat's keenness to discuss in greater depth the 'problem of food poverty' that led to a mind mapping process which covered two weeks, and following this the visual mind mapping process suggested by participant Paula. Having discussed recruitment and retention issues with Ellie and my university supervisors, it was decided that the group work as closed from week eight. Taking this to the group, I stated that existing members - those that had 'signed up' - were free to come and go as they pleased, but that no newcomers would now join. Asked how they felt about this, participants gave a mixed response. Some were keen to work as closed while others were less sure. In November 2014 - half-way through the fieldwork - the issue of whether to work as a closed or open group returned when it was discovered that existing members felt uncomfortable at having to turn their friends away, as I discuss in detail in data analysis Chapter Five, Section 5.2.1. As mentioned previously [see Section 3.4], I re-applied for ethical approval on the basis that the group work as open and in January 2015 the group underwent a period of re-recruitment and was opened to new members. Between this

period and the end of the project in May 2015 nine new participants joined the group. The process of re-recruitment and re-establishing group boundaries provided important research data in terms of understanding group reflexivity, the need to adapt to the wider BUCFP environment and an ethos of inclusivity and the ability of the group to be self-determining, addressing ideas and narratives surrounding vulnerability in particular.

3.5.4 Phase 4 July 2014 - May 2015 Fieldwork: weekly two-hour group art-making sessions and monthly two-hour group interviews

In what follows I describe the structure of the art-making and the group interview sessions. The patterning of the movement between the two and participant attendance at the sessions is illustrated in Appendix 1.

Structure of art sessions

In total thirty three art-making sessions were held, resulting in sixty six hours of art-making activity. In order to gather data in these sessions, I adopted a participant observation approach (Bernard 1995: 136) and kept extensive fieldwork notes (approximately 175,000 words) [see journal extract in Appendix 8] and took photographs of the art-work in order to document the process [see sample of photography in Appendix 9]. Art-making sessions were held every Tuesday afternoon in the large main area of the BUCFP after lunch time. The start of the session would be marked by clearing away the tables and chairs and more often than not group members would assist me in this task, setting up tables ready for art-making. We would then unlock the art cupboard, kept locked when not in use, and proceed to take out the materials, put on aprons and cover the tables in protective cloths. BUCFP staff would often provide free biscuits and snacks and people taking part in the project were able to have free tea and coffee from the tea bar. At the end of the session we would tidy up and store the artworks in an area designated for this purpose. Following the sessions I would write my reflexive journal, noting who had attended, what had happened in the sessions and so on.

Structure of group interviews

The structure of the movement between cycles of action and reflection was developed from an action research methodology (Reason and Bradbury 2008) which claims to offer a framework that is responsive to, and builds upon, the conversations and discussions of participants as co-inquirers. In total eight two-hour group interviews were held throughout the fieldwork period resulting in sixteen hours of interview data. Interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone, transcribed by me soon after they had taken place, and stored securely on my home PC. Participant attendance at interview sessions was in keeping with art group attendance, although it was notable that some participants came to the meetings and not the art-making, and vice versa [see table in Appendix 1]. Group interview sessions averaged eight participants; the lowest attendance being five including Ellie and the highest being eleven. As someone new to group interviewing, it took me a while to 'find my feet' and I tried out different approaches. During the earlier group interview sessions, I adopted a method reminiscent of a Foulkesian (1975) approach which meant at times 'going with' the silences in the group interviews and not rushing to fill pauses or lulls in conversation (Khan 1963). In Foulke's philosophy 'free-floating group discussion' (Nitzgen 2013: 149) initiates a type of free-association which offers greater scope for interpretation and can serve as a generative force in the group setting. However, I was aware that in 'abandoning the usual codes of communication' (as noted in my reflexive field note 05.08.14), the communicative patterning of 'speak and response' (Watzlawick et al 1967; Benwell and Stokoe 2016) was potentially disrupted and might have been experienced as unnerving for participants, particularly those deemed vulnerable. There was a fine line between seeing what emerged in the group interview by taking a less direct and more 'unstructured' approach, and potentially upsetting group members who may not be familiar with a group interview process. As my interest was in ideas of group self-management and the emergence of narrative, it was vital that I did not overly direct the conversation but instead listen attentively and respond accordingly. I used open-ended questions and techniques I had learnt in courses on interpersonal communication that took a Rogerian (1961) approach. These utilised reflective listening skills in repeating back to participants' things that they said and seeking clarification whilst also prompting further discussion. In earlier group interview sessions, I also adopted art elicitation methods as used by Bagnoli (2009), Margolis and Pauwels (2011) and Mannay (2016), wherein the art-work is used as a device to prompt discussion.

What I found key in art elicitation methods within the group interview setting was firstly a sense of disruption to communication, as I discuss in data analysis Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1,

wherein the pauses while participants examined the artworks appeared to alter the temporality of communication in the group and allow a different type of communication to emerge, and secondly the widening of scope for interpretation that the process afforded. In bringing the collages that participants had made in art-making sessions into the group meetings, I was able to use the images as prompts to explore narrative themes surrounding food poverty. This raises interesting questions regarding the uses of visual methods as interpretative tools that might aid the collaborative building of group narrative. In subsequent group interview sessions I tried more structured approaches. On a couple of occasions I brought pre-prepared questions as feedback from previous sessions. In other sessions I took a less directive role, the group becoming far more conversational in style. These differing methodological approaches made for interesting reflections on approaches to group interviews, raising in particular questions regarding researcher positionality in the co-construction of group narrative. As I have discussed in relation to my position as an insider and practitioner-researcher, reflexive practice enabled me to consider my role in relation to the group. In particular it is important to consider ideas of directed and non-directedness in relation to the topic of food poverty and the goal-orientated task of creating an art exhibition. Having a 'topic' meant that I found myself directing questions towards it, when at times conversation felt like a group of friends chatting together, particularly in later stages of fieldwork when friendships had formed. In some instances I took a facilitator role while in others participants took on more directive roles, raising further questions of group self-management. The group's prioritisation of the art-making over discussion of food poverty is important to consider in its effects on communication, as I discuss in the data analysis chapters that follow.

3.6 Data analysis

My field note observations, interview data and photography of art group sessions combined to create a rich data set that enabled a picture to emerge of the group and narrative formation over time. I had adopted a longitudinal approach (Thomson and McLeod 2015) because I was interested predominantly in ideas of process. Discussing qualitative longitudinal research, Thomson et al (2002) and Farrall (2006) suggest that this enables the bringing into consideration of ideas of temporality, change and the research as it exists at a particular moment in time. This was useful for two reasons: firstly, it had been my observations of the art group and the role that the art material played within it - participants finding they had to

adjust themselves to the material - that had initially prompted questions of the relationships between material, temporality and group communication. Secondly, the topic of food poverty meant that it was important to consider the historical and socio-political moment within which the research was occurring.

In order to analyse the data, and address my research questions, it was vital that I develop the theoretical underpinnings that would enable me to explore the relationships between the art material, ideas of purpose and intention, communication and semiosis and the wider environment in which they were emerging, as well as 'what was said' in group meetings. Movements between art-making as 'action' captured through field note observations and photography, and group meetings as 'talk' captured through audio recordings, provided data that demanded a particular approach to analysis. Applying systems theory conceptualisations to group dynamics, alongside narrative analysis, critical psychology and theories surrounding semiosis and meaning-making, provided theoretical bases upon which I could draw at different times in different ways in order to 'read' the data. Analysis began during the fieldwork process and the transcription of group interviews, alongside observation of the art sessions and reflexive journal keeping and photography [see Appendices 8, 9 and 10]. This carried on beyond the end of fieldwork in May 2015 through a constant reflexive and iterative process of analysis of the data in reference to theory. Once the fieldwork was finished, I began the process of examining the data as a whole by compiling and condensing field note data into single page documents that highlighted key themes emerging during each session week-by-week. I drew thematic maps charting the development of these themes over time in relation to the interview data and examining these alongside the photography of the artwork. This process enabled me to explore how the introduction, for example, of a particular idea by a particular participant, might have been picked up, carried and worked upon by group members, or conversely, how a theme or idea might have been dropped, rejected and quietly sidelined. I was able to examine group narrative formation in relation to the development of the art exhibition and, as I discuss at length in the following data analysis chapters, the effect that the art-making, and ideas of audience in particular, had on the group's narrative development.

3.6.1 Narrative analysis

As I have suggested, analysis of the data began in various ways during the transcription process. As I was interested in the group's co-construction of narrative, and how it might offer

an alternative to dominant forms of discourse, I needed analytical approaches that would enable me to explore both the micro of talk, that is, the ways in which small acts of communication within the group sphere developed, as well as an understanding of macro narratives and broader societal discourses that the group might re-interpret.

Ochs and Capps (2001) and Georgakopolou's (2006, 2007) approaches to examining narratives through micro 'talk-in-action' forms a third wave of narrative research that is concerned with meaning-making as co-constructed, social and dialogic. As Georgakopolou states (2007: 7):

Conventional narrative analysis has consistently privileged one end of the continuum. In particular one active teller as opposed to multiple co-tellers; high tellability instead of low tellability, detachment from surrounding activity at the expense of embeddedness in the local context, a certain and constant moral stance over an uncertain, fluid and dynamic one, a closed temporal and causal order over open-endedness and/or spatial organisation.

Georgakopolou's approach enables a consideration of the dynamic nature of narrative construction, highlighting the contradiction and lack of coherence that often occurs in group talk. Close examination of what people say enables an exploration of the ways in which narratives are often contested, resisted or accepted through micro interactions. The ability of larger, more 'fixed' or formalised narratives to develop through these small interactions was an important consideration in adopting this approach. In that it accounts also for context, Georgakopolou's approach struck me as important to my research and analysis. My initial hypothesis had been that the BUCFP ethos and organisational narrative of self-organisation enabled the emergence of creatively working and self-managing groups. As such, an approach to analysis that acknowledged the importance of the environment in which the group's communication could take place was vital. This approach to narrative, and a concern with situatedness, is similarly explored, though perhaps not explicitly, in new materialist (Bennett 2010; Coole and Frost 2010) notions of the importance of the 'non-human' and its place in the creation of meaning. Iovino and Oppermann (2012: 76) state:

One of the key-points of the "material turn" is a pronounced reaction against some radical trends of post-modern and post-structuralist thinking that allegedly "dematerialized" the world into linguistic and social constructions. The new attention paid to matter has, therefore, emphasized the need for recalling the concreteness of existential fields, with regard to both the bodily dimension and to non-binary object-subject relations.

In their consideration of the importance of the materiality of engagement, and its role in group communication, Askins and Pain (2011) and Lang (2016) similarly offer useful approaches to

data analysis. Building on Allport's (1954) 'contact theory', Askins and Pain (2011: 804) highlight:

...the role of the physical nature of encounters in fostering or foreclosing interaction, suggesting that alongside enabling spaces for intercultural encounter, attention must be paid to the materialities of such encounters - or more specifically, the epistemological deployment of materials within arenas of social interaction.

As I was interested in art-making, its role in group communication and potential narrative formation, as well as the environment in which art-making and group activity took place, I found that Georgakopolou, Askins and Pain's and new materialist approaches to narrative analysis enabled a consideration of context, 'spatial organisation' and the art material that were useful in the analysis of my data. Similarly concerned that conventional approaches to narrative analysis limit contextual and other factors, Ochs and Capps (2001: 33) suggest:

Narrative scholarship is centred on narratives with the following qualities; a coherent temporal progression of events that may be reordered for rhetorical purposes and that is typically located in some past time and place...A plotline that encompasses a beginning, middle and an end, and conveys a particular perspective and is designed for a particular audience who apprehend and shape its meaning.

Squire's (2005: 93) explications of narrative and that 'the notion of 'story' always entails 'audience' as well as 'storyteller' enable a further consideration of narrative construction and its relation not only with others in an immediate conversational interaction, but also as a performance in relation to a wider - imagined - audience and therefore always to a greater or lesser extent, socially constructed. The notion of 'storying' and the role of audience came to play a significant aspect of the analysis of my research data, particularly as the group was making an art exhibition and developed a need to present a coherent narrative surrounding food poverty. As I discuss in the data analysis chapters concerning semiosis and the re-positioning of selves, the group's ability to resist forms of stigmatisation was arguably aided through signalling to an imagined audience the taking of a particular political position. The interactions between participants, the art material, conversations in the group space and, beyond, how the group communicated to an imagined audience through visual art and the effect this had subsequently on group narrative formation, formed a complex dynamic that that needed to be understood using a range of theoretical and analytic approaches. As the research was interested in the emergence within the group of possible alternative narratives to stigmatising discourses surrounding food poverty, I drew on Bamberg and Andrew's (2004) notions of counter narratives. This provided a way of analysing how stories told within the group appeared in relation to, and might offer resistance to, dominant cultural narratives. In order to develop an alternative, the group had to explore dominant conceptions and the

narrative approaches outlined above made it possible for me to examine ways in which they did this.

3.6.2 Visual analysis

I was interested in the function of art-making in the group sphere; its capacity both as a material to create a sense of a group space and ways in which physical 'doing' and purposefulness demarcated the group from the wider BUCFP environment, and also in the ways in which the semiosis of art-making was developed by group members and what relation this had to the shaping of group narrative. As such, it was vital that my approaches to analysing the visual data enabled me to capture these processes.

Taking extensive photographs and writing detailed notes of the art-making sessions, it became apparent, particularly during the earlier art-making sessions that the material of the art-making had a significant impact on the dynamics of the group and as such needed to be analysed. The material - chicken wire and mod roc, as well as other things such as cardboard, string and glue - revealed differing levels of participant competence and confidence wherein those less used to the materials asked for assistance from other group members, and those who were competent in using the materials were able to get on with their own making or help others. An analysis of the ways in which the production of visual materials impacted group dynamics was an important consideration as dependency on others led in some cases to the building of relationships, participants bought together in a sense of shared purpose. In later group sessions, it was notable how art-making was perhaps used to avoid arguably difficult discussions of food poverty. The making together helped to create a sense of cohesion that needed to be taken into account in analysis of the data. For these reasons, it was useful to draw on Askins and Pain's (2011: 809) description:

...messiness refers to the complex and irresolvable politics of interaction, in that these interactions - while they are brief moments, transient interfaces, and situated connections - also held the potential to cross space, place, and time in unforeseeable ways.

Lang's (2016: 100) non-deliberative practice approach is also helpful in foregrounding the materiality of interactions in the development of group sense-making:

Non-deliberative practice develops ways of casting important content in accessible actional forms for particular purposes. These helping modalities make use of nonverbal means of problem solving such as play, art, analog, game, action, music,

dance, dramatics, experience, simulation, role play, rehearsal, intuitive thinking, and activity. In tailor-made fashion, the combined verbal and nonverbal components precisely design and operationalize experiential forms of problem solving.

While it was vitally important to consider, document and analyse the non-deliberative and physical aspects of art-making, I was similarly aware of the need to adopt methods of analysis that would enable me to examine the development of a semiotic meaning system and its relation to group narrative formation. Rose (2014: 5) suggests that visual research methods have gained increasing attention in recent years as a way of exploring the 'social practices through which specific visual objects become meaningful', and it was art-making as the imbuing of inanimate objects with meaning that I was interested in analysing in the data. I drew on Dissayanake's (1992) anthropological explications of the early human decorating of tools and cooking pots, for example, to examine how these developed sign systems and became meaning-bearing objects through which culture and group identity developed. An anthropological basis for understanding semiosis and its relation to sense-making provided a foundation from which I was able to further develop analytical tools and approaches to the visual data produced by my research.

The notion that we live in a symbolically mediated and ocular-centric post-modernity (Lasch 1978; Rose 2014, 2016), wherein social power relations are articulated through visibility as the dominant scopic regime (Haraway 1991) increasingly divorced from materiality and the 'every day' of meaning-making, pose interesting questions for an analysis of group based community artwork. Rose (2014) argues that the regime of representation is neither a historical inevitability nor is it uncontested. Indeed, in seeking to examine the group's development of a symbolic meaning system through the materiality and visibility of art-making, I was exploring precisely whether group based creative art-making might offer disruption to the regime of representation, and if so with what effects. This asked whether, in a symbolically mediated society, the ability to develop through material and physical space with a group of co-inquirers, a semiosis that indicated an alternative value system, might be considered an act of resistance to the top-down imposition of meaning. It became clear to see the ways in which the communicative group space - the monthly group meetings - interacted with the art-making space and the development of a coherent message in the artwork. Hence, in documenting and analysing this process it has been impossible - and would be detrimental - to disentangle the two processes. As Rose (2014) argues, the lack of an account within visual research methods of its relation to contemporary visual culture suggests the need for a different approach to understanding symbolic and communicative activity, criticism of this is similarly expressed by Wagner (2011: 73):

The broad bifurcation of cultural studies into material and non-material domains has too often neglected how members of a culture act and behave, individually and in consort with others. Attending to what people actually do—as social, psychological and physical beings that embody cultural practices—blurs boundaries between things and ideas, the material and non-material, the visual and non-visual (Bronner 1986). As a special instance of this ambiguity, the human body appears as a significant ‘material’ for the production and distribution of culture and corporeal behavior as an important, but frequently neglected, domain of material culture (Bell 2009).

Combining the photography data with my reflexive fieldwork journals and group interview transcripts, enabled me to build a rich picture of the research fieldwork overall. In bringing together methods of analysis that examined the function, that is, the materiality of art-making in a group context through Askins, Pain and Lang, as well as approaches that enabled an analysis of the groups development of a symbolic meaning system and its effect on narrative formation, I have been able to highlight the necessity of developing complex analytical tools that are able to highlight important communicative and symbolic processes, a much-needed development. As Georgakopolou (2007: 33) states: ‘Empirical studies of exactly what these “other” non-canonical stories are like, what the analytical tools appropriate for them are and what their consequentiality can be for narrative cum identity research are still lagging behind.’

3.7 Structure of the data analysis chapters

The following three data analysis chapters have been organised longitudinally in order to document and examine the group's processes over time and the role that creative art group activity played in narrative formation. The data analysis chapters' chart the major themes that I saw develop during fieldwork and apply my theoretical position to an analysis of these.

Chapter Four covers the months June 2014 to September 2014. In this chapter I chart the forming of the group and the narrative themes generated and made available for group discussion. I continue by charting the movement of the themes into the visual medium and the ways that this engenders ideas of group self-management. I examine art-making not only as a methodological approach to 'doing research', but also ask what the art-making process 'does' in terms of its effect on group dynamics and narrative development. Particularly significant in July 2014 was the group's meeting with difference in the environment of the BUCFP - a conflict prompted by their artwork - and their response to it. The discovery of a different narrative in the shared BUCFP space highlighted the ways in which group identity can be considered as being formed in relation to the wider environment and the importance of being able to respond creatively. I suggest that through the experience of an encounter with difference,

group members were more willing and able to respond in less conventional ways to other forms of difference and that it is possible to see at work within the group the development of an alternative value system during these moments.

Chapter Five covers the period October 2014 to January 2015 and continues to explore the group's development and key themes. This addresses issues of group boundary formation, dissolution and re-formation and how the emergence of something that might be considered self-management challenges, among other things, ideas of vulnerability. Also important to consider is the role that the art-making continued to play within the group sphere. Inclusion in the group, despite its operating as 'open', was determined by new members adopting the *modus operandi* of the group in terms of the production of the art exhibition. Having decided upon the form and the content of the exhibition, it was notable that any proposed divergence from this led to a rejection of the member by the group through in-direct forms of communication. Hence it is possible to consider the relationship between the art-making, the material and that which has been produced by the group, as playing a fundamental role in the group's communication and subsequent narrative formation. This leads to a theoretical questioning of relationships between the human, material and tangible and non-human, in the carrying out of task-orientated activity.

Chapter Six covers the period from February 2015 to the end of the fieldwork and culmination of the group's work in the exhibition 'Art on the Breadline: Food Poverty UK' in May 2015. The chapter examines how the materialisation of the 'art idea' occupied a space that enabled participants to re-narrativise their experiences surrounding food poverty. This describes how the group art-making process aided in the construction of an alternative story and identity - a counter narrative - to dominant neoliberal conceptions, specifically in relation to food poverty. Developing an idea of narrative as formed through combinations of affordances generated by macro societal discourses and the micro experiential and lived every day, the final chapter explores how, enabled by art-making and group processes, narratives are co-constructed through both the contextual and embodied and semiotic and disembodied. In this Chapter I suggest that creating spaces for engagement with forms of storytelling through the physicality and semiosis of art-making and group discussion enables the emergence of a shared group narrative that is able to resist often stigmatising wider societal discourses. A close reading of my transcript data, reflexive fieldwork notes and photography of the artwork, has made it possible to examine the ways in which participants' re-positioning of themselves and each other in relation to wider societal discourses, is made possible through discursive and semiotic

processes and highlights the malleability of identity and narrative construction in relation to environment and practice.

Chapter Four: Data analysis June 2014 - September 2014

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is organised into four sections across the months June 2014 to September 2014, examining the major themes emerging within each of these. In June, the two themes 'recruitment and structure' and 'the function of art and use of time' document the forming stages of the group, including introducing participants that were attending at this time, questions of group structure, and processes of decision-making surrounding the art and exhibition. The month of July is explored through two sections: 'populating the structure' and 'destabilisation'. 'Populating the structure' examines the narrative themes that emerged during the group's mind mapping activity and the decision to continue this exploration through collage-making. The following section 'destabilisation' documents how the tearing of one of the collages impacted the group and examines their response to it. In August, 'the position of selves in the group' draws on interview data to explore how the group continued to make sense of food poverty and ways in which the art-making contributed to this through an art elicitation process. The section 'contestation' examines further interview data and ways in which broader societal and food related narratives - that we should eat seven portions of fruit and vegetables a day, for example - are interpreted, experienced, and in some cases contested, by group members. Analysis of data produced during September explores the effect that the material production of the art pieces had on the group through the theme of 'materiality and commitment'. This examines how the art material affected group working, such as the need for some participants to rely on others, or how the material provided a form of problem-solving and in turn affected relationships in the group. 'Poverty, adaptation and the 'fake life'' examines continuing discussions of food poverty in group meetings and the emergence of diverging narratives between, for example, ideas of individual action, education and consumer choice, and questions of structural inequality.

4.2 June 2014

4.2.1 Recruitment and structure

In this section I discuss the establishing of a group structure and how the project was understood and framed by participants during its initial stages. Recruitment began in June 2014 [see Figure 1, Section 3.5] with posters and fliers distributed throughout the Centre [see

Appendix 7]. In her role as participation worker, Ellie also encouraged Centre users to join the project.

In June 2014 thirteen Centre users attended the initial project meeting [see Figure 1, Section 3.5]. These were: Paula, a white British female in her 30s who was pregnant and a newly qualified art teacher working temporarily as a supply teacher; Jasmine, a retired and well-spoken BME woman in her late 50s; Sandra, a retired childcare worker and also a BME woman in her 50s; Clive a white British male and an unemployed engineer in his 50s; Steve, a white British male in his 30s who received disability living allowance and struggled with Type 2 diabetes; Stephanie, a white British woman in her 40s who suffered with an anxiety disorder; Pat, a white British woman and retired nurse in her 60s who lived in a camper van; Rose, a white British woman in her 50s who had experienced a brain injury and was in receipt of disability living allowance. Other participants at the initial recruitment meeting subsequently left the group. I introduced myself to the participants, though most already knew me from the art group, and Ellie explained that I was working with the Centre as a doctoral researcher, developing a 'creative arts project with a focus on food poverty', and that this topic was something that we would like to know more about. I explained that, in my research, I was interested in how groups were able to use the arts to explore certain topics. Discussing ethics, confidentiality and anonymity, the issue of whether to work as a 'closed' or 'open' group came to play a significant part of the conversation. Some people said that they wanted to be able to come and go and did not feel the group needed to be closed, while others preferred the privacy afforded by a closed group space. My ethics application had asked how I would ensure the protection of those I proposed working with, given that many Centre users were considered by BUCFP staff to be vulnerable, and I became aware of a possible contradiction with what I was proposing. My research was interested in exploring the self-managing capacities of groups and as such, it would be the group members who determined the structure and working. There seemed to be an acknowledgement that if the group were operating as 'closed' the expectation would fall on those that had 'signed up'; the structure of the group was immediately recognised as important. The project was forming against the backdrop of media speculation about the roles of GCHQ, 'Big Data' and the NHS sharing of patient records (Goldacre 2014; Landi 2014; Slack 2014) and this made me wonder how political and societal events fed into participants' understandings of confidentiality and the group. Some people seemed slightly nervous when I talked about data collection, recording and transcribing and the signing of consent forms. Perhaps, paradoxically, being in a closed group felt more exposing; perhaps porous group boundaries meant that participants would

not feel attention would be solely on them. We agreed to defer decision-making for the time being with a tentative suggestion that after a four-week recruitment period we assess whether to move forward as closed or open.

4.2.2 The function of art and use of time

My field notes of the session discussed above [17.06.14] indicate that there was a sense of demarcation between serious discussions of ethics, confidentiality and group structure and the business of art-making. For the newly forming group it appeared that art-making provided an accessible and engaging phenomenon around which 'form' (Marshall 2008: 08) might emerge. Halfway through discussions of food poverty and creating an exhibition on this topic, there was a sense of lull and Ellie disappeared returning a few minutes later with printouts of images from a Google search using the term 'food art'. In my notes [17.04.14] I wrote:

I had avoided bringing any supporting material other than the information sheet so that the group would not follow a pre-existing model. There was certainly no shortage of fantastic ideas. However, when Ellie printed some Google images of 'food art' it did generate a buzz, though I thought that it seemed little bit of a distraction from people thinking about whether they wanted to be involved and what the project was about, but it was also a relief of tension perhaps as I was feeling a little bit like I might lose people and I think she was feeling that too. Whereas I am keen to explore those slightly uncomfortable spaces and to see what grows through them, I understand the drive to distract from them or fill that space with something more familiar. I'm not being critical, it is more an observation, maybe Ellie felt I, and the group, needed 'rescuing' through the use of visual aids.

Drawing on Heron's (1992) contention that he 'seeks to notice presentational knowing arising, to catch it in process before it is overtaken, discounted, devalued by conventionalized forming' (in Marshall 2008: 687), it is possible to ask whether Ellie's actions in providing pre-existing concepts about how to 'do' 'food art' were useful or whether they perhaps foreclosed the development of participant's own ideas - their 'presentational knowing' - and ways of working. Was the sense of lull perceived as dangerous and in need of containing? My sense of slight relief when participants had something to focus on shaped my subsequent questions of the necessity - or indeed the kindness - involved in the provision of forms to work within rather than a possibly frightening space of potential options. However, previous to Ellie's introduction of the 'food art' pictures, the group had discussed the possibility of a samba band, making food themed costumes, a parade, a banquet, a poetry night, a play and a film based on a mock of the TV programme 'Come Dine With Me' using food waste. Participants seemed to be dealing with the topic in a varied and exciting way. Conscious of my objectives for a participatory

methodological approach (Lewin 1935, 1948; Senge 1990; Reason 2002; Ison 2007; Flood 2010), and so for the group to develop a sense of ownership of the topic 'food poverty', particularly as it had been imposed from without, it felt important that the art exhibition and what the group wanted to communicate about food poverty should come from within, rather than being directed by Ellie or me. Drawing on Luhmann's (2013: xi) proposition that 'decomposing the process of communication into actions is a convenient way of reducing system complexity and thereby enabling it to steer itself', it is possible to consider the group's ability to determine how it wanted to represent the topic as a vital aspect of its functioning as a self-managing system. This is a concept similarly articulated by Stacey and Stickely (2010: 73) when they suggest that 'an important factor in promoting participation and empowerment of those taking part in arts activity is to enable them to determine their own goals and actions'.

Steve, Sandra, Clive, Pat, Stephanie, Rose and Paula attended the following week's session and we were joined by newcomers Emily, a young white British woman in her 20s; Simon, a white British man in his 60s living with Parkinson's disease; and Jim, a white British man in his 40s living with schizophrenia. Pat had brought to the session a large round cushion covered in netting. She had been using this cushion suspended from the ceiling of her van to hang earrings from so they would not get lost in transit. Having decided that she no longer needed it, Pat had brought it to the Centre whereupon Steve proclaimed its uncanny resemblance to a giant bulb of garlic replete with netting. This observation proved the catalyst for the idea of a banquet consisting of oversized food stuffs covered in glitter and 'bling'. Participants excitedly discussed that, in covering the pieces of 'food' in sequins and jewels, they would emerge as a dazzling array of glittery foodstuffs symbolising the rarefied expense which participants experienced certain foods as possessing, while also creating a striking and witty visual statement that, in its joviality, rejected the oft portrayed image of those in poverty as existing in a seemingly perpetual monotone drudgery; making the artwork fun thus became part of the subversion. I had drawn a diagram of the action research cycles in order to illustrate my suggestion that we move between art-making and group meeting sessions. While some participants were keen to start the 'making and doing' - the 'action' - of the project, Pat suggested that we ought to explore the 'problem' of food poverty in greater depth first. Finding agreement with this within the group, Pat's suggestion struck me as an important moment in the group's development. The claiming of time and psychological space enables the consideration of this as a form of territorialisation (DeLanda 2006). In creating a space in which to discuss the topic of food poverty, the group recognised itself as an entity that needed to communicate with itself suggesting ideas of autopoiesis (Teubner 1993). The demarcation

assigned value to the group's endeavours, giving participants permission to explore the 'problem of food poverty' in a way that might be considered as enacting a form of 'mutual self care' as Deleuze and Guattari (1972) describe. Highlighting the importance of such discursive spaces, Reason (2006: 193) states:

The formation of communicative space is in itself a form of action. It may well be that the most important thing we can do in certain situations is to open, develop, maintain and encourage new and better forms of communication and dialogue.

Sandra suggested that in order to explore food poverty in greater depth we make a mind-map and she, Steve, Clive, Pat, Stephanie, Rose, Paula, Emily, Simon and Jim agreed. At the end of the session Sandra and Pat asked me to organise the mind-map comments and bring them to the session the following week.

4.3 July 2014

4.3.1 Populating the structure

Responding to Sandra and Pat's request, I organised the mind-map comments into seven thematic sections, as follows:

Perhaps unsurprisingly, 'family' appeared as a predominant theme in the mind-map and I grouped comments concerning early food education, meal time rituals, time and cooking, table manners, school breakfast clubs and parenting in this area. Paula was keen to describe how early learned habits that may not be conducive to current ideas of health had to be in some cases 'un-learned', and she positioned herself as someone who had developed healthier ways to eat. She described how in the 1980s 'when we were growing up' everyone ate junk food and did not think too much about it. The past in her imaginary was a saccharine-filled place where grubby ketchup fingers were allowed to consume vast amounts of white bread and margarine with little consequence. But this innocence had been lost and replaced with a sense of a need to take responsibility for one's own health; 'our parents didn't know any better' Paula said. We considered family meal time rituals and how 'these days' people had less time to share food in this way. Participants reflected on table manners and being told to 'sit up straight', not to 'talk with your mouth full' and to 'keep elbows off the table'. There was, for some, a nostalgic construction of parents who, while blissfully unaware of the dire health consequences of McCain oven chips and Angel Delight, were none the less proud disciplinarians who adhered to rigorously held ideas about the importance of 'family mealtimes'. In contrast, Emily told us of

an article she had read that described school teachers as saying how children nowadays did not know how to use knives and forks properly and there was a sense of a threatening contemporary landscape populated with children whose parents did not parent properly and were reliant on schools and the State to feed their offspring. The group was momentarily united in positioning themselves as 'doing food the right way', scornful of those who did not, and finding between them a shared nostalgia for something lost, mourning a period of civility and manners – a time before 'broken Britain' perhaps. Despite food having been 'less healthy' in the past, there had nonetheless been stable structures surrounding family and food, and these had bought a sense of security. Sandra, who as someone in her mid-sixties was one of the older participants in the group, spoke with affection of her childhood home and of the living room being 'kept for best' only used when the vicar or head-teacher visited. But there was also within the group a sense of anger, an outrage that food poverty existed in a wealthy 21st century country. Blaming parents or those less well-off was not the answer; the food system was broken, had become corrupt. Nostalgia was not only for a civility lost, but also for a threatened relationship with nature too.

The theme of 'health' existed on something of a spectrum in participants' accounts. At one end, ideas of healthy 'lifestyles' and fitness were embodied in a type of 'healthism' (Skrabanek 1994), perpetuated by a media that demanded a certain ideal that was the responsibility of individuals to achieve. At the other, participants offered something of a more formalised conception embodied in health professionals, with less accessible and as such slightly esoteric knowledge held by nutritionists, food scientists and medical doctors. Some foods were identified as dangerous and carcinogenic and these were also promoted through the media, and the State and professionals were seen as having a duty to protect the public from these. But, the group discussed, governments could not always be trusted to do this, numerous food scares were indications of a corrupt system of vested, powerful interests. As a consequence there was a strong sentiment within the group of self-education in regard to health and as form of resistance to a corrupt system. Emphasis was placed on individual consumer choice as a form of political agency but this still raised the question of how, within such an individualised model, one could be politically agentic when one was of limited financial means. Was 'health' the preserve of a small section of self-educated individuals who had the means to take action through their pockets, or was it felt to be the responsibility of the State and something that was to be protected and demanded for through political action that was not dependent on how much money one had?

I considered the theme of 'geography' as encompassing questions of how we relate to the environment and, for example, how the urban landscape impacts our experience of food and shapes food practices. Steve talked about how he lived in a privately rented bed-sit with no kitchen and only 'a small Baby Belling cooker that burnt everything'. Living on disability benefits and without storage space for food or utensils, Steve described how it was difficult to maintain a healthy diet. He had been diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, but in his circumstances eating what his GP had told him to - seven fruit and vegetables a day - was almost impossible. As a consequence he seemed to move between feeling at times guilty and at others defiant. Simon, a pensioner with Parkinson's disease, described how he bought powdered milk for the porridge that he made to eat three times a day because it was easier to carry up the big hill where he lived and lasted longer. He added raisins and bananas to make it more interesting and healthy, he said. In contrast to the descriptions of managing within constraints, Stephanie described how allotments, 'growing your own' and 'freeganism' were acts of resistance that made us think differently about urban spaces. She described how the 'dumpster diving' movement had been born initially of necessity but had become politicised in highlighting the amounts of food waste produced by supermarkets. Pat described foraging for wild food and 'gleaning the fields' after the harvest and a time when communities lived more closely to farmers and the cycles of nature. Nostalgia provided a contrast between an idealised 'then' and more troubling 'now', raising questions of ecology, sustainability, urban living and poverty in relation to food practices.

Participants discussed money and the prevalence of low-paid and casual work; zero hour contracts, unemployment and the constant need to budget. Food choice was described as a luxury many could often not afford, highlighting that while one might be aware of what constituted a healthy diet, it was not always possible to achieve it. The narrative of an awareness of healthy choices and eating but an inability to enact it highlighted differences between ideas of an 'uneducated' consumer and people needing to be better informed about food choices, versus consumers that were well aware that certain foods were unhealthy but none the less had no choice but to buy them. Rose described how, as a disabled person living on benefits, it was 'budget, budget, budget' and how she had devised ways to manage, taking her shopping trolley from one shop to another where there were offers on such as two-for-one, or buy-one-get-one-free or where the food was reduced at the end of the day. Rose told of days structured around free or cheap food and sitting in fast food restaurants where the impersonality afforded somewhere to rest. Clive described how as an engineer he had become unemployed when his skills had grown outdated and he had no way to retrain; he was now

living on benefits and unable to find work. Consequently, he had very little money to live on; echoing responses in the BUCFP Annual Survey [see Sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2]. Clive said this led to difficult choices between whether to 'heat or eat' and the need to prioritise bills and rent over food which in many ways was seen as of secondary importance and could be forfeited in ways that payment of bills or rent could not.

Overlapping the theme of 'money' was that of 'government', and participants talked about what was felt to be a punitive benefits system that included seemingly futile and often humiliating trips to the Job Centre or compulsory attendance on work programmes. They talked of benefits being docked or 'sanctioned' because of filling in a form wrong, or being a few minutes late to sign on. There was a sense of fatigue and of being punished. A clear collective narrative emerged that the government's austerity agenda had been driven by bailing out banks 'that were too big to fail' in the aftermath of the 2007 financial crash, and that a need to reduce 'the deficit' had seen the cutting back of provision to those most in need who were then pushed into cycles of poverty and hardship that were hard to escape. The social effects of benefit cuts were particularly stark as participants described devising ways to hide from friends and family that they were living in food poverty because they were embarrassed, instead becoming isolated and internalising a sense of shame. Some participants, such as Steve, spoke of no longer being able to afford to meet up with friends for tea or coffee or an occasional treat, arguably social exclusion in the rawest sense. Describing 'a complex and multi-dimensional process' Levitas et al (2007: 9) suggest that social exclusion involves:

...the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole.

Moving to more globalised perspectives, participants discussed their concerns over large-scale food production, industrialisation and that trade and profit motives were often put before consumer safety, workers' rights or ecological concerns. 'Corporate multinationals' such as Monsanto and Nestle were cited as companies that threatened sustainability, bio-diversity and ecology. Human rights were important and ought to be fought for. The group discussed alternatives and cited the Fair Trade movement, animal rights campaigns, activism and the making of consumer choices such as being vegan as ways to counter damaging and unjust practices.

Under a theme of 'media', participants discussed representations of the 'poor' on television and how programmes such as *Benefits Street* demonised certain groups in ways that were divisive and 'distracting from real issues'. There was anger with a media that was seen as being run by powerful elites with vested interests who distorted things. The media perpetuated and demanded conformity to a certain consumerist 'lifestyle' ideal and abjectified (Tyler 2013) those that were perceived to not be adhering to it or who were unable to enact it. Conversely, social media and grassroots movements such as Occupy, Uncut and Tax Justice were seen as possessing a capacity to raise awareness about poverty and injustice and deliver an alternative narrative that was able to destabilise dominant agendas and conceptions.

The mind-map activity and emergence of the themes revealed that, within the group, there were rich and diverse narratives at play and participants were keen to engage with the topic of food poverty in multiple ways. The activity also raised the question of how we might, within the boundaries of the proposed art exhibition, address all of these concerns. I brought the themes to the group the following week and Paula suggested that we continue to work on them through the medium of visual mind-maps. This prompted for me ideas of conscious purpose and art-making, I wrote in my reflexive journal:

Does the level of intentionality in the topic centred-ness of 'food poverty' detract from the creative process? It's as if in asking people to consciously explore food poverty it becomes too literal, and that really I am seeking to find out something to do with a level of non-conscious exploration.

[Bella field note 11.07.14]

This highlighted for me questions raised in my explorations of Ehrenzweig's (1967) notions of the purpose and function of unconscious thought and its expression in art activity, a notion similarly explored by Brydon-Miller et al (2011) in their discussions of participatory art and action research. Citing Bateson (2000), Brydon-Miller et al (2011: 10) suggest 'the suspension of conscious purpose, and the possibilities it awakens, Bateson identifies as one of the great riches of aesthetic experience and of the creativity and perception of art'.

In an example that arguably served to highlight ideas of the differences between the conscious and the non-conscious in participatory art-making, Paula and Pat joined together to work on their collage leaving Jon, a young and slightly chaotic white British man in his 20s, Mel, a Turkish woman and single parent also in her 20s, James, a white British man in his late 30s and pensioner Simon, to form another group. Pat and Paula organised their collage into four sections [see Figure 2]. One section of Pat and Paula's collage was labelled 'tradition' and included pictures of cakes, beans and the words 'tea', another was labelled 'nature' and

included pictures of farmers and trees, while another corner addressed 'body image' and included pictures of women (including a naked woman), pies and tape measures. The top right hand corner seemed less organised and included were pictures of dogs, dog bowls and the words 'I'm okay, I'm alive'. This corner seemed to be in contrast to the other three more descriptive corners and I assumed it was Jon's contribution as he had been moving between the two groups. In the middle of the four sections sat a somewhat suggestive picture of a woman with blonde curly hair licking her lips with the words 'decisions decisions' glued on in alphabet cereal.



Figure 2: Paula and Pat's collage.

Paula and Pat's collage/visual mind-map, apart from the dog's dinner section, felt literal and ordered and as if it consciously told the audience something about the themes. The stylised interpretations of 'nature', 'body image' and 'tradition' struck me as not engaging with the symbolic and as such not leaving much scope for interpretation. The collage remained instead resolutely first-order and resisted the desire, indeed the necessity, that the audience do some of the interpretative work (Eco 1978). In a reversal of Barthesian (1977) ideas, meaning lay with the makers of the collage. In contrast, the collage made by Mel, Simon, James and Jon, [see Figure 3] felt to me disordered and less tied to the themes that we had discussed and as if it demanded that the audience interpret what it was they were trying to convey. Meaning was elusive and it was the viewer's guessing that became the generative force. This raised complex questions of author, audience and interpretation and where and with whom 'meaning-making' lies. Why, we might ask, was there a picture of a camera, an exotic looking bird, a boat, a naked woman and a robot and what, if anything were the makers trying to tell us about food poverty? Somehow this effort felt more laden with narrative affordances than the first, more descriptive, collage. The desire to 'make sense' through interpretation felt generative and I wondered if and how I might raise these questions when the artworks were bought to the

group meeting. Discussing the creative process and referring to Poincare (1982), Boden (2004: 30) suggests: 'Far from ignoring the role of consciousness, Poincare insisted that unconscious work is possible, and of a certainty it is only fruitful, if it is on the one hand preceded, and on the other hand followed by, a period of conscious work'. In utilising a participatory framework, and a movement between art-making as accessing 'unconscious work', and reflexive monthly group meetings as 'conscious work', I wondered if we might invoke the sort of fruitful activity suggested by Boden and Poincare.

4.3.2 Destabilisation

Between the weekly group sessions the collages were pinned to a notice board in the main area of the Centre, assigned us for this purpose by BUCFP staff. At the start of the forth session participants noticed that the image of a naked woman, appearing as part of Pat and Paula's collage section on body image, had been torn off. Inquiring what had happened, and upset that their work had been defaced, the group – which consisted of Steve, Jon, Sandra, Mel, Paula, Pat, Simon and who had been joined by Pete, a regular Centre user, and white British artist and retired furniture restorer in his 60s – were told by staff that a Muslim woman who had found the image offensive had torn it. In this section I explore the impact of this event and how participants responded to it in order to consider how it acted as a critical moment in the group's development. This incident also raised questions concerning my positionality as a facilitator, protective of the group and their work, while also needing to maintain a level of objectivity as a researcher regarding their response. As such, this section highlights complex questions regarding the BUCFP as an environment that seeks to be inclusive, while also managing tensions between differing communities in practice.

The group and the Centre were operating at this time within the wider context of a media landscape awash with coverage of tensions between Muslim and non-Muslim communities, tensions which had been heightened by the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris six months previously. When participants discovered that the person that tore the artwork was a Muslim woman who had found the image offensive, they appeared initially to be stunned, though this shock soon turned to anger. In my reflexive journal [15.07.14] I noted participants' responses which ranged from saying things like 'we live in a democracy', and emphasising 'freedom of expression', to the more inflammatory 'we were here first'. Whereas the tearing might have been made by someone simply 'being offended' by nakedness, it was the fact that the woman was Muslim that was most significant to the group. Sandra, who as a BME woman in her sixties

had thoughts of her own in relation to multiculturalism and tolerance, had been working on a Degas style pastel drawing depicting a nude woman sitting on the edge of a bath. 'What', Sandra asked abruptly, 'would the person who tore the collage do to this picture? Would she take offence and tear this as well?' While staff members struggled to emphasise the Centre as a diverse, multicultural and tolerant space, Steve declared, 'but whoever tore the picture wasn't being very tolerant of us, were they?' There was a sense that participants needed to understand what had happened, to express their confusion and anger but that they might be silenced because of fears of accusations of discrimination. The situation seemed to point to an inherent paradox within discourses surrounding tolerance and diversity. As people who aspire to such philosophies we place upon ourselves an expectation that we bear forms of difference, yet we might ask what happens when those we have vowed to be tolerant of do not share the narrative of tolerance, inclusion and diversity. When it is revealed, as in the incident described, to not have been shared, the 'other' becomes, rather than a benign 'other', a frightening and unknowable 'other'. The rejection of our cultural values is found to be destabilising and our philosophy is revealed to have been, in the expectation that others share it, horribly arrogant.

The tearing of the collage revealed something of a fissure in the narrative of the group and the BUCFP as spaces that were liberal and inoffensive. Indeed, the tearing suggested that the group *was* offensive, a concept that they struggled with, hence their initial shock. Tolerance was revealed not to be grounded on a genuine tolerance of difference, but as having been premised on an assumed similarity. The discovery that 'the other' did not share the same epistemological ground meant a blunt acknowledgement, shock, and recourse to a new authority, one which was rooted in time, space and territory, 'we were here first'. It is also possible to suggest that, in expecting the group to tolerate the symbolically violent behaviour of someone they share an environment with, the phenomena of what Nawaz and Harris (2015) term 'the soft bigotry of low expectations' is invoked. In being excused from dialogue on the basis that the 'other' inhabits a culture that cannot, or should not, be brought into discussion out of a misplaced sense of the tolerance of difference, Nawaz and Harris suggest that we lose the opportunity for a genuine encounter and the development of greater understanding. Indeed, the 'soft bigotry of low expectations' could be considered a form of abjection based on an assumed inability of the 'other' to enter into reflexive discourse. Recourse surrounding the tearing incident was to just such a narrative - the person who tore the artwork was excused on the basis that we tolerate and accept difference - but this proved ineffectual in managing or addressing the tensions that arose and the complexity of the situation in that moment and consequently anger within the group was left unattended to. As much recent discourse

suggests, community organisations can play a pivotal role in addressing notions of inclusion and diversity and the consequences of not doing become increasingly apparent. Feeling that as a group facilitator I had to respond quickly, I raised a question of context in relation to the artwork and suggested that the person who tore it was perhaps failing to read the image as appearing as part of a critique of female body objectification and was instead offended only by the nudity. However, this raised the further problem of whether the person tore the artwork because she did not 'get it', or whether she did indeed 'get it' and was making a political statement in denying the group's 'freedom of expression' in tearing it. Of course, we did not know fully what the motivations were, but what appeared to be so upsetting for participants was that they felt the person had displayed a lack of tolerance of the culture of the group, and that she had not recognised that they had been using a culturally-specific semiotic meaning system to make sense of and explore their experiences of food poverty. The defacing said to them that the person who had carried it out did not share a cultural landscape and as such was experienced as an epistemological violence perpetrated against their way of making sense of the world. The group seemed to say 'we don't censor art so how do we reconcile this with a narrative of tolerance for a culture that does?'

Three significant things subsequently happened by way of a response. Firstly, Pat started looking for an image to replace the one that had been torn and quickly found an even more provocative image from a fashion magazine that depicted women wearing the hijab, each garment steadily removed until the final woman appeared naked except for the face covering. Pat was excited that she had found this image and Pete looked on with furrowed brow as she set about gluing it in place. Steve, Sandra and Mel also seemed excited, and a narrative of the importance of freedom of expression seemed to solidify as they agreed that art should be about provocation. Paula and Pete seemed slightly ambivalent. Secondly, and in response to Pat's desire to seemingly up the stakes, the more moderate among the group thought that it would be a reasonable compromise to move the collages away from where they had been displayed and into a less conspicuous area. They had, until now, been kept on the notice boards attached to the wall between the comfy chair area and the children's area. Although not directly *in* the children's area, it was possible to conceive that a mother might not want her child seeing pictures of naked women and this as a possible reason for the defacing. Thirdly, once the collages had been moved to the notice boards on the other side of the room, Pete thought it would be a good idea to enter into a form of dialogue with our imagined audience (Elkind 1967) by offering the option of 'covering up' parts that they might find offensive [see Figures 4 and 5].

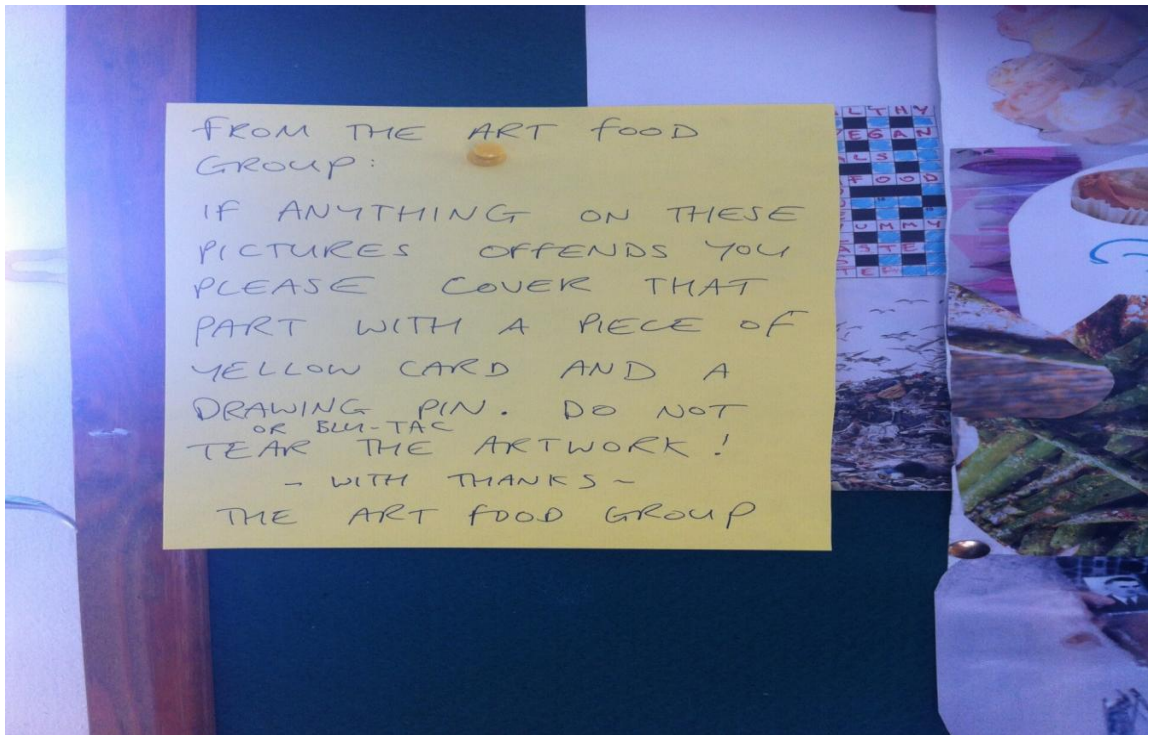


Figure 4: Inviting people who might be offended by the art work to cover it up.

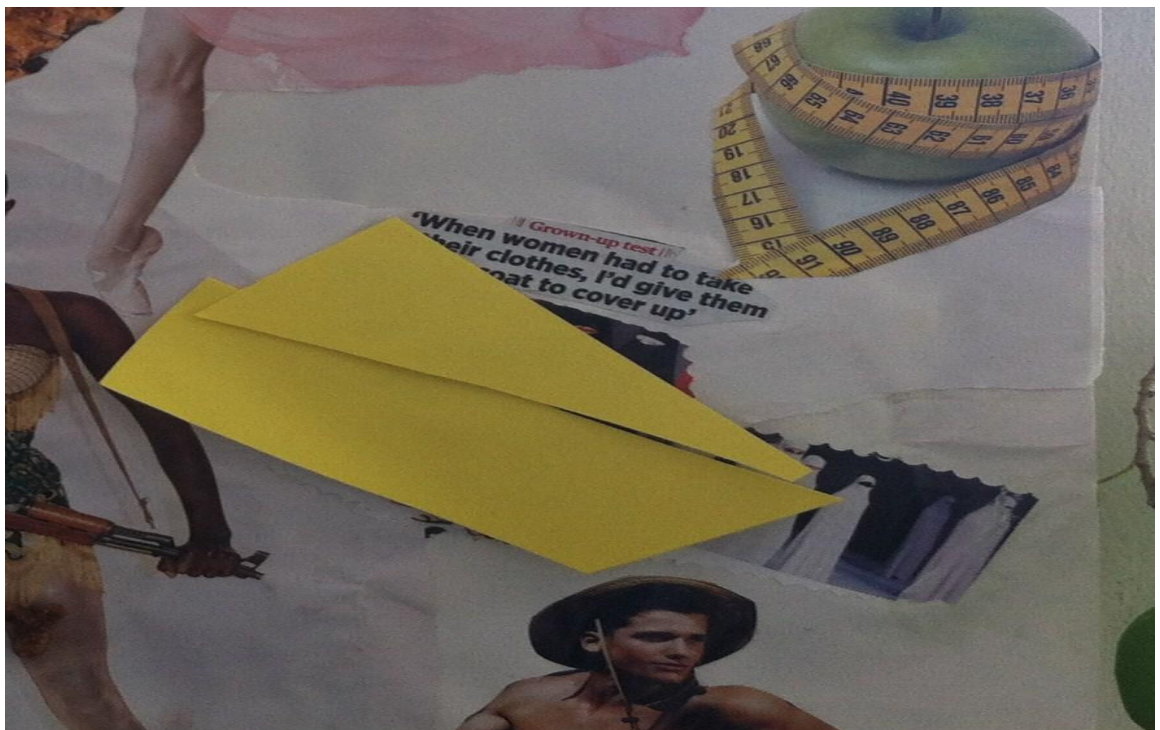


Figure 5: Pete's self-censoring of the artwork.

While participants Pat, Mel and Sandra were keen to enact a re-enforced sense of the importance of the principles of artistic freedom of expression, others Pete and Paula were keen to offer a compromise in the form of the option to censor parts that might offend other Centre users. As such the group was able to both make a statement about the things they held important, while also acknowledging that not everyone in the environment agreed with these principles. In incorporating the element of 'non-agreement' into the artwork, the principles of the person who tore the artwork were absorbed and themselves became available for dialogue and critique. In what I thought was a very interesting response, participants were able to enact agentic creativity that also demonstrated a Batesonian (1972) form of 'self-correction' wherein the group adjusted itself to its environment enabling its continued existence. This occurrence raised questions to do with the role that conflict, compromise and the capacity for creative response have in the shaping of ideas, identity and narratives. Absorbing the tensions discovered into its own language and operating system of 'art', the group was able to manage conflicting demands while demonstrating an ability to adapt to the environment and maintain its integrity as a system.

4.4 August 2014

4.4.1 The position of selves in the group

In a continuation of explorations of group self-management in relation to the production of visual artwork, this section analyses the art elicitation process in the group interview setting. This examines how a sense of disruption to group communication was created firstly by the materiality of the artwork in the group space, and secondly by its semiotic content and the narrative potential it afforded. I describe how, appearing in the group context, the artwork imagery provided the opportunity to make choices about what aspects might be applied to the group, enabling a consideration of group narrative and identity formation as it occurred in relation to the visual work produced.

Taking the collages to the first group interview [05.08.14] in a process of art elicitation (Bagnoli 2009; Margolis and Pauwels 2011; Mannay 2016), I was keen to explore with Clive, Rose, Simon and Steve how they might respond and whether, and if so in what ways, the collages enabled particular interpretative processes. Upon listening to the interview recording I was initially struck by the lengths of the pauses in the conversation; such overly long silences did

not seem to adhere to the usual patterns of the group's conversation (Watzlawick et al 1967; Andrews et al 2013; Stokoe 2016):

Bella: So I don't know what people sort of feel about having made the collages, I thought we could perhaps talk about some of the things that people have done?

[Silence: 9 seconds]

Clive: I think it's quite good actually.

Rose: Yeah, I think it's good.

Clive: Yeah, quite a good job of it, nice really yeah.

Bella: Mmm.

Clive: Yeah, it does look good, no question about it.

[Group interview 05.08.14]

And again, slightly later, and discussing my asking Mel what the inclusion of a crossword puzzle meant as part of the collage in relation to food poverty:

Bella: But when I asked her, she explained and I thought 'oh that's brilliant', you know?

Clive: Yeah, I like that it's good.

[Silence: 12 seconds]

And again:

Bella: So what do we, what do we think that food poverty actually is then? Do we, have we got any ideas about what food poverty actually is? What the term means?

[Silence: 7 seconds]

Clive: Well I suppose in some ways it could be poverty is, people can't afford to pay for the food and you know, they're charging such high prices that people just ain't got the money to pay for it.

[Group interview 05.08.14]

It was only upon realising that the long pauses were moments when participants were considering the artwork that I became aware of how it was affecting the temporality of the communication, albeit not in ways I had anticipated. Discussing relationships between temporality, communication and language, Thompson (1975: 232) states 'a theory of meaning cannot be formulated before the technicalities of the code are known'. That the group's

communication was affected by the materiality and semiosis of the artwork raises the question of whether this was providing the 'technical codes' from which further meaning might develop. The combination of materiality and semiosis, and its role in narrative formation, is explored by Iovino and Oppermann (2012: 79) when they suggest that 'material-discursive dynamics are concepts that influence deeply the ideas of narrativity and text'. To take a semiological (Rose 2014) view, it is possible to argue that in having created a set of visual codes through the collage-making process, participants then set about deciphering and making-sense of these and in so doing created potential for the emergence of new ways of understanding the phenomena they were interrogating. Clive and Rose's contemplative responses seemed to take the group out of the immediate moment, forming a type of second-order observation (Teubner 1993; Luhmann 2013) that enables a consideration of the reflexive affordances of the artwork in the communicative group space. While in previous moments the art-making had provided the group with purpose and function, in this moment it appeared to enable a form of self-observation, an important feature of group systems working. As Teubner (1993: 24) suggests, 'self-descriptions facilitate the interlinking of individual operations by determining that they belong to the system, and thus serve to regulate self-reproduction'. In thinking about the ways in which the imagery might have contributed to the building of a 'group system', and with it a sense of identity and narrative formation, it is useful to examine how the images were interpreted and utilised by different participants.

Referring to the image of a smiling woman in rural south American dress, Clive commented 'people abroad in other countries who are experiencing food poverty still look happy though, don't they?' and 'have a smile upon their face'. This comment could arguably be considered as part of a process of distancing (Schafer 2010), wherein food poverty became a phenomenon occurring elsewhere, or indeed a process of othering (Said 1985; 1994) wherein the idealised and uncritically accepted image of a content rural poor provided an acceptable representation of poverty that, as such, did not demand social or political action. Just as it was possible to suggest that the 'soft bigotry of low expectations' had been invoked in the response to the tearing of the collage, wherein the 'other' inhabited a culture that - unable to enter discourse - was to be viewed with a form of sympathy, so too it was possible to suggest that in invoking an untroubling image of poverty and contentment, a similar process of abjection was taking place. Conversely, it may be possible to suggest that, born of a process of recognition as Freud (1921, 1930) argues othering to be, Clive's comments might also be interpreted as a type of wish. In invoking the 'poor but happy' trope, it is possible that Clive wished to apply this to himself and, by extension, to the group; making available an identity and narrative construction of

acceptable, bearable, poverty. Ellie's response in asking 'but do you think it [food poverty] is here in Brighton?' highlighted the way in which, as someone invested in the research as addressing a local issue, conversation was steered in a particular direction. Food poverty was thus found not to be something that was happening elsewhere to a largely content rural poor, but was here in Brighton and affecting people locally. The art elicitation process enabled group members to determine what aspects of the collages might be applicable to them as a form of self-description (Teubner 1993). The artwork was revealed to play multiple functions within the group sphere; in the 'doing' and creating of a communicative space, and in the 'reflection' that enabled group members to determine how and in what ways they wanted to continue. It is possible to maintain that the less descriptive collage offered more in terms of interpretative affordances, and as such a greater capacity for group members to consider what codes and narrative formulations they might be working to.

Responding quickly and with a firm 'yes' to Ellie's question of food poverty being in Brighton, Rose continued by describing her personal experiences of it:

- Rose: And yeah with food poverty, I've been in that circumstance, I've been into Starbucks or McDonald's, people have had their lunch, especially the kiddies, haven't bothered putting the rubbish in the litter bins, just gone and left everything there, the kids have had a couple of nibbles of the burgers so I've gone and sat down and eaten the child's remains.
- Ellie: And that's because you're starving?
- Rose: Yeah, yeah.
- Ellie: Because you haven't eaten and you can't?
- Rose: The same in Starbucks, I've got a radar key to access the toilets, you see where people have been sitting down and, you know, all the cups are half full and people have gone, so I tip it all into one cup and then have a classy cup of coffee which you're talking about three quid.
- Ellie: And then there's another thing that comes up which is food waste.
- Bella: Hmmm.
- Ellie: You know there's food poverty but there's also food waste, people are wasting that food, if you didn't eat it, it would get put in the bin.
- Rose: Yeah, yeah.
- Clive: Definitely, sure, yeah.
- Ellie: You know it's interesting that people can't eat while some people have too much.

- Rose: And if there is too much for me I give it to my dog.
- Clive: Oh yeah fair enough.
- Rose: And it's her second birthday on Thursday.
- Bella: So is that to do with budgeting and being able to afford?
- Rose: Yeah because all I get is about £280 per month which is classed as DLA.
- Bella: Right.
- Rose: My mum's got power of attorney and it's budget, budget, budget, yeah.

[Group interview 05.08.14]

In this exchange Rose positioned herself as someone who, in difficult circumstances, was able to think and act resourcefully. Her narrative positioned her as virtuous and the McDonald's patrons as lazy; she occupied the moral high ground. When Ellie responded by saying 'if you didn't eat it, it would get put in the bin' she supported Rose's self-construct, drawing out an implicit reference to a macro-narrative of sustainability and the problems of a wasteful society. Ellie championed Rose, highlighting the difficulties that she faced with the statement 'that's because you're starving', while carefully moving the conversation away from the potentially uncomfortable descriptions of eating leftover food and a 'child's remains'. Yet Rose resisted Ellie's positioning of her practices as existing within discourses of sustainability, and instead talked about feeding her dog and how her financial situation was driven by her mum's power of attorney. Rose's openness, and disregard of a more acceptable interpretation of her practices, arguably demonstrated a resistance to abjection.

Sort of like it is so desperate because if you collect the stickers off of McDonald's cups of tea stroke coffee, if you fill a card up and you've got all six stickers you get a free coffee, the amount of times I've had a rummage through the waste bin just to find the stickers to fill a card up just to get a free cup, and I know you can also get a free drink and people, members of staff will say 'well have you had food?' and I'll say 'oh yeah I'm just sitting over there' and point wherever and say 'I've had some food but now I fancy a drink' and get a free cardboard cup of sparkling water or still water.

[Rose, group interview 05.08.14]

Rose did not tell this story with a sense of shame, rather she told us with a sense of pride in her economic ability. In the extract above, Ellie, Clive and I support Rose's depictions of herself as capable and virtuous, even when drawing on different narratives to do so as Ellie did. This narrative containment enables Rose to take up a position within the group that both provided capital and potentially expanded the narratives available to the group. Support for the

disruption and questioning of conventions surrounding social behaviour and food indicated that the group was not operating according to the usual codes of acceptability. Rose's unboundedness and unwillingness to subscribe to conventional narrative codes surrounding food furnished the group with different narrative possibilities. In this space Rose was able to tell stories of eating people's leftover food and having a 'rummage through the bin' without being treated as abject or socially unacceptable, instead she was praised as having developed inventive ways to feed, reward and take care of herself. While acknowledging that she may have been made 'desperate' by poverty, Rose was also able to show her skill in securing access to 'classy' things, and so to be supported in a narrative that did not deny her hardship but also was not demeaned by it.

4.4.2 Contestation

In this section I explore how Steve's challenging of the 'seven-a-day' public health and food narrative generated an alternative value system within the group. I consider how Steve's response can be understood arguably as a defence, developed in reaction to a narrative that he could not easily access, and I explore how alternative value systems emerge within the group in relation to dominant macro and societal narratives.

When Ellie began a conversation about the perpetuation of the idea that we should now all be eating 'seven-a-day', Steve stated:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Steve: | I don't think it makes that much of a difference really. |
| Ellie: | But that's it, it's the media telling you, and like, the media writing about food poverty, but actually what does it mean? |
| Steve: | They've just said that it extends your, if you eat more than you should, your life just gets extended a little bit longer. |

[Group interview 05.08.14]

Steve's dismissal of the seven-a-day narrative was supported by the group; there was laughter and a sense of rejection of an authoritarian and draconian discourse. The narrative - that we ought to eat seven pieces of fruit and/or vegetables a day - was felt to be berating and 'a pressure' [Ellie 05.08.14] that demanded a lifestyle that, through Steve's dismissal, could be acceptably resisted. Upon closer inspection however, it seemed that this disregard may not have been as flippant as it initially seemed. Steve described how he was living in temporary accommodation and had no kitchen to speak of, cooking in such cramped conditions was

difficult and with little storage and only a small Baby Belling cooker, making healthy meals at home was not something he could easily do.

- Rose: I always go into Sainsbury's along Lewes Road about half past six and find everything that's reduced.
- Clive: Good plan, that's a good idea.
- Rose: Yeah.
- Steve: When I've got money, it's hit the reduced section.
- Rose: Yeah.
- Ellie: What's your diet like Steve?
- Steve: The only time I eat healthy is when I'm up here, that's all I'm saying.
- Ellie: That's what we started off talking about.
- Steve: Well funny enough I don't really eat a lot, I get into this, um, I have days where I don't want to eat, I just don't feel like eating, you know, especially in this hot weather I just lose my appetite all together, but at the moment financially I'm struggling and actually been having hand outs from the food bank, I'm supposed to be eating vegetables because I'm anaemic and I'm supposed to have my greens and I'm not doing it.
- Ellie: You're not able to do it.
- Steve: I take supplements, tablets and stuff.
- Ellie: Is that because of the expense that you're not doing it? You can't afford the fresh green?
- Steve: Yeah well as a single, well you know, plus it's kind of awkward because I don't have a proper kitchen and I don't have a proper cooker and all of this and all of that and I just feel, you know, I've got this tiny little, it looks like a microwave with two hobs on basically.
- Clive: A Baby Belling.
- Steve: A Baby Belling and it's an hour and a half to heat up the oven if I want to do anything and then it just burns everything 'cos it's electric, everything just gets burnt, yeah.
- Rose: And the electric's probably going like that, the meter [signals electric meter spinning round very quickly]

[Group interview 05.08.14]

Steve's initial comment that had seemed to galvanise the group and build a sense of the development of an alternative narrative, had perhaps been built as a defence; an attitude and performance of carefree rebellion cultivated in response to being structurally and

economically excluded from attaining the seven-a-day narrative. In much the same way as Rose viewed her taking of leftover food as outsmarting the food outlets, the development of alternative narratives and identities offered ways to make one's situation tolerable in the face of incongruence between lived experience and broader canonical narratives (Bruner 1991) concerning food and social acceptability. It may be that, in actuality, Steve would prefer to have his life 'extended a little bit longer', but given a discourse that told him he had to do certain things in order to achieve this - things he could not easily do - he perhaps had no other option than to cultivate a narrative and identity that made such structural disadvantage bearable.

These examples illustrate the ways in which identities and positions are enabled or disabled by the group, situations and contexts and that these are fluid, 'under construction' and liable to change. As Loots et al (2013: 109) suggest:

The performance of identities includes the way scenes are organised, the grammatical resources employed and the choices made about social positioning - how narrators position audience, characters, and themselves; and, reciprocally, how the audience positions the narrator. Narrative selfhood is constituted through such performances, within the context of narrating...the 'I' is located, with the possibility of moving from one position to another in accordance with changes in situation and time.

As the ability of group members to accept, cultivate or reject certain narrative constructs became apparent, it led to questions of the agency and autonomy of the group and how certain narratives and cultures might emerge in relation to others. Steve acknowledged the seven-a-day narrative, but his inability to access it determined the development of an alternative. Inability to enact the narrative apparently created a counter narrative (Bamberg and Andrews 2004), 'it just extends your life a bit longer' could be read as 'what do I care, I live for the moment' and this became the only option when accessing a life prolonging diet was economically unachievable.

4.5 September 2014

4.5.1 Art, materiality, commitment

This section explores the group's relationship with materiality (Askins and Pain 2011), turning to artwork carried out in September and the group's closer engagement with the material, asking in what ways it affected social aspects of the group. Using examples that support concepts of materiality as enabling the emergence of social relationships, and conversely of

social relationships as enabling closer involvement with the material, I examine the role of art-making in the group context.

Through the steady development of the idea developed at the start of the fieldwork, the group had settled on the exhibition as taking the form of 'a table full of fruit and vegetables like a 17th Century Dutch still life or cornucopia' [Bella field note 12.08.14]. The idea of creating oversized food stuffs covered in glitter, jewels and 'bling' prompted an inevitable consideration of materials. The diversity of suggestions - mod roc, plaster of Paris, cardboard, papier maché, florist's block, found objects, sewn or knitted pieces, clay, foam and sponge [Bella field note 12.08.14] - made it possible to consider that once the form had been established, participants immediately set about mapping and testing the boundaries of it. As Boden (1995: 1) suggests:

The 'mapping' of a conceptual space involves the representation, whether at conscious or unconscious levels, of its structural features. The more such features are represented in the mind of the person concerned, the more power (or freedom) they have to navigate and negotiate these spaces.

The profusion of suggested materials that would create the 'structural features' of the exhibition, and lengthy discussions of these, also perhaps highlights the apparent contradiction that creativity is dependent on restraint, or at least a testing of the rules and limitations of the given form (Boden 2010: 73). The limitation established by the form, paradoxically, enabled a proliferation of materials and a testing of what was possible. This sense of exploration was subsequently challenged, however, by the group's encountering the reality of the material in the form of the chicken wire and mod roc [see Figures 6 and 7].



Figure 6: Wire and mod roc pieces.



Figure 7: Wire and mod roc mushroom.

These materials revealed themselves to be more difficult than we had anticipated; they were not easy to work with and did not always do what we wanted them to do. As such this demanded a temporal shift in our way of working [Bella field note 09.09.14] and we had to

respond to the material, work with it and rethink what it was possible to achieve within our given timeframe. Many of the participants had not used this material in this way before and there was a sense of us learning together. People observed and imitated each other enabling considerations of mimesis and the ways that information is transferred and carried throughout groups and how the social sits in relation to the material (Dissyanake 1992). The group space became a site for the exchange of ideas and importantly, the meeting and resolution of differences, the material increasing scope for this.

Participants used the art-making sessions in different ways, and I noticed that Clive had consistently come to the sessions; talking, being friendly and making himself useful, but did not engage directly in the art-making itself. Taking the supposition explored by Askins and Pain (2011: 804) that immaterial webs of relations may sustain the group as much as ones that are 'visible', it was useful to consider the way that Clive had been an important member of the group but had not necessarily been 'seen' or represented visually or materially, as I noted:

Yesterday he [Clive] seemed to move more decisively toward engaging with the materials. He helped put some papier maché on the fish I had been working on and went to fetch tools with which to do this. I wonder if there is something about the making and engineering aspect of what we are doing that appeals in some way?

[Bella field note 16.09.14]

It was possible to consider that the material 'doing' bound the group together and that this enabled the emergence of more complex interactions and communication. Clive's situation may have been functioning somewhat in reverse. In a demonstration of the complex processes at play in the group and between material and non-material interactions, Clive seemed to have circled the group for several weeks, building relationships with other participants, before displaying a willingness to be materially involved. I recalled Clive having told me that before becoming unemployed he had been an engineer and I started to think about the project from what I imagined to be an 'engineering perspective', the project posing a set of technical problems. Re-framing the artwork and its construction by using a language that might be more readily familiar through comments such as 'do you think we ought to put this here?' and 'how might we attach this piece to that piece?' and 'what tools should we use?' arguably enabled Clive (consciously or non-consciously) to 'see' the similarity and bridge the divide between 'art project' and 'not art project'. The application of something familiar - in the form of a knowable language - enabled the penetration of the boundary of the group and the move from immaterial to material involvement.

4.5.2 Poverty, adaptation and the 'fake life'

In this section I refer to narrative contestations and the taking of moral positions in relation to food poverty during the September group meeting. This considers how the group positioned themselves and each other in relation to questions of government, belief systems and food poverty. Pat, Paula, Clive, Ellie, Rose, Sandra and I took part in this session, and had been having a conversation surrounding austerity, the irresponsibility of the bankers and 'the way Britain is run now' [Paula], which had been prompted by Pat's asking 'so where is the money coming from?':

- Pat: So why aren't the corporates doing that then? [Paying taxes to the UK treasury]
- Bella: Why isn't?
- Pat: The big international corporations doing that? They're the ones that are actually surviving here, living, not just surviving. We're surviving they're the ones that are actually making it here.
- Bella: Well exactly.
- Clive: Yeah of course.
- Bella: Why is the government having to bail out the banks? And now it is people that, with the bedroom tax and austerity, it's because they're trying to take from that pot to make up for.
- Pat: For people who don't even live here.
- Bella: Yeah?
- Pat: Let alone not even, I'm not talking about being British or anything like that.
- Bella: No.
- Pat: People not living here.
- Bella: Buying property?
- Pat: Yeah.

[Group interview 05.08.14]

When the conversation began to lull Paula continued by saying:

I was thinking like, I'm just gonna throw the ball in there in a more positive way, have some people adapted the way they live a bit more? Like adapted a little bit more to not be, I'm just trying to be more positive.

In the context of a narrative of a corrupt system, Paula's question made me wonder in what way adaptation to such a system might be the 'more positive' thing to do. I wondered if she found the group's building of a narrative that was, by her implication 'negative', a bit difficult. Giving examples of the ways that she had altered her shopping habits to fit her recently changed financial circumstances - moving from being a newly qualified teacher and doing supply work to being a full-time parent - Paula described no longer buying expensive cereal and instead making her own:

I'm feeling like; okay we'll scrape by. Have some people, in a positive way, adapted? Like I was, I went through all my finances and I thought okay what can I do to make things cheaper? And I started making my own granola, my own cereal, like okay I'm gonna stop buying this, what can I make?

In the face of strained financial circumstances, Paula appeared to be cultivating an identity that was more acceptable to her - agentic, resourceful and creative - and seeking support within the group. While enacted in a very different, arguably more middle class way, Paula's narrative carried echoes of Rose's account of skill in the management of financial constraints - Rose was able to secure her 'classy' cup of coffee and Paula made her own granola. When threatened with poverty as a reality, an identity that incorporated a sense of agency and resourcefulness was favourable, in Paula's conceptualisation and 'more positive', than resignation to a failing economic system that afforded little ability to enact agency.

Continuing a theme of adaptation, Ellie described her sense that some people who used the Centre managed living in poverty not through adaptation to what she termed the 'fake life', but rather through adaptation to an alternative value system that encompassed a 'strong moral sense' enabling them to 'really do alright on nothing':

Ellie: Some people do cope and they -

Paula: And I think for the future.

Ellie: - and they do feel.

Pat: I do, but it's.

Ellie: Erm, they feel more fulfilled by the fact that they are coping and that they are not buying into.

Pat: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Paula: Yeah.

Ellie: The fake life.

Paula: There are some positives.

- Ellie: For some people, other people, it's just too much and they're too busy struggling to survive that it breaks them.
- Paula: Well, it depends on your circumstances doesn't it?
- Pat: And how strong you are.
- Ellie: I see people here and they are doing really alright on nothing.
- Bella: Mmm.
- Ellie: But they have a very strong moral sense I suppose.
- Pat: Belief.
- Clive: Yeah, yeah.
- Bella: Mmm.
- Pat: That's what it is yeah.
- Sandra: Yeah.
- Ellie: And that keeps them going.
- Sandra: Absolutely, I'm a bit like that.

[Group interview 05.08.14]

While Paula's narrative of adaptation could be considered an attempt to maintain a foothold within the existing system and not become marginalised or socially excluded, Ellie's comments began to build a construction of the availability of an alternative value system. Mainstream society was, in Ellie's conception, 'the fake life' and being fulfilled by 'not buying into' it suggested that one had a choice, not necessarily excluded from the mainstream but opting to not adhere to it. This implied that poverty was not only a circumstance experienced, but was also carried a potentially moral dimension. In much the same way that Steve, Rose and Paula attempted to make sense of their various experiences by adapting and curating narratives and identities that made it bearable, in this example Ellie posed the ultimate adaptation as being a moral one. To be poor was, in this account, to also be virtuous, though perhaps more ominously the caveat that some people might be 'too busy struggling to survive that it breaks them' insinuated that those that did not adhere to the alternative belief system were in some way doomed. Anti-consumerism, in this scenario, became an individual belief system imbued with a morality that offered a coping mechanism and a sense of virtue for those living in poverty. In this depiction, agency was privileged over structure: poverty was not primarily framed as a systemic issue that might be addressed though, for example, campaigning or engagement with party politics, but as a circumstance that one had to manage through

'strength', in Pat's words – by developing an inner resource and a philosophical and spiritual framework in order to survive. Drawing on, though not explicitly stating, canonical narratives (Bruner 1991) of Christianity, poverty and virtue and tying these to anti-capitalist narratives and the rejection of consumerism, Ellie offered the BUCFP as embodying a type of secular religiosity. Paula had demonstrated her identity and sense of self as tied to an ability to make choices that enabled her to maintain inclusion in the mainstream, and this for as her 'positive'. Ellie's construction, on the other hand, indicated to the group, and was supported by them, that the alternative - a rejection of the mainstream - was possible, desirable and was indeed 'the moral' option. Ellie's narrative construction arguably began to develop a sense of group culture and an acceptable, shared identity, while also highlighting narrative divergences within the group.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the course of the group from its inception and over the subsequent four months. The formation of the group using the participatory methods enabled the generation of a mind-map and what I have termed a 'populating of the structure'. Themes generated through the mind mapping activity made available for the group multiple ways of making sense of food poverty. It was possible to identify concerns ranging from globalisation in the form of mass food production and a sense that this brought with it instability and unpredictability, to a sense of unease that a changed food landscape impacted on the structure of family life in issues such as lack of time to eat food together and children not knowing how to use cutlery. It was notable that despite food being perhaps 'less healthy' in earlier generations, there was nonetheless nostalgia for what was perceived to have been a more stable sense of family life. Further explorations enabled a consideration of the group space as a site for the performance and contestation of different narratives and identities in relation to food practices. Rose's descriptions of living in poverty but accessing mainstream cultural value systems in the form of having a 'classy cup of coffee', or conversely Steve's challenge to the seven-a-day public health narrative, demonstrated both conformity and resistance to wider narratives surrounding food practices. The group's response to the tearing of the artwork perhaps exemplified an ability to resist in some instances, and accept in others, aspects of the wider environment and narratives contained within it. Explorations of choice, and the ways in which one could work within the current system to enact forms of agency and display inclusion were brought into more concrete discussion with the idea that it was possible

to reject the mainstream through the auspices of the BUCFP, but that in order to do so and successfully 'cope' one had to develop a 'strong moral sense'. The group emerged as a site through which members could be united in an alternative discourse that made poverty bearable, while still wanting to be included in mainstream society.

Chapter Five: Data analysis October 2014 - January 2015

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the group across the three-month period covering October 2014 to January 2015, exploring various themes arising during this time. The extent to which the group's communication and action centred on the art-making, in order to produce the pieces for the exhibition, was noticeable and a shift from ideas to their materialisation prompted various temporal changes that are important to consider. Questions of the open or closedness of the group came to the fore and revealed the underlying structures of the group and this prompted ideas of group self-awareness and autonomy. While the 'way of working' had been established in many ways by the material, so to it is possible to identify the group searching for a narrative structure to work to in discussions of approaches to food. Access to groups, and forms of organisational life, are revealed to have certain conditions of entry attached to them and at this stage in the group's development these appear to be somewhat contested.

5.2 October 2014

5.2.1 Spontaneity versus planning

In this section I consider ways in which the temporality afforded by the material - the wire, cardboard, mod roc, glue, wallpaper paste, papier maché and plaster of Paris - highlighted tensions within the group between a desire for spontaneity and creative exploration versus an awareness of the limitations of the material, importance of time and the necessity of planning in order to create the exhibition. The giving of form to ideas provided a material boundedness to the project, apparent for example, in Pat's encounter with the reality of the chicken wire; willow and mod roc in making a giant pumpkin and her subsequent appeal to other participants for assistance with it [see Figure 8]. Collective responsibility for the production of the pieces perhaps sat in contrast to those working on their pieces individually. The effects of the material on the group raised important questions to do with group functioning, communication and role of the art material within it which I explore in this section.

By the beginning of October, the group - consisting regularly of Clive, Paula, Pat, Mel, Jim, Sandra, Steve and Pete - had amassed a collection of approximately fifteen pieces for the bejewelled still life that we had set on doing [see Figures 8, 9 and 10 and Appendix 9]. Pieces

included a fish, mushroom, cucumber, pizza slice, potato and a drumstick and the beginnings of a tin of beans.



Figure 8: Pat's giant pumpkin.



Figure 9: Paula's pizza slice.



Figure 10: Tin of beans with lid.

Intended to form the centre piece of the exhibition, Pat's giant pumpkin proved difficult to construct. It posed practical problems such as, for example, needing to be propped up from the inside because she had not accounted for the weight of the mod roc on the willow frame. There was discovered to be a gap between what she had in mind - the creative vision - and the practical steps she had to take in its materialisation. Pete's raising of the importance of planning in the execution of pieces sat in contrast to Pat's stating that she was 'not capable of thinking ahead at the moment' [Bella's field note 21.10.14] and highlighted differences between participants' capability, the structuring of time, and how the task was approached. Pete's knowledge as a carpenter and furniture restorer arguably provided him with concrete experience of managing construction projects, as well as a sense of the temporality of the material, and as such a confidence and ability to work independently. Conversely, Pat found the material challenging and her vocalising of her predicament, asking for help, served as a call for co-operation and group working. We were realising that a large project with a deadline demanded significant planning and work. An idea of spontaneous doing was replaced with a sense of determined productivity, drawing on skill and knowledge. Mastery of form was realised to be essential in the materialisation of the idea and this required group working and cohesion if it were to be successful. Indeed, the needs of the project arguably almost enforced a sense of 'group'. This highlighted the centrality of the art material and its relation to the dynamics of the group; the establishing of the task and a sense of purposefulness had created a shared endeavour. I wrote in my journal [21.10.14]:

I agree with Pat and understand the feeling of 'sod it I'm just doing this now', and I understand a resistance towards planning. I don't know why exactly but it feels too controlled, perhaps when sometimes what we want is spontaneity.

Pat's vocalising of her predicament, and her apparent vulnerability, was perhaps a call for a co-operation that embodied a sense of the Deleuzian 'mutual self-care' mentioned in Chapter One. In contrast, those with greater capability in making were not as dependent on others. Participants brought with them differing levels of ability, know-how and skill and these infused the group in different ways. The material was challenging. Indeed, despite initially showing willing Steve had retreated from the activity stating that he found the plaster 'too messy', opting instead to make loom bands on a neighbouring table and rejecting my attempts to include him in the group. Despite not coming to the group meetings and choosing instead to focus on his art-making, Thomas, a white British male artist in his 50s and a familiar face at the Centre, set about quietly constructing a large cardboard milk carton separate from the other participants. In some cases I helped start pieces off, constructing a shape or demonstrating how to use the mod roc and these had been taken over and continued by, for example, Jim with the cucumber and Mel with the drum stick.

5.2.2 Maintaining engagement

My concern over a perception of dwindling numbers towards the end of the October brought an awareness of the wider environment of the BUCFP and the possibility that the project might be being perceived negatively by Centre users. This led me to wonder about the effects on participants, provoking a return to issues of the closed and openness of the group. Despite the sense of group working, I had an unavoidable awareness that something was not right and needed to change. This was prompted by a woman, new to the Centre, who was angry when she had asked me if she could join the group and received my standard reply that 'we are a closed group, sorry, but there is an open art group running on a Wednesday that you can join'. My unease was exacerbated when I then worked on my own for the first fifteen minutes of the session until Clive and Paula arrived while the woman sat across the room painting polystyrene balls, intended to be oranges, with black paint and attaching pipe cleaners to turn them into 'spiders'. This incident compounded my sense of how ridiculous it felt that the group was operating as 'closed' particularly when earlier in the month Pat's difficulties with the making and material had highlighted the importance and necessity of group work and co-operation. While not wanting to diminish the efforts of those who were coming to the sessions, I decided

that the best thing to do was to take the issue of dwindling numbers to the group meeting. It felt unavoidable.

It felt to me that during this period the group was being sustained by the material 'doing' of the art and the objective goal of 'art exhibition' but that it was fragile. It is also possible to ask, in light of events documented here, if the difficulty posed by the material and the realisation that it required planning and sustained working over time, had caused participants to be reluctant to take part. My sense that people were dropping away, or were reluctant to attend, and that this was a problem was prompted (as noted above) by a Centre user wanting to join but being turned away because of the closed group rule. Two themes can be identified as emerging at this time. Firstly, the material and the objective of the exhibition demanded certain capabilities and commitments. This raised the question of participants having 'signed up' to the project before knowing fully what it would entail. Secondly, it highlighted the necessity that the group function as 'open' in order to maximise the possibility that participants who were able to address the specificity of the task might join. Enabled by the material, the reality of the creative vision emerged and invited those who were able to carry it out. Those less able were dependent on co-operative group functioning. Turning away someone who wanted to join proved a pivotal moment in my realisation that there was a problem and highlighted my role as both facilitator and researcher-observer. The problem, at that moment, was not articulated but I experienced it as an incongruence between the group space and the wider environment of the BUCFP, prompted primarily by a sense of guilt and embarrassment that while Paula, Clive and I were working on our pieces there was a woman sitting upset and alone making a series of black polystyrene spiders. In some sense the woman who I had turned away came to represent something of a spirit of inclusivity espoused by the Centre that was being neglected in the working practices I had established for the group.

5.3 November 2014

5.3.1 Ownership and group boundaries

In this section I explore how participants responded to my concern over the dwindling numbers. In the early recruitment stages, and in the interests of confidentiality and anonymity, I had raised the question of whether we work as a closed or open group. Decision-making had been deferred until the end of the four-week recruitment period. When this period came, and twenty participants had signed up, I had reminded everyone and suggested that we move

ahead as closed, and there had been no disagreement. Thus for the past four months whenever someone new had approached the group either I or a participant had explained that we were a closed group, apologised and re-directed them to the other, open, art group at the Centre. This had happened about four or five times. In doing this I felt the group was manageable and researchable and was also a 'safe space' for those that were vulnerable. I asked myself if the lack of numbers was due to several possible things: the difficulty posed by the material; a lack of holding or leadership due to a methodological stance of non-directedness; a sense of mistrust; a sense of obligation; participants not enjoying it; or, more abstractly, whether the closed group structure was inconsistent with the philosophy of the BUCFP and did not 'fit', making it an uncomfortable experience for existing participants [Bella field note 04.11.14].

I had also become aware that for those that attended them, group meetings had become less to do with food poverty and more to do with discussion of materials and planning for the exhibition. I wondered if this development was part of participants' attempt to make the project their own or if it was a form of resistance to the university research aspect, or perhaps a bit of both. Was there emerging a struggle for ownership of the project, the dwindling numbers reflecting a rejection of the closed rule that was perhaps felt to be imposed by me (and the university as an imagined authority figure in the background)? I asked myself how I could claim to be using participatory methods and philosophies of co-construction while still maintaining control of the process in order to gather my data. The implications of opening the group and re-recruiting were daunting but I wondered if it might be part of a necessary process of adaptation to the environment in which the group existed. The group meeting consisted of Paula, Clive, Steve, Pete and Jim. I discussed my concerns with Ellie beforehand and she proceeded to raise them at the meeting:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Ellie: | Like, should we look at a way of erm, changing, a different way of producing art? Is it putting people off? We had twenty people signed up, not so many people now, what's the way forward, you know? [to Steve] You've been away for a little bit it's good to see you. |
| Steve: | Yeah, yeah I've had my own issues and then giving this a bit of a break you know. |
| Ellie: | Yeah. |
| Steve: | Give everybody a bit of a break. |
| Ellie: | Exactly. |
| Steve: | And give myself a break as well. |

- Ellie: And I think that comes up quite a lot.
- Bella: [to Steve] Okay.
- Ellie: That people are vulnerable and they need space apart.
- Steve: Yeah.
- Ellie: Yeah.

[Group interview 04.11.14]

Steve cited his non-attendance as being to do with his 'own issues' and this prompted Ellie to locate the reasons for people not coming to the group with participants, people who were 'vulnerable and needed space apart' and for whom regularity was 'not their lifestyle'. Ellie's emphasis on people 'not being in a good space' echoed a narrative of vulnerability, raising tensions discussed in Chapter One between the Centre as a place that enables self-organisation and this as tied to empowerment discourses, while also acknowledging the often difficult circumstances and conditions within which Centre users lived. Pete agreed and expanded on this point stating 'that's the Centre...the dynamic is not long slow and steady...the dynamic here is up and down'. Pete and Ellie's comments suggested the need for the project to adapt to the temporality of the Centre and the lives of the participants. Pete and Ellie's suggestions might also be considered as protective of me and the project. In their accounts it was not a problem with the project that was the reason for falling attendance, but was the nature of participant's lives. Keen to explore possible reasons further I applied a bit of pressure and highlighted the exhibition and the proposed timeline we were working to, the exhibition as a deadline that exerted an organising principle. Ellie raised the issue that keeping the group closed might put pressure on those who did take part, changing the way they experienced the group and turning it into a demand.

- Pete: The dynamic is not long slow and steady, and the dynamic here is up and down.
- Ellie: Yeah.
- Pete: But you've got time, sorry I've talked it.
- Ellie: No, no, no please do, I mean I just think that we have time but then the other side of it is it puts pressure on people to come every week, like Clive and you [to Bella] and Paula and to come and produce the work and that's pressure on people that have to, because you will feel obliged to get it done and I think the idea is that it is more participatory and that everyone gets involved on an equal level, I mean, would you agree with that?

Bella: Yeah, yeah I mean the last thing we want to do is make people feel obliged to, or pressured into doing it you know.

Ellie: Yeah, yeah.

[Group interview 04.11.14]

Vulnerability in this context was understood as being expected to do too much, or expected to adhere to a particular ordering of time that participants might not correspond with. The move towards an open group embodied a type of mutuality that had been raised by Pat's actions in previous sessions wherein the sharing and dissolution of tasks acted as a form of support in the reaching of a goal. A 'safe space' was thus in the process of being reconstructed not a closed group space but as a mutually supportive, co-operative and open group space. Managing vulnerability was not about an individualised, contained and private self, but was about a collectivised, dispersed self. The more ethical thing to do was revealed not to be a closed and contained group but to operate as an open and collectively working group, the boundaries dissolved to include potentially the whole Centre.

Based on my observations, my concern about dwindling attendance had been raised thorough the group meeting and this had prompted a process of second-order observation wherein the group examined itself and its operating. Before being able to develop an alternative structure in order to achieve the goal of creating the art exhibition, it was perhaps necessary for us, as a group, to understand why this particular structure was seemingly not working. The difference between the necessity that the group adhere to the BUCFP environment and a narrative of inclusivity as a way of managing vulnerability, versus my need to have a research project that remained within my control and adhered to a particular idea of ethics, became apparent. Attempting to resolve these issues through group discussion, a strange entanglement occurred between whereabouts in space and time the group was located, and whether it was open or not. The group space was bounded and defined in some sense by the things around it that it was not. It was *not* an open drop-in art group without any particularly fixed purpose, as was occurring on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, that particular time and space belonged to the Centre art group. It was a food poverty and art research group located on a Tuesday, gathering with the intention of producing an exhibition for the Brighton Festival in May. When Paula asked me 'what do your supervisors say?' it reminded me and the group that we were not working only within our own limits and boundaries, but also those of the university and that there was part of the group structure that was not being defined by group members. While Ellie had met with my university supervisors, participants had not, and as such it could

be argued that they and the university were a presence felt but perhaps not fully understood that Ellie and I able to invoke when we needed to.

Once discussion of restructuring the group was underway the boundaries dissolved and had to be re-built. Recourse was to the Centre's philosophy of inclusion and rules of behaviour in the form of the Safe Centre Policy [see Appendix 11], participants becoming members of a shared - Centre-wide - ethic and narrative:

- Paula: The Centre is its own space anyway.
- Clive: Oh yeah sure.
- Ellie: Exactly.
- Paula: So if you come to the Centre that's what you think anyway, it's like an enclosed space, I don't really feel comfortable coming here otherwise.
- Ellie: No, the Safe Centre Policy, I was going to say it should be on every table but that is the contract of the whole group.
- Paula: Yeah.
- Ellie: Like the rules of the group so.
- Paula: So yeah, people wouldn't be here otherwise, unless they felt comfortable.

[Group interview 04.11.14]

In stating the 'rules of the group' as being also the rules of the Centre, Ellie and Paula attempted to re-establish a set of principles for the group and minimise differences between those who were 'in', and those who were 'out'. The solution to the group as having been closed because of a concern about participant vulnerability was for it to instead operate as open, yet still be governed by a set of principles in the form of the Safe Centre Policy [Appendix 11]. However, despite this attempt at resolution concerning ideas of participant vulnerability, the question of the project *as research* that needed to be 'researchable' [as noted by Ellie] and thus bounded, was more difficult to address. Clive, Pete and Steve stated that surely if people wanted to work on their pieces in the Wednesday art group then they should be able to:

- Pete: Well if it was open to time, so if Tuesday and Wednesday, if somebody chose to do that then you'd get more fruit made.
- Paula: But you'd have less control over the art.
- Bella: Yeah.

- Pete: It would be a positive.
- Steve: Well I was thinking.
- Clive: [agreeing with Pete] I think so too actually, I think so too.
- Steve: With the Wednesday that could be, you see if we fall behind, we could use Wednesdays to help speed things up a bit if we fall behind you know?
- Paula: I'm a control freak though, I would want it to be just on a Tuesday, I would be happy for it to be open but I would want it to stick to just the day because, I dunno, I think it could be a little bit messy.

[Group interview 04.11.14]

Positioning herself as protective of the project, and by extension protective of me, Paula defended the project as research by inserting something of herself - her being a 'control freak'. In opposition to mine, Ellie and Paula's position however, Clive, Steve and Pete continued building a narrative of the importance of 'free range' and unstructured art-making and creativity:

- Clive: Do what they want can't they, you know, free range, free range to do what they want innit?
- Steve: People want to be creative.
- Pete: No structure.
- Clive: Really it is.
- Steve: Yeah.

[Group interview 04.11.14]

While Paula, mine and Ellie's discussion felt as if it was an attempt to be clear about the boundaries between the group and the wider Centre, and to acknowledge that the project was also research, Pete, Steve and Clive's position - claiming the need for total freedom - felt to me, perhaps paradoxically, to be actually more controlling in its refusal to acknowledge that boundaries did exist. In their version, creativity resisted all ordering processes and could not be contained. I felt that the request for 'no structure' was perhaps in some way a rejection of the university research aspect of the project. This raised questions for what type of participatory project this was. As the Durham Community Research Team (2011: 6) outline, there are various and diverging approaches to participatory and community research and hence, differing ideas about control and the role of participants:

1. Community-controlled and managed research, no professional researchers involved.

2. Community-controlled with professional researchers managed by and working for the community.
3. Co-production – equal partnership between professional researchers and community members.
4. Controlled by professional researchers but with greater or lesser degrees of community partnership, e.g. Advisory group involved in design, dissemination; trained community researchers undertake some/all of data gathering, analysis, writing; professional researcher uses participatory methods (e.g. young people take photos).

I asked myself whether perhaps an ethnographic approach would have been the better method if I was interested in observing the emergence of self-managing groups enabled by the environment and ethos of the BUCFP. As a research project that set out to create an art exhibition, and used a particular methodological approach, I had set certain conditions of observability. I was not able, for example, to be at the Centre five days a week on the chance that participants might spontaneously start art-making. Having dealt with the issue of participant vulnerability, and having established the Safe Centre Policy [Appendix 11] as a protective framework, the underlying issue of the project as research that needed to be documented by me became apparent. While the group being open recognised the need for greater complexity and diversity of contributors and to adapt to the BUCFP ethos of inclusivity, my request that it be limited to the time and space of 'Tuesday afternoon' acknowledged the project as research that needed to 'be researchable'. Ellie and Paula became my interlocutors in a defence of the project. In furthering the argument for the group to be open however, Steve raised the issue that seemed to be at the heart of the problem:

- Steve: [name] wants to take part but.
- Clive: Who?
- Steve: [name], earlier she wanted to have a go at art, take part.
- Ellie: Right.
- Clive: Yeah.
- Bella: Oh.
- Ellie: What did she say about it then, what was her feeling?
- Steve: I said 'oh it's a closed group'.
- Ellie: Was she kind of, does she feel excluded, was she, you know?
- Steve: Yeah, yeah.
- Ellie: Yeah.

[Pause three seconds]

[Group interview 04.11.14]

Steve had revealed the effects of the group being closed and in so doing moved the discussion from a theoretical to more visceral realm. The group's silence seemed to serve as recognition that being excluded was painful; there was a sense of guilt. Tentatively I asked:

Bella: So is there a sense of um, resentment from other people that they are not able to join the group?

Clive: Slightly I suppose, slightly, slightly, slightly, slightly.

Pete: I haven't felt any, it's, resentment is quite rare at the Centre.

Bella: I think I'm, I was aware that, I was aware.

Ellie: Yeah exclusion I think, exclusion's the word.

Clive: Yeah, exclusion.

Bella: Maybe that's not the right word?

[Group talking murmuring]

Steve: Sounds exclusive like doesn't it, like it's an exclusive little club that we have.

Bella: Oh right.

[Someone laughs unclear who]

Pete: Well.

Ellie: Well we can still have an exclusive little club can't we? That's the whole unemployed Centre.

Steve: Yeah that's what comes across, that it's exclusive, you can only come here if you were here from the beginning and that.

[Group interview 04.11.14]

My initial question of whether there was a 'sense of resentment' had been responded to by Clive whose repetition of the word 'slightly' indicated to me that this was most probably where the problem lay, though it was contradicted by Pete. Ellie's re-naming the situation as being a problem of 'exclusion' rather than 'resentment' shifted the locus from the Centre user to the group as exclusionary. Emphasis on 'exclusion' - a powerful word associated with social exclusion and marginalisation - was immediately refuted by me, reflecting my shock and wish for it to not be the case. Playing an intermediary role between the group and the excluded Centre user and between concepts of 'exclusion', 'resentment' and 'exclusivity', Steve

suggested the perhaps easier to manage notion that we were being an 'exclusive little club'. This arguably softened the harder sounding terms 'exclusion' and 'resentment' and bought the situation into a more social, humanly located, space. This enabled Ellie to then offer a solution in the form of dissolution of the boundaries of the group and the suggestion that they merge instead with the levelling and democratising space of the 'whole unemployed Centre'. With this development there was no way that the group could continue as closed and we agreed that we would enter a process of re-recruitment and open the group to newcomers but that sessions would remain on Tuesdays only. As I discuss in the following section drawing on Bion (1961), this changing group situation can perhaps be understood through a group and systems theory lens.

5.3.2 Material and reflexivity

My analysis suggests that, midway through the fieldwork, the group can be considered as having developed a type of second-order awareness, a self-consciousness and self-observation (Teubner 1993; Luhmann 2013) that enabled it to continue. My field note [11.11.14] records:

The group today felt tense after the discussions we had the previous week about whether to be closed or open...it was in the air but nobody was talking about it. Conversation did not flow easily and people seemed reluctant to join in the art-making...making indicates a commitment. Things began to ease after Pete and I spoke about the group again. We move between being aware of the group and being consumed with the group. Pat was back and her lack of awareness of what happened at the meeting last Tuesday bought an easy feel...she was keen to get on and work on the giant pumpkin, which suddenly took shape....Jon came back after not having been seen for a while, as is the way at the Centre, and wanted to get involved again. He was surprised to see the progress the group has made.

It was notable that participants who had been at the meeting the previous week seemed reluctant to take part in the art-making. It was as if handling the material and involving oneself in the process now denoted more than just being part of an art and research project. The objects seemed imbued with some other meaning, participants were aware and bonded together through doing, reminding me of Latour's (2000: 114) notion that 'material is the very 'stuff' out of which socialness is made'. It was only once Pete and I started talking about 'being a group' - the thing that needed to be talked about - that a more relaxed atmosphere emerged; we needed to acknowledge what had happened. But it felt as if we were being too reflexive, asking where do we go now? The material no longer shielded the underlying mechanisms and functions that had been made explicit and we were horribly self-conscious; it

paralysed us. Arriving fresh and breezy and unaware of the depths of group self-criticality that we had plumbed the previous week, Pat bought something easy and relaxed to the group. The attention we had given ourselves 'as a group' and consequent reconsideration of structure, meant that questions surrounding the topic of food poverty had been less of a concern. Despite this, the topic had nonetheless disappeared and reappeared throughout the session and had been utilised in interesting ways. Three possible structuring principles around which group members organised themselves seemed to have emerged: the topic of food poverty; art materials and lengthy considerations of what to use and how; and group structure itself, all of which had all been fore-grounded at different times and, it would seem, for different purposes and with different effects.

Previous to the discussion of structure, the group had been coming together to work on a conscious 'work' task in the form of 'creating an art exhibition on the topic of food poverty'. The underlying structures - the Bionic (1961) basic assumptions - had remained non-conscious and the group was operating, as Bion (Long 1992: 29) suggests, as a purposeful group driven by conscious task-focused activity. Paradoxically, our thinking about the group's structure and questions of closed versus open was made possible by the structuring principle afforded by the centralising of the topic 'food poverty exhibition'. Taking a systems theory perspective, the group's structure needed to be 'observed' by the group because doing so enabled a determining of the best way to achieve its conscious aims. As Teubner (1993), Ulanowicz (1997), Juarrero (2002) and Luhmann (2013) suggest, a process of second-order observation takes place in all evolving and 'living' systems once they reach a certain point. Crucially this process can be thought of as engendering the movement towards self-determination. Luhmann (cited in Teubner 1993: 9) suggests 'the concept of self-reference is generalised to a description of existence...which at the same time establishes the conditions of observability'. Teubner (1993: 20) states:

If self-regulation and self-description are combined with each other in such a way that the (self-constituted) identity is used as a criterion of structural change, then the system effectively becomes self-reflexive. The development of a coherent form of argumentation about the identity of the system makes the system self-reflexive.

For Teubner (ibid: 24), self-descriptions 'facilitate the interlinking of individual operations by determining that they belong to the system, [and] thus serve to regulate self reproduction'. It is possible to consider the group at this point in time as developing self-awareness and thus moving towards ideas of self-determination, aided in many ways by the project and relationship with the art-making as a material device.

5.4 December 2014

5.4.1 Porosity and liminality

The dissolution of boundaries surrounding the group raised interesting questions of the 'nestedness' (Bronfenbrenner 1979) of the group within the wider BUCFP environment and what the relationship between the group and BUCFP was. In the following section I discuss two events that took place beyond the group - in the space of the BUCFP - that nevertheless impacted the group in interesting ways. The events I discuss are firstly, the disappearance of the large wood, wire and mod roc 'tree' which had occupied the main area of the Centre. Secondly, I discuss the disruption to the Centre-wide meeting that had been organised by Centre users (including project participants) in response to the tree having been pulled down. In drawing on these examples and the ways in which participants respond to the events described, I illustrate the porosity between the group and wider environment. My field note [4.12.14] states:

I was feeling rested and looking forward to being back at the Centre after the two-week break. However this feeling was quickly dispelled when I entered the main room and saw that the tree has disappeared. There was a low feeling in the room and quiet whispers and conspiracies that the staff had pulled it down. It took me a while to register what had happened and I still (two days later) am feeling a level of shock. Mostly I think I am feeling upset and concerned for Pete, for whom the tree meant so much. Pat, myself and another Centre user approached Ellie to find out what had happened, they were keen for me to be there and I wondered if I was seen as a sort of go-between between the officialdom of the BUCFP and Centre users....In speaking with Ellie I said that it felt like a massive violence that the tree had been torn down. Apparently two volunteers while re-decorating during in maintenance week had seen fit to dismantle and dispose of it. It is almost beyond comprehension as to what was going on in their minds and it was important for us to find out what had happened lest conspiracy theories about vengeful attacks from Centre staff become entrenched, which would be hugely damaging.

The tree had been at the Centre for as long as I could remember and stood approximately 9ft foot tall in the main area of the Centre, next to large windows that over looked the Children's Centre and the park with far-reaching views across the city. It had formed the focal point for the art group, who redecorated it according to the changing seasons. When we asked, Ellie explained that the two volunteers had accidentally broken one of the branches of the tree, and had then decided to pull the whole thing down. Ellie said that one of them had substance misuse and mental health issues and that, sad as it was, these things happen at the Centre and user vulnerability was fore-fronted again in her account. Participants were upset and spoke about Pete leaving in anger, furious and deeply hurt and vowing never to return. There was a

pervasive sense that staff ought to have been overseeing the volunteers and that it should not have happened. The tree having been pulled down caused much consternation in the research group and conversation moved back and forth between group participants and other Centre users.

That staff members were not willing to talk about what had happened and that some Centre users said the damage to the tree was a breach of Safe Centre Policy [Appendix 11] prompted some, including Pat and Clive, to call a Centre-wide meeting. Pat asked me if I would come to the meeting and I agreed. My field note [09.12.14] records:

Pat and some others have organised a Centre user meeting...I like the idea that there is more Centre user involvement...Pat said 'if we want it to happen we have to make it happen' and that the Centre becoming a 'bland computers and food service' must be stopped.

The pulling down of the tree seemed to symbolise a deeper concern to do with a homogenisation of the Centre and the sense of a need to protect from this. The meeting was well attended and got off to a good start; an agenda was circulated and a trustee joined. However, it was disrupted by a Centre user who was distressed and became increasingly agitated and aggressive to the point where proceedings had to be halted and the police were called. I wrote in my field note [10.12.14] [see also Appendix 8]:

At the meeting Pat and [Centre user] asked for copies of the Centre Constitution, which [staff member] provided. Touching on questions of 'what does the Centre do' and 'what is its purpose' these issues were weirdly illustrated by a man who, joining the meeting proceeded to disrupt it by becoming increasingly angry. The whole thing dissolved and the police were called because he was becoming aggressive and frightening. It made me think how people are able to access the Centre and forms of organisational life through the Centre meeting and how the Centre manages people with complex issues. Was the outburst and aggression due to austerity (as someone suggested) or was it due to mental health issues (as someone else suggested simultaneously) or some combination of both?

The man who had disrupted the meeting had initially been keen to participate but seemed to be unable to listen to others, instead shouting over them, demanding he be listened to and getting angry. The volatility was frightening and I wondered if the opportunity to be heard in the context of a large group had proved too much and he had not been able to manage it. As I discuss in the following section, this raised important questions of the capacity of groups to contain and manage people who appear as challenging and disruptive.

5.4.2 Access to forms of organisational life

Opportunities to be in groups were a large part of what the Centre offered, but in the instance described above neither the meeting attendees nor staff had been able to contain or manage the aggression of a group member and recourse had been to an external authority in the form of the police. The incident seemed to illustrate questions concerning the Centre's purpose; should it focus on employment and training, as the trustee at the meeting had suggested, or should its focus be long-term mental health support? During the meeting another staff member had approached Ellie, who had been facilitating, and had pulled her away saying 'remember Ellie, self-managing!' and this idea – held for thirty-six years – of the importance of self-organising and autonomous groups, proved pervasive. However, aware of an ecological systems theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner 1979), I had wondered whether the meeting perhaps did need some form of structure. While it was to be applauded if self-organising and self-managing groups formed within the Centre, I felt that, illustrated by the incident during the meeting, there may be times and occasions wherein groups needed steering and a sense of holding and containment (Winnicott 1982). Indeed, the tree perhaps would not have been pulled down had the volunteers - vulnerable people - been overseen by staff members. I was reminded of an occasion where a member of staff had got bit cross in a staff meeting once, and how it had struck me as a privilege to be able to do that; to feel secure enough to know that your colleagues would not ostracise you but would contain and accept your human failings. I wondered about the sense of security afforded by being able to lose your temper and reflected on the man who had attended the Centre meeting:

This is why it was so awful when he completely lost it on Wednesday, because we all know how important it is to feel included and listened to. It was interesting that Clive said afterwards 'it's funny because he never usually says anything' because my feeling is that in finding himself in a space of being listened to, with a platform and audience, he went into overdrive as if he didn't know how to moderate his behaviour with others and that this is perhaps something that he would have an opportunity to learn in the context of a group at the Centre. But that groups maybe need to have a certain level of 'fixity' themselves if they are to withstand such destabilising, potentially annihilating, forces.

[Bella field note 12.12.14]

Bion's (1961) exploration of the relationships between conscious, task-focused work groups and non-conscious basic assumption groups perhaps provides a useful analytic lens through which to examine the disrupted meeting. Bion suggests that a sense of purpose and directedness can create a process through which is possible to move away from a precarious emotionality and the non-conscious drives that form basic assumption groups and instead

move towards task, differentiation and in so doing relieve a sense of self-dissolution and group collusion. The power of the basic assumption group is described by Bion (Long 1992: 30) when he suggests:

During basic assumption group functioning, individuals seem to find themselves saying things that they normally would disagree with or would modify, and behaving in a manner that they later experience as alien to themselves.

Was the anger displayed during the Centre meeting born of a fear of self-dissolution in the group context? Did the man who got upset feel that he would be consumed and thus had to disrupt the meeting in order to control it? Despite having an agenda, the meeting was exploratory and this may have been experienced as lacking direction and, as such, destabilising and frightening. It is possible to suggest that part of the role of BUCFP staff in relation to people with mental health issues in particular is to provide access to task-focused activity and forms of organisational life through a sense of holding and responsive containment, and that this enables the more marginalised members of society to gain a purchase in a knowable 'system'. While it might be possible for this form of community organisation to be construed as delivering those who are marginal into containing systems, it is also important to emphasise that the ethos of the Centre as 'user and volunteer led' ensures a level of responsivity and affords agency to those that enter it. Crucially, the boundaries of the system need to be malleable and responsive and determined by those working within them - the Centre users - if they are to act as the containers that 'include' rather than 'exclude'.

5.4.3 Art-making and access

In a continuation of the concept of access to forms of organisational life applied to ideas of art-making, it is possible to consider participants as, to a greater or lesser extent, 'tied in' through the doing and the material of the art project. As Askins and Pain (2011: 817) discuss drawing on ideas of 'messy materialities' and the importance of 'the deployment of matter':

The physical or embodied experiences of making art and using art-related materials may prompt or enable new social relations, and these encounters are both remembered reflectively (discursively) and reflexively (through the body).

During the art-making session following the week of the Centre meeting, the man that had been disruptive returned and wanted to join the group. We were operating now as an open group and, once I had explained that we were a research group and had gone through the information and consent process, he was able to join. Although he did not seem agitated,

some participants who had been at the Centre meeting were understandably wary. However, once he found a space to work he settled in and, painting the polystyrene balls to look like oranges, seemed happy. Though seeing him relaxed and apparently enjoying himself was something of a relief, I had a slight sense of concern that he might suddenly escalate as before. I became aware of a feeling that he needed to be managed and found that I was more alert to communication in the group, conscious of things that might 'trigger' him. Reflecting on this later, I wondered about this sense of needing to manage him, and conversely how his volatility served as a way for him to manage others. I wondered at how having something to do, a material object to work on and sense of purpose, however small, provided both a sense of boundary and also afforded a way into greater levels of structure. Were participants 'bound in' as part of an 'unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings' (Schatzki 1996: 89) wherein the purposefulness of the art exhibition and the self-setting of task within this enabled access to greater forms of organisation in terms of relationships with other people? I began to think more determinedly about the material nature of our becoming, the role of objects and how matrices of relations emerge co-terminously.

In this section I have explored the sometimes difficult to discern 'liminal spaces' and fluid relationships between group participants, Centre users and staff members within the environment of the BUCFP. This has included an examination of the contested nature of relationships as well as the effects of various destabilising forces and how they are managed by different people, at different times and in different ways. In the first example, due to the porosity between the food art research group and the Centre art group, participants occupying both spaces and their being united by the felling of the 'tree', the boundaries of the group dissolved to encompass the Centre meeting. Things that occurred in the Centre meeting consequently fed back into the research group, raising questions of forms of 'organisational life', materiality and the role of the Centre. In drawing on these examples I have demonstrated a type of circular causality (Juarrero 2002: 5) that is at work within and beyond the bounds of the group and have examined the way that this circularity and fluidity may be beneficial or not for participants and Centre users generally. I have demonstrated how the attempt to reclaim forms of power (felt to have been taken away by the felling of the tree and lack of sharing of information surrounding this), through asserting ability to make and take decisions and determine the direction of the Centre, raised questions of relationships between perceived power-holders and Centre users, who might be considered 'vulnerable' and what the role of the Centre, and groups within it might be.

5.5 January 2015

5.5.1 Food and spirituality

In this section I explore narratives within the group surrounding food poverty, spirituality and belief systems and consider the ways in which participants engaged with different cultural, ethical and moral approaches to food. The introduction of the idea that individuals were unable to make the 'right' sorts of food choices due to financial, as opposed to other forms of constraint such as lack of education, highlighted tensions between notions of self-education as agentic versus as individualising and not accounting for wider structural inequality. Re-opening the group meant the inclusion of newcomers, including on this occasion, Lorraine. When I joined the meeting at the agreed time, Lorraine, Pat, Steve and Clive were discussing global food distribution:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| Lorraine: | I mean some people don't even begin to think about the amount of cereals that goes into dog food that is preventing other people from actually eating them, like, people don't make that connection. |
| Clive: | No sure. |
| Bella: | Mmm. |
| Clive: | Sure mmm. |
| Steve: | It's also down to the politicians of that country that send stuff over and then they sell it to make money to go in their pocket. |
| Bella: | Yeah? |
| Steve: | They don't actually get it. |
| Pat: | We're talking about global corporations. |

[Group meeting 13.01.15]

The narrative context seemed to have been set and I found myself surprised at how political it was, despite Pat having been pursuing a theme of corrupt global multinationals over the past few sessions. When I raised the question of powerlessness and the idea that it might be futile to not give one's dog certain food because it might be depriving people in other parts of the world, Pat responded by saying 'I think I've said it before...be the change you want to see'. Drawing on the phrase widely attributed to Gandhi, Pat expressed a sentiment often adopted by social justice campaigns and an idea of the personal as political. 'The ripple effect', Pat said, 'you can only do [signalling 'small' with her thumb and forefinger] in this small space' and other participants listened and nodded in agreement. Whereas Pat might have been deploying

this narrative as part of a collectivising effort, it has nevertheless been critiqued as an individualising narrative construction, as Morton (2011) argues 'the 'be the change' narrative suggests that your responsibilities begin and end with your own behaviour; it's apolitical and a little smug'. Adopted by the new age movement in particular Heelas (1996: 74) suggests that - in that it provides an internalised, self-regulating and quasi-religious voice that determines one's actions - the basic theme of the 'be the change' narrative is one of self-responsibility. Echoing earlier proclamations of the importance of individual strength, morality and personal belief systems, Pat's repetition - 'be the change you want to see', 'you've got to make it happen, we are being the change' - begged the question of just how such change might be enacted. Did it mean altering one's shopping habits to reflect a particular moral code? Did it mean joining a political party? Volunteering at a food bank? It felt, to me, inspirational but a bit empty. Aware of the risk involved in moving outside the meaning frame being constructed by Pat, and conscious of the problematic concept of my holding power and an ability to define the operant context, I nonetheless decided that this was an opportune moment to ask the group: 'what is food?' The response was immediate: 'nourishment' replied Pat and she, Lorraine, Steve and Clive continued to discuss what they understood nourishment to mean. While for Steve nourishment was closely allied to a medicinal view of food because he had recently developed Type 2 diabetes, food was revealed by other members not only to consist of the right amounts of fruit and vegetables in one's diet, but also as something more spiritual and meaningful. As the group examined relationships between, for example, fasting and religious practices such as kosher diets, a narrative of food as more than simply functional began to develop. The idea of food as functional and medicinal as well as spiritually nourishing was framed by participants as more easily accessible through non-western practices:

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|-----------|---|
| Lorraine: | Because a lot of the calories that are ingested are actually taken up with digestion, you actually gain far much more nutritional benefit out of one good meal a day. |
| Bella: | Mmm. |
| Lorraine: | Than out of eating three times a day. |
| Pat: | Like Buddhist monks if they're gonna eat it's got to be before twelve noon, they're not allowed to eat afterwards. |
| Bella: | So the body, part of the energy of the food is in the digesting of it? |
| Pat: | Yeah that's why breakfast is your best meal. |

[Group meeting 13.01.15]

While not having three square meals a day might, in a UK context, be associated with forms of impoverishment, the availability of other cultural narratives enabled the shaping of one's life in ways that transcended certain environments. In this instance, Buddhist approaches offered an alternative relationship to food - spirituality *and* science - to that offered by western approaches. Responding, I asked 'so do you think that we've got it all round the wrong way...all completely backwards?' to which Pat replied 'yeah a little bit, well we've moved it from that necessity of life to being, it's like money, like money, it's a currency'. In this narrative construction western food systems had become corrupted by capital. Pat and Lorraine positioned themselves as people who carried with them a different, alternative knowledge; spiritual, yet practical and sensible, associated with meaning more than just money. Viewed through the prism of food inequality, 'be the change' - clearly stated several times at the outset to indicate to newcomer Lorraine that this was the narrative the group was working to - was of political and social change as part spiritual endeavour. Through this co-construction Lorraine had also been successfully bought into the group. Keen to explore ideas of 'nourishment' and functionality versus meaningfulness, I suggested 'we don't eat just for necessity do we? We eat because it's a comfort or because we like it' and participants responded:

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| Lorraine: | Well there's a sensual side to it isn't there? |
| Bella: | Sensual? Yes, is that what you said? Sensual or essential? |
| Lorraine: | Well would, no there's a sensual, yes it's not, there's an essential but there's also a sensual side. |
| Bella: | Element. |
| Lorraine: | There's a social sensual side. |
| Clive: | Life-sustaining. |
| Lorraine: | Isn't it? |
| Clive: | Life-sustaining, life-sustaining? |
| Bella: | It is life-sustaining, well that's it. |
| Clive: | Yeah. |
| Bella: | Chocolate isn't a necessity, is it? |
| Clive: | Not really no. |
| Bella: | We don't really need it to survive. |
| Clive: | Not really no. |

Bella: It's a pleasure.

[Group meeting 13.01.15]

Lorraine, Clive, Pat and I had explored that food was 'more than just medicine' through explications of differing cultural attitudes as tied to certain spiritual and religious belief systems and we had begun to examine our own non-utilitarian food practices. When Clive interjected with the idea that food was 'life-sustaining' it was unclear whether he was suggesting that food itself was life-sustaining, or whether he was responding to the 'social sensual' that Lorraine mentioned and suggesting that it was the sociality of food that was life-sustaining. The conversational confusions seemed indicative of overlaps between ideas of food as simultaneously medicinal, functional and 'essential' as well 'socially sensual' and an important socially shared pleasure. Lorraine then tied the idea of the pleasure and sensuality of food to the human desire to diversify and experiment and this as driven by the seeking of new forms of sensory experience. Thus in a relatively short period of time participants had furnished the group space with myriad ways of thinking about what food meant to them and the concept that it was 'more than just functional'. Multiple perspectives had been highlighted, while a new member had also been tied into the group.

5.5.2 Responsibility and education

Paula was slightly late to join the group meeting and was keen to talk about her friend who, despite being able to afford to buy a flat and live comfortably, opted to live in her car eating only 'crisps and bread'. Paula was critical of her friend's decisions, describing how she delayed 'eating healthily', claiming instead that she would start to do so when she was settled. Yet, as Paula described, this was something that never happened which, she said, was 'the most frustrating thing'. Paula seemed surprised when Pat and I did not fall into step with her narrative construction, offering instead possible reasons for her friend's behaviour; 'but if she hasn't got a kitchen?' I said, and, suggesting that we all sometimes take a slightly lazy attitude towards cooking; 'we all do that, don't we?' Pat added. Paula's introduction of an 'invisible other' (Ritchie 2012) seemed to serve as a device around which she invited participants to join in the taking of a certain moral position. Pat's and my lack of collusion, arguably prompted by Pat herself living in a van and my resistance towards a tone that I found slightly berating, meant that we had prevented the tellability (Ochs and Capps 2001) of Paula's narrative construction. In response Paula repositioned herself as more sympathetic to her friend, saying 'I mean, I can see her situation'. The attempt to construct a narrative that was not readily

accepted indicated that there was at work within the group the potential for the emergence of different value systems. Pat, Paula, Steve and I continued an exploration of Paula's friend's predicament:

- Pat: She just wants to be a nomad and she's most probably enjoying it, actually eating crisps because then she doesn't have to think about it at all, do you, you just go out and buy crisps or sandwich and a tin of coke.
- Paula: Yeah but I would feel so awful if I just lived on that.
- Bella: Yeah, yeah.
- Pat: Yeah but for a lot of people that is it, that is the main diet.
- Paula: And then they wonder why they feel so tired and horrible.
- Bella: Mmm.
- Pat: They don't know that there's an option! [laughing]
- Bella: Does it feel like though sometimes, like cooking can be a bit of a chore can't it?
- Paula: Oh yeah.
- Steve: Yeah.
- Bella: I mean for me you know, I find it's like everyday it's.
- Pat: It's a chore course it is.
- Bella: It is a chore, you know, so you can see why people.
- Pat: They don't want chores.
- Paula: Just want to do the easy thing.
- Pat: Go to McDonalds.

[Group meeting 13.01.15]

The narrative construction underway via Pat was one of Paula's friend as a carefree happy nomad for whom food did not play a large part in her life. Paula countered this construction by suggesting that the friend may in fact not be happy and instead be feeling 'tired and horrible'. As such Paula put herself in the position of knower and someone who had made a connection between food and mood whereas her friend was positioned as 'not knower', unaware that a happier life awaited her if only she would move into a flat and start eating properly. Pat's comment that 'they don't know there's an option' continued to shift the narrative away from 'happy nomad' and towards Paula's unknowing subject. When I interjected with the suggestion that 'cooking can be a chore' I attempted to shift the construction once again to one of

empathy for the friend, offering a more universal and levelling narrative through the use of 'for me' to invoke shared experience. This was however refuted by Pat and Paula and became the more critical 'people just want to do the easy thing', which enabled a subtext to emerge that suggested that people did not eat the right sorts of things because they were lazy and did not adhere to a particular health discourse which included investment - time and energy - given to food. Food became a major marker around which people could be judged in their relationship to it. Paula's introduction of the 'invisible other' had indeed served the purpose of an object around which group members had been able to take various moral positions.

When Lorraine said 'yeah I only bother to cook when I'm with someone, I mean, you know, if I've got a partner, if I've got children' she seemed to echo my narrative of cooking as hard work, and so to be taking a less prescriptive approach:

Paula:	If you're on your own it's less motivation to cook.
Bella:	Yeah.
Lorraine:	But just for yourself, on your own.
Pat:	Until you realise that's what you've got to do.

[Group meeting 13.01.15]

The narrative development underway between Pat and Paula seemed to suggest that in order to be a full and proper human being one had to 'do chores', invest time and energy in certain socially sanctioned relationships to food, and take part in the sometimes boring work of cooking lest you be positioned as lazy and abject (Tyler 2013). Earlier explorations of morality and ideas of personal strength were, in this example, tied more directly to food practices; a narrative that was perhaps at odds with earlier constructions wherein less conventional approaches to food were possible. When Lorraine raised the point that 'ironically these days it can be more expensive to cook your own food than it is to grab something out', this posed a problem for Paula and Pat's narrative construction. The narrative subtext had been that 'eating slowly' [Paula], cooking your own food and making proper meals, were good and virtuous - indeed were political and quasi-spiritual acts of agentic social change. Conversely, not 'eating properly' (regardless of circumstances like living in a car or, like me, being a sometimes tired and time-poor working single parent) were 'bad' and, by extension, un-virtuous. Morality and goodness were merged with the taking of a particular attitude towards food, to not be doing so in the correct way was viewed negatively. Within the narrative framework of 'be the change' the onus remained on the individual to ensure that the correct position was taken in relation to food. When Lorraine gave the example of economic inequality she highlighted that

it was not just laziness or ignorance that prompted people to buy cheap and easy food, but economics too. Following Pat and Paula's narrative construction to its next logical step would be to surmise that poorer people were 'less virtuous', lazier, less strong and less engaged in political and socially conscious action. Whether one was not only human but also engaged politically - had a conscience - was dependent on one's ability to make certain consumer choices, to not do so for whatever reasons, meant that one was stripped of both moral and political agency. Perhaps it was no wonder that at this juncture the group changed the topic, turning to talk instead about the art materials that they wanted to use for the exhibition, and I was reminded again about the way this was utilised by the group as a distraction from sometimes difficult and complex issues.

Given the setting of the operant context as 'be the change', it was not surprising that when food poverty was discussed some viewed it as something individuals ought to be adept at managing through a form of self-education:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| Lorraine: | A select minority live the lives of Riley while the majority live in poverty, don't they? |
| Bella: | Yeah, yeah. |
| Paula: | But then there's a lot of people that, it's not necessarily starving, it's people that are sort of maybe uneducated and eating the wrong things. |
| Pat: | Malnutrition. |
| Paula: | So when you're, there's a lot of people that, they're in poverty, that are overweight because they just eat the wrong. |
| Pat: | Because they're malnourished. |
| Paula: | They're malnourished. |
| Bella: | But, but is that, is that? |
| Paula: | Eating the wrong things. |
| Bella: | See my concern with that is that's sort of like, blaming the individual for a structural problem you know? |
| Lorraine: | No, it's not their fault that they can't afford to buy better quality food. |
| Bella: | Exactly, I think it's dangerous if we say that they're not you know people aren't educated and making the wrong choices when actually. |
| Paula: | I didn't really mean it like that, sorry. |

- Bella: No, I know.
- Paula: It's the way I said it.
- Bella: But just to draw it out but.
- Paula: There's a lot of people that are in poverty that are overweight, it's not like back in Victorian times that people were really skinny.
- Bella: Yeah.
- Lorraine: But these days they're overweight because of the amount of salt and sugar.
- Paula: Yeah.
- Lorraine: That goes in.
- Bella and Lorraine: Cheaper food.
- Bella: Yeah.
- Lorraine: It's not the choices they make it's what they can afford to buy.

[Group meeting 13.01.15]

Lorraine's opening statement appeared to create a narrative of 'them and us' that highlighted entrenched forms of social inequality and perhaps also sought to create cohesion within the group; we were either the 'select minority who lived the life of Riley' or we were the majority, living in poverty. Keen to provide a counter to this, and perhaps demonstrating a discomfort with being positioned as poor and resisting Lorraine's binary construction, Paula introduced the idea that people who experienced food poverty perhaps did so because of a lack of education. Offering disruption to Lorraine's construction, Paula's narrative seemed to suggest that the poor take responsibility for learning how to eat, echoing her and Pat's earlier comments that people were experiencing food poverty because 'they didn't know any better' and continuing the building of a narrative that suggested food poverty was the fault of the poor themselves. Not only were people experiencing food poverty poor, but they were also, in this account, ignorant. My challenging of Paula's narrative construction was supported by Lorraine who pointed out that people may well be educated but nonetheless unable to buy healthy food due to economic factors, illuminating differing narrative constructs at play within the group. Lorraine continued to develop a counter to Paula and Pat's narrative, highlighting the food industry as culpable and the lack of choice when living on a limited budget. This shifted the blame away from people experiencing food poverty and again highlighted the structural and systemic factors that contributed to it. Both Lorraine and I developed a narrative that was protective of people experiencing food poverty, locating the cause with economic

factors and an unscrupulous food industry, while Paula and Pat took a more individualising approach that put personal action, divorced from wider context, as both the cause and the solution. The group discussion appeared to raise the question of the limits of personal agency within structural circumstances. While forms of self-education surrounding food might appear emancipatory, and to provide an important sense of agency, if they neglected to consider wider systemic factors such narratives nevertheless colluded with neoliberal doctrines of individualism divorced from wider socio-political and cultural contexts in their failure to 'see' the systemic. Popular media discourses of 'frugal foodyism' and 're-skilling' (Wincott 2017) were deployed by Paula and Pat as emancipatory and politically attuned food practices that provided for them acceptable narrative constructions surrounding cooking and food during a time of austerity. An engagement with political, economic and systemic questions, conversely, was viewed as defeatist and not enabling the enacting of agency. One's capability, self-concept and the narratives deployed to make-sense of living in challenging financial times, appeared to be far more important than traditional forms of political action, in Paula and Pat's account.

5.5.3 Openness and closedness

In this section I discuss how, despite the group having decided to operate as open and having gone through a process of re-recruitment, newcomer Lorraine – having been initially welcomed into the group – appeared to be 'blocked' by participants when she suggested contributions to the art-making. The 'blocking' of Lorraine raised questions about the group's willingness to include new members and the possibility that they experienced the introduction as destabilising to their established mode of working, also perhaps demonstrating the somewhat provisional nature of the language of 'inclusivity'. Having made several attempts to join discussions of art-making, in that her suggestions deviated from the chosen form that the group was working to, Lorraine's attempts were noticeably rejected. Participants deployed elaborate avoidance and distraction techniques to evade the question of whether Lorraine's canvases were included as part of the exhibition or not. In what follows I provide examples of this 'blocking' and suggest that this meta-communication by the group indicated that they were working to a specific mode and that, despite claims to be inclusive, they were perhaps not so willing to accept the introduction of difference at this stage.

Pursuing the question of whether or not Lorraine's canvases should go on the exhibition walls and demonstrating reluctance, participants then posed another hurdle:

Pat: I think the original montages should go up.

Bella: You think those should go up?

Paula: Yeah 'cos they're the beginning aren't they?

Pat: The beginning like.

Bella: Oh really, so the exhibition should chart the whole progress?

Pat: Well just the beginning and the end.

Paula: I think it would.

Pat: Leave the rest up to your imagination.

Paula: Show the inspiration and where it started.

Pat: Mmm.

Bella: Mmm.

Paula: And that, that we were, weren't, that there were some thoughts behind it and.

Bella: Yeah.

Pat: 'Cos there's a lot on those montages.

Bella: There is a lot on there.

Pat: To engage people to think.

[Group meeting 13.01.15]

In what was arguably an attempt to signal to Lorraine that any new ideas that did not conform to the existing art mode would not be welcome, Pat, Paula and I concluded that the collages produced in the earlier stages of the group's development ought to be exhibited in the available space. A concept of time and the group's shared development was given as a justification for the collages, rather than Lorraine's canvases, going on the exhibition walls. Paula's highlighting that there were 'thoughts behind it' indicated that the exhibition and project had a history that group members were invested in and cared about, and that if new members wanted to join they had to understand and respect this. Lorraine fell silent and did not speak again until later in the conversation when she was arguably able to re-enter due to her learning that there were other newcomers who had only just started working on their pieces. Hearing that she was not alone, Lorraine said 'see I'd quite like to do an obese, a fat, an obese dog and a really skinny child' and the response from group members confirmed the notion that entry to the group was conditional upon adherence to its existing functioning:

Pat: In what? What medium? You wanted to paint yeah?

Lorraine: Well either like flat or modelled.

Bella: What? Yeah 3-D?

Lorraine: Just to highlight the thing of so much food going into dog food.

Pat: Mmm.

[Group meeting 13.01.15]

Lorraine attempted to highlight her inclusion in the group, drawing on earlier discussions wherein she had been part of narrative construction, but her keenness that she do something to go up on the wall - 'well that's why I was asking if you've got wall space as well you see' - was nevertheless met with scepticism. Deploying a technique of distraction and effectively ignoring Lorraine's question, I turned to Steve who had been experimenting with bits of jewellery. Pat responded to Lorraine by saying 'oh you could have dogs on the table' before then pointing out a 'nice red jacket' on the Centre's clothes rail, something that took Lorraine's attention - and Lorraine - literally outside of the group space. In an attempt to then re-group participants who had broken out into smaller conversations, I began to address members only to find myself interrupted by Clive joining in the diversion tactics by asking if I would like a cup of coffee. I responded with a 'yes please' and what followed were almost comical deliberations lasting several minutes wherein other participants - Mel, Paula and Pat - asked if they could also have coffee and tea. 'Earl Grey please!' said Mel and lots of discussion of who wanted what, and who had sugar, and what types of milk and so on, followed. The group seemed to be enjoying an element of disruption and confusion. Utilising blocking and diversion tactics and displaying group solidarity in the face of the potential destabilisation brought by a new member, the group were building a fortress of words using something as innocuous as tea-making. Paula continued by talking about experimenting with different art materials, and the issue of what Lorraine wanted to do disappeared; the group's closure had been effective. However, Lorraine inserted herself back into the conversation by referring directly to the canvases and stating clearly and loudly 'see, I bought these in' at which point Paula responded by saying 'great!'. Thus eventually, and after much persistence, Lorraine's voice had been heard but not without the group having made it quite clear - albeit indirectly - that inclusion was based on their terms and that they were an already established entity. In a demonstration of Steve's awareness of the subtleties of group dynamics, he proceeded to offer a compromise. Given that the issue could no longer be ignored, he suggested a solution in the form of the idea that the canvases be incorporated with the installation as placemats, with participants making plates, knives and forks to go alongside them. The group all agreed that it was a good idea and I finally gave Lorraine the appropriate response to her offer of free

canvases by saying 'thank you'. It is possible to suggest that despite the 're-opening' of the group, ideas of 'open' and 'closed' and inclusion and exclusion are far more complex when applied to group dynamics in practice than they appear as descriptions in language. It is important to note that it was the material carrying out of the art-making task that underscored ideas of inclusion and exclusion. This indicated that the group was now sufficiently formed, the task established, and that the group was able to select what 'parts' - in the form of people and ideas - belonged to it and would help achieve its stated aims. Perhaps also interesting to note was the way in which positions and roles were taken up and maintained; Pat was inclusive in forging something of a friendship with Lorraine, and Steve had, as in earlier sessions, also demonstrated a drive towards inclusivity and mediation. In this example both he and Pat worked to incorporate and contain a new member and walk a line between the seemingly often conflicting tensions between inclusion and exclusion.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the group's progress over the three months from October 2014 to January 2015. Critical moments (Thomson et al 2002) can be identified, for example, in the realisation that group numbers were falling and the destruction of the tree. The need to ask why group numbers were falling, and the discovery of difficult feelings of exclusion among non-members, enabled a detailed consideration and a consequent re-structuring of the group. This re-forming demonstrated an important critical and reflexive capacity and brought with it a new awareness of group structure, process and purpose. Continuing the themes of inclusion and exclusion it was possible to examine the ways in which, despite proclaiming to be open and inclusive, the group used its communication - and forms of meta-communication - to demonstrate effectively the ways that new members could or could not be integrated. This also brought a greater understanding of the role that the material played in the dynamics of the group as members were accepting and inclusive in a non-material sense, Lorraine was welcomed into the group's conversation but when she suggested the introduction of a material 'new' the group struggled to accept her. This served to demonstrate that the participants and group as a system were in some sense 'formed' and were not able to tolerate things that might destabilise their working and that participants were protective of the space they had created. As we explored the topic of food poverty in greater depth, both shared and diverging narratives began to emerge. Ideas surrounding choice, consumerism and self-education met with questions of systemic inequality. The data revealed the ways in which

broader societal narratives surrounding food practices in the time of austerity were utilised, interpreted and understood by participants. Emphasis on creativity and adaptation in relation to food was revealed as a way to demonstrate agency and capability, and also to resist forms of stigmatisation, it was important to be seen to be doing food in the right way and investing time and energy into it. Some participants appeared to draw on media narratives of acceptable frugality and 're-skilling' (Wincott 2017), such as celebrations of 'cooking from scratch' and growing your own food, which meant that food poverty became something that, through forms of self-education, could be managed. These were also tied to emancipatory narratives in their apparent rejection of corporate consumerism raising complex questions of agency, political ability and adaptability and maintaining a foothold in mainstream society when one was increasingly financially marginalised.

Chapter Six: Data analysis February 2015 - May 2015

6.1 Introduction

This third data analysis chapter charts the final three months of the fieldwork as the group moved towards the exhibition and the Brighton Festival. Again, material played a central role, and while ideas of vulnerability and the 'safe space' may have been challenged through the language of inclusion, the art-making revealed that there were nonetheless conditions of entry into the group and that a mode had been established. The narrative structure of the group was still being explored and in this chapter I examine how ideas of the personal and experiential surrounding food poverty intersect with socio-political understandings. The strengthening of a political narrative within the group - arguably as a form of explanation and sense-making - provided a narrative that made its way into the artwork. As such, this chapter highlights relationships between personal experiences and understandings of food poverty and political understandings and the role of art-making within these.

6.2 February 2015

6.2.1 Bringing together of different knowledges

In this section I examine narrative constructs that structured the group in different ways and at different times. Ideas of a 'safe' and 'therapeutic' space carry with them notions of vulnerability and, building on analysis in previous chapters, I explore this as a narrative that was deployed, yet at times resisted, by group members. A sense of politicisation, developed more explicitly by Pat and newcomer Fran, and articulated through the art-making, arguably engendered an ability to recognise poverty, disadvantage and vulnerability while also resisting stigmatising discourses.

Although not experiencing food poverty herself (and despite my reservations because of this), retired and well-spoken design technology teacher Fran joined the group at Ellie's suggestion. Fran brought with her an enthusiasm, knowledge of art and materials and a sense of authority. Her open and vocal derision of government austerity policies married with other political voices in the group such as Pat's. This emerging and politically focused narrative continued to shift the problem of food poverty away from an idea of individuals who are weak, including morally weak, incapable and make the wrong sorts of choices, not budgeting properly or unable to cook (Roberts 2014; Chorley 2014; Garthwaite 2016) and towards the political and

systemic. This shift raised questions to do with the relationships between political engagement and activism as forms of action that might be considered healthy in their engendering an ability to resist 'being done to', as Mullender and Ward (1991), Bandura (1997) and Sanders (2001) explore. The ability to address systemic issues and develop counter narratives (Bamberg and Andrews 2004), and the relation this has with wellbeing, is explored by Squire (2005: 97) who highlights the ability of those living with HIV in South Africa to talk about their experiences, stating that 'telling such stories was also seen by professionals, and the tellers themselves, as related to social, psychological and physiological health'. Drawing on Labov (2001, 2002), Squire (2005: 97) examines the ways in which understandings of narrative as personal sense-making increasingly converge with wider forms of political and cultural discourse. She states 'it could be helpful to view other personal narratives as strategies for explaining events that are partially represented, or outside representation, and that stories drag into representation some form of theoretical coherence'. From this perspective, the ability of stories to be told makes them available as forms of representation and, in bringing them into a cultural and political milieu, alters that milieu.

In what appeared to form a bridge between ideas of personal, lived experience and the wider socio-political and cultural sphere, participants had been seeking to understand how it was that one million people in the UK were living in food poverty (Boyle 2014). I felt that as a university researcher I was being positioned by the group as an 'expert knower' with access to certain valid and 'legitimate' forms of knowledge (Foucault 1980) and an expectation that I would make this knowledge available for members to utilise. I started to feel as if I was researching food poverty *itself* rather than what the group understood food poverty to be. In a demonstration of this I arranged a meeting with Professor Erik Millstone of the University of Sussex, an expert in food and agriculture. I planned to ask him whether the narrative development within the group - of corrupt multinationals and government policy as behind the rise in food poverty - was, in his opinion, accurate, and what his thoughts on this topic were. In so doing it struck me that what the group were seeking to do was perhaps bring a 'legitimate' story in line with their own understandings as a form of reinforcement. When framed within a socio-historical account, experiences and thoughts on food poverty were made culturally and politically legitimate, historical 'truth' and accuracy made their experiences 'real' and 'valid'. In a similar way to that described by Squire (2005), in locating the experiential and personal within wider socio-historical, political and cultural accounts, experience could be represented and become theoretically relevant and coherent. This made me wonder if what we were doing might be thought of as inquiry group or community of practice approach (Wenger 1998;

Reason 2002) and if my ability to access to certain forms of 'valid' knowledge was being capitalised upon by the group, suggesting Wenger's (1998: 15) contention that:

The notion of meaning production has to do with our ability to 'own' meanings; it involves issues of social participation and relations of power in fundamental ways. Indeed, many theories in this category have been concerned with issues of resistance to institutional or colonial power though local cultural production.

The meeting between 'local' knowledge and experience, and supposedly 'valid' and expert knowledge, led me to ask if perhaps what was most useful to a group in a community setting was access to information based on their own inquiries. In facilitating ways that would enable group members to address questions relating to systemic factors in their lives, it was possible to view access to information as a form of group self-learning and support. In this sense I was not researcher extracting information, rather the group and I - through the pooling of our resources - were co-creating knowledge, as Weick (1995: 126) describes:

When we say that meanings materialize, we mean that sense-making is, importantly, an issue of language, talk, and communication. Situations, organizations and environments are talked into existence.

The realisation of the importance of access to information provoked the question again of whether the notion of the safe, closed group space was perhaps patronising, or even infantilising. The group's desire to be 'open' could be considered a rejection of the 'safe space' and a call for more information through which to better understand food poverty. Perhaps the narrative of vulnerability as needing to be addressed through containment in the 'safe space' and internal psychologising was part of broader neoliberal discourse that sought to locate problems with the individual, rather than with society. When the neoliberal State increasingly orientates itself around the emotional lives of its citizens (Mizra 2005), then it is perhaps to be expected that an individualising - and de-politicising - approach to wellness would occur. Positioning me as someone with access to knowledge beyond that of the group can be considered an acknowledgement of the importance and usefulness of information in re-thinking the systemic and structural, denoting a capacity to take the 'long view' and re-position selves in a landscape changed by the introduction of 'new' information and the potential this has for narrative formation. This was, however, not an unproblematic notion, raising complex questions of the relationship between local and contextual knowledge and its association with academic and 'expert' knowledge. I felt that Fran and Pat had a clear expectation that I would research and gather information on the topics that they were raising in the sessions, yet I was concerned that the group's assumption that I would 'do research', and bring back knowledge that they did not otherwise have access to, ran the risk of inhibiting the emergence of their

knowledge. How did the positioning of group members, myself included, by group members affect the emergence of types of knowledge?

In the February group meeting [10.02.15] Ellie described how the Centre was funded by Comic Relief, who was in turn supported by Sainsbury's. Ellie's descriptions, and suggestions that the Centre partner with the 'Sainsbury's down the road', appeared to provide for Fran and Pat an opportunity exercise a narrative, and identity, as political agitators working together against 'dodgy corporates'. In this construction the group were powerful and knowing, aware of the 'bigger picture' and able to make decisions about who they worked with. Their knowledge combined to enable them to perform actions that were protective of their narrative constructions. By this point the group had been joined also by new member Leon, a BME man in his early 40s and keen amateur photographer.

- | | |
|--------|---|
| Ellie: | We're funded through Comic Relief and one of the big companies that give to comic relief is Sainsbury's and they do big Comic Relief days with all their staff, so they are partnering us up with Sainsbury's, the local Sainsbury's down the road. |
| Bella: | Ah. |
| Leon: | Yeah. |
| Ellie: | So I've said to them why don't they come and I will do a tour on a Tuesday afternoon to the food, or the food art project. |
| Bella: | Mmm. |
| Ellie: | So they can see where their money goes. |
| Pat: | As long as - |
| Ellie: | I was thinking it would be quite a nice idea to. |
| Pat: | - they are not expecting to be? |
| Ellie: | Corporate? These are workers in Sainsbury's. |
| Pat: | Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. |
| Ellie: | Do you know, these are cashiers, these are food shelf people, there might be a manager. |
| Fran: | [laughs] |
| Pat: | Oh just the workers alright, I thought you were talking of corporate. |
| Leon: | Oh just them? |
| Pat: | 'We're funding you, you've got to give us some' hmm? |

- Ellie: I don't think they're, the idea is they will go back to their managers and say they're doing this.
- Pat: No we're going to advertise Tesco's!
- Ellie: Hang on let me finish, and, and so they will hopefully form a relationship with us and we can maybe ask for food.
- Pat: yeah, yeah.
- Ellie: And funding towards a really big event, I don't know but you know just thinking, we're talking about Tesco's being corporate and dodgy but.
- Fran: Okay.
- Leon: Yeah, we don't know now.
- Ellie: I mean these corporate are made up of people who.
- Pat: As long as.
- Ellie: Do that very.
- Fran: Of course yes, yes.
- Ellie: You know, low minimum wage.
- Pat: As long as they are not expecting us.
- Ellie: They are still employing people

[Group interview 10.02.15]

In the above passage Ellie posed the idea that, as somewhere dependent to a large extent on charitable donations, the Centre had to maintain and develop relationships with certain businesses. She began to develop a narrative of a harmonious relationship between the BUCFP and Sainsbury's. In order to appease Pat and other group members' suspicions of 'dodgy corporate' affiliations, the supermarket was portrayed as consisting of 'the workers, shelf people and cashiers', people who share the experience of poverty through a 'low minimum wage'. Ellie's reasoning that the Centre could develop a relationship with the supermarkets and 'maybe ask for food', suggested that as a charity they were perhaps not in a position to take a moral stance concerning where the food and funding came from and that a 'them and us' mentality did not address the complexities involved; supermarkets were 'still employing people' and were thus in some sense 'good'. This position stood in opposition to Pat's which was borne of a political and ideological stance that viewed interference by big business as fundamentally questionable. Pat and Fran, and others more tentatively, had been building an anti-corporate narrative and with it a political identity that was opposed to business and

corporate interests. In the above extract, this narrative construction was challenged by Ellie. The overtly political narrative that criticised the supermarkets was thrown into question by the information that the BUCFP, and hence the group, were inadvertently being sustained by them. This tension illustrates Delanty's (2003: 67) argument that 'fear of losing what they had become dependent upon leads citizens to refrain from challenging the corporations that have colonised local communities'. The development of an anti-corporate narrative had enabled resistance to, and a questioning of, the role of supermarkets in a direct and locally applicable way. In this scenario the group were not powerless or vulnerable but possessed knowledge and social capital that enabled them to resist from a political and moral position. Participants as self-determining and able to enact moral and political agency stood in contrast to earlier depictions wherein participants were described, and described themselves, as 'vulnerable' people living 'chaotic lives' who valued the group as a 'therapeutic' space to 'just do some art'. At the start of February's meeting, and waiting for people to arrive, Ellie, Pat and I had been talking about 'our people' in ways that retained this depiction of vulnerable lives:

- Ellie: [to Pat] We were just saying about where our people are.
- Pat: [laughs]
- Ellie: And why they don't want to come to meetings.
- Pat: Well nobody wants meetings, do they? They just want to do the hands on stuff.
- Ellie: They just want that therapeutic kind of.
- Pat: Yeah, yeah this is not.
- Bella: The planning is not an enjoyable part of it?
- Pat: It's not, no.
- Bella: Right.
- Pat: Or in my case, it's not the easy part of it, I can't plan me life let alone something else, do you know what I mean?
- Ellie: I agree I think people here are, life can be quite chaotic.
- Pat: Yeah, yeah.
- Ellie: So to be able to come and do some art is.
- Pat: That's all you need.

[Group meeting 10.02.15]

As in previous meetings, participant vulnerabilities were foregrounded as reasons for low or non-attendance of meetings and sessions. The contrast between this and later, arguably politicised, narratives highlights the bringing of differing structures and narratives to bear on the group space and the fluidity of these.

6.2.2 Inclusion and the art form

In light of participant responses to Lorraine's joining, it was interesting to see parallels in responses to new comer Leon. When he asked if it would be possible to include as part of the exhibition '2-D, 3-D's and drawings', participants stated that there needed to be space on the exhibition walls for the timelines, highlighting the now established consensus about not including art material on the wall lest it 'dominate' [Fran]. When it transpired that Leon was keen to use the space to display photographs of his allotment, Ellie made the group's position clear:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Leon: | I have, I have got pictures, that's why I'm asking like, 'cos I've got an allotment. |
| Bella: | You mean like, photos? |
| Leon: | Photos, drawings. |
| Ellie: | No, you know, I think we're a bit. |
| Leon: | I know what you're saying. |
| Ellie: | If you want to bring your pictures here then maybe we can put them on the wall once we've had that discussion. |
| Leon: | Yeah. |
| Ellie: | I know you've just gone through all your photographs so now you're keen to exhibit your photos. |
| Leon: | Yeah, yeah but what I was saying is. |
| Ellie: | I don't know if it's, it's. |
| Leon: | Also is that, as well, for people to do some now. |
| Ellie: | For within the food project. |

[Group meeting 10.02.15]

In this scenario Ellie was protective of the group, and their work, maintaining a position despite Leon's insertions and he realised that there were conditions of entry to the group and

project. If he were to join he would need to subscribe to the way that the group was working, a position reiterated by Fran, Clive and me:

- Fran: I think you've got to be careful that these things will detract from the main focus.
- Leon: Okay.
- Bella: Yeah, I agree with that.
- Clive: Yeah.
- Bella: Yeah.
- Fran: 'Cos what I'm saying is: how are these gonna be?
- Bella: 'Cos we've worked on it collectively haven't we for six months, seven months?

[Group meeting 10.02.15]

I used the concept of time to emphasise that the group was established and had a shared history and experiences, drawing the other group members into my argument with the question 'haven't we?' The narrative subtext - 'we are formed' - closed off Leon's suggestions that deviated from the form. However, keen to demonstrate inclusivity given the problems the group had faced over this previously, Pat proceeded to embark, with some difficulty, in describing a way that Leon *could* be included by using as a basis for his drawing and photography the content generated through the collages produced in the earlier stages of the group's work.

- Pat: Not the sculpture...yeah? Just some of the concepts within those, the collage, can be exploded into a drawing or a photo you know?
- Bella: Oh I see what you mean.
- Fran: [to Mel who has just joined the meeting] Just kind of talking about the exhibition.
- Bella: Do you want to explain that to?
- Pat: I just have! [laughing]
- Bella: You'll have to explain it again I don't think everyone heard you [laughs] erm.
- Pat: Just saying that other than just like the sculptural work.
- Clive: Yeah?

Pat: The main table work, 'cos we're displaying that and that [pointing to both notice boards] part of the timeline, part of the collage, surely we can pick out certain topics, especially from the collage, which we can, you [indicating to Leon] can express?

Clive: Good idea.

Bella: Mmm.

Pat: You know, like just normal drawing, painting.

Bella: Yes.

Pat: Or photography, just to.

Leon: Yeah.

Pat: Well it's just like expanding that on the wall.

Bella: Mmm.

Pat: With all these.

Fran: Yeah, yep.

Mel: Yeah.

Leon: Maybe that could be.

Pat: Have I explained it?

Leon: That could be part of the exhibition, as well?

Pat: Well it is!

Ellie: Yeah.

Leon: Okay.

Bella: So, for example.

Pat: So, you can bring it in normal, sort of painting and drawing.

Bella: Okay, so.

Pat: 'Cos.

Bella: Okay.

Pat: Not just sculptures.

[Group meeting 10.02.15]

The problem was revealed not to be that there was not enough space on the exhibition walls, because in actuality there was, but that Leon needed to demonstrate a willingness to be part of the group and adopt the group's way of working; Pat offered him the opportunity to do this

and enter the group. This gave Leon a sense that he could 'be part of the exhibition as well' whilst simultaneously encouraging Fran to repeat her cautious assertion that 'we have to be a little bit careful that it's not too dominant'. While they had attempted to include Leon through conversation, as with Lorraine, participants were less keen to do so materially and in a way that might jeopardise the work they were invested in. In a demonstration of ways in which the group (including me) used concepts of time in order to manage and control the threat to their stability that Leon posed, he had been offered the possibility of being introjected into the group through inclusion at an earlier stage of its development. Leon could be woven in if he was willing to effectively 'go back' and enter at the earlier, less formed stage of the collages. However, despite Pat's suggestion, there remained a sense of closedness, as if maybe the opportunity for inclusion of new and different forms had passed and to try and do so now would be too disruptive; this sense was compounded by Mel when she suggested that it would 'be like extra work'. Building upon reasons for the non-inclusion of Leon's photographs, Ellie added somewhat poignantly 'this is our journey', suggesting an identity that did not include Leon and emphasised the group's working together over time and the need for this to be documented and protected (through the timeline, on the wall and as part of the project). There was a sense of the group acknowledging that the project existed, was valuable and worth defending. This was justified through a shared lineage and ability to have demarcated time in such a way that it was working autonomously. I wrote in my journal [25.02.15]:

It felt like Leon did a kind of sabotage through multiple suggestions of things to incorporate...It is interesting that he is a relative new comer and that Lorraine, who was also a new comer, made lots of different and new suggestions, i.e. they have not been part of the group since its inception and are sort of working outside the group despite it's being 'open'. The ideas have formed and the group cannot tolerate too much disruption at this stage.

The descriptions above serve to demonstrate the contrasting and contested uses of the group space and the dynamism surrounding it. In one instance, Centre users and participants are vulnerable adults needing to be taken care of and the group serves as a therapeutic space, while in another, the group are uncoupled from the environment of the Centre, able to behave autonomously and challenge how they are perceived. In both examples there are demonstrations of agency, in the first in relation to a testing out of a counter narrative and ability to resist dependency based on a moral-political standpoint, and in the second, the group is able to make and take decisions about the artwork that is included. In their differing ways both examples illustrate the emergence of forms of capital within the group sphere.

6.3 March 2015

6.3.1 Adaptation and the art form

In this section I explore the addition of new participants; Sophia, Luke, Henry and Alison and their adaptation to the group's *modus operandi* and how this can be considered in contrast to previous descriptions of the group's working.

In March more people joined the group: Luke, a white British male in his early 20s with severe autism joined with his carer; Sophia, a white British woman, also in her 20s and with a milder form of autism joined also with a carer; Henry, a white British male in his 50s who was a physically disabled a long-time Centre user returning after a period of having been banned (it was not clear what for); and a young mother, Alison, in her 20s and also white British and with a six month old baby. I introduced the newcomers to existing participants - Fran, Rose, Ellie, Paula and Clive - at the group meeting. I highlighted each person's artwork and what they were currently working on. I described the project and research, and secured informed consent from the new participants (and their carers where appropriate). The exhibition opening had been scheduled to take place at the Jubilee Library in the centre of Brighton on the evening of 1st May and had become a centralising topic of group discussion. There was a sense of seriousness and importance in us holding a 'private view'. Fran's ease and familiarity with the local art scene, and her use of terminology that some participants did not quite understand, brought with it a dimension that placed the group and project within the wider context of the city, beyond the walls of the Centre. By now the group had a well-established form to work to in the food sculptures and, as I described to the newcomers; 'we are still just adding things to it, making stuff'. I asked them what they'd like to make; 'we could make a digestive!' said Sophia enthusiastically, 'or a really nice banana!' said Fran. 'A hamburger!' chimed Paul. It appeared that there was perhaps relief in joining something pre-existing that nonetheless offered scope for inventiveness, or perhaps I was relieved that these newcomers were keen to adopt the existing mode. I was reminded of one participant who, despite having signed up to the project in the early stages, had opted to leave on the basis that she found not having a clear idea of what we were doing stressful and said she would rather have joined something already formed. We had by now amassed a collection of sculpted pieces and adopted the use of text and packaging, altering slogans in the 'culture jamming' style (Dery 2003; English 2004; Milstein and Pulos 2015) [see Figures 11, 12, 13, 14 and Appendix 9]. This style seemed to prove an accessible and playful way to engage with what was a serious topic. In the art-making sessions there had been lots of enjoyable word play between group members surrounding

ways in which packaging slogans could be adapted. This had developed a momentum within the group both of subversion and playfulness but also at the same time the delivery of a more overt political message. The 'Heinz Baked Beans' had become 'BUCFP Lean Times Beans' while a 'Heinz Tomato Ketchup' bottle had become 'BUCFP Katchup Kutz' in reference to the austerity measures that were deemed to be the cause of increased food bank use. The ability to deliver a message in a playful way grabbed the participants' imaginations and was carried throughout the group. Deciding to make a 'Rice Crispies' packet Fran and Henry altered the slogan to 'Crisis Crispies', solidifying the group's collective narrative through the joint artwork.



Figure 11: Culture jamming.

6.3.2 Rationalisation and food poverty

In this section I discuss how Rose's descriptions of living in food poverty, and the methods she deployed to manage it, were responded to by participants. This analysis explores the ability of participants to potentially normalise certain behaviours and situations, and asks what the effects of this might be on group narrative formation. While not having taken part in much of the art-making, Rose had been keen to be part of group discussions and was a noticeable presence, joining in with the March meeting and discussing food poverty:

- Rose: Yeah, erm, regarding food poverty, you can cheat, if your cupboard's empty, say you've opened a tin of baked beans, take the, once you've opened it, take the lid off and rinse it out and shove it back in the cupboard to pretend that, especially if you've got visitors come over, to enhance; 'oh look I've got all this food!'
- Bella and Paula: [laughter]
- Rose: When you bloody haven't.
- Bella: Oh my gosh really? But don't you think you'd have to be in a bit of a sort of thing, to think you'd have to hide the fact that?
- Rose: Yeah! Well it's recycling but say, say, my mum come all the way over from Eastbourne to Brighton to see me.
- Bella: Yeah?
- Rose: I'd say 'look mum, I've, my food cupboards is chocker block' and it's all blinking empty.
- Carer: But that's to stop your mum worrying isn't it so?
- Rose: Yeah.
- Bella: Is it to stop your mum worrying?
- Carer: It's about.
- Rose: Yeah, and also [pause] erm, other friends to enhance you're not, you know, hard up.
- Bella: Yeah.
- Rose: Not a total empty cupboard, but you've got.
- Bella: But I mean there's a sense, for me, there's a sense of, you know hiding that and that there's some kind of shame or guilt attached to that rather than, you know, saying 'look I can't afford to buy food look at the state of my cupboards, I haven't got any food in them' you know, what situation drives you into the, you know, into the situation where you're having to wash

out tins of beans and put them in your cupboard to hide the fact that you can't afford to buy food? I mean that's quite shocking to me I think, you know?

Rose: Yeah that's what I would.

Carer: It depends who's coming round as well if it's, if it's hiding it from your mum it might be to stop her worrying, but if it's a guest then it might be shame, yeah.

Bella: Mmm.

Paula: But still the issue behind it.

[Group interview 10.03.15]

Paula and I had initially met Rose's statement that it was possible to 'cheat' food poverty by rinsing out and replacing empty tins of food - hiding it from others - with an outburst of laughter, thinking that she was making a joke. It was only upon realising that Rose was probably describing something of her own experience that we saw the seriousness of it. In previous group meetings Rose had described her experiences of poverty and disability and I had been shocked, for example, at her descriptions of eating leftover food in McDonald's and 'rummaging through bins'. I had asked myself whether or not I ought to be open about my shock when, for Rose, what she had described was apparently a normal and regular occurrence. To be told 'this is not an okay way to live' when she had narrated her experience in a way that made sense to her, and living in poverty was made at least bearable, felt unfair. This time however I felt that Rose also felt that washing out and putting empty food tins back in the cupboard was a terrible thing to have to do, and that she wanted to talk about it and wanted it acknowledged. Other group members' responses however highlighted the ways in which certain situations, while shocking, can nonetheless be made acceptable. Rationalising Rose's actions by focusing attention on her desire to protect her mum from worry felt to me like downplaying what was a shocking situation. Paula's response in saying 'but still the issues behind it' perhaps also attempted to resist a process of normalisation. At the same time Rose had been positioned as heroic in protecting her mum and arguably a sense of pride had been restored in a situation that was potentially humiliating. The importance of projecting an appearance of managing, and the lengths gone to maintain it in Rose's narrative, exemplifies the social pressure that a fear of stigma exerts. Sense of shame, and/or the need to protect others from worry, prevented Rose from being explicit about her situation which in turn affected her relationships, demonstrating the isolating and corrosive effects poverty can exert on personal relationships, as recent research suggests (Tavistock Institute and Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2014). There was a tension between the group as a space in which

participants made-sense of their experiences, and developed a group culture that was accepting of lives that fell outside the norm, and an adaptation to circumstances that fell below what should be an acceptable standard of living in 21st century England. In seeking to understand this dynamic, perhaps micro and macro perspectives are useful. Micro perspectives make it possible to consider the importance of the kindness involved in making Rose heroic in protecting her mum from worry, when her life and identity was made fragile by poverty, while macro perspectives highlight the need to retain outrage that she felt she had to take that course of action, raising questions to do with narrative sense-making and ways in which we can manage the tensions described.

The group had begun to exert and demonstrate a type of agency through making choices about what was included in the creation of the exhibition and on what basis charitable assistance should be accepted. In this context it is possible to suggest the development of an alternative value and meaning system, the group developing a sense of its own processes of working. Rose's descriptions introduced to the group further moral and political questions: what is acceptable and to what extent participants ought to adapt to the circumstances they find themselves in? The possibility that the group was able to develop a cohesive narrative that might be protective of identities and lives that do not fit the status quo feels vitally important, yet equally the potential of such processes to make acceptable situations that ought not to be made acceptable feels an important consideration too. Perhaps this is the challenge: how to make a life bearable within very restricted circumstances, while also challenging the right and wrongness of those constraints.

6.4 April 2015

6.4.1 The art object as wall

In this section I discuss the group's desire to hold the monthly meeting within an art-making session and consider what this reveals about the complex inter-play between the art-making, materials and the group's communication which had not perhaps been so explicit previously.

Transcribing last focus group interview and noting the environment of the Centre, just after lunch time, very noisy, chaotic, kids shouting, etc., and me trying to hold focus group interview in this space...my response is to talk quite loudly and at length. This could be seen as a perfectly normal reaction to a noisy situation where I am trying to get and keep people's attention, but it is worth noticing that that is what is happening, i.e. the environment shapes the level and type of communication that takes place and

beyond this it shapes the tone and shape of conversations that the group then has. If there is a sense of urgency in my tone or stress, or as in the case I am drawing on, overly talking, then these things are carried into the group and it is valid to ask what the consequences might be. In a broader sense I want to ask something to do with the permeation of the environment into the group space. Is my over-talking at the beginning an attempt to create a barrier/boundary between the group and the environment through creating an 'equal to' type noise? When I am talking am I actually just making a sound barrier?

[Bella field note 10.04.15]

When I had reminded participants at the close of the previous session that we would be holding the monthly meeting the following week, Paula, Pat, Clive and Mel had at first suggested - and then practically insisted upon - holding an art-making session within the meeting. The reason given for this was to do with time and necessity. This posed for me a revisiting of ideas of community research and needing to retain some degree of researcher control. I wondered about the group needing a sense of ownership and was aware of the potential for a power struggle. I conceded to the group's wishes and one of the results was that there was an incredible amount of activity, noise and distraction during the session. I wondered if the group's insistence upon art-making during the group meeting was an attempt to destabilise my authority and test my ability to hold and manage the group as Bion (1961) and Slater's (1966) contentions to do with group dynamics and the overthrowing of leaders suggests. While I was trying to establish a metaphorical 'wall' between the group and the wider Centre, described in my field note, I felt as if the group was busily trying to establish a similar 'wall' - using the art materials - between themselves and me. I was struck by the way participants utilised various objects, and the communication they demanded, to avoid the directness of sitting and talking. People interrupted me and each other by asking if someone could pass a paintbrush across the table or where such and such was or if this should be painted a certain colour and so on. I felt that perhaps participants were annoyed with me and my questions about food poverty and that art-making enabled them to hide, divert or distract attention, or at least dictate via the material the direction of conversation as I noted in my journal that 'people were too distracted to have a full conversation' [07.04.15]. It was not until more than half way through the session that a less chaotic atmosphere emerged enabling questions to be addressed and conversation to flow.

If we take the Batesonian (1972) dictum that everything is communication, it is possible to analyse the developments described above in several ways. Holding the art-making session within the group meeting could have been suggested as part of a genuine concern to do with time and meeting a looming exhibition deadline. Equally perhaps, it could have indicated a

form of resistance to my questions on the topic of food poverty, particularly if these made some people uncomfortable or were exposing of feelings of vulnerability. The art material might be considered as enabling the group to protect itself from me by using it to throw multiple obstacles and distractions in the way. Indeed, to return to previous questions of destabilisation, it might have been felt that my probing and unsettling of narratives surrounding food poverty was a disruption, the group now demonstrating a rejection of the way of working that I had suggested at the outset of the fieldwork. The resistance in itself signalled to me the group's claiming of its own working and that it was functioning as self-managing and did not need (or want) me to steer it.

6.4.2 The discovery of a language in order to communicate

In what follows I examine how wrangling with issues of audience, the need to convey a message in the artworks, and a consideration of whether participants work as individuals or as a unified whole, was managed by participants at this point in the process. Discussions of audience interpretation prompted Paula's and my realisation that we needed a language that would enable the group to progress, raising questions of meta-language as that which defines the context in which content becomes legible.

Fran, Thomas, Paula, James, Mel, Simon, Sophia, Clive, Jim and towards the end Ellie, all came to the combined group meeting and art-making session, making it one of the most well attended sessions of the fieldwork process. A growing awareness that the exhibition deadline was upon us meant that we started to address questions of the presentation of the exhibition and this gave rise to concerns over whether the group's 'message' was being conveyed. The idea put forward by Steve in the early stages of the project was that the sculpted oversized 'food' be covered with glitter, sequins, 'bling' and painted neon and bright colours. We had discussed that the meanings associated with the still life genre - rurality, nature and tradition - when combined with glitter and 'bling' symbolising expense and artificiality, would create a visual statement about participants' perceptions of food poverty. Much of the meeting was occupied with a concern that the pieces might not deliver this message. James's comment that 'the bigger the audience the simpler the message has to be' came to occupy an important place in the group's conversation. Highlighting the contrast between what individual participants wanted to do with their artwork, and the need for a unified message, Paula responded to Thomas's suggestion that people just work on their own pieces by saying 'So

everyone individually? But would that get confused? There'd be so many different points?' Participants began to engage more concretely with ideas of audience receptivity, interpretation and questions of a 'group message'. My field note [13.04.15] states:

The group struggled when thinking about the audience and what our message is, we wondered if the necessity to 'fix' a theme in the early stages meant that we didn't 'build in' an element of process that the eleven month project would inevitably entail. As time went on and we became concerned that the art piece would end up looking like a harvest festival and would not 'speak to' our concerns, we adapted and changed it, adding slogans in the form of the subversion of packaging and adding the coca-cola with bubbles and money spilling forth. Did the art lend enough scope for us to say all the things that we wanted to say?

I wondered whether we had resorted to the 'culture jamming' style and use of text as a form of 'shortcutting' in the delivery of a message that said something about a contemporary food landscape and food poverty [see Figures 11, 12, 13 and 14].



Figure 12: Examples of the Culture Jamming and Adbusters styles.



Figure 13: Examples of the Culture Jamming and Adbusters styles.



Figure 14: Examples of the Culture Jamming and Adbusters styles.

The use of text arguably borrowed from a familiar contemporary visual trope to effectively deliver 'the message' (Eco 1978). Many of the pieces were now working to this code, which signified disruption to - and thereby a commentary on - consumer culture. In a discussion of culture jamming and Barthesian semiotics, and drawing on Hebdige (1979) among others, Dery (2017: 53) suggests:

Barthes "set out to examine the normally hidden set of rules, codes and conventions through which meanings particular to specific social groups (i.e. those in power) are rendered universal and 'given' for the whole of society" (Hebdige 1979, 9). Marshall Blonsky (1992, 231) has called semiotics "a defense against information sickness, the 'too-muchness' of the world" fulfilling Marshall McLuhan's (1964, 267) prophecy that "just as we now try to control atom-bomb fallout, so we will one day try to control media fallout." As used by culture jammers it is an essential tool in the all-important undertaking of making sense of the world, its networks of power, the encoded messages that flicker ceaselessly along its communication channels.

Several onlookers at the Centre had asked us if we were making something to do with the harvest festival, which was not how we had intended the artwork to be perceived. We had met the quandary of how to deliver a unified 'message' - a commentary on all the concerns that we had to do with food poverty and the complexity we had discovered within it - while also enabling enough scope for group members to work individually. The demand for convergence in the delivery of a 'strong, unified message', and the question reiterated several times by Paula of how we 'tie it all in', had come to represent something about being in a group. Two distinguishing features had emerged: firstly the relationship between ideas of group cohesion versus individuality and a need to not conform represented perhaps by Thomas and his position as slightly removed from group activity, often working on a separate table during sessions and only occasionally coming to the group meetings. Secondly, there was a tension between the art-making as a process versus as a final product. The question became whether we had 'built in' enough scope to account for what might be discovered in the process and whether everybody's pieces conformed enough to create a coherent statement. The question might equally be re-framed as whether the necessity involved in establishing a form around which to organise enabled and accounted for the complexity and scope of the content.

Struggling as we were, Paula's introduction of the language of 'curation' and 'composition' in thinking about how the artwork message was delivered and might be received, proved a significant turning point in the group's development in that it provided a language for what it was that we were trying to do:

- Paula: It's about how it's curated, about how it's put together.
- Fran: Mmm [to Paula] yes, I agree with you.
- Paula: It's all about composition.
- Fran: Yeah.

[Group interview 07.04.15]

I felt that there was a sense of relief within the group that a language had been discovered that would enable us to describe what it was we were doing and to continue. Ideas of composition, curation and a consideration of how objects were placed in relation to each other, shifted the thinking from being about individual pieces as the sole bearers and carriers of meaning to how the exhibition would work as a whole. This enabled the idea that 'stronger' - more obviously meaning-bearing - pieces might 'carry' less 'strong' pieces and that the pieces could not, in actuality, exist as independent of each other. That how they would be read and interpreted would inevitably be determined by the things around them drew on interesting conceptions of context, meaning and signification:

- Fran: So you're thinking of making?
- Bella: Just bolt it on.
- Fran: Of drawing the whole thing together?
- Bella: Well, we're playing with that idea.
- Fran: Yeah.
- Bella: Because, you know, Thomas has said, and I've said there's this feeling that it wants to be unified, it wants to be kind of.
- Paula: But it can be unified.
- Bella: Organised.
- Paula: By the way it's displayed.
- Bella: Stuck together.

[Group interview 07.04.15]

Later:

- Paula: And pulling it together is really important and the most important, it is important, what you're saying.
- Fran: Yeah, of course.
- Paula: You know, it's got to have, at the end of the day I mean you sort of, maybe you, you, although it's everybody's, everybody's gotta have

their input because it's a group work, it still needs curating, like, it still needs sort of a unifying theme, you know to be all pulled together if you see what I mean?

[Group interview 07.04.15]

That we needed to 'find a language' for what we were doing [Bella field note 07.04.15] and this as important to the group and its working, prompted me to think about the ways in which multiple languages and forms of communication were at play within the group. While on one hand it had been necessary that we develop and find a 'unified narrative' within the topic of food poverty in order to create the exhibition, it also became apparent that we needed to find a language for the delivery of this narrative, a sort of 'meta-language' to address the question of how to convey meaning. Thinking about how to deliver a 'visual message' demanded a certain type of group communication and the 'language of art' provided this. Though conversely, my earlier attempts to use 'the language of art' via suggestions that we were creating a 'visual dialogue' had been met with snorts of derision and described as sounding 'too poncey' [Group interview 10.03.15]. Despite not articulating, and in some cases actively resisting (which may be significant) the development of a language of semiosis, participants understood enough of how the visual worked to convey meaning for the project to have started. Steve's suggestion, and the combining of meanings associated with the 'still life' and 'bling' had been built upon and developed, and in an intuitive way, what the pieces were 'saying' was understood. Similarly, Mel's suggestion that we attach a ball and chain to the 'chicken' to symbolise the cruelty of factory farming engaged with ideas of visual metaphor without needing artistic terminology to explain that this was what she was doing. The group were thinking in terms of the symbolic without necessarily having to articulate it and this had got us so far, but the discovery of an 'art language' enabled us to progress further when the question of audience interpretation demanded it.

What was perhaps most notable at this point in the life-cycle of the group, was that the concept of addressing an audience through the medium of the visual arts and with a predetermined theme of, in this case 'food poverty', placed a demand on the group that 'something be said'. Within the context of a political statement the art exhibition was not only a display of people's work, skills and talents, but also a forum through which the group 'spoke'. As such, attention given to 'the message' became of central importance. The development of the 'art language' was arguably provoked by these circumstances in order that the group as a system was able to achieve its goals. This raises interesting Batesonian (1972) questions to do with communication and meta-communication and the way that a language code is called

forth in order for the group or system to 'grow'. As Bateson suggests when he makes the differentiation between 'action in context and action or behaviour which defines context or makes context intelligible...a function of the meta-message is in fact to classify the messages which occur within its context' (ibid: 129), or indeed as Bruner (1991: 15) reminds us 'mind is guided by the use of an enabling language'.

6.5 May 2015

6.5.1 The personal and political

Narrative researchers' divergence over whether stories are representing internal individual states or external social circumstances relate to another dichotomy; are narratives shaped by the audiences to whom they are delivered and if so to what extent?

[Andrews et al 2013: 05]

The above quote typifies the crux of the issues I was keen to explore. I wanted to understand if, how, and in what ways, participants thinking about food poverty, and externalising their thoughts through the creation of an art exhibition, impacted their subsequent narrative formation. There were undoubtedly complex 'internal individual states' surrounding food poverty and part of the exploration was to ask in what ways 'external social circumstances' intersected with these. As I suggested in drawing on Squire (2005, 2013) previously, the merging of ideas between the personal as things that could not be spoken, and the ability of these to become spoken, indeed made them 'political'. As Andrews et al (2013) highlight, how 'the personal' is able to contribute to processes of cultural and political change is an important area for narrative inquiry. The process of art-making, that is, the externalisation of thoughts and ideas on a particular theme and the representation of these to an external audience, illuminated this relationship further.

The adaptation of the artwork, adopting the culture jamming trope as discussed in the previous section, was perhaps indicative of the group's adjusting its narrative in relation to an imagined audience and the taking of a position within a wider cultural milieu. As I have suggested in drawing on Rose's (2014) criticisms of arts-based methods and their lack of acknowledgement of the wider cultural (and political) landscapes in which semiotic meaning-making occurs, the group's collective positioning of itself through art-making was of central concern to my research. The question of whether the group's narrative was 'shaped by the audience to whom it was delivered' sets up an interesting notion of recursivity. It is possible to

suggest that the desire to be recognised and intelligible meant that the group drew on an existing visual and cultural meaning system, signalling the taking of a position. The meta-language contained within the 'culture jamming' trope ensured the artwork would 'make sense'. This reinforced a narrative construct back to the group and arguably strengthened a particular - political - standpoint. Whereas more nuanced and complex personal thoughts and feelings surrounding food poverty might have been expressed through the artwork, in actuality, recourse was to an established art mode and political, visual narrative. In needing and wanting to communicate, be legible and recognised by their imagined audience, perhaps in an act of solidarity with the imagined other, the group arguably forwent the possible lack of coherence that multiple complex, precarious and less articulated narrative constructions surrounding food poverty might have engendered as part of an artwork. As James had suggested when discussing the need to address an audience, it was best to opt for a simple and clear 'message' and thus the group unified under an established visual political narrative.

The exhibition went up at Jubilee Library in the centre of Brighton as planned on 1st May 2015, a significant date for the Centre and an exhibition on food poverty. As McKay (2011: 9) states:

It is the seasonal celebration of new growth and fertility around the rural maypole, it is the neo-pagan's Beltane, and it is International Workers Day for trade unionists and industrial workers. May Day is the one day of the year when there is a coincidence of horticulture - including gardening - and radical politics, when the bucolic intermingles seasonally with the ideological.

Also significant was the exhibition opening one week before the UK General Election and the backdrop of the austerity agenda. Lots of people came to the opening event. Ellie, Paula and I had been nominated by group members to say a few words about the project and I thanked everyone who had taken part. Mel and some of the kitchen volunteers made food and a Centre user played Spanish guitar while people viewed the artwork. Four days later we held the final group meeting and I asked how people felt and what they thought now that the project was at an end. Six participants came to the meeting: Clive, Sophia, Fran, Thomas, Carl and Leon. I took with me to the group the historical and fact based narrative that Professor Erik Millstone had given me in response to my questions of corporations and their part in food poverty - questions that the group had posed for me as a researcher. I suggested to the group that maybe we had 'worked out' what the 'causes' of food poverty were, as if the aim of the project had been to find an explanation. Perhaps unsurprisingly there was a slight pause when I presented this theory to the group before Fran responded by saying, 'No I think that's fairly factual, I also think the exhibition and the process of creating it was quite personal and that element I don't think can be ignored'. It appeared that we had launched headlong into the

dichotomy that Andrews et al (2013: 05) posed between broader political, historical and social narratives that the Centre and group were situated in and that circulated around food poverty, and the intersections with the 'quite personal' that as Fran suggested, should not be ignored.

Fran: So, I think it was quite a personal co-operative community sort of.

Bella: Yeah, yeah, I'd agree.

Sophia: Yeah.

Bella: Erm, yeah, I think that was a sort of tension throughout, are we saying something big about food poverty, are we making a statement about food poverty, or are we doing our own individual kind of experience through the individual pieces that we're making? And that that was something of a feature of the project all the way through.

Fran: It's a combination.

Bella: It's a combination of those things?

Fran: I think so.

Sophia: Mmm.

Fran: Erm, now we've got the bare walls either side what are we going to?

[Group interview 05.05.15]

Despite highlighting the importance of the personal aspects of the project, Fran then made a leap to talking about the practicalities of the exhibition, and whether we wanted to put large A4 prints of food poverty statistics that she had taken from the national media on the exhibition walls:

Fran: Now the other thing I had an idea about, I bought it along, it means blowing it up, printing it off, so we've got these facts.

Sophia: Mmm.

Fran: [reading from the sheet] 'More than a million people have used food banks in the past year'.

Bella: Yeah.

Fran: [Continuing to read from the sheet] 'Experts warn figures showing a nineteen percent rise year on year is just the tip of the iceberg of UK food poverty' etcetera.

[Group interview 05.05.15]

The conversation seemed to demonstrate the tension between the desire to communicate something about a perceived inequality and injustice as a socio-political concern and how the communication of the personal sits within it. While highlighting that the project had been

personal, and that my use of a historical lineage as a way of understanding food poverty did not adequately address this aspect, Fran then did something similar in the resorting to statistics drawn from the media as a way of creating a dialogue about food poverty. This seemed to signal a return of earlier tensions described in the previous group meeting between the individual pieces of artwork as 'the personal' and the need to externalise and deliver a coherent 'message' in unison with the rest of the group. Deeply personal stories and experiences sat alongside larger, broader narratives that had not been generated from within the group. Again, I was reminded of the idea of legitimisation and recourse to more officially sanctioned versions of the 'truth' about food poverty and wondered if, in our rush to 'get a message across' we had lost something of the personal. I noted how at the opening event visitors to the exhibition had been drawn to a small part of one of the collages where Jon had written 'allways hungary' (sic), 'no money' and 'I like cooking' [see Figures 15 and 16] alongside pictures of bank logos and food. It had seemed to me that there was something quite profound about this section and that, while it may have been the case that the literal references to food poverty made it easier to read, it nevertheless told something of the personal experience of food poverty than the unified piece perhaps did.



Figure 15: Close-up of Jon's collage.



Figure 16: Jon's collage.

Joining the conversation, Thomas tied the historical description of food poverty as caused by post WWII food shortages and E.U subsidies, as provided by Professor Millstone, with his feelings about it:

Thomas: You look at, you look at the way, erm, farming is being cut in this country and, erm you can, various stuff it's almost like [pause] I often think to myself, has there always been like a fifty-year plan?

Bella: Mmm?

Thomas: To take us where we are now and so where we can only be exporting food and stuff like this, it's almost like you often think, we have a government that feels to punish us for something.

Bella: Yeah?

Thomas: You know.

Bella: Yeah, yeah.

Thomas: The whole behaviour, all the way through from closing down pits and cutting, scrapping work and industry and stuff now farming stuff it's like so we sit in apathy.

Bella: Yeah, powerless to.

Thomas: Yeah, and it's almost like who are these people? Do they hate, do they hate us?

[Group interview 05.05.15]

In considering the historical and political lineage relating to food production and food poverty, Thomas had taken a broader perspective and interpretation and placed himself within it, examining his thoughts and feelings in relation to the 'long view' and emerging with a sense of persecution. Building on the historical narrative as a form of affordance, and furnishing it with dystopian visions of society that had been drawn on by him and others at different times - Paula and *The Hunger Games*, James and *The Time Machine* and Fran and *Soylent Green*, for example - Thomas elaborated on his idea that WWI was a sinister exercise in population control. Aiding the conspiratorial tone of the narrative development, Fran replied 'it's also about social control I think' and as if to compound the narrative of 'them and us', and thus solidify group cohesion, Fran, Thomas and I then listed the 'media machine', the 'U.S model', 'privatisation of the health service' and loss of affordable houses with gardens to grow food, as ways that government and political ideology had shaped society over time for the worse. We were in agreement, angry and energised political allies, historical information and facts having given us a sense of knowledge and empowerment. A position of defiance in the face of an established order emerged based on a combination of interpretations of historical events, current political situations, science-fiction, personal experience and a pervading sense of injustice.

There continued to develop within the group a will for a level of self-organisation and community spirit enacted through practical things like 'allotments and growing your own vegetables' [Carl] despite the fact that many of us had never grown our own food or had gardens or allotments. 'Time and organisation as well as knowledge' became determining factors in the advancement of an alternative organisation of society starting with our small community. The idea of being able to 'grow your own food' was elaborated on by Fran with me commenting on how empowering it must be. This again seemed to imply a combining of the personal and political as acts of resistance to commodification and commercialisation drawing, in part, on a lineage of narratives surrounding food, self-sustainability and 'green politics' as highlighted by McKay (2011: 10):

Climate change, peak oil transition, community cohesion, the environment, genetic commodification and food policy, diet, health and disability - the garden is the local patch which touches and is touched by all these kinds of major global concerns, whether it wants attention or not...Growing a garden has become - at least potentially - an act of resistance.

When Fran exclaimed excitedly that 'we should have a campaign for a community garden' the reaction from other members proved a pivotal point in the development of a group identity. After discussion about possible wasteland that we could commandeer and people whose knowledge of land and food growing we could utilise, Thomas interjected:

If we, if we now focus back on the project that we're doing, I mean what I like about what we've done so far is, people see already are trying to find fixing plasters and stuff, I think all we should be doing is still giving things for people to think and they have, they have their choice on how they can make a difference in their own lives as well as their friends and families, so all we have to do is like we've already done down there [at the Library], and when I've read the book [the visitors book accompanying the exhibition] it's, people are liking it, but if we start going down that road like 'right we need allotments' like you think, we're taking it down a, we are straying away from all we're doing [pause] we're like the graffiti artist writing on the wall.

Thomas's point served to halt the group in its sense of forward marching time. In suggesting that what we were doing through the art-making was enough, was indeed our part in making a better society, Thomas made a stand for the importance of art not as a precursor to other forms of action, but as important and vital in its own right as able to provoke thought and social change:

Thomas:	We're just.
Bella:	We're highlighting something.
Thomas:	And that's all we should be doing.
Bella:	So, you're, so?
Fran:	Yeah, that's fair enough.
Bella:	So we've got a thing of, about, right do we go for a direct, erm, action kind of approach saying, you know we want this land we want to grow things on it, or do we stay as artists?
Thomas:	Yes!
Bella:	And activists?
Fran:	Yes, I think perhaps that's right.
Thomas:	We're not, we're not.
Bella:	What, that we stay as artists and activists?
Fran:	Yep.
Thomas:	Because if we.
Carl:	What?

- Thomas: If we go down that.
- Carl: Once you start the activist road then you're in trouble with the police and all this sort of.
- Fran: Well, I think we can pick it up as well.
- Bella: I think what we have been doing is.
- Carl: Other people can.
- Bella: Is art, is art activism.
- Fran: Yes.
- Carl: The art is the focus on it.
- Fran: Yeah, I think that's great.
- Bella: So do we want to stay doing art activism?
- Thomas: Being leaders and people wanting us to give them answers, but as long as you stay an artist [trails off, unclear].

[Group interview 05.05.15]

This moment seemed to form the consolidation of a sense of a group identity, not as radical community gardeners or people defined by their experiences of food poverty, but as activists for whom art was equally as valid a form of action as anything that might be considered more practical or 'direct action'. Thomas and Leon cited Banksy, Jamie Reid and Dada as artists and movements that were inspiring in their use of art as a form of social critique. This prompted me to suggest that 'the news is our material' and that current affairs provided contextualising 'themes' within which the group could continue to work. In this scenario art-making - in that it created a space through we could interpret societal discourses - enabled the expression of the interplay between micro 'internal individual' narratives and macro societal 'external social' narratives. Thomas's sense-making drew partly on the historical and socio-cultural and partly his own experience. His maintaining of a position of artist meant he was able to claim a space that wove these spheres together, his identity - shared with the group - meant that he was able to 'speak' to macro and micro narratives through creative, arts-based work.

6.5.2 Art, identity and 'being cultured'

Continuing the theme of the development of an 'art activist' identity, Thomas suggested:

Allotments and all that growing stuff, it's almost like we've been up here and now we need somewhere to land and walk away, it all depends if the group still wants to be, dare I say it, an activist art group?

Other participants signalled agreement and when I asked whether they now felt 'like artists?'

Leon was contemplative:

Leon: I don't know, I do, I feel, let's say, I am, I'm a radical, I am, I said that the other day, I called myself an artist, yeah.

Bella: 'Cos it's quite a big shift isn't it to say 'ooh I feel like an artist' I mean that's?

Leon: It is yeah.

Bella: It's like a claim, like an identity you know?

Leon: I, yeah, you're self-employed, you're.

Bella: A self-employed artist?

Clive: Self-employed artist.

Bella: Yeah that's quite a thing though.

Leon: Yeah.

Clive: Yeah.

Leon: You're a surface technician! [laughs]

Bella: Surface technician?

Leon: That's what I like you know, painter and decorator, it's like.

Bella: Oh right I see, it's a different word for being a painter and decorator, a surface technician, oh.

Leon: Yeah.

Clive: [laughs]

Bella: [laughs]

Clive: Surface improvement technician.

Leon: Artist, yeah.

Clive: That's it, that's it, yeah.

Bella: But you know calling yourself, feeling like an artist is, you know, it's a different thing isn't it?

Leon: Mmm.

Bella: And then feeling like an activist?

[Group interview 05.05.15]

Leon's comments alluded to the fluidity of identity in modernity in relation to work, and a sense of mutability via the cynical, yet presented as comedic, re-naming of painters and decorators as surface technicians. The 'rebranding of self' (Clark 2013) has been critiqued by Giddens (1991), Holstein and Gubrium (2000) and Sennett (2006) among others, as part of the project of modernity wherein a perpetual renewal and construction of identity is required, particularly in relation to a fluctuating and unstable employment landscape. In order to be employable one must be willing to engage in the renegotiation of ideas of the self. Discussing this and the role of institutions in the shaping of identities, Sennett (2006: 79) suggests:

In the 1970s thinking in strategic narratives accorded with the way institutions were perceived; such thinking, for an ambitious young person, does not accord with the way leading-edge institutions appear today. The issue is the model: even when young people now enter relatively fixed work pyramids, their point of reference is the fluid model, present-oriented, evoking possibility rather than progression.

Sennett argues that the demands of finance capital, its increasing rapidity and evolving organisational structures, create certain types of individuals; fluid and present-orientated, demanding that 'the self' be a constantly evolving, and thus insecure project permanently under construction. When Leon retorted that 'It's culture isn't it? You know, you're cultured if you're an artist' he was acknowledging and exploring a potentially re-branded 'self as artist' that bought with it forms of social capital. How one imagined to be perceived by others was recognised as impacting on sense of self as a type of cultural feedback loop. Indeed, this sense of the *collective* positioning of selves through the semiotic meaning systems developed through the group's artistic work, also involved processes of imagining a wider cultural audience perception. The issue for the group had been how to develop a collective identity and symbolise this through the artwork in ways that accorded with participant self-perceptions. Being able to position selves in ways that allied with a political narrative that refuted stigmatising conceptions of food poverty could be argued as taking part in modern project of identity reconstruction in a symbolically mediated modernity in ways that Sennett and others describe.



Figure 17: Final exhibition piece at Jubilee Library, Brighton as part of the Brighton Festival May 2015.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have charted the progress of the group, and themes that have emerged, over four consecutive months. I have explored how the introduction of new members brought different ideas about what the group was, and might be. Fran's more overtly political narratives merged with Pat's, alongside other voices in the group, focusing attention outwards. This highlighted both the need to think about questions of 'message' and 'audience' receptivity in relation to food poverty and the exhibition, as well as challenging ideas of the vulnerability of participants and what we might understand by the notion of the therapeutic group art space. As with the previous chapter finding that perhaps the therapeutic values of the group lay in the interdependencies that members created between them, and the desire to be an 'open' group to maximise opportunities for this, in this chapter questions of access to information - driven by political questions and the forming of a 'message' contained within the artwork - enabled a rethinking of ideas of community self-care as lying in the ability to position

selves and others through information and socio-historical and political landscapes, challenging individualising conceptions of therapeutic environments as being necessarily about forms of self-disclosure and private, personal workings. Members explored tensions between the desire in some cases - such as Thomas and Paula's - to work as individuals on their own pieces crafting messages contained within them, while in others - as with Sophia and Luke who needed or wanted more assistance with their creations - to work collectively and how differences between individuality, unity, collectivism and necessity could be managed.

The group's utilisation of me as a researcher with access to 'sanctioned knowledge' and historical and factual accuracy via the university, also sat in an interesting relationship with ideas of local and contextualised knowledge, and this became something of a recurring theme throughout the four months. Particularly notable was the way that Rose's sharing of personal stories of managing living in food poverty, when told in an increasingly politicised space, challenged ideas of the group as 'making acceptable' things that ought not to be acceptable, leading to a consideration of the way that political narratives within the group perhaps 're-cast' everyday experiences of poverty in ways that forced political and moral decision-making. These examples serve to illustrate the malleable nature of the group as a space through which differing ideas and narratives could be brought to bear, tested and experimented with. The diversity of participants, brought about by the diversity of the Centre environment, and the re-opening of the group, prevented the group space from becoming a monoculture and instead offered a rich social ecology that enabled multiple narratives to sit in relationship with each other and resist formalisation in interesting ways. I have explored the differing group structures that emerged and appeared at different times within the group's lifecycle; the group as both vulnerable and powerful and the interplay between macro political narratives - anti-austerity, anti-capitalistic, historical and societal - and everyday lived experiences in washing empty tins of food to 're-cycle' and 'cheat' food poverty. Perhaps most interesting was the finding that participants were able to use the group and their experiences of it to question and re-imagine their identities and that this was made possible through the combining of historical and fact-based information and knowledge with lived experience and participation in the project to generate new ways of making-sense and the emergence of new identities - as art activists - that were protective of these.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

Having arrived at the BUCFP several years before the start of the study as a volunteer and student interested in creativity and wellbeing, I had discovered there a small and humble, yet dynamic and lively, sense of community. As I have explored elsewhere in the thesis, I was struck by the ways in which the BUCFP enabled the forming of friendships and relationships and created a space in which people were able to 'be' and 'do' in ways that I felt had become increasingly limited elsewhere in society. This highlighted for me ways in which spaces more often than not have conditions of entry attached to them; ascribed purpose was usually economically determined in the form of being either a consumer or worker, for example. Opportunities to use and access spaces in ways that did not have such conditionality attached to them were hard to find. For those that did not have the ascribed qualities, such as the poor and unemployed, access to space was restricted and that alone was a formidable barrier that lay above and beyond the ability to exercise agency in relation to it. I became interested in how the BUCFP used its space in ways that offered an alternative to the restricted framings I had encountered, how it had maintained itself over such a long time period, and how it was experienced by those that used it. Broadly, I was interested in the relationships between structure and subjective experience. The premise of the research was threefold. Firstly, it sought to understand the relationships between the organisational narrative and culture of the BUCFP - as non-prescriptive, 'hands-off' and Centre user led - and ways in which this related to the self-organising of groups. Secondly, it asked how such groups, working creatively and using arts-based methods, might enable processes of re-narrativisation surrounding, in the case of this research, the topic of food poverty. Thirdly, it sought to understand whether such re-narrativisation might be considered 'healthy' in its proffering an ability to resist stigmatising narratives surrounding food poverty. As such, the research asked whether people experiencing food poverty were able to make sense of their experiences through the mechanisms afforded by the BUCFP and creative group work, and whether these might enable the development of alternative narratives that were protective of lives and experiences that did not fit dominant, hegemonic discourses.

In seeking to address these questions I needed an approach that was able to examine the interconnections between ideas of environment - how particular spaces formed and were maintained, what their qualities were and how certain narratives organised their functioning - and how these factors related to the experiences of those within them. As such, I drew on a

wide and diverse body of literature, from critical health psychology, post-structuralism and critical theory, to systems theory and narrative analysis. Adopting narrative analysis, and bringing rich theoretical concepts to bear, I was able to examine what participants said and did in ways that enabled me explore how the BUCFP, art-making, and beyond to policy discourse and wider visual culture, impacted the group and ideas of narrative formation. In this final chapter I discuss these ideas and findings in reference to my research questions. I discuss the substantive and theoretical contributions, as well as methodological contributions that this research makes to knowledge. I also discuss the limitations of the research and its design, and make suggestions for further research.

7.2 Substantive and methodological contributions to knowledge

The research can, in many ways, be considered a methodological exploration. In that it sought to examine the role and impact of arts-based practice in a group setting, it arguably formed a 'testing' of a methodological hypothesis. The initial bringing together of theory from arts-based practice and art psychology through the work of Ehrenzweig (1967) and Boden (1995, 2004, 2010), for example, and the combining of this with anthropological explorations of art-making and its relation to human sense-making in the work of Dissyanake (1992), contributed to the development of a methodological approach and a research hypothesis. Similarly, elements of participatory research approaches - the cyclical movements between action and reflection - were deployed alongside arts-based methods to examine if, how and in what ways, groups using these methods to address a specific topic might develop new narratives in relation to the said topic. The bringing together of systems thinking and its application in participatory methods, with arts-based methods and theory surrounding art and semiotics, provides a critical insight into the ways in which narrative formation within groups takes place. Examining the group over time, and taking a longitudinal and qualitative approach, the research provided an in-depth case study examination of the development of meaning and how it is shaped through various processes. As I describe here, the research makes an important contribution to understandings of participatory art-making and group processes within community settings and ways in which these affect sense-making and wellbeing.

7.2.1 The contribution of systems thinking to participatory arts-based methods

It is important to consider the principles around which the project and research formed (see Chapter Three, Section 3.5.3). This initial step set the conditions and structure around which a group would form and included both a topic - food poverty - and a purpose - to make an art exhibition. As such, it was not an informal group, but was a group gathering to achieve a stated purpose and a structure can be considered as having been imposed from without. Arrow et al (2000: 35) suggest that 'the sharing of collective outcomes based on group membership is sometimes referred to as common fate' and what became of interest to questions of group self-management was the way in which the setting of the task that provided a 'common fate' can be considered as introducing a difference into the environment of the BUCFP and how this was negotiated by the group and the Centre.

As such, the recruitment period can be considered as beginning a process of abstraction and selection from the environment of the BUCFP that might also be considered using the language of inclusion and exclusion. The project invited people to self-select on the basis that they recognised something in the principles; those that recognised something would be included, while those that did not would not. The group's forming can be thought of in ways described by Luhmann (2013: 63):

The important issue consists in the fact that the system draws its own boundaries by means of its own operations, that it thereby distinguishes itself from its environment, and that only then and in this manner can it be observed as a system.

At this point the group's boundaries had been set by me, as a research project. There followed further structuring principles. As a research project that proposed working with vulnerable adults (as the BUCFP staff had suggested that some participants might be given the high proportion that experienced mental health difficulties), I had stated when applying for ethical approval for fieldwork that once I had recruited a group of approximately ten to twelve participants the group would operate as closed. With twenty participants signed up to the project and having carried out the mind mapping and visual mapping activity, I suggested that we formally close the group and not enrol new members. The manageability of the research, and meeting the ethical requirements, made it easier for me to side with those that wanted to work as closed and this was tentatively agreed upon. I suggested that any people that now approached the group could be re-directed to the Centre's Wednesday and Thursday drop-in and open art groups. Over the coming weeks the group set about the making and doing of the proposed art form - sculpted pieces of giant 'food' covered in glitter, sequins and 'bling'. This seemed to work well except for the few times when non-participants asked to join the group's

activity. I became increasingly aware of a contradiction in that I had proposed exploring the self-managing capabilities of a group in the environment of the Centre, yet here I was imposing boundaries from without. The closed or open issue came to a head half-way through fieldwork when a sense of discomfort prompted by a friend of Steve and Clive's who had not been able to join had, in turn, made them reluctant to attend. The group appearing as 'exclusive' was revealed by Steve to lie behind the uncomfortable situation and prompted more serious questions of exclusion. In a group discussion of whether we ought to open the group or not I highlighted that we had been working as closed due to a question of participant vulnerability. However, the situation revealed that a boundary between those who were 'in' and those who were 'out' of the project increased and agitated ideas of vulnerability: those that were outside the group felt excluded, and those that were inside felt excluding and as a result, guilty. For the group to continue as it was would have been unethical. This development - aided by a participatory methodology and reflexive group discussion - can perhaps be thought of as the moment when group members recognised themselves as 'a group' and an entity within the wider environment of the BUCFP. Luhmann's (2013: 247) notion that 'structure is always also an instrument of cognition' illuminates the process and that it was a problem with the structure of the group - the boundaries imposed by me - that made the group aware of itself and as such enabled a form of self-regulation (Teubner 1993: 145). This meant that the group were able to establish their own boundaries and move towards ideas of self-organisation while also retaining the principles of task and content.

In the dissolution of the group's boundaries recourse was to the BUCFP's Safe Centre Policy [Appendix 11] as a containing and protective framework, a policy that encompassed the 'whole Centre', minimised differences and claimed to ensure that everyone within it was treated fairly. Yet there followed confusion about where the demarcations between group and non-group lay; was everyone in the Centre vulnerable? Could anybody join? What if they were not affected by issues of food poverty but 'just wanted to do some art' as Ellie suggested people might? While participants had been able to determine the group's boundaries and had dissolved them to encompass the whole Centre, there were still organising principles which constituted the group's working that were not determined by participants. It was a research project, bounded by me and by extension the university, and had to adhere to certain principles. And this proved a slight struggle in discussion of whether or not the group ought to be closed or open and where and on what days it ought to be held. Steve, Clive and Pete argued that the group should be 'free range' and that people ought to be able to 'do what they feel' spilling out onto other days should they wish, while Paula and Ellie argued from, and were

protective of, my position and the group as needing to exist on a fixed day, in a fixed time and place. The project had to be, as Ellie stated, 'researchable' and had to be kept, for example, on a day when I could attend and could observe the group working. Conversely, Pete, Clive and Steve argued that if people wanted to work on their pieces they ought to be able to do so on Wednesdays and Thursdays too. As such, the demands of research were revealed to stand in awkward defiance of ideas of group self-management. We managed eventually to reach a compromise and agreed that the group would be open to new members but kept to Tuesday afternoons. Despite this, I did wonder if some participants might have experienced an uncomfortable sense of the group as being controlled by an unknown and mysterious force in the slightly opaque sounding 'university research'.

The dissolution and re-establishing of group boundaries raised questions of who had the authority to define the boundaries and differing conceptions of what the project was and who 'owned' it. On the one hand, the group had become open to the Centre and had expanded to encompass a wider array of potential participants and ideas of vulnerability had been quelled through recourse to the Safe Centre Policy [Appendix 11]. On the other hand, a set of boundaries and conditions for inclusion were now held by me, as a researcher. If new people wanted to join, rather than saying 'sorry we are a closed group' and turning them away, I would have to explain that the project was also university research and that I would be using the data for my PhD and, if new members were happy to give consent, they could join. In some sense the group being closed had felt protective of the research as well as of vulnerable participants, whereas now I felt the research was somehow more vulnerable too. A question over the management of numbers also made me feel less secure about my ability to manage the project. However, that the group had taken control over the shaping of boundaries felt like an important move towards ideas of self-management and an interesting adaptation the environment of the BUCFP, necessary if it were to 'survive'. In Luhmann's descriptions, systems are maintained by their internal functions and these serve to avoid the problem of entropy, answering the question of how the system survives and 'evolves'. In this summation, the self-sustaining ability of the system is made possible through second-order observation; a need to regulate its internal operations develops a level of self-awareness. The realisation, mid-way through fieldwork, that the structure was not working because it was not adhering to the BUCFP ethos of inclusion, was indicative of a second-order observation wherein the group became aware of the environment in which it existed and which allowed group members to determine the group's subsequent structure. The consequent decision to 're-open' the group proved a type of structural adaptation to the environment, i.e. was responsive to it. Using a

systems-based approach enabled me to examine both how the art-making impacted the group and its functioning, and what the relationship was between the group and the wider environment of which it was a part. As such, I was able to address questions of group self-management in ways that I might not have been possible had I used a different analytical approach. In attempting to address questions of participation in self-managing groups, narrative formation and sense of wellbeing, it proved vital to develop a theoretical approach that enabled a consideration of both the 'internal operations' of the group - the art-making - as well as the context in which this took place, and a systems based approach enabled me to do this.

7.2.2 Considerations of material and purpose in participatory art-making

Highlighting differences between recourse to the BUCFP narrative of inclusion in theory, and its realisation in practice, it was remarkable that although the group had chosen to operate as open and new members had joined, when those new members (Lorraine and Leon notably) proposed ideas that were different to the group's existing way of working and deviated from the form of making sculpted pieces, they were given swift rebuke. This demonstrated that despite members feeling as if the group must be open in order to adhere to the environment and narrative of the BUCFP and allay uncomfortable feelings, in actuality there were still conditions attached to inclusion. Lorraine's suggestions that she make pictures 'to go on the walls' of the exhibition or a sculpted 'skinny child and really fat dog' to highlight global food inequalities, and Leon's suggestion that he put some of his photography of his allotment on the exhibition walls as well, were covertly but clearly rejected through a complicated form of meta-communication adopted by the group to indicate that it did not accept deviation from its established working. Newcomers who did not adhere to the proposed objectives and consequent functioning of the group posed a threat; the group was, in Luhmannian (2013: 63) terms, 'operationally closed'. In redefining the boundaries of the group the function and task had become the principles around which members formed. To return to Luhmann's contention that 'the system draws on its own boundaries by means of its own operations', this suggests that the group's operations - its purpose and means of achieving it - had been established and any non-adherence was rejected. The covert but nonetheless clearly communicated rejection of newcomers that appeared to pose too much divergence from the task returns us to Luhmannian (2013: 64) ideas of closure: 'choosing a radical formulation, one might say that knowledge is possible not only in spite of, but also because of, the fact that the system is

operationally closed.' It is possible to speculate that having generated narrative complexity and multiple possible visual approaches to the carrying out of the art-making task, and having settled on the form of sculpture, and hence a reduction of said complexity through establishing of a mode, the group's organisation - determined in order to carry out a conscious purpose - proved to have a much greater bearing on the group than ideas of inclusion and exclusion appearing in the BUCFP narrative of inclusion. We might consider that the group became organisationally closed - despite claims of openness - in order to develop its own objectives and 'learn' and that interference from the environment posed a destabilisation that was undesirable, thus highlighting ideas of the ability of a self-managing group to make choices and selections from the environment. When Steve offered a compromise to the inclusion of Lorraine's canvases by suggesting they be incorporated as placemats, it was accepted by participants who viewed it as a good idea (it was however notable that despite this the canvas placemats did not, in actuality, materialise in the artwork and Lorraine did not return to the group). Destabilisation had been tolerated when it had remained purely in the form of the verbal and non-material, in which case newcomers could be assimilated, yet when they posed a material difference - a threat to the carrying out of the proposed art-making task - they were rejected.

The lack of explicit communication was interesting in considering the concept of the self-managing group: to communicate through effective blocking with, for example, a 'wall of words', the changing of conversation or notably - material distraction techniques using objects - avoided direct confrontation yet nevertheless communicated effectively. It is also worth considering how conscious the group was that this was what they were doing; certainly I was not aware of it until listening back to the recordings and analysing the data. The use of different types of communication to achieve certain aims highlights a complex interplay between language and communication, material and purpose. While an idea of inclusion existed in the language and narrative of the BUCFP, and the group had utilised this to alleviate feelings of discomfort, it was discovered to not always correspond with the reality of group practice, particularly when that reality involved the completion of a task. The material and task were important, but perhaps language was provisional. Questions of function and purpose led me to wonder if there had been a developmental necessity in the group's operating as closed in the earlier stages. Had this enabled a small group to define themselves as separate from the environment, a form of un-coupling, and develop an overabundance of narrative affordances through the mind mapping and visual mapping processes? With such an 'over-abundance' could the group then enter into a process of selection of these affordances and establish the

form and begin to establish a narrative that they would work to before presenting this as the mode that new members could adopt once re-opened? Was the ability to make such choices and selections fundamental to ideas of self-organisation? It is perhaps worth noting that adherence to the established form - the organisational mode of the group - determined forms of inclusion and exclusion; it was only possible to 'speak' in this space if you adhered to this - material - way of working.

It is possible then to view the role of the art-making within the group sphere as contributing to the forming of its operations, establishing its boundaries and thus a degree of separation from the immediate environment. As Juerrero (2002: 246) states 'in self-organising, a complex system partly de-couples from the environment, from which it wrests a measure of autonomy.' What the research revealed was not the group's complete separation and autonomy, however, but a relationship of partial dependency. The ability to determine the conditions of the relationship seemed to be crucial to ideas of self-management. Arrow, McGrath and Berdahl (2000: 34) suggest:

Groups are open and complex systems that interact with the smaller systems (i.e., the members) embedded within them and the larger systems (e.g., the organizations) within which they are embedded. Groups have fuzzy boundaries that both distinguish them from and connect them to their members and their embedding contexts.

The above definition perhaps sits in contrast to arguments that suggest 'operational closure' such as Luhmann's (2013: 64):

...one might say that the system always operates on the inside of the form - that is, in itself, and not on the outside. But this operation on the inside - that is, in the system as opposed to the environment - presupposes that there is in fact an outside, an environment. If one avoids such extravagant formulations, the entire matter appears rather trivial, for it is probably immediately intuitive that a system cannot operate in its environment and that its operations thus always take place within the system. If systems operations did actually take place in the environment, the distinction between system and environment would be undermined.

While Luhmann argues that the group as a system needs to be 'closed' - that is, self-referential in order to maintain a boundary - the research revealed that there was in fact a symbiotic relationship between the group and environment in which it was nested, and as such it could not be wholly closed. The group was affected by the environment of the BUCFP and the BUCFP by the group, raising the question of how the group related to the environment. If it was necessary that the group effectively 'see' the environment beyond itself, how did it do so without the dissolution of its boundaries? Mingers' (2004: 404) suggests that: 'Autopoietic systems are organizationally closed - they are characterised by relations of self-production -

but structurally (or interactively) open in that they do still have interactions with their environment.' Mingers' differentiation between the organisational closure necessary for self-reproduction and a structural openness in the need to react, relate and respond to the environment, suggests that the key to understanding questions of group self-management lie in the ability of the group as a system to make selections from the environment in order to determine what 'parts' are necessary for its continuation. Rather than a theory of operational closure as rejecting any communication between group and environment, it appeared that it was an ability to select that was important. The example of the torn collage showed how the group managed a negotiation between the demands of the BUCFP narrative of tolerance when their artwork had been defaced, versus a desire for artistic self-expression and the continuation of its art-making, illustrating notions of autonomy as a form of negotiation. Participants managed to preserve the group's working - its integrity as a system - while also adapting to the environment in order to survive, demonstrating an acknowledgement of the relationship and environment in which it was nested. Had the group been impervious to the wider environment, they would have invariably have run into difficulty. As Arrow, McGrath and Berdahl (2000: 28) suggest, 'groups are adaptive systems that actively engage with their embedding contexts in two-way exchanges...group and embedding contexts adapt to one another'.

The centrality of the art-making as a task and the use of material as a form of communication within the group was similarly noticeable when we held a group meeting with art-making running concurrently within it. I asked myself if participants, perhaps getting a bit fed up with my questions about food poverty and keen to 'just get on and do some art', had used the art materials and communication about them to 'block' me and so dictate the direction of conversation within the meeting. This reminded me of Dissyanake's (1992) examinations of the interplay between objects and materials and their adaptation by humans who utilised them as tools and imbued them with meaning: inanimate objects made meaningful. When participants asked someone across the table to 'pass the paintbrush' or lent across someone in a way that meant that they could not be heard, or put an object in such a way that obscured another participant, they were communicating something using the material. Several times during the art-making and group meeting session my Dictaphone was shoved to one side or covered with a half-finished piece of artwork and I interpreted these (rightly or wrongly) to be small acts of micro-aggression played out through the material and as such in-directly communicating participant's dissatisfaction. The material was both a semiotic device, in that meaning and association emerged and could be developed through it, but it was also a tool, a presence in

the group sphere that could be utilised alongside other forms of communication. It is useful to consider new materialist conceptions of the relationships between human and non-human and the place of the material as explored by Coole and Frost (2010) and Barrett and Bolt (2013). As Bolt (2013: 3) states, 'new materialism aims to return to matter, the vivacity denied by social constructivist theories that posit all social processes, and indeed reality itself, as socially and ideologically constituted'. It is thus vitally important to consider carefully the role that the art-making - its material and semiosis - exerts within the group's sphere, as Askins and Pain (2011) highlight, for example, in their discussions of 'the messiness of interaction' and its contribution to the creation of a communicative space.

These findings also pose wider questions for ideas of group self-management, autonomy, participatory art-making and relationships with the environments in which they are nested. Complete autonomy might not be desirable, for example, when it is recognised that an ability to influence and affect decision-making is important to sense of wellbeing, and this is crucial when thinking about participation and co-production. Questions of accountability also arise. If we agree that we operate within nested systems – drawing on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems approach, for example - invariably relationships with and to those other systems must be negotiated, discussion and compromise become essential for functioning. Recent turns to ideas of co-production (Stephens, Ryan-Collins and Boyle 2008) as the need for systems and those within them to not become isolated and to instead communicate with one another are perhaps indicative of an intuitive sense of inter-dependence and relief from negative forms of autonomy, as Kihlstrom (2011: 292) drawing on Luhmann suggests: 'organisation and administration can release the individual from autonomy, particularly negative forms of autonomy, for example, alienation and loneliness'. It is the importance of a two-way relationship and a level of responsivity embedded in the BUCFP's organisational structure that seems to be most valuable to its users. The opportunity to enact agency and influence decision-making recognises Centre user experience as important in ways that challenge current neoliberal ideas of vulnerability. No longer are Centre users defunct individuals and passive recipients of top-down interventions, but are instead agentic beings who are able to challenge the source of their difficulty through materially embedded means - political in the Aristotelian 'zoon politickon' (McCarthy 1992: 331) sense. Citing Harvey's (2006: 129) claim that 'rights mean nothing without the ability to concretize them in absolute space and time', Coole and Frost (2010: 25) state that:

From this materialist point of view, it is ideological naïveté to believe that significant social change can be engendered solely by reconstructing subjectivities, discourses, ethics and

identities - that is, without also altering their socio-economic conditions or tracing crucial aspects of their reproduction to the economic interests they unwittingly serve.

Agency in this scenario is not only an ability to move autonomously and freely without constraint or to experience only a 'reconstructed subjectivity', but also to have influence over the structures, processes and operations that determine and affect one's life. As I discuss at greater length regarding questions of art-making and semiosis, while human beings are undoubtedly 'symbolically mediated' we must also recognise the systems and structures that serve to liberate and/or regulate our lives and that access to them is vitally important to notions of wellbeing.

7.2.3 Participatory art-making, semiosis and group narrative formation

The previous section considered art-making as the provision of a purpose and material practice in relation to group working. In this section I examine art-making in the group sphere as the development of a semiotic meaning system, asking how this impacted narrative formation within the group.

In early fieldwork sessions, group members had suggested the creation of a sculpted oversized food banquet, a still life covered in glitter, 'bling' and painted neon, as forming the basis of the exhibition. The proposal incorporated the juxtaposition of associations - the still life denoting the bucolic, rural, traditional and idyllic, contrasted with glitter, 'bling' and neon pertaining to excess, modernity and artificiality. These associations combined to create a visual narrative of a contemporary food landscape populated with 'fake' and over-priced food. Observing the group, it was interesting to see the ways in which the provision of a topic - in the form of food poverty - and the focus of producing an art exhibition - shifted the group's practice from the arguably micro and small-scale of the lived, experiential and every-day to thinking about the development of semiotic meaning system and the signifying of positions in wider culture and society. Indeed, it is possible to explore the project as driven by a tension between ideas of the expression of lived everydayness, and representations of it. Considering Rose's (2014) argument concerning the lack of awareness in much of participatory arts-based practice concerning participants' artistic sensibilities in relation to wider social and visual discourses, the research revealed the centrality of participants thinking about, displaying and taking positions in relation to wider cultural landscapes through the semiosis afforded by arts-based

methods. This re-emphasised the socially situated and constructed nature of lives and selves in ways that are vital for socially engaged academic work.

Accepted into the group through a demonstration of willingness to conform to the group's established way of working, newcomers in some cases brought with them overtly anti-austerity narratives. When Fran joined she adopted the art form, as so was able to enter the group. In the group meetings Fran was critical of the government's austerity agenda which she described as the being the cause of food poverty and this understanding seemed to combine with other narratives within the group. While Pat had made clear her frustrations with the current 'corrupt' food system, and had been critical of a capitalist ideology that had, in her view, shaped our culture and society for the worse, Fran's clear narrative of food poverty as due to government benefit cuts, the increase in zero hour contracts and the lack of a living wage, appeared to dovetail with Pat's. Fran was a well-spoken, retired teacher not personally affected by food poverty, but who had joined at Ellie's suggestion that I have support with the project. As someone with an air of authority, her narrative seemed to provide a coherent and accurate account of food poverty, 'making sense' of it in that it told a seemingly legitimate story that placed it more squarely in the realm of the political. Her explications drew on familiar Left-wing arguments and as such began to develop within the group a sense of an allegiance with an established political position and in so doing arguably made available for the group a perhaps firmer sense of political identity. This raised questions of the development of counter narratives (Bamberg and Andrews 2004) in relation to dominant narratives. Having identified more firmly where the root of food poverty and inequality lay, the group was able to take a more fixed political identity as a form of opposition. As Bamberg and Andrews (ibid p.1) note, 'counter narratives [are the] stories which people tell and live which offer resistance, either implicitly or explicitly, to dominant cultural narratives'. The discovery and development of a more overtly political narrative in turn impacted participants concern with questions of the artwork, audience and interpretation and whether the 'visual narrative' - broadly a juxtaposition between ideas of rural pre-modernity and modern excess and corruption - would be understood. The realisation that some pieces conveyed the message, while others did not, raised important questions of comprehensibility. Indeed, the drawing on the familiar 'culture jamming' visual trope (Dery 2003; English 2004; Milstein and Pulos 2015) may have been prompted by a desire to deliver a recognisable message which would communicate to our audience that we were doing something political and subversive. Had we, in the adoption of this mode and utilising another form of meta-communication, attempted to shortcut the delivery of a message enabling us to ally ourselves with an existing cultural and semiotic

affordance because we had been concerned that our original idea would not sufficiently convey a desired political critique of the current state of affairs? As Leon suggested when presented with the mock Tesco's exhibition flyer, 'I think that's been done before, it's been done before, I seen things like that before though' [Group interview 10.02.15] [see Appendix 12]. In what was an interesting act of mimesis, it was notable that the culture jamming approach spread throughout the group, enabling a consideration of this as a reinforcement of the group narrative in response to ideas of audience. In articulating, adapting and delivering the visual dialogue, a feedback system between group and its imagined audience appeared to have been activated, serving to strengthen the group's own narrative. Thus the discovery of the 'other', and a desire to communicate with and to it, drove narrative formation within the group and brought something of a self-awareness. As Giddens (1991: 51) suggests 'discovering the other, in an emotional-cognitive way, is of key importance in the initial development of self-awareness'.

The notion of selves and identities as determined by how they imagine they are perceived by others is perhaps most famously associated with symbolic interactionism and Cooley's (1902: 152) 'looking glass self':

As we see our face, figure, and dress in the glass, and are interested in them because they are ours, and pleased or otherwise with them according as they do or do not answer to what we should like them to be; so in imagination we perceive in another's mind some thought of our appearance, manners, aims, deeds, character, friends, and so on, and are variously affected by it. A self-idea of this sort seems to have three principle elements: the imagination of his judgement if that appearance and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification. The comparison with a looking-glass hardly suggests the second element, the imagined judgement, which is quite essential. The thing that moves us to pride or shame is not the mere technical reflection or ourselves, but an imputed sentiment, the imagined effect of this relation upon another's mind.

As Cooley so eloquently describes, as innately social creatures our sense of self is intimately bound up with how we imagine others to perceive us. If we signal, through the production of artwork, our allegiance to a certain group or narrative - in this case, anti-austerity and Left-wing - we imagine we are perceived by that group as allies, as part of a shared value system. This has a reinforcing effect that reflects back to us how we imagine we have been perceived by the group we imagine we are communicating with. It is possible to argue that through this process, and the perceived communication, a sense of group identity is affected. The research data revealed that this dynamic served to build and develop within the group a more concrete narrative of anti-austerity and an identity as art activists. The availability in the wider culture of counter narratives, and their introduction through group members and subsequent emergence

through incorporation in the artworks, served to develop within the group an alternative to dominant forms of discourse. The belief that humans are 'actively involved in the shaping of their social worlds' (Scott 2006: 146) gives credence to ideas of the ability of the group to generate and re-present alternative narratives surrounding food poverty. In this context we might think of creativity as the ability to 'read' the culture in which we reside and actively shape signifiers that locate and position us in ways that we deem desirable. If we consider the group's art work as 'politically engaged' it becomes clear that the availability of alternative narratives, and the forging of allegiances through symbolic capital, must be considered in its effects on participant subject positions. Art-making and the development of a semiotic sign system enabled a form of group self-representation which had consequent feedback effects on narrative and identity formation. The ability to self-define through utilising alternative narratives and a creative space can thus be considered as important in terms of resistance to stigmatisation. Drawing on Foucault (1984), Baxter (2016: 37) states:

Discourses are responsible for the ways in which individual identities are recognised, constructed and regulated. This process of identity construction is reciprocally achieved through the agency of individual language users who are subjectively motivated to take up particular positions within multiple discourses and through the ways they are variously positioned as subjects by the social, normalising power of discourses.

The development of a more overtly Left-wing political narrative that placed the causes of food poverty at the door of government austerity policies and a corrupt corporate food industry, offered an alternative 'way of knowing' (Baxter 2016: 36) and making-sense of food poverty. As such, it might be argued that this narrative construction provided a form of resistance to individualising and stigmatising discourses. The artwork can be considered as the development of a sign system; the group's distortion of images of consumer culture through the culture jamming trope signifying to an imagined audience that they ascribed to an alternative narrative regime. This construction draws attention to several possible processes at play. Firstly, the decision to participate in the project indicated that food poverty was of relevance to those that joined, and questions such as 'how am I affected by food poverty?', 'why am I affected by food poverty?' and 'what is the cause of food poverty?' prompted an engagement with a broadly defined notion of 'the political'. As such, participants began to consider their positions in a socio-cultural sphere beyond the immediacy of the group and Centre. Focused on this socio-political dimension, the art-making was understood as being not only for pleasure or as part of a process, but as having a purpose in that it sought to 'speak' and 'say something' about the topic. Crucially - aided by a particular methodological approach - it engendered a reflexivity that enabled members to imagine themselves in a social landscape; to this end we

might consider it as politically engaged art. Secondly, not only were group members communicating to an imagined audience and signifying an allegiance with a particular (political) group and narrative, but they were also communicating to each other and themselves.

Thus two prevailing factors are identifiable as being at work within the group: firstly the strengthening of an existing narrative through drawing on familiar culturally available narrative affordances provided by a Left-wing position, and secondly the bringing of this position into the artwork through tying it also to existing visual and cultural affordances in the form of the culture jamming trope. It is possible to argue that the group drew on existing affordances available in the wider landscape to denote allegiances and inform an audience of what their socio-political cultural position was. Whether or not an audience 'got the message' depended on them understanding the references, highlighting the wider argument that knowledge is contextual and culturally located. In order to secure the delivery of the message, participants had imagined a landscape that an audience would be familiar with and had brought existing and familiar meaning systems to bear on the project. This perhaps had the added effect of also developing a more fixed sense of group identity in that while communicating to an audience, the group was also communicating to itself. This raises interesting and important questions of a recursivity between audience and artist, semiosis and positioning in a visual culture, and the re-enforcing of particular narratives and identities. Considered as an opportunity to develop a social sign system, participatory arts-based methods have the capacity to amplify and 'make visible' people, voices and circumstances that are often not heard or seen in the visual and auditory landscape. Vitrally, participants are able to do this in ways that are self-determined. The effect that being able to do this had on participants in my research was noticeable, not least in the claim that at the end of the project they felt they had become 'art activists'. The opportunity afforded by participatory arts-based practice in a facilitating and 'hands off' environment meant the ability to take and signify a position in a wider visual landscape, to not only be included in wider culture, but to manipulate culture too. The discovery and adoption of an alternative narrative and subsequent taking of positions regarding food poverty and the signifying of this through visual methods, can be argued as enabling a resistance to dominant political and media positioning of those in poverty as 'shirkers and scroungers', for example. The relationships between the semiosis of the art-making and the group's narrative formation, particularly the function of addressing an imagined audience, might go some way to helping understand how participatory arts-based methods make alternative understandings and narratives available, particularly important for those who are otherwise stigmatised by

dominant discourses. Mingers' (2008: 405) notion that we 'bring forth the world we experience through our own linguistic distinctions' draws on Maturana's (1988) understanding of the relationships between language, narrative formation and our sense of being in the world. Added to ideas of our experience of the world as mediated by language, it is possible to also highlight the visual and non-verbal and the importance of ideas of audience in our sense-making processes.

7.3 Limitations of the research

My methodological approach was informed by my substantive research questions, which sought to examine:

- The relationship between the non-prescriptive and user-led ethos of the BUCFP and the experience of the creatively working and self-managing group
- How a group working in this way might enable a process of sense-making and narrative formation surrounding the topic of food poverty
- How engagement with the group might offer resistance to stigmatisation

As such, I developed an approach to gathering data that was reflective of the ways art groups ordinarily worked at the Centre and built upon my position as an insider and researcher-facilitator. In order to align myself with notions of group self-management and negate the potential imposition of the research, I proposed using participatory methods and a movement between stages of 'action' and 'reflection' throughout an eleven month fieldwork process. However, it is inevitable that simply by researching the process, and holding the dual position as a researcher and as facilitator of the group, the research itself has influenced the question of how the BUCFP ethos and organisational structure relates to the forming of self-managing and creatively working groups. While my approach attempted to minimise the introduction of difference into the environment, the fact of my being a researcher and doing university research that adhered to a particular methodological and ethical framework, as well as someone familiar to the Centre and its users, created a difference in the BUCFP environment that has to be recognised in seeking to answer questions of the organisational ethos and its giving rise to the emergence of self-managing and creatively working groups.

As McCambridge et al (2013) and Luhmann (2013) suggest; an observer - in this case, me as a researcher - cannot help but effect that which is being observed. Hence, it may have never been possible to answer this question effectively. This realisation led to an adaptation of the research question which instead sought to examine the nature of the relationship between the group and BUCFP, rather than assume a causal link, and in so doing I was also able to account for my involvement in the research. The research can thus be considered as forming a type of intervention in the BUCFP environment and this created a greater consideration of the role and function of methods in processes of change. The research had begun with questions of the narrative affordances of the environment, as adhering to self-organising principles and how these enabled the emergence of creatively working groups and what the effects of participation in these might be, yet, because of my research design and methodological approach and my positionality as someone known to the Centre, it perhaps ended with an analysis of participatory and arts-based methods. This raised a further consideration of contexts in which creative group work takes place and whether the methodological approach taken might be replicated in a different environment with a similar outcome. The in-depth longitudinal approach to the design of the fieldwork, and the patterning of data collection between art-making and group discussion sessions, enabled me to gather data in a structured way and to examine process of change over time and to address questions of process and the things that influence change. While the research claimed to be using participatory methods it might be fair to ask quite how participatory these were. Indeed, relationships again between the methodological approach and substantive research questions came to the fore, particularly when participants revealed half way through the fieldwork that they found the closed group rule - imposed as part of a methodological and ethical concern - to be restrictive. This prompted a re-opening of the group, a sense of group ownership and a renewed theoretical engagement with ideas of group self-management and participation. The need for me to relinquish some control over the research process highlighted the difficulties of occupying a researcher-facilitator role as well as addressing questions of participatory methods and group self-management.

Similar questions of the level of participation might be asked due to the research topic - food poverty - as having been established outside of the group and by Ellie as a BUCFP staff member in response to what she perceived to be an emerging phenomenon. While arts-based practices were an existing occurrence at the BUCFP, the methodological approach - movements between action and reflection - were not. I was not consulting with participants as co-inquirers attempting to solve a community defined problem or issue with a view to affecting processes

of practical change, as some participatory and action research based practitioners and commentators suggest participatory research as doing (Martin 2008; Mead 2008). Rather, I was observing participants discussing food poverty in order to examine ways in which art-making and group communication intersected to affect narrative formation; as I have stated, I was in many ways testing a methodological hypothesis. Ideas of the imposition of a methodological approach and my ability to answer my research questions similarly arose during group interview sessions wherein I experimented to a degree with differing approaches. The directed versus non-directedness of questions and approaches in the interview setting again raised questions of impact on group functions. It must be acknowledged, therefore, that the 'structuring principles' of the research - food poverty as the topic, and a movement between art-making and reflexive group meetings as the methodology - while not alien to the BUCFP by any means, were nonetheless established from outside the group.

7.4 Implications for policy and practice

In this section I discuss emerging potential implications for policy and practice based on my research findings. These cover two broad areas for consideration: the importance of 'hands off' facilitative community spaces that have embedded within them methods that enhance processes of 'action' and 'reflection', and a greater consideration of the role of art-making as both a material and semiotic device and its relation to wider visual culture.

7.4.1 Approaches to community organisation and ideas of wellbeing

The BUCFP has been documented and acknowledged as a space that is valuable because it enables people to find their own routes to wellness (Walker 2012; Walker et al 2015). Environments that offer multiple opportunities for engagement, and in which Centre users are not defined by one characteristic or circumstance, have been suggested as important in their ability to proffer a sense of agency and self-determination. As evidenced by the BUCFP Annual Survey, many people arrived at the Centre for a specific purpose and unexpectedly found, with usually positive outcomes, other aspects of the Centre to be beneficial. Research suggests that a sense of control over one's environment, and an ability to act with self-determination in relation it, is important to wellbeing (Marmot 1998, 2004, 2015) and people within the BUCFP were in many ways able to act with such agency. Rather than labelling its users as 'failed

citizens' (Tyler 2013), and treating them as passive recipients of prescribed services and potentially increasing a sense of stigmatisation, the BUCFP's narrative of collective action and self-organisation - despite being somewhat moderated from its 1981 rhetoric - remains embodied in the 'hands off' approach that, as Walker argues, is so vital. I have suggested in this research that because of the ways in which the BUCFP enacts its ethos and consequently functions - multiple activities and opportunities for engagement, non-prescribed use of space and an open-door policy - it offers an interesting and important form of resistance to the use of space in a structurally differentiated modernity. Drawing on Delanty (2003), among others, the research argues that as a 'space after modernity' the BUCFP offers an alternative conception that is important to consider in relation to ideas of community, creative group work, agency and wellbeing. As such, this research suggests greater consideration of the organisational narratives that community, charitable and third sector organisations adhere to, and what these do, and do not, make available and possible for those within them. Close links between agency and wellbeing suggest that such a model offers an important contribution to the community landscape.

7.4.2 Art-making

Through my research I aimed to explore in what ways a 'hands off' and non-prescriptive ethos held by the BUCFP might relate to the forming of self-managing and creatively working groups, asking what the effects of participation in such groups might be. As I have explored in the literature review, community groups and charitable and third sector organisations are increasingly expected to play a role in the provision of creative arts activity as part of broader health and arts for wellbeing agendas (Staricoff 2004; HM Treasury 2005; Camic 2008; White 2009; Department of Health 2014, 2016; Buckley 2016; National Voices 2016; Daykin and Joss 2016). This research has demonstrated that, far from creative activities being beneficial to wellbeing through enhancing individual creative exploration only, such approaches must be considered in relation to wider visual culture as part of a broader social milieu. This suggests that, as semiotic systems, art-making processes enable a greater consideration of the taking, resisting and symbolising of certain socially located positions. If we are to take a holistic view of society and see citizens as affected by, taking part in, belonging to and being recipients of, complex communicative processes constituting material, non-material, visual and auditory activities on a daily basis, then a consideration of creative capacity in relation to culture and society is vitally important.

The argument that community in modernity is 'shaped by cognitive and symbolic structures that are not underpinned by 'lived' spaces and immediate forms of social intimacy' (Delanty 2003: 3) is perhaps challenged through the space of the BUCFP. In its ability to facilitate group working and creative arts activity, and keep a distance from groups' working within its environment through its ethos of user self-management, my research suggests that the BUCFP is able to maintain a space for activity that accommodates both the 'lived every day' and forms of social intimacy, as well as the 'symbolic structures' associated with modernity. In combining creative art work with a focus on socio-political issues that affect community members, the BUCFP art group space raises important considerations and questions of community and arts practice. A binary between ideas of community as pre-modern, parochial and residing in the lived every day versus community in modernity as removed from embeddedness in context and as only symbolically mediated, is perhaps challenged through community arts-based practice which is able to straddle both these domains. McKenzie's (2009: 353) statement that 'human capabilities are located and realised only in embodied subjects, and the form such embodiment takes is profoundly influenced by the form of sociality in which it is situated' prompts interesting ways to think about narrative formation and sense-making in relation to art-making and both materiality and semiosis it affords.

As such, the research recommends a greater consideration of arts-based practice - and the environments that facilitate and maintain it - as an alternative to individualistic and prescribed notions of creativity and arts for health existing as in some way separate from wider cultural discourses. Recognising that humans are socially situated and that meaning arises in context, as well through visually mediated and disembodied semiotic processes, means acknowledging the capacity that collective art making has in terms of its ability to shape storytelling, narrative formation and consequently identity, sense of self and community. As the research has highlighted, the ability to bring the personal and experiential into the socio-political realm (Andrews 1991; Squire 2005, 2013) - aided by visual methods in a highly visual culture - should not be underestimated. This approach views sense of wellbeing as existing in relation to wider society and the ability to enter into forms of dialogue and exchange through many differing - creative - ways. The research revealed that it is an ability to partake in society through inclusion in its cultural, political and social landscapes that can be considered 'healthy' in the broadest sense. Such activity is aided by environments that acknowledge and accept that human ability to be self-determining and exercise agency in relation to one's culture are important to subjectivity, sense and meaning-making, and that to deny the ability to do so is to deny a basic humanity.

7.5 Possible directions for further research

Towards the end of the fieldwork period, as I have identified in my data analysis chapters and drawing on ideas of overlaps between personal, experiential stories and their interrelation with wider societal discourses, there appeared to be within the group a concerted move towards gathering information through which to build alternative and counter narratives. This was reminiscent of a more conventional community of practice, or participatory action research approach. Putting these approaches, alongside arts-based and creative methods, into practice in community settings, aided perhaps by university researchers, has the capacity to generate further insights into the relationships between creativity, group formation and self-management, narrative sense-making and wellbeing. Indeed, at one point near the end of the research, there was discussion between my supervisor at the BUCFP and I of training community researchers based on such a model. The environment of the BUCFP, in that it is receptive and open to innovations and partnership working, offers an important arena for further explorations of community knowledge building and counter narrative formation and its relationship to wellbeing. Further longitudinal research to explore whether, and if so in what ways, relationships and ways of working are maintained after the research fieldwork is over may also shed light on the ability of methods to become part of community practice. It was interesting to note that at the end of the BUCFP project a new art project on the topic of homelessness began and initially adopted the participatory model that I had proposed. Collaborative working between community organisations, research participants and university departments has the potential to enable the building of relationships that are of benefit to all parties.

In the tensions that emerged in group discussions about BUCFP funding, the research highlighted the ways in which the positioning of small third sector organisations has changed in relation to the State, particularly within the context of neoliberal 'austerity'. The increasing expectation that the third sector delivers forms of social care previously provided by statutory organisations (HM Treasury 2005; Office for Civil Society 2010; Department of Health 2014; 2016) raises important questions. Small charities have, in the main, operated independently of government, behaving as autonomous bodies and considered part of wider civil society. However, the shrinking of the State and an ideological commitment to free-market principles have driven a re-organisation of this relationship wherein charities have found themselves inadvertently drawn in as part of a marketised health and social care landscape. This approach

has bought with it increasingly restricted and narrowly defined notions of value and worth. Top-down agendas and service delivery expectations have the effect of focusing attention on the attainment of specific outcomes based on specific interventions. This quasi-experimental and reductionist 'outcome and evaluation' approach is not conducive to somewhere like the BUCFP that takes a non-prescriptive approach that includes opportunities to develop political voice as part of its offer. Indeed, such reductionist models bring with them the potential to label and further stigmatise those that use community and third sector services in ways that might be considered damaging to health and wellbeing. For places that deliver asset-based and arguably preventative approaches the challenge lies in how to best evidence the efficacy of this practice within current paradigms. It is possible to advocate for complex methods of evaluation such as those suggested by Pawson and Tilley (1997) which have the capacity to recognise the holistic and nuanced ways in which organisations such as the BUCFP work. Acknowledged and understood as valuable such approaches have the potential to offer paradigmatic change to reductive health and wellbeing landscapes that do not currently recognise the importance of self-determination and creativity in supporting and maintaining wellbeing. Similarly, if we are to recognise arguments for locality and complexity and indeed to celebrate the diversity of communities, then standardised top-down policy driven interventions with narrowly defined criteria of effectiveness are clearly not the best approaches. What is necessary is a methodology that captures local complexity and the ways in which these might vary yet nevertheless be effective in maintaining wellbeing. As Boddy et al (2011: 188) state:

Traditions of choice and local determinism are problematic for standardisation agendas, since they are actively intended to enable diversity in service models, but this does not mean the diverse services offered are not effective.

Further research needs to consider this increasingly complex relationship between the third sector and State. In an era of austerity and restricted financial support for the community and third sector - while the government nevertheless maintains an expectation that the sector deliver public services (Hastings et al 2015; O'Hara 2015) - research, information and evidence that illuminates these changing relationships and effects on services and those that need and use them is vitally important. The ability of organisations and those within them to resist particular narrative framings and to offer and develop alternative understandings is enhanced through collaborative working and critical examination of how communities are affected by policy and changing socio-political landscapes. It is, however, worthwhile to note diverging narratives surrounding collaborative working, particularly apparent within ideas of co-

production and patient and public involvement (PPI) in health research. Ives et al (2013: 181) distinguish between two such broad types of narratives:

The first is a pragmatic and outcome orientated type of PPI which positively impacts on the quality of research processes and outputs, and promotes more reliable, relevant research. The second is a more ideological, rights-based type of PPI which draws on broader social and ethical narratives around democratic representation, transparency, accountability, responsibility and the redressing of power imbalances.

The growing expectation that the third sector deliver public services is underlined by ideas of co-production, though as the above quote highlights; whether these movements are democratic, empowering and locally responsive approaches to health and wellbeing or whether they are symptomatic of the ideological withdrawing of the State from areas of public life are questions that remain to be answered. Legislation such as the Lobbying Bill (2014), which many have decried as a gagging clause and further evidence of the de-politicisation of the third sector (Bubb 2014; Burnham 2014; Disability Rights UK 2014; Foster et al 2014; Hutchins 2015), raises crucial questions concerning advocacy, autonomy, civil society and democracy. Do places like the BUCFP effectively 'de-politicise' - comply to survive - or is it possible to argue for complex methods of evaluation that include political empowerment, self-efficacy, creativity and the ability to resist stigmatisation and the abjection of the neoliberal State as part of wellbeing discourses?

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant attendance week-by-week

Appendix 2: BUCFP annual survey [blank]

Appendix 3: Copy of ethical review application (Section C.15 appended March 2017)

Appendix 4: Copies of ethics approvals

Appendix 5: Participant information sheet

Appendix 6: Participant consent form

Appendix 7: Recruitment poster/flyer

Appendix 8: Extracts from reflexive journal

Appendix 9: Sample of art session photographs

Appendix 10: Extract of transcript data (05.08.14)

Appendix 11: BUCFP Safe Centre Policy

Appendix 12: BUCFP exhibition flyer

Appendix 1: Participant attendance week-by-week

The table below indicates attendance at group sessions as it occurred week-by-week, and provides a clear outline of the recruitment period, art-making sessions and group interview sessions. As such, this table makes it possible to see what participants were attending when, and how often.

Key

Recruitment period	
Mind map activity	
Visual mind maps	
Art-making	
Group interviews	

1. 17th June 2014	Clive, Ellie, Jasmine, Jon, Pat, Paula, Rose, Sandra, Stephanie, Steve, (plus four Centre users who did not sign up)
2. 24th June	Clive, Ellie, Emily, Jim, Pat, Paula, Rose, Sandra, Simon, Stephanie, Steve
3. 1st July	David, Jon, Pat, Paula, Rose, Sandra, Simon, Stephanie, Steve
4. 15th July	Jon, Mel, Pat, Paula, Pete, Sandra, Simon, Steve
5. 22nd July	Clive, Jim, Jon, Pat, Pete, Sandra, Simon, Steve
6. 29th July	Steve, Sandra, Simon
7. 5th August	Clive, Ellie, Rose, Steve, Simon
8. 12th August	Clive, David, Jon, Mel, Pete, Rose, Sandra, Simon, Steve
9. 19th August	Clive, David, Jim, Mel, Rose, Sandra, Simon, Steve
10. 2nd September	Clive, David, Mel, Jim, Pete, Steve
11. 9th September	Clive, James, Mel, Pat, Sandra, Simon
12. 16th September	Clive, Jim, Mel, Pat, Paula, Pete, Sandra, Steve

13. 23rd September	Clive, Ellie, James, Jim, Pat, Paula, Rose, Sandra, Steve
14. 30th September	Clive, Jim, Pat, Paula, Pete, Rose, Sandra, Simon, Steve
15. 7th October	Jim, Pat, Paula, Pete, Steve
16. 21st October	Clive, Jim, Mel, Pat, Paula, Rose
17. 28th October	Clive, Paula
18. 4th November	Clive, Ellie, Jim, Paula, Pete, Steve
19. 11th November	Jon, Pat, Paula, Pete
20. 2nd December	Clive, Jim, Pat, Paula, Sandra
21. 9th December	Clive, Jim, Pat, Paula, Rose, Simon
22. 16th December	Clive, Lorraine, Mel, Pat, Paula, Steve
23. 6th January 2015	Clive, Jim, Mel, Pat, Paula
24. 13th January	Clive, Lorraine, Mel, Pat, Paula, Steve
25. 20th January	Clive, Fran, Leon, Mel, Pat, Paula, Steve
26. 27th January	Alison, Clive, Mel, Paula, Pat, Steve, Thomas
27. 3rd February	Clive, Fran, Henry, Jim, Jon, Luke, Pat, Sandra, Sophia, Thomas
28. 10th February	Clive, Ellie, Fran, Leon, Mel, Pat, Rose, Simon, Thomas
29. 17th February	Clive, Fran, Sophia, Thomas
30. 24th February	Clive, Fran, Luke, Mel, Thomas
31. 3rd March	Clive, Fran, Henry, Jim, Jon, Luke, Pat, Sandra, Sophia, Thomas
32. 10th March	Alison, Clive, Ellie, Fran, Henry, Luke, Paula, Rose, Sophia
33. 17th March	Clive, Fran, Sophia, Thomas
34. 24th March	Carer, Clive, Fran, James, Luke, Mel, Steve, Sophia, Thomas
35. 31st March	Clive, Paula, Simon, Sophia, Thomas
36. 7th April	Clive, Ellie, Fran, James, Jim, Mel, Paula, Rose, Simon, Sophia, Thomas
38. 14th April	Clive, Fran, Henry, Paula, Sophia, Thomas
39. 21st April	Clive, Henry, Mel, Paula, Sandra, Sophia, Stephanie, Steve

40. 28th April	Clive, Leon, Paula, Sophia, Thomas
41. 5th May	Carl, Clive, Fran, Leon, Sophia, Thomas

Families Project

Each year, we ask Centre users to complete a survey; this is to help us find out:

- The survey should only take about 10 minutes to complete and all survey forms are anonymous. Pat, our Social Work student, will lead you through the survey, however, if you would like to complete it yourself, just let her know. Survey findings are invaluable to the Centre, enabling us to meet the needs of users, make improvements to our services, develop new initiatives and raise money to keep the Centre alive.

Thank you for your time, assistance and ideas.

1. Gender ☐ male ☐ female

2. Age ☐ under 18 ☐ 18-25 ☐ 26-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56-65 ☐ over 65

- 3 a.** Are you a parent of children under 18? Yes / No

- b.** If so, are you a lone parent? Yes / No

4. Would you describe yourself as belonging to a minority ethnic community? Yes / No

- 5. Which one of the following describes your situation?:**

- ☐ Unemployed ☐ Parent/carer ☐ in part-time work ☐ in full-time work ☐ Student

- ☐ On sickness/disability benefits ☐ Retired ☐ other

6. Have you been unemployed or on sickness/disability benefits for the last 12 months or more?

Yes / No

7. a. Would you describe your housing as adequate?

Yes /

No

b. If No, please tell us why?

8. In the past 12 months have you lived in temporary accommodation or been homeless?

Yes / No

9. Would you describe yourself as having a disability?

Yes / No

10. Would you describe yourself as having health problems?

Yes / No

11. a. Would you say that over the last 12 months you have had mental health issues (depression, anxiety, etc.)?

Yes / No

b. If YES, please could you try to describe these issues, if you feel comfortable doing so.

12. Are you receiving any treatment/support for mental health issues?

Yes / No

13. In the past 12 months have you had any problems with alcohol or drugs or are you in recovery?

Yes / No

14. Please tell us what you think are the most important issues affecting you/your family?

We are interested in finding out about how recent changes to benefit and the cost of living are affecting people that use the centre...

15. How much on average do you spend on food each week? _____

16. Do you feel that you are able to adequately feed yourself and/or your family? yes/no

17. Please tell us your thoughts surrounding food and eating, for example, do you feel you are able to keep a healthy diet or are you concerned that you might not always be able to buy food?

B. Please tell us what you feel about the services provided by the Centre?

18. How long have you been using the centre?

☐ 0-6 months ☐ 6-12 months ☐ 1-2 years ☐ 3–5 years ☐ Over 5 years

19. What first brought you to the centre, e.g. hot food, needed advice, crèche, courses, etc., (please be as specific as you can?)

20. How often do you use the centre on average?

☐ most days ☐ 2/3 times a week ☐ once a week ☐ occasionally ☐ first visit

21. Have you volunteered with the project over the last 12 months? Yes / No

22. Do you have children who use the crèche? Yes / No

23. What do you think about the quality of any services you have used in the past 12 months?

Please tick:	not used	excellent	good	OK	poor	very poor
Crèche						
Centre outings						
Family support						
Children's Christmas parties						
Temporary housing advice						
Laundry						
Equipment/clothes/toys/food						
Benefits advice						
Reception						
Lunch						

Teabar						
Wholefood co-op						
Computer classes						
Open computer access						
Activity classes (e.g. yoga, dance)						
Language classes						
Creative groups (e.g. writing, film)						
Allotment						
Art and craft group						
Volunteering generally						

24. Do you have any comments about any of the above?

25. We aim to provide a safe and welcoming environment and would be grateful for your ideas about how we can improve the building, e.g. repairs, changes, maintenance issues, etc.

26. One outcome of our organisational review has been a reorganisation of our management structure. Elected Trustees continue to be legally responsible for all the activities and operations of the Centre, however, from January 2009 the operational and day-to-day authority for making Centre decisions was delegated by the trustees to a Project Workers Group (11 paid workers).

a. Have you noticed any negative impact on services resulting from this restructuring? Yes / No

b. Do you have any comments about any of the above?

C. This section will help us to show whether our services are effective.

We appreciate that this question is very wordy and possibly difficult, but it is the best way that we have managed to find to collect this information, please feel free to ask for assistance.

<p>27. a) Thinking back to when you first came to the centre, please tell us on a scale of 0 to 10 how confident you felt.</p> <p>(0 being very unconfident and 10 is very confident)</p>	<p>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p>
---	---

b) Has coming to the centre made any difference to how confident you feel now? <i>(0 being very unconfident and 10 is very confident)</i>	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
---	---

28. a) Thinking back to when you first came to the centre, please tell us on a scale of 0 to 10 how you would grade your wellbeing , taking wellbeing to mean your physical and mental health. <i>(0 being very unhealthy and 10 is very healthy)</i>	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
b) Has coming to the centre made any difference to your wellbeing? <i>(0 being very unhealthy and 10 is very healthy)</i>	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

29. a) On first coming to the centre many people say they feel isolated or alone, thinking back to when you first came to the centre, please tell us on a scale of 0 to 10 how isolated you felt. <i>(10 being very isolated and 0 is not isolated at all)</i>	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
b) Has coming to the centre made any difference to how isolated you feel now? <i>(10 being very isolated and 0 is not isolated at all)</i>	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

c) Please add any comments about your confidence/wellbeing/isolation below:

30. As a result of coming to the centre, please tell us whether or not you agree with the following statements by ticking **one** of the boxes for each statement.

As a result of coming to the centre....	Not used	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
I feel that the centre provides a safe, welcoming environment				
I feel that I have benefited from regular access to hot food				
I feel more informed about my benefit entitlement				

I feel I can get support/advice/information about housing issues				
I feel I have benefited from taking courses/classes				
I feel I have benefited from my volunteer experience				
I feel more informed about other local services				
I feel less anxious/depressed/troubled				
I feel my child has benefited from play & learning opportunities				
I feel better able to cope with being a parent/carers				

D. This section asks about courses, activities, and training (including volunteer training)

31. Please tell us what qualifications you had when you first came to the centre?

32. Did you come to the Centre intending to take some courses/activities/training? Yes / No

33. Please tell us what courses/activities/training you have done at the Centre, if possible in the order you did them?

34. a) Thinking back to when you first came to the centre, please tell us on a scale of 0 to 10 how you would grade your level of skills , (in relation to courses, training, volunteering, parenting, etc.) <i>(0 being very unskilled and 10 is very skilled)</i>	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
b) Has coming to the Centre made any difference to your level of skills? <i>(0 being very unskilled and 10 is very skilled)</i>	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

c) Please add any other comments about your learning activities at the Centre below:

35. Have you joined any other learning activities outside the Centre?

36. Please tell us about any qualifications you have gained here or elsewhere since you started at the centre?

37. Have the courses/activities/training you've done since coming to the Centre helped you into any sort of work (voluntary or paid)?

Yes / No

38 a. Some users would like to participate in more creative, photographic, art and/or history projects at the Centre. Would you be interested in taking part in creative activities?

Yes / No

b. Would you be interested in seeing an exhibition based on any of the above? Yes / No

E. General Comments

39. Any other comments about the Centre, such as how you or your family have benefited from using the centre, any suggestions for new services/activities, what you would like to see improved, anything you don't like about the centre, etc.

Thank you very much for taking the time and trouble to complete this survey, the findings will create better services and raise money for the centre. We will write up and distribute the findings.

Appendix 3: Copy of ethical review application (Section C.15 appended March 2017)

Ethical Review Application (ER/BW53/2)

Parent Application: ER/BW53/1

Project Title	spaces after modernity: a systems based examination of narrative formation and environments for health (COPY)		Status	Approved
Department	Social Work and Social Care	Email	B.Wheeler@sussex.ac.uk	
Applicant Status	PG (Research)	Phone	07788691662	
Supervisor	Boddy, Janet M			
Project Start Date	17-Oct-2013	Project End Date	17-Jun-2017	
External Funding in place	✓	External Collaborators	✓	
Funder/Project Title				
Name of Funder	ESRC/BUCFP			
Project Description	<p>This research proposes a study into the nature of the relationship between environment and individual and group sense and meaning making and how this relates to health. Taking a socio-ecological and systems theory perspective the research seeks to understand how, indeed if, individual and group narratives might be altered through the process of engagement with particular environments.</p> <p>The research explores these ideas as applied specifically to busy inner city day centre, the Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project (BUCFP), East Sussex. In using its space to offer - not prescribe - multiple opportunities for engagement and participation, the research explores the environment of the BUCFP as enabling a self scaffolding wherein participants experience a self determination and mastery that may be closely tied to notions of a broadly defined concept of health. This suggests that in its adherence to a particular organizational ethos, of inclusivity and receptivity, the BUCFP may enable the forming of creatively working and self managing groups and that this process may generate particular health giving properties.</p>			

Project Title	spaces after modernity: a systems based examination of narrative formation and environments for health (COPY)	Status	Approved
	<p>The BUCFP is a registered charity of some 30 years duration that has approximately 2,000 Centre users annually. A high proportion of Centre users self describe as affected by issues of poverty, such as poor housing and health. This includes a high proportion of Centre users as affected by mental health issues such as stress, anxiety and depression and a significant proportion as being affected by issues of alcohol and substance misuse.</p> <p>Within the environment of the BUCFP the research proposes exploring ideas of potential narrative reformation and sense making through creative arts activity, specifically through the forming of a creative arts group. Using the principles of action research, with attendant notions of participation and knowledge co-construction, the research seeks to explore how participant experiences surrounding the topic of food poverty may be altered or changed through engagement with the project.</p> <p>Thematic narrative analysis seeks to uncover how participants make sense of, and potentially 're-story' their experience through analysis of emergent themes surrounding the topic of food poverty and experiences of the group, and of the BUCFP.</p>		

Ethical Review Form Section A (ER/BW53/2)

» Checklist

A1. Will your study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent or in a dependent position (e.g. people under 18, people with learning difficulties, over-researched groups or people in care facilities)?

A2. Will participants be required to take part in the study without their consent or knowledge at the time (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places), and /

or will deception of any sort be used?

A3. Will it be possible to link identities or information back to individual participants in any way? Yes

A4. Might the study induce psychological stress or anxiety, or produce humiliation or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in the everyday life of the participants? No

A5. Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use, ethnicity, political behaviour, potentially illegal activities)? Yes

A6. Will any drugs, placebos or other substances (such as food substances or vitamins) be administered as part of this study and will any invasive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind will be used? No

A7. Will your project involve working with any substances and / or equipment which may be considered hazardous? No

A8. Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses, compensation for time or a lottery / draw ticket) be offered to participants? No

» Risk Assessment

A9. If you have answered 'Yes' to ANY of the above questions, your application will be considered as HIGH risk. If however you wish to make a case that your application should be considered as LOW risk please enter the reasons here:

Ethical Review Form Section C (ER/BW53/2)

» C.1 Risk Checklist - Participants

C1. Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable, or unable to give informed consent, or in a dependent position (e.g. children (under 18), people with learning difficulties, over-researched

groups or people in care facilities, including prisons)?

C2. Is DBS clearance necessary for this project? If yes, No
please ensure you complete Section C.6.

C3. Will participants be asked to take part in the study No
without their consent or knowledge at the time (e.g.
covert observation of people) or will deception of any sort
be involved? Please refer to the British Psychological
Society Code of Ethics and Conduct for further
information.

C4. Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety, No
or produce humiliation, or cause harm or negative
consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal
life?

C5. Are alcoholic drinks, drugs, placebos or other No
substances (such as food substances or vitamins) to be
administered to the study participants?

C6. Can you think of anything else that might be potentially harmful to participants in this
research?
No

» C.2 Risk Checklist - Researcher(s) Safety and Wellbeing

C7. Does the project involve working with any substances No
and/or equipment which may be considered hazardous?
(Please refer to the University's Control of Hazardous
Substances Policy).

C8. Could the nature or subject of the research potentially Yes
have an emotionally disturbing impact on the
researcher(s)?

C8a. If yes, briefly describe what measures will be taken to help the researcher(s) to
manage this.
PhD support groups and supervision. Option to access university counselling services if
deemed necessary

C9. Could the nature or subject of the research potentially Yes
expose the researcher(s) to threats of physical violence
and / or verbal abuse?

C9a. If yes, briefly describe what measures will be taken to mitigate this. The researcher (BW) is a trustee of the Centre, and has previous experience of successfully running art groups there, so she is experienced in the needs and characteristics of Centre users, and how to access support if she has any concerns. In addition, her work in the Centre will be supported and supervised by the BUFCP participation worker. (This is a collaborative studentship with ESRC and BUFCP).

C10. Does the research involve any fieldwork - Overseas Yes
or in the UK?

C10a. If yes, where will the fieldwork take place?
Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton East Sussex BN2 0GY

C11. Will any researchers be in a lone working situation? No

C11a. If yes, briefly describe the location, time of day and duration of lone working. What precautionary measures will be taken to ensure safety of the researcher(s)?

C12. Can you think of anything else that might be potentially harmful to the researcher(s) in this research?
No

» C.3 Data Collection and Analysis (Please provide full details)

C13. PARTICIPANTS: How many people do you envisage will participate, who they are, and how will they be selected?
The group will be self selecting volunteers, and aims to number approximately 10-12 participants in total (the usual size of a BUFCP project group). They will be invited to take part in the project and given time to think about what is involved before they make a decision, to ensure that participation is completely voluntary. In addition to participation in group interviews (see C15) people who participate in the group will be asked to volunteer to take part in one-to-one semi structured interviews, and three group members will be selected from those who volunteer (sampled to represent male and female participants and variation in duration of involvement with BUFCP, if feasible).

C14. RECRUITMENT: How will participants be approached and recruited?
Information about the project will be introduced in May 2014 through Centre meetings (attended by Centre users, volunteers, workers and trustees), through leaflets and posters and through a series of initial meetings running up to the proposed start date of July 2014. Importantly the project proposal will also be delivered to Centre users through the work of the participation worker whose job it is to suggest involvement of Centre users in BUFCP projects. Art based projects form a large part of participation and historically the BUFCP has been involved in these, particularly as part of the Brighton Festival Fringe.

C15. METHOD: What research method(s) do you plan to use; e.g. interview, questionnaire/self-completion questionnaire, field observation, audio/audio-visual recording?

The initial stages of the research fieldwork involve drawing on survey data held by the BUCFP. This is anonymous data that will enable me to contextualise subsequent research. The research proposes using action research and visual arts methods. This will take the form of an art group working within the cycles of action research for the duration of the fieldwork process (approx. 1 year see timetable) Data will be gathered through monthly focus group interviews involving volunteer participants. In addition to this, semi structured individual interviews will be carried out with three volunteer participants at key stages throughout the project (i.e. beginning, middle and end) for thematic narrative analysis. Focus group and individual interviews will be recorded using Dictaphone and transcribed by the researcher. I will also be using ethnographic methods such as reflexive journal keeping and observation throughout the creative group work stages.

C16. LOCATION: Where will the project be carried out e.g. public place, in researcher's office, in private office at organisation? The group arts activity will be carried out in the main communal area at the Centre. Individual interviews will be carried out in the more private space of one of the classrooms at the Centre.

» C.4 Ethical Considerations (Please provide full details)

C17. INFORMED CONSENT: Please describe the process you will use to ensure your participants are freely giving fully informed consent to participate. This will usually include the provision of an Information Sheet and will normally require a Consent Form unless it is a purely self-completion questionnaire based study or there is justification for not doing so. (Please state this clearly). Towards the end of the recruitment period (May-July 2014)(see C.14) potential participants will be asked if they would feel happy to commit to participation in the project. There will be no expectation to take part and participants will be free to decide whether or not they would like to be involved. This is an important part of the process and of the study as it sits within the BUCFP ethos of Centre User self determination and of the project as being an invitation and an offer rather than a prescription for participation. A final recruitment meeting would seek to gain informed consent based upon an understanding of what the project involves including right of withdrawal and the withdrawal of data.

C18. RIGHT OF WITHDRAWAL: Participants should be able to withdraw from the research at any time. Participants should also be able to withdraw their data if it is linked to them and should be told when this will no longer be possible (e.g. once it has been included in the final report). Please describe the exact arrangements for withdrawal from participation and withdrawal of data for your study. If at any point a participant feels they no longer wish to take part in the study they have the right to withdraw without giving reason. This includes the right to withdraw data and this will be made clear as part of the consent process (see C.17) However, it will be stated

before the giving of consent that data will be being used as part of the researchers (BW) doctoral thesis and beyond a certain point (August 2016) data will not be able to be withdrawn.

C19. OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES: If you answered YES to anything in C.1 you must specifically address this here. Please also consider whether there are other ethical issues you should be covering here. Please also make reference to the professional code of conduct you intend to follow in your research. It is important that all participants are freely volunteering to take part in the project and that no one be excluded if they want to participate. It is also essential to ensure that those that do participate have the capacity to give informed consent. If the researcher has concerns about a participant's capacity to give informed consent then she will discuss this with the participation worker. If at any time it is felt that participation is impacting negatively on a participant this will also be discussed with the participation worker and with university supervisors. Clear ground rules will be established to ensure the group adheres to a principle of creating a supportive and non-threatening environment and works within the BUCFP safe Centre policy.

» C.5 Data Protection, Confidentiality, and Records Management

C20. Will you ensure that the processing of personal Yes
information related to the study will be in full compliance
with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA)?

C20a. If you are processing any personal information outside of the European Economic Area (EEA) you must explain how compliance with the DPA will be ensured.

C21. Will you take steps to ensure the confidentiality of Yes
personal information?

C21a. Please provide details of anonymisation procedures and of physical and technical security measures here:
It will be stated at the outset that the project will form a closed group of approximately 10-12 participants working together for the period of approximately one year. It will be requested that participants share an ethic of respect for the group and refrain from sharing sensitive topics discussed within the group with others outside the group. It will, however, not be possible to ensure that participants remain entirely anonymous and non-identifiable outside the group, particularly as the BUCFP will be named in the thesis and further publication. This will be made clear at the outset and at recruitment stages of the project (May-July 2014) before the giving of consent. Regarding the art exhibition and work produced, it may be that in some cases participants wish for their work to be anonymised to protect identities, while in other cases participants feel they would like acknowledgement and authorship of the work they have produced. These are issues that will be negotiated by the group, in keeping with an action research methodology. In terms

of data collected for use for the PhD thesis (through focus group, individual semi-structured interviews and analysis of ethnographic data including art work produced) names will be anonymised and quotes unattributed where relevant. All data relating to the project will be stored by the researcher on her home PC and in locked cabinet files at the researcher's home address. Art work produced by the group will be stored at the BUCFP and depending on the size and dimensions will be kept in either a locked cupboard or in a locked classroom space at the Centre.

C22. Will all personal information related to this study be No retained and shared in a form that is fully anonymised?

C22a. If you answered "no" to the above question you must ensure that these arrangements are detailed in the Information Sheet and that participant consent will be in place. If relevant, please outline arrangements here: It will not be possible to ensure full anonymity for the art exhibition. Some contributors and their work may be recognizable, indeed, as discussed previously some may want to be credited for their work. This means that despite anonymisation, anonymity in the PhD thesis may also be limited due to certain people being known to have taken part in the BUCFP art project. It is essential that potential participants understand this before giving consent and that there is plenty of time to consider and discuss this before committing (or not) to the project. Participants will also be reminded of this throughout the process. I will however anonymise and disguise individual identities and accounts within the thesis itself to address this risk of recognisability (e.g. use of unattributed quotes where necessary, and change of identifiable/distinctive details to avoid recognisability).

C23. Will the Principal Investigator take full responsibility Yes during the study, for ensuring appropriate storage and security of information (including research data, consent forms and administrative records) and, where appropriate, will the necessary arrangements be made in order to process copyright material lawfully?

C23a. If you answered "no" to the above question, please give further details:

C24. Who will have access to personal information relating to this study? The BUCFP participation worker, who I will be working with for the duration of the fieldwork, will have access to participant personal information. She will also be advising on issues of confidentiality and I will be in discussion with her regarding participants capacity to take part in the study.

C25. Data management responsibilities after the study. State how long study information including research data, consent forms and administrative records will be retained, in what format(s) and where the information will be kept. Information relating to the study will be kept by the researcher for upto potentially five

years post doc. This is for the purposes of future knowledge exchange and the revisiting of findings that may be of value. Participants will be made fully aware of this possibility at the outset.

» C.6 Other Ethical Clearances and Permissions

C26. Are any other ethical clearances or permissions No required?

C26a. If yes, please give further details including the name and address of the organisation. If other ethical approval has already been received please attach evidence of approval, otherwise you will need to supply it when ready.

Supporting Documents (ER/BW53/2)

You MUST ensure that ALL documents are converted to PDF format before uploading. Otherwise they will not be included in the merged PDF file.

No.	Document	Document Type	Version	Upload Date
	Ethical Review Application [PDF]	Application		
1	Certificate of Approval.pdf [5Kb : PDF]	of Certificate of Approval	of 1	24-Mar-2017 15.56.22

Submission History (ER/BW53/2)

Submission Date	Submitted To	Risk Rating (System)	Risk Rating (User)	Decision / Status	Reason(s) for Return
24-Mar-2017 14:49	Social Sciences & Arts C-REC (Liz McDonnell)	High	High	Approved	
24-Mar-2017 09:55	Supervisor (Janet Boddy)	High	High	Approved by supervisor	

Explanation of Return: PLEASE NOTE: As Bella has discussed with Liz McDonnell as CREC Chair, this amendment relates to a low risk addition to the study - secondary

analysis of existing anonymised survey data from the community organisation in which she has conducted her qualitative research. No participants are identifiable in the survey data analysis, which is purely descriptive and context-setting for the qualitative work which has already been approved. There are no ethics risks associated with the analysis or its inclusion in the thesis. The student is now ready to submit her thesis, subject to this ethics approval, and so we request an urgent fast track review to avoid subjecting her to delays in submission.

Appendix 4: Copies of ethics approvals

As discussed in the thesis, I originally secured ethics approval in February 2014, but subsequently secured an amendment in October 2014 to allow me to open up the group. In March 2017 I secured an additional amendment to allow me to include anonymised BUCFP survey data in the thesis.



University of Sussex

Certificate of Approval

Reference Number:	ER/BW53/1
Title Of Project:	spaces after modernity: a systems based examination of narrative formation and environments for health
Principal Investigator (PI):	Bella Wheeler (application amended)
Student:	Bella Wheeler
Collaborators:	
Duration Of Approval:	n/a
Expected Start Date:	01-Jan-2014
Date Of Approval:	11-Feb-2014
Approval Expiry Date:	31-May-2015
Approved By:	Jayne Paulin
Name of Authorised Signatory:	Stephen Shute
Date:	03-Dec-2014

*NB. If the actual project start date is delayed beyond 12 months of the expected start date, this Certificate of Approval will lapse and the project will need to be reviewed again to take account of changed circumstances such as legislation, sponsor requirements and University procedures.

Please note and follow the requirements for approved submissions:

Amendments to protocol

- * Any changes or amendments to approved protocols must be submitted to the C-REC for authorisation prior to implementation.

Feedback regarding the status and conduct of approved projects

- * Any incidents with ethical implications that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported immediately to the Chair of the C-REC.

Feedback regarding any adverse and unexpected events

- * Any adverse (undesirable and unintended) and unexpected events that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported to the Chair of the Social Sciences C-REC. In the event of a serious adverse event, research must be stopped immediately and the Chair alerted within 24 hours of the occurrence.

Social Sciences & Arts Cross-School Research Ethics Committee

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

Reference Number:	ER/BW53/3
School:	Education and Social Work
Title of Project	spaces after modernity: a systems based examination of narrative formation and environments for health
Principal Investigator:	Bella Wheeler
Expected Start Date:*	October 2014 – January 2015
<p>*NB. If the actual project start date is delayed beyond 12 months of the <u>expected</u> start date, this Certificate of Approval will lapse and the project will need to be reviewed again to take account of changed circumstances such as legislation, sponsor requirements and University procedures</p>	
<p>This project has been given ethical approval by the Social Sciences/Arts Research Ethics Committee (C-REC). <i>Please note the following requirements for approved submissions:</i></p> <p>Amendments to research proposal - Any changes or amendments to the approved proposal, which have ethical implications, must be submitted to the committee for authorisation prior to implementation.</p> <p>Feedback regarding any adverse and unexpected events - Any adverse (undesirable and unintended) and unexpected events that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported to the Chair of the Social Sciences C-REC. In the event of a serious adverse event, research must be stopped immediately and the Chair alerted within 24 hours of the occurrence.</p>	
Authorised Signature	Liz McDonnell
Name of Authorised Signatory (C-REC Chair or nominated deputy)	Liz McDonnell



University of Sussex

Certificate of Approval

Reference Number	ER/BW53/2
Title Of Project	spaces after modernity: a systems based examination of narrative formation and environments for health (COPY)
Principal Investigator	Bella Wheeler
Student	Bella Wheeler
Collaborators	
Duration Of Approval	2 months 3 weeks
Expected Start Date	24-Mar-2017
Date Of Approval	24-Mar-2017
Approval Expiry Date	17-Jun-2017
Approved By	Liz McDonnell
Name of Authorised Signatory	Liz McDonnell
Date	24-Mar-2017

*NB. If the actual project start date is delayed beyond 12 months of the expected start date, this Certificate of Approval will lapse and the project will need to be reviewed again to take account of changed circumstances such as legislation, sponsor requirements and University procedures.

Please note and follow the requirements for approved submissions:

Amendments to protocol

- * Any changes or amendments to approved protocols must be submitted to the C-REC for authorisation prior to implementation.

Feedback regarding the status and conduct of approved projects

- * Any incidents with ethical implications that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported immediately to the Chair of the C-REC.

Feedback regarding any adverse and unexpected events

- * Any adverse (undesirable and unintended) and unexpected events that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported to the Chair of the Social Sciences C-REC. In the event of a serious adverse event, research must be stopped immediately and the Chair alerted within 24 hours of the occurrence.

Appendix 5: Participant information sheet



Arts, Food Poverty and Health Research

Participant Information Sheet

Key Contact: Ms. Bella Wheeler, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton BN1 9QQ. Tel. 07788691662

Email: bw53@sussex.ac.uk

Study Title

‘Spaces after Modernity: A Systems Based Analysis of Narrative Formation and Environments for Health’

Invitation

You have been invited to take part in this study and this information sheet explains why the research is being carried out and what it involves. If you decide to take part, the researcher will go through the information sheet with you and answer any questions you have. Please ask if anything isn’t clear.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to explore how, why, if and in what ways taking part in group arts activity might improve the health and wellbeing of people that use the BUCFP. This also explores how the BUCFP plays a role in actively supporting beneficial arts group activity.

Forming a creative arts group working together around the topic of food poverty, the research explores if, how and in what ways the group may challenge ideas surrounding this topic, and

how this might be considered as health giving. The aim of this research is to find out how community health might be better supported.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate because you are a BUCFP Centre user and might find being part of this project beneficial. We are interested in hearing the thoughts and experiences of Centre users as this is an important part of improving health and social care in the community and this research hopes to contribute to that.

Food poverty is an issue that the Centre is seeing more and more people as affected by and we are keen to find out how this issue affects people in their daily lives, and how it affects other areas of their lives. Creative arts projects form a key part of what the BUCFP does and the research explores how involvement in creative projects and exploration using this method may affect Centre users' health and wellbeing.

What will happen if I agree to take part?

If you agree to take part in the study you will be part of a creative arts group of approximately 10-12 people working together on the topic of food poverty. The group will meet for two hours once a week to take part in arts activity with the aim of producing an exhibition for the Brighton Fringe 2015.

At the beginning of each month the group will meet to discuss our thoughts and feelings about taking part and how we would like to move forward with the project. These sessions will form a focus group and be recorded using Dictaphone, transcribed and used for further understanding of participation and about the topic of food poverty. All information gathered in this way will be used for the purposes of university research and will be kept confidential. Names and relevant details will be changed for any further publication, for example doctoral thesis or in academic journals.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

We (the BUCFP and University) do not believe there to be any risks involved in taking part in this project. However, there may be times when we discuss issues of a personal nature. Therefore, we ask that all group members are respectful of each others' thoughts and feelings and that we work in accordance with the BUCFP Safe Centre Policy and an ethic of kindness and respect for each other.

The researcher has received training regarding dealing with sensitive topics and difficult situations and a member of the BUCFP staff will be available during sessions for participants to talk to if necessary. If you do decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time and without giving reason and we will only keep information you have given us up to that point.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

We are keen to explore the ways in which taking part in creative arts groups, in the environment of the BUCFP, may have positive health benefits for those involved. It is our experience that such groups may improve the lives of people that use the Centre and we would like to find out more about this. The BUCFP sees a high proportion of people as affected by such issues as food poverty, illness and unemployment and works to challenge these. Through creative arts methods the study explores how and in what ways the group might effectively challenge these difficult issues.

Will my information in this study be kept confidential?

As the research will take the form of a group art project and production of an exhibition, it may not always be possible to secure confidentiality. This is something participants will need to be aware of if they do decide to take part. As mentioned previously, we will ask that participants are respectful of things shared within the group. Participants must be clear that although it may be possible to anonymise art work, this might not fully protect them for being identified both within, and beyond, the group and BUCFP.

Information and notes gathered and recorded throughout the project for further research will be transcribed and securely stored by the researcher. The researcher will check with participants before any publication that they are happy with the information being shared. Names and details will be changed for the purpose of writing up and publication of findings. Information will be kept for up to five years after the completion of the study to help with further research in this area and future knowledge exchange.

We will only talk to someone else about what we have discussed if we think you or another person is at risk. If that happens we will tell someone who can help, but only after we have talked with you about it first.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study will be written up as part of the researchers PhD thesis. I hope that it may help to inform policy surrounding arts, community and health. These may be published in academic journals and presented at conferences, but no participants will be named.

Who is organizing and funding the research?

The researcher is a Social Work and Social Care doctoral student in the Department of Education and Social Work at the University of Sussex. The research is jointly funded between the BUCFP, ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) and the University.

Who has approved this study?

This study has been approved by the University of Sussex and the ESRC Doctoral Training Centre's Ethics Committee, C-REC. Details of which can be found here: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/spg/researchgovernance>

Contacts:

Ms. Bella Wheeler (researcher): **bw53@sussex.ac.uk** or 07788691662

Ms. Ellie Moulton (BUCFP participation worker) **info@bucfp.org**

Dr. Janet Boddy (1st Supervisor): **J.M.Boddy@sussex.ac.uk**

Dr. David Orr (2nd Supervisor): **D.Orr@sussex.ac.uk**

Thank you

If you feel you would like to take part in this project please sign the participant consent form and hand back to me, Bella Wheeler. Thank you for your co-operation and I look forward to working together on what we hope will be an exciting and enjoyable project!

Appendix 6: Participant consent form



Arts, Food Poverty and Health Research

Research Consent Form

Key Contact: Ms. Bella Wheeler, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton BN1 9QQ. Tel. 07788691662

Email: bw53@sussex.ac.uk

Study Title

'Spaces after Modernity: A Systems Based Analysis of Narrative Formation and Environments for Health'

Please read and complete this form carefully. If you are willing to participate in this study, ring the appropriate responses and sign and date the declaration at the end. If you do not understand anything and would like more information, please ask.

I have had the research satisfactorily explained to me in verbal and / or written form by the researcher.

YES / NO

I understand that the research will involve being part of an arts group and taking part in focus group discussions and interviews.

YES / NO

I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time without having to give an explanation.

YES / NO

I understand that all information about me will be treated in strict confidence and that I will not be named in any written work arising from this study.

YES / NO

I understand that any audiotape material of me will be used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed on completion of your research.

YES / NO

I understand that you will be discussing the progress of the research with others Dr. Janet Boddy, Dr. David Orr (University of Sussex) Ms. Ellie Moulton (BUCFP).

YES / NO

I freely give my consent to participate in this research study and have been given a copy of this form for my own information.

Name (participant).....

Signature (participant).....

Name (researcher).....

Signature (researcher).....

Date

Appendix 7: Recruitment poster/flyer



**WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE PART
OF THE BRIGHTON FESTIVAL
FRINGE 2015?**

Interested in food and art...?
Then read on...

WE ARE FORMING A SMALL GROUP TO EXPLORE THE TOPIC
OF FOOD AND FOOD POVERTY USING CREATIVE ARTS BASED
METHODS WITH THE AIM OF PRODUCING AN EXHIBITION IN
MAY 2015

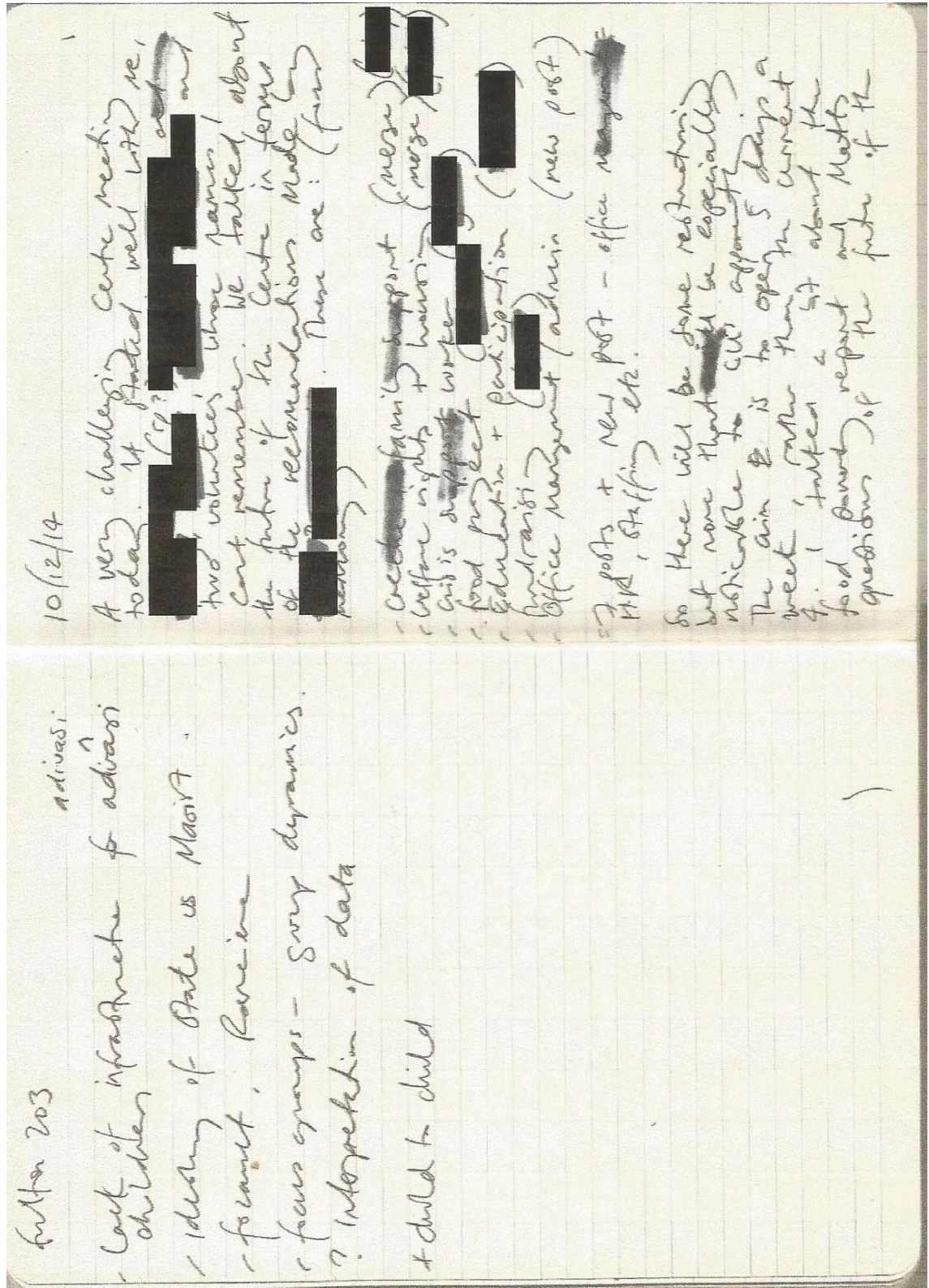
THIS PROJECT WILL RUN FOR A YEAR AS PART OF RESEARCH
INTO ARTS, CREATIVITY AND HEALTH...

IF YOU THINK YOU MIGHT LIKE TO BE PART OF THE GROUP,
PLEASE COME AND FIND OUT MORE AT OUR FIRST MEETING
ON

LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THERE!



Appendix 8: Reflexive journal extracts



I need to set some thoughts out
re brief + feedback
Q's for next focus group interviews

set an agenda

1. How do we want to represent
ourselves / the project in the
exhibition?



e.g. 'Food poverty affects XYZ...'
'As a collaborative project...

- Action research community
arts group exploring
the topic of food poverty
"...what we did..."
meeting, focus group seeking -
planning, decision making,
materials, ideas...
= community participation +
voice.

- "What's at?" as a medium
of representation - interpret -

visual culture - thought
poverty - inst - non-verbal -
accessible
- community talk back
- i.e. quotes on food poverty -
highlighting the issue



'abundance' 'sustainability'
'modesty' 'poverty'

- the exposure - security / guilt
- the adverbially - near etc.

Topics for discussion:

- idea of security trap
on the food - a new take on
the idea of 'food security'

- talking about supermarket
prices -

Appendix 9: Sample of art session photos









Appendix 10: Extract of transcript data (05.08.14)

344	shared allotment...do you have the time to do that and then also time in terms of <u>cooking</u> ...you	374
345	know...that takes time I mean you <u>have to plan</u> ...	375
346	I've got a vegetable patch and my experience...I don't grow much vegetables...is to put an awful	376
347	lot of effort into potatoes that you have for one or two meals...and they've gone and you've waited	377
348	for months to grow them and the same with tomato plants because it's...it's...you're putting so much	378
349	effort in and only get for a few meals worth...and strawberries and...	379
	well I know...	380
	tasty... - <i>Could be down narrative - conflict avoided</i>	381
352	oh they taste delicious...and you know you've grown them and that's such a lovely	382
353	feeling...but...the amount of time and effort...and even just buying the seeds or the compost...you	383
354	know...until you get the whole system going and the knowledge to do it as well...	384
355	that's...that's the thing the <u>knowledge to do it</u> ...well it's a lot of time to <u>get the knowledge</u> to be	385
356	able to subsidise your own diet with an allotment or a veg patch I imagine	386
357	well yes it is to some extent you know...its hard work...	387
358	so I think...we are reliant on supermarkets...pretty much...	388
359	no... - <i>again.</i>	389
360	oh you're not...your pretty good with gardening stuff...you've said before that you're quite	390
361	good with your composting and you've got a whole thing worked out...	391
362	yeah I go to Starbucks as for the free used up ground coffee that's been used from two o'clock	392
363	onwards...put it on the soil...goodbye slugs...goodbye snails...I can't put slug pellets down because	393
364	I've got a dog	394
365	so how much are you able to produce that you supplement your own diet with? With the veg that	395
366	you grow?	396
367	mint, spearmint, bay...I've got a massive great big bay tree...rosemary, lavender, lemon balm	397
368	so herbs...	398
369	rhubarb	399
370	mmm rhubarb's good	400
371	yeah	401
372	I don't like it - <i>even conflict - albeit in a safe way - but he tries it out too.</i>	
373	you get an abundance don't you...so it's eating rhubarb for a month...	

13

+ the personal becomes a point of trust.

374 chives

375 but that wouldn't feed you...that would make the flavours delicious but it wouldn't feed you...it's
376 not a meal...like potatoes and carrots

- conflict again

377 no

378 courgettes and...

379 but I always go into Sainsbury's along Lewes road about half past six and find everything that's
380 reduced

- resourceful - different type of knowledge

381 good plan...that's a good idea

382 yeah

383 when I've got money it's hit the reduced section

- choice? or just what's the in-need?

384 yeah

385 what's your diet like?

- direct

386 the only time I eat healthy is when I'm up here...that's all I'm saying

- true for

387 that's what we started off talking about

388 well funny enough I don't really eat a lot...I get into this...um...I have days where I don't want to
389 eat...I just don't feel like eating...you know...especially in this hot weather I just lose my appetite all
390 together...but at the moment financially...I'm struggling and actually been having hand outs from the
391 food bank...I'm supposed to be eating vegetables because I'm anaemic and I'm supposed to have my
392 greens and I'm not doing it...

- why - personal choice?

393 you're not able to do it...

- financial constraints or personal choice?

394 I take supplements...tablets and stuff...

395 is that because of the expense that you're not doing it? You can't afford...the fresh green...

396 yeah well as a single...well you know...plus...it's kind of awkward because I don't have a proper
397 kitchen and I don't have a proper cooker and all of this and all of that and I just feel...you know...I've
398 got this tiny little...it looks like a microwave with two hobs on basically...a baby belling

399 a baby belling

400 and it's an hour and a half to heat up the oven if I want to do anything and then it just burns
401 everything cos it's electric everything just gets burnt...yeah...

narrative
stroke in
response to
multiple
disadvantage

- poor housing /
facilities
- multiple obstacles
interconnected.

Appendix 11: BUCFP Safe Centre Policy

Brighton Unemployed Centre Safe Centre Policy (as March 2017)

1. Everyone is to be treated with respect regardless of difference.
2. Everyone is responsible for keeping a safe and welcoming environment for all who use the Centre. Be aware of others around you, including children.
3. Alcohol and recreational drugs are not to be bought into or consumed on the premises, people under the influence of these are not allowed into the Centre.
4. Violence is not acceptable under any circumstances
5. No weapons are to be bought into the Centre.
6. No animals are allowed to be bought into the Centre, except guide dogs, as some people are uncomfortable around them.
7. There is a no smacking policy in all parts of the Centre, we also work to a child protection policy, which is available to view on request.
8. Peanuts are not allowed on the premises because of peanut allergies.
9. Anyone who is found to be intimidating, aggressive or disturbing to others or breaking the Safe Centre Policy will be asked to stop and may be asked to leave the Centre. Police assistance will be sought if necessary.
10. If you know or suspect that you have a highly infectious/contagious condition, please seek medical advice before coming to the Centre.
11. Report all hazards or incidents to a day co-ordinator, whose name is on the white-board in the main area of the Centre, as soon as possible. The day co-ordinator is responsible for upholding the Safe Centre Policy.

HARRASSMENT

The Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project is a safe space and people need to respect this. Harassment means any uninvited, and/or unwanted behaviour or looks or gestures that make other people feel uncomfortable. These are some examples of inappropriate behaviour: making unwelcome comments, uninvited physical contact and sexual comments. Safe Centre Policy is very clear on this. If you feel you are being harassed please speak to the day co-ordinator.

Appendix 12: BUCFP exhibition flyer

