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Feminism and Social Movements

"Working women demand peace and food": Gender and class in the East London Federation of Suffragettes' food politics

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Abstract

In this article, we foreground how gender, class and feminism underpin the aims and modes of mobilization of the food politics of a British first wave suffragette organization, the East London Federation of Suffragettes. Our discussion shows how upper and middle-class suffragettes excluded working-class women and marginalized their political gendered classed interests, raising questions about feminist cross-class solidarities today. We focus on three of East London Federation of the Suffragettes quite different modes of mobilization: embodied protests, radical welfare community organizing and food protest writing, all of which foreground class politics. In discussing three quite distinct modes of mobilization, we highlight the rich package of strategies they created and the different classed identities and struggles in these. We show the diversity of gendered and classed social roles around which the women politicked, as workers, mothers, housewives and consumers. The historical focus enables us to "see" the activities and identifications over time to understand and map their range and dynamics. Moreover, suffragette politics have a "long-tail" and continue to influence feminist politics and thinking, but the working-class mobilizing and food politics have been much less recognized and yet offer potential insights for feminist activism, including the cost-of-living crisis today.

KEYWORDS
class, food politics, suffragettes

1 | INTRODUCTION

The quotation in our title comes from a headline in the feminist newspaper of the East London Federation of the Suffragettes (ELFS) and points to themes in our article about the gendering and classing of their food movement. The headline appeared in a half page article, on Saturday, January 26, 1918, toward the end of the first world war in Europe. Their article calls for a "great demonstration" about classed and gendered food inequalities in the food supply; working-class women and children's hunger; and pacificism. In using the term "working-women" rather than suffragettes, housewives or mothers, the headline points to the specificity of the political identity they mobilized for this demonstration and article, and the significance for them of food as a classed gendered political demand.

The suffrage and suffragette organizations used demonstrations to protest for enfranchisement. But for ELFS, a militant working-class organization, the article and planned demonstration formed part of a panoply of modes of mobilizations about the classed gendered politics of food during the war. These politics included mobilizing around food access, unequal distribution, anti-profiteering, anti-hoarding, the inequality of the food supply, classed and feminized starvation and hunger, and gendered labor rights. Working-class women experienced a disproportionate burden in relation to food scarcity in the war, as do many white and women of color working-class women today in the UK under austerity politics and the cost-of-living crisis. As an organization neglected in studies of social movements in organization studies, ELFS, and its food politics and modes of mobilization during 1914–1918 makes for a rich case study for theorizing intersected gender and classed movements.

To date, some feminist and critical race scholars have critiqued the British suffrage and suffragette movements. For instance, some argue that historians and the media downplay the nationalism, racism and imperialism of suffragette groups; reproduce the idea that the suffragettes was a middle-class "white woman's movement" rather than a global and anti-imperialist suffragette movement; and over-emphasize the heroic-individualism of middle-class suffragettes to the detriment of working-class feminists and collective mobilizing (Mirza, 2015; Mukherjee, 2018; Schwartz, 2018).

But the ELFS movement was distinct from other suffrage groups especially those dominated by middle-class women and politics. ELFS was a vibrant classed feminist and socialist organization which participated in diverse modes of protests that brought working-class white women together to form alternative solidarities and spaces of mobilization around university adult suffrage that is, votes for working-class men and women and not just property-based franchise for middle-class women, fights for working class struggles, working and living conditions.

From what we can tell, and using today's racial understandings, many ELFS were white, although some were Irish and Jewish, both racialized on the edges of whiteness at this time. A few were in mixed-raced marriages with African Caribbean men. Some members were already highly politicized, involved with transnational labor activism and fully acquainted with socialism and communism. White working-class women formed the leadership of ELFS alongside some middle- and upper-class women such as Sylvia Pankhurst. As the first world war took hold, their politics turned to the classed feminization of poverty, food insecurity, maternal starvations, the burden of working-class women's domestic food work, and gendered classed inequalities of access to food (Green, 2017).

The study of contemporary women's and feminist movements grows in feminist organization studies, with current research on the politics of solidarity, affect, social media platforms and embodied protest (see for example, Fotaki & Daskalaki, 2021; Grosser & McCarthy, 2019; Kouki & Chatzidakis, 2021; Smolović Jones, Winchester, and Clarke, 2021; Vachhani & Pullen, 2019; Wickstrom et al., 2021). But to date, little attention has been given to first, historical women's movements; secondly women's food activism; and thirdly, classed gendered modes of mobilization. ELFS provides feminists interested in social movements with a significant historic case study because they

engaged in a package of tactics from challenging patriarchal state institutions, capitalist businesses, middle-class women consumers to engaging in protests, demonstrations, community organizing and journalism.

Through our discussion, we contribute to feminist organizational studies of social movements which examine how movements are gendered and/or feminist (see for instance, Kouki & Chatzidakis, 2021; Daskalaki & Fotaki, 2017). In line with others feminist studies of social movements (see for instance, Daskalaki & Fotaki, 2017; Fotaki & Daskalaki, 2021; Taylor, 1999), Hara Kouki and Andreas Chatzidakis argue that gender can be a "crucial factor in the emergence and development of social movements" (2021, p. 893). But as scholars insist, social movements are gendered in manifold ways as they emerge and develop. Furthermore, studies gendered movements are not all feminist, although some may become so (Motta et al., 2011).

We extend these discussions by foregrounding the intersections of class and gender. Some feminist movements, for instance *MeToo* and *Black Lives Matter* have been criticized for their lack of attention to intersectionality, especially race, disability and trans rights (Onwuachi-Willig, 2018). Hence questions are being asked about how intersectional social movements are in their demands, leadership, membership and organizing (Vachhani & Pullen, 2019).

What we notice about historic women's food movements, including the ELFS food politics, is the significance of class, a political identification less attended to in recent social movement scholarship. Indeed, in this journal, organizational theorists Laurence Romani, Patrizia Zanoni, and Lotte Holck (2021) call for more studies of class as a collective mobilizing identity. In our analysis we foreground how gender, class and feminism underpin the aims and modes of mobilization of the ELFS.

Key to our analysis is that we understand that collective identities of class and gender "are dynamically expressed in specific contexts and circumstances" (Beckwith, 1998, p. 162). This means understanding gender and class as categories and processes and analyzing how mobilizations are gendered and classed and how these categorizations are historically, culturally and geo-politically contextual (Fotaki & Daskalaki, 2021).

Thus, we offer an historical analysis of a case study focused on women's multifaceted articulations of politics based on class-based social inequalities. Histories matter because, to date, most feminist organization studies of social movements focus on recent women's mobilizing. But women of color and white women historically have been active in social movements and more specifically in food politics and are over-represented in food activism (Allen & Sachs, 2007) Women continue to lead, collectivize and participate in food movements globally (Allen & Sachs, 2007; Motta, 2021).

By discussing ELFS, a British first wave feminist movement and its food politics, we reveal their creativity and commitment which can inspire us, especially at a time of a severe cost of living crisis in the UK. The historical focus enables us to "see" the activities and identifications over time to understand and map their range and dynamics. Moreover, suffragette politics have a "longtail" and continue to influence feminist politics and thinking, but the working-class mobilizing and food politics have been much less recognized and yet offer potential insights for feminist activism, including the cost-of-living crisis today. Our discussion shows how upper and middle-class suffragettes excluded working-class women and marginalized their political gendered classed interests, raising questions about feminist cross-class solidarities today.

To present our analysis, we structure our article as follows: we start with feminist literature on social movements and historic gendered and classed food movements. We introduce our archival methodology, followed by a discussion of the history of the ELFS and the context to food struggles for working-class women in Britain during the first world war. Our data analysis examines three modes of mobilization: ELFS food-related marches and protests; radical welfare community food organizing; and protest writing to reveal a complex, heterogeneous, adaptive package of mobilizing which foregrounded gendered class politics through different identifications, mobilizations and spatialities.

2 | GENDERING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Beyond organization studies, feminist social science has defined the ways in which gender operates as a category and a process in women's politics (Beckwith, 2005). Studies reveal how gender inflects different elements in social

movements: from the aims, compositions, leadership styles, collective identifications, modes of mobilization and outcomes, discourses and framings, inter alia (Einwohner et al., 2000; Motta et al., 2011; Taylor, 1999; Tonkiss, 2018; Yulia, 2010). For instance, embodied street protests can be calling attention to gendered body politics or performing the body as a mode of politicking on other issues (Tonkiss, 2018). This scholarship reveals that a central plank in the gendering of social movements, beyond the feminization of participation, is the collective political identifications around which women and others politick. For instance, identities of motherhood and related maternalistic politics dominate many women's social movements (Merithew, 2006; Motta et al., 2011; Tonkiss, 2018). The feminist politics of maternalism are debated and activists and academics often ignore how maternal politics can be distinguished along race, class and sexuality lines.

In contrast to the growing literature on the gendering of social movements, studies of the intersections of class, race and gender in creating political identities and politics mobilizing are relatively neglected (Beckwith, 1998; Eidlin & Kerrissey, 2018). Scholars raise further questions in the literature about how feminist women's movements are, and in what ways. To foreground this issue, social movement theorists Sara Motta et al. (2011) distinguish between women's movements, women in movements and feminist movements. In their article on social movements during the Greek crisis, Kouki and Chatzidakis (2021) explore how women took on important roles but did not all identify as feminists nor profiled gendered inequality. But Kouki and Chatzidakis underline how a feminist agenda can be implict or emerge over time. They show, in their case study, how feminist principles and solidarities developed as the women's politics transformed from traditional protest to the provision of social production.

Contemporary food movements led by women cannot all be described as feminist (Allen & Sachs, 2007; Motta, 2021). The extent and nature of feminist politics in women's food activism varies historically and nationally, and by class, race and ethnicity. For instance, feminist food scholar, Carole Sachs and Anouk Patel-Campillo (2014) claim that feminism is absent in many food movements in North America, although, women numerically dominate food activisms. In contrast, Renata Motta (2021) shows how in Latin American food movements, popular feminisms have articulated gender and race justice and food sovereignty agendas.

The question of the feminist potential of consumer activism is particularly acute in relation to food and politics founded on identities of housewives protesting food supply and cost of living. Relatedly feminist relations to food have been, and continue to be complex and ambivalent, particularly in relation to consumption and consumer activism (Hollows, 2013). This is despite the case that the food movement and the women's movement have "deeply entwined" histories, especially in North America (see Curran, 2014).

Feminist consumption scholars make the point that conventional assumptions hold that "proper feminists" have a hostile relationship with consumer culture, largely to do with critiques of capitalism, the unequal gendered division of domestic labor and the exploitative reinforcement of domestic roles (Hollows, 2008, 2013; Littler, 2008). But feminist food studies scholar Joanne Hollows (2008, n.d., 2013) challenges the notion that consumer culture has not been and cannot be not a site for feminist politics. She argues that such a view constrains the feminist potential of consumer culture and consumption practices and neglects women in British feminist consumer politics who mobilized their role as wives, mothers and consumers to protest against the State, patriarchy and business.

3 | FEMINIST HISTORIES OF FOOD PROTESTS

We now introduce feminist histories of women's involvement in food protests in the early 20th century. These foreground how gendered and classed identities underpinned the different modes and spaces of mobilization around women's food politics. Women of different classes and racialization's have been involved in food movements for centuries in many countries around the world from food supply riots in the 18th and 19th Centuries; boycotts of sugar produced by slave labor in the 19th century; alternative forms of consumption; global food demonstrations during the first world war; consumer boycotts, and consumer activism; and the development of alternative food systems (Bohstedt, 1988; Hollows, 2008, n.d., 2013; Hunt, 2000, 2010).

These studies raise important questions for our study about the gendering, classing, ethnicisation, racialization of food mobilizations in different national contexts. What's of relevance is that these studies foreground the gendered identifications and mobilizing identities which underpinned, and continue to underpin, women's food activism: for instance, the feminist, paid worker, domestic worker, housewife, homekeeper, working class woman, mother, wife, mother, citizen, consumer and socialist; and the related demands made. These varied forms of activism conceptualized domestic labor and women's roles and claims made of patriarchal and capitalist institutions in different ways. But many of these movements extended domesticity into the political realm.

At the time of the ELFS food movements in London during the first world war, women and some men rioted, and protested about food prices, shortages and distribution in Russia, Germany, Spain, New York, and Australia. The riot has been a dominant form of food protest, but the extent to which the protest is gendered as opposed to class or community based depends on the historical context, constructions of food management, and citizenship and varies by nation (Bohstedt, 1988; Hunt, 2000, 2010).

A related theme in the literature of relevance to our study is how feminists understand working-class housewives' food-based politicking when based on their social roles as mothers and homekeepers (Frank, 1985; Hunt, 2000; Kaplan, 1982; Merithew, 2006). For instance, American historian Temma Kaplan (1982) in her study of the 1917 food riots in Barcelona, argues that women participated in these protests as an extension of their role in the sexual division of labor and their understanding of their responsibilities for family feeding work. Such women demonstrated "female consciousness" based on women's acceptance of their social role as housewives, mothers and homekeepers but who are spurred to public and even violent political protest when their responsibility for preserving life is frustrated. Kaplan argues that their mobilizing originates in their acceptance of their feeding work duties rather than a wider political discourse of feminism or class. There is a politics in the sense that women extended their domain and sense of obligation into the public sphere (Kaplan, 1982, p. 545).

For other scholars, housewives' food politics reconfigured the politics of work and represented a worker-campaign outside the labor movement. North American historian Dana Frank (1985, 2004) writes about a Jewish working-class housewives' movement in New York City February 1917. Thousands of immigrant Jewish women demonstrated against the cost of living from violent street protests, boycotting chickens, fish and vegetables, shutting down food markets for two weeks and panicking public officials. For Frank, this working-class women's activism focused on gendered consumer issues of converting wages into food for their families. They protested as housewives, wives and mothers, outside of the paid labor force, about the "exacerbation of their own labors by exhorbitant prices" (Frank, 2004, p. 368). Hence, for Frank the women"s food politics are work politics but outside unions and the labor movement. For the women, "consumer organizing spoke directly to their daily lives and concerns with cheaper food… because higher prices made their work harder (1985, p. 283). As Frank underlines, protests were these women's way of workplace organizing, as "workers whose occupation was shopping, preparing food, and keeping their families content" (1985, p. 283).

The extent to which food protests and movements can be regarded as feminist is also up for grabs. For instance, scholars raise questions about the conservativism of collective action to secure rights derived from the sexual division of labor based on stereotypically feminized norms and roles (Hunt, 2010: Twarog, 2017). But for other scholars, such activism politicizes gendered, classed and racialized everyday life, everyday needs and domestic foodwork, bringing women's unpaid labor into the public sphere (Rowbotham, 1973; Frank, 2012; Hollows, n.d.). Moreover, women defied certain feminine norms through their corporeal street protests, and politicking in the public domain.

For British historian Karen Hunt (2010, 2000), a key question is about how such politics enact longer term wider structural gendered change. But Hunt shows nevertheless that food riots "were not the only way in which women participated in, or made their own, wartime politics of food" (2010, p. 10). Women participated as consumers and as housewives in neighborhood food organizations created by the state. Whilst food policy and national organizations were important sites of wartime food politics, neighborhoods were where the food crisis was felt, and therefore the alternative spaces where women's politics of food was permitted and performed (ibid). Women involved in state food committees brought women's issues to the fore calling for national provisioning, and challenging the

profiteering and restaurant prices, and the establishment of national kitchens. They objected to the exclusion of working women and adolescent girls from supplementary meat rations and insisted that women who undertook the same paid work as men should be treated equally in the same way. Hence as Hunt writes, the women contributed to a consumer critique of capitalism and labor rights. At the same time, a socialist collective notion of the working class within which women's interests, radical consumer consciousness and domestic labors were prominent and allied with the concerns of labor did not eventuate (Hunt, 2010).

In a similar vein US housewife food politics has complex progressive dynamics in relation to feminism, class and race equality. US historian Emily Twarog (2017) examines a range of white, racially minoritized, middle and working-class US women's consumer activisms protesting high food prices and low-quality food between the 1930s and the 1970s. She defines these as "domestic politics" because she argues that the protests expressed class consciousness, and represented "a distinctive form of activism andnot simply the feminine version of labor activism", (2017, p. 2). Domestic politics blended working-class concerns with the home and community, politicized women domestic roles, brought the home into the center of public policy and challenged capitalism and the patriarchy. The women's mobilizing ranged from reproducing traditional labor organizing to using their expertize as consumers and unionists to influence state institutions about economic imbalances, food justice, rights of working women, inequality of working women's wages and price control. The women developed political identities and expanded their activities beyond the home, with white middle class housewives more able to operate in formal roles in the political sphere. Although there was cross class and racial solidarities, there were separatist politics for instance, Black housewives targeted White-owned businesses in predominantly Black neighborhoods in their boycotts of high-priced meat.

The women embraced their roles as mothers and wives and whilst referencing traditionally feminine roles they engaged with serious political issues around wage labor and consumption and attempted to make systemic change bigger systems in a patriarchal environment and challenged gendered norms when protesting (2017, p. 146). They instantiated a national politics, going beyond the home and the local and asserted their own political power, couched in the language and tactics of home-centered "domestic politics" (2017, p. 2). As Twarog makes clear, the campaigns were long-lived over decades and yet feminist scholars have been overlooked them.

Much of what we have reviewed here concerns consumer protests because of the nature of the ELFS food politics, but there is a history of other modes of mobilizing around communal food labor, and the politicization of urban space (Morrow & Parker, 2020). For instance, Oona Morrow and Barbara Parkins (2020) detail an American history of anti-racist and feminist experiments in urban collective and co-operative living. They give examples such as cooperative and co-housing; worker cooperatives; community kitchens, fridges, and daycare. They argue that such food initiatives "socialized" and therefore "collectivized" as well as politicized aspects of domestic life. They provided material spaces and feminist imaginaries, with a focus on designing and reimaging cities that facilitate care, commoning, and collectivity.

In summary then there is a recent history of women creating food politics through various modes and strategies, mobilizing under different identifications and social roles, and undertaking collective action across a range of spaces, many of which were not aligned with political organizations or spaces. Although not all were identified as feminist, the women politicized everyday life, and blurred the boundaries between the private and public, the domestic and the feminist, unpaid and paid work (Rowbotham, 2010 cited Hollows, n.d.). In many cases, they crafted their role as housewives, mothers and care giving into political identities and through their politics took them outside of the home and into the political arena where they created social unrest in public, challenging notions of domestic femininity (P. Schwartz, 1999). Often these food politics centered on gendered dimensions and protests were done in gendered sites, and spaces such as the market or the queue, and practices like shopping but raised issues about labor, social reproduction, and inequality. As we discuss, the extent to which scholars attach the label of feminist to such politics varies. Some modes of identification reinforced the patriachal division of domestic labor, social reproductive responsibility and but others enabled collective organizing, intra and inter-class and race solidarities and challenged subordination (Brown, 2017).

These feminist literature provide a "conceptual ecology" for our analysis and leads us to questions pivotal for thinking about the legacies of ELFS' food movements (Ravitch & Carl, 2019): Which identifications - housewife,

mother, domestic worker, consumer, worker, working-class, feminist - are deployed? How does class as a form of identification and mobilization get reproduced and Brown, 2017 what divisions or solidarities across class and gender were enabled? What modes of mobilizing were used and how were these inflected by gender and class?

4 | METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH CONTEXT

To answer these questions, we present three "case studies" of ELFS' food related social movement activities which we developed from our archival research, and which related clearly to social movement organizing practices and the food politics of the ELFS. Broadly speaking archival research often involves the study of historical documents, and locating, evaluating, and systematically interpreting and analyzing sources (Corti, 2004); "providing us access that we might not otherwise have to the organizations, individuals, and events of that earlier time" (Ventresca & Mohr, 2017).

Sources can include documents, electronic and non-electronic records, audio-visual materials, objects, documents, manuscripts etc held in an archive, a Special Collections library, or other repository (GSU, 2022). Archives "comprise the cultural and material residues of both institutional and theoretical or intellectual processes" and therefore archives are always motivated and interested (Corti, 2004: online). Analytical approaches vary by paradigm and include testing out hypotheses to using grounded theory, content and discourses analyses or biographical methods (Corti, 2004).

4.1 | ELFS exhibition and archival research

We produced our analysis from archival research undertaken by one of the authors and other volunteers who took part in a volunteering program at Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives in London in 2018, a much memorialized 100-year anniversary of the Representation of the People Act; a law passed by the UK government permitting property-owning women over the age of 30, as well as graduates from British universities to vote. It was not until 1928 that all women were given the vote on equal terms with men.

Volunteers participated in the archival research as part of a series of events and activities about the ELFS history entitled *The Women's Hall Project*, named after the ELFS headquarters (HQ) in Old Ford Row, Bow from 1914 to 1924. The Hall was the main space for planning, and strategizing and working-class community organizing and where Pankhurst also slept for several years. Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Project included exhibitions, and public program of talks, events and workshops, developed by the Four Corners Gallery, Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, East End Women's Museum, Numbi Arts, Alternative Arts and Women's History Month in the East End of London. The partners and volunteers transformed the archive into a recreation of the Hall, published two copies of a newspaper *The Women's Hall Dreadnough*t, modeled on the ELFS newspaper, organized the first exhibition of ELFS and amateur photographer Norah Smyth and created a Cost Price restaurant supported by Fare Share food charity (East End Women's Museum Press Release, 2018).

4.2 | Our data sources

Archives can be based in many institutions including government collections, libraries, museums, businesses, and historical societies (GSU, 2022). The archives we used were in the physical and digital catalogs at Towers Hamlets Local History and Archives; the British Library; the Women's Library Collection at London School of Economics Library Archive and Special collections and Estelle Sylvia Pankhurst Papers at the International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam. The Tower Hamlets Local History and Archives is a local government archive; the British Library a national archive; the Women's Library a collection at a university created originally in 1926 to record the

suffragette movement and IISH a large archive of Pankhurst's papers donated by Pankhurst's son in 1961 with later additions in 1976. As part of her volunteering, one of the authors examined digital and material archives for items featuring food from reports of food demonstrations; global food labor struggles; the setting up and running of the cost price restaurants in the minutes and newspaper *Dreadnought*.

To generate our findings, Author one read 531 digital copies of the ELFS' newspaper Women's and Worker's *Dreadnought* for reports on food politics; summaries of the ELFS Minute books of meetings; one digitalized annual report 1914–1915; one digitalized brochure from 1914 about the "Mothers" "Arms", the children's nursery, mother and infant clinic and milk house; and one file from 1917 of mixed documents on food supplies; correspondence with the Ministry of Food and Borough of Poplar and a pamphlet "Workers: Demand Food and Peace"; documents and letters based at the Sylvia Pankhurst Papers IISH, and 20 articles on ELFS food politics from various digitalized online original newspapers from 1915 to 1918. Rosemary Lucas, one of the volunteers transcribed the digitalized hand-written digitalized minute books of the Council of the East London Federation, in essence their committee meetings from February 28, 1914 until June 10, 1920. Additionally, we drew on secondary data in academic articles, public histories and Pankhurst "self-crafted histories" in her memoirs.

4.3 | Conceptual framing

Feminist archival projects matter because as feminist archive scholars Alison Bartlett, Maryanne Dever, and Margaret Henderson note, they have the potential to "make the feminist past become alive and accessible" (2007, p. 5). At the same time, feminist scholars insist that that archives are not fixed repositories, innocent, nor "stories in wait" but "enmeshed in histories, politics and power structures" and (Dever, 2017, p. 2). Moreover, for feminist archive scholars Marika Cifor and Stacy Wood "the transformative potential of archives" is not just recording invisibilised histories but dismantling patriarchy (2007, p. 1). Hence writing history is a political act (2007, p. 1).

In organization studies, few feminist scholars take up archival research, but the work of Albert Mills, Jean Mills and Gabrielle Durepos represents an important exception. In their theorizing of archival research like many feminist historians, they contend that historical knowledge is not objective, neutral, scientific or certain. Indeed, in the view of Caterina Bettin & Albert J. Mills

> histories of the past are seen as a collage of more or less stable interpretations of a subject of the past, nuanced by fragments that, like broken mirrors, reflect the choices and the situatedness of who is writing about her.
>
> (Bettin & Mills, 2018, p. 78)

In other words, our representation of ELFS' mobilizations can never be complete or disinterested and reflects our own decisions and interests. Archives are living resources in need of interpretation and revision. Our conceptual framing for our analysis links to the broken mirror metaphor in this quotation in that we draw on a range of thinking rather than applying one theorist. The modes of mobilization we write about represent different tactics and "media" and require suitable, relevant concepts and theories. Thus, we take inspiration from feminist food historians of food protests and suffragette scholars and are motivated by the question of intersections of gender and class.

5 | RESEARCH CONTEXT: ELFS MOBILIZATIONS, CLASS AND FOOD

The ELFS was originally part of the controversial militant Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), led by Sylvia Pankhurst's mother, Emmeline and sister, Christabel and that she had helped co-found. But ELFS broke away when they were expelled for fighting for the rights of workers and working-class women, and universal adult suffrage.

Pankhurst and white working-class suffragettes were disillusioned with the WSPU class politics, autocratic leadership and turn to violence. Historians remind us of the class tensions and discrimination in the suffrage movement as in wider Edwardian society. Although the WSPU started life as a working-class labor movement, although with middle-class leadership, it became more middle and upper class in its composition, mobilization and politics (Connelly, 2015; Mayall, 2018). White working- class women had been center to the growth of the movement and had skills in street marching, organizing and demonstrating through their labor politics and union participation (Garner, 1984).

Sylvia was a committed socialist, and a staunch supporter of organized labor, and other broad movements including the Campaign against the First World War, anti-imperialism, anti-fascism and later communism and the freedom of Ethiopia (Connelly, 2015; Garner, 1984; Mayall, 2018). She rejected Christabel's idea that wealthy women could represent the needs of working-class women and the WSPU's autocratic leadership.

ELFS was thus created in March 1914 as an independent and democratic organization fighting for a working-class suffragette campaign and struggles with employers and the State (Connelly, 2015; Garner, 1984). In 1917, it became the Worker Suffrage Federation to reflect its labor and universal suffrage politics and renamed again in May 1917 as the Workers' Socialist Federation. ELFS linked women's suffrage to a wide range of classed gendered emancipation issues demanding political and economic rights for women. Like the radical suffragists, the East London Federation of the WSPU saw the importance of linking the struggle for the vote with the struggle for better working and living conditions. By expanding the fight for equality beyond the vote, they relieved the pressure on many politically active white working-class women to choose between their gender and their class.

Of particular concern for Pankhurst and ELFS was how to incorporate local women into mass mobilization and to provide practical assistance and mobilize political consciousness raising and action (Mayall, 2018). The leadership of ELFS involved local white working-class activists like Julia Scurr, Melvina Walker, Minnie Lansbury, Daisy Parsons, Jessie Payne and Nellie Cressall who shaped the new organization alongside upper- and middle-class women, including Pankhurst. Indeed, as historian Stephanie Brown writes, "one of the primary tasks of the ELFS would be to refute the notion that working-class women were voiceless victims, unable to advocate for themselves, and in need of 'rescue' by more educated women" (Brown, 2017, p. 124).

What is often ignored is that the working-class women had skills and experience of demonstrating and politicking on labor issues and demanding relief or hungry children that were valuable to middle class suffrage organizations Although white working-class women had been at the foreground of early WSPU politics, the lack of attention on universal suffrage, the violent tactics of the suffragettes, and the growing militarism and patritiotism during the war meant that there was less cross-class solidarity and alliances.

Middle- and upper-class suffragettes stereotyped and marginalized working-class women, and class exerting a powerful influence on opportunities and identities, "fractur(ed) and shap(ed) relations" (Jenkins, 2019, p. 478). As Sarah Jackson writes, "class sharply divided Edwardian Britain" with millions living in "deep poverty", working long hours often in difficult conditions (Jackson, 2018). As class historian Lyndsey Jenkins puts it: "the structures and significance of class…exerted such a powerful influence on economic opportunities, social hierarchies, cultural life, and individual identities", a set of conditions sometimes neglected in histories and contemporary accounts of women's social movements (Jenkins, 2019, p. 479). Culturally, working women were constructed within a paradigm of otherness, according to which women workers "diverged so markedly from a dominant bourgeois construction of femininity as passive, reproductive and domestic", middle-calss women, and the media marked them as "perceptibly different", "signif(ying) social disorder" (Hunealt, 1996, p. 52). Middle-class and upper-class suffragettes who saw war work as a patriotic duty were often hostile to working-class women's insistence on being paid a living wage or getting state allowances for their husbands being at war (Brown, 2017). Domestic labor historian Laura Schwartz (2020) writes that many working-class women were domestic servants, on whom the middle-class suffragettes and movement relied and yet, even though they were active in grassroots organizing, they were erased from formal propaganda and the public spectacles. For class historians, these exclusions were based on class conflict between working-class and middle-class suffragettes and other women.

6 | FOOD POLICY AND WAR EFFECTS

In this section, we turn from discussing ELFS, class politics and the suffragette movement to provide a brief introduction to the context of wartime food politics and the role of ELFS. The war brought specific challenges for working-class women. Factories across East London closed, and food prices spiraled, pushing many poor families to the brink of starvation. Everyday life was dramatically altered especially around food, with working class women suffering from shortages and queues. There was very little relief offered by the government in the early days of war. Profoundly disadvantaged, working-class women experienced a disproportionate burden and yet were expected to make deep sacrifices.

When men enlisted, many of their families couldn't afford sufficient food. Mistakes and delays in the "separation allowances" for women running the household whose husbands went to war had a devastating impact on poorer, working-class families who did not have the financial resources to subsist (Connelly, 2015). During the outbreak of war, food inflated uncontrollably, accounting for most of household budgets at that time. For instance, the cost of a loaf of bread almost doubled within a week of the start of the war (Pearson, 1988). The problems of food supply dominated the public sphere during the war, as food prices skyrocketed, profiteering was rife, food became scarce and later, rationing was established (Benson, 2015; Green, 2017). Working-class mothers and children suffered most because of food shortages, increasing poverty, inflated food prices, hoarding, food queues and experienced malnutrition and starvation (Green, 2017). Women's movements including ELFS campaigned to influence government policies on food, pay, allowances and other issues, disproportionately affecting working-class women.

The minutes and *Dreadnought* show that ELFS took up food politics as soon as Britain declared war on Germany in 1914. Two days after the formal announcement of war, ELFS had a special committee meeting to decide how they would continue their activism. They agreed five demands for the Government to mobilize their campaigning focus (Connelly, 2015), including two demands focused on food that were later published in their newspaper, *Women's Dreadnought* August 15, 2014: The first, called for the government to take control of the food supply "in order that all may feed or starve together, without regard to wealth or social position". They called for the nationalization of food supply to ensure equality of access. Very significantly, they argued for working class women's representation - that working-class women be consulted on the price and distribution of food and for committees dealing with food prices, employment and relief to include working-class women.

ELFS during the 4 years agitated with local and central authorities and businesses about the inequalities of the distribution, provision and prices of food and women's unemployment, equal pay and suffrage. In the next section, we focus on three of ELFS' quite different modes of mobilization: embodied protests, radical welfare community organizing and food protest writing, all of which foreground class politics.

6.1 | ELFS embodied protests

In this first section we foreground how ELFS deployed embodiment, street-based protests and public spaces organized around gendered classed food politics. Gender and class were performed as categories of identities, modes of protests and the "content" of issues being politicked. Feminist studies of contemporary social movements have focused on embodied protests as forms of political action. Fotaki and Daskalaki (2021) discuss the importance of women's protesting bodies. But the racialized and classed politics of gendered "protesting bodies" in social movements, historic or otherwise and the identifications and solidarities enabled through them need further interrogation.

The suffragette movement drew on corporeal theater, performative activism and visibility politics, developing alternative politics practices (Green, 1994; Parkins, 1997, 2020). The suffragettes' marches and processions enacted an embodied classed femininity. The movement consistently linked the spectacle of women's actively dissenting bodies with the campaign for political representation (Parkins, 1997, 2020). Visual representation of women's bodies was central to the WSPU. White working-class women did March, and their numbers and experience of marching

were very important to the WSPU at the beginning of its protests. But quite quickly the WSPU marches displayed a "gendered particularity and bodily specificity" through conventional white middle-class feminine appearance, fashion, aesthetics, and walking style (Parkins, 1997, p. 44). These practices challenged normative definitions of "citizen" and "woman" and "enact(ed) a critique of the constitution of the political domain" and provided a public expression of solidarity and a means of identification with other women (Parkins, 1997, p. 42).

But these classed forms of embodiment raise questions about working-class femininity, cross-class solidarities and identifications. After 1906, few WSPU marches profiled large numbers of working-class women (Kelly, 2004). Indeed, the WSPU leadership claimed that middle-class women were better at getting public, press and politician attention when they transgressed their classed feminine appearance and acted "working-class" (Kelly, 2004). Or in the words of Christabel, transformed from "ladies" into "women" (Kelly, 2004). The middle-classes believed that "working-class attire… undermined their wearers" attempts to be taken seriously as political agents' (Brown, 2017). As a result, WSPU discouraged cross-class solidarity in public protests.

We note, however, that the ELFS created significant but less well-known embodied food-related protests including marches, demonstrations, and raids. These were based on a politics of feminized classed inequalities and their roles as workers, mothers, wives, and consumers. As can be seen from the minutes, their newspaper *Dreadnought*, and Pankhurst's memoirs, the ELFS planned many food-related mobilizations as response to the debilitating effects of state policy and class inequalities. Very quickly into the war, food became a special topic for which they established a distinct meeting infrastructure, with special committees and food meetings organized at times that housewives and workers could attend (Garner, 1984). They devised formal food marches and organization deputations to the heart of the state, to formal Government bodies, the President of Board of Agriculture, Prime Minister, the Food Controller, and the Mayor of Poplar. The ELFS set up food meetings and committees and undertook direct action and raids. These varied tactics aimed to persuade the government and businesses to manage the rising food prices and profiteering and to nationalize supply to address classed inequalities.

Their modes of protest centered on classed gendered demands and protesting bodies, intervening in public spaces to engage with bigger systems and demand change. The EFLS' marches, demonstrations, raids and deputations were different kinds of embodied, spatial and gendered politicking for challenging political and policy regimes which impacted classed gendered "services, incomes and family lives" (Tonkiss, 2018). They turned a whole range of spaces into sites of politics challenging and appealing to a range of authorities and underlining the place for working class gendered and feminist arguments in public space. ELFS wanted to facilitate working-class feminist resistance to patriarchal state power and classed inequalities in relation to food en masse and on the streets and employed a variety of spatial tactics.

In addition to the demonstrations and deputations, the archives show us that ELFS designed and participated in direct action. They created meetings and raids on local streets, in local food markets, and shops, like many women in food politics across the world at this time (see earlier literature review). As a political intervention, these tactics de-railed the usual order of the streets, "repurposing" the everyday into sites of resistance and occupation (Taylor, 1996).

At their special committee meeting called 2 days after the outbreak of war, the ELFS voted to support the proposal of members Mrs Bird and Miss Paterson to take direct action in shops to resist the rising food prices and food shortages. To publicize the gendered and classed inequality of the food distribution of sugar they carried out comparative shopping in wealthier as discussed in ELFS meetings and the pages of *Dreadnought*. In *Dreadnought* Saturday June 2, 1917, ELFS member Melvina Walker describes how working-class women went on raids on sugar in the West End to compare the abundances in West End cafes and shortages in the East End. The women knew that the dockers- often their husbands- were unloading tons of sugar into warehouses and that the distribution was unfair and discriminatory by class. Walker writes about a street protest under the heading of "Hock of Bacon", Saturday July 6, 1918, She explains in her article how working-class women demanded to know from a government food official why a hock of bacon in Crisp Street, Poplar was more expensive than in Selfridges. Selfridges was the middle- and upper-class department store in the most affluent West End of London.

In referencing the West End, the ELFS were extending their spatial politics and making clear the gendered classed intersections of wealth and food privilege. The East End was far removed from most suffragette action in the West End reflecting the asymmetries of classed power shaping the movement geographically, symbolically and politically (Walker, 2006).

ELFS sought not only the enactment of political agency on the streets but a radical focus on proper representation in formal government organizations such as food committees. Minutes August 6, 1914 show the ELFS noted that "The Chancellor of the Exchequer said he was going to make an arrangement about the food supply, but he was not consulting women". They discussed trying to gain one third representation on the new government food committees and using every opportunity to influence and "stir things up" as member Miss Hicks put it. As Suffragette historian Kathleen Connolly writes, they sought "working-class control over questions previously deemed beyond the concern of democratic decisions" (2015, p. 8). In their minutes they justified the right for working-class women's participation through acknowledging their classed gendered social roles and practical knowledge, expertize and experience as "working women homemakers" "the principal consumers of the nation".

Although working-class women had participated in many marches on the streets, they still took on a particular charge given the women's working-class protesting bodies. Across their different tactics and identities, working-class women made visible for others to see how social and economic inequalities were classed and gendered, and sometimes based on cross gendered class conflict (Tonkiss, 2018). As Jackson (2018) notes, they also took on extra risks, being more vulnerable to hostility and police brutality. Many gave up their day off to protest. As well as working long hours in a factory, laundry, or shop, or as a maid or cook, most working-class suffragettes had a "second shift" of unpaid housework and childcare alongside their activism (Jackson, 2018).

The ELFS framed their interventions through classed based gendered and feminist identifications, variously invoking working women's role as homekeepers, consumers, mothers, health-givers and workers. They mobilized these to challenge capitalism and patriarchy and their production of classed inequalities. Their food politics was framed by a critique of the gendered classed unfairness of the food distribution and supply and called attention to classed divisions around food. The classed rhetoric of maternalism invoked was quite distinct from that of white middle-class mothers because of material need and classed realities of mothering.

Thus, ELFS mobilized a classed and gendered "spatial infrastructure of political protest" afforded by the streets, markets, and shops, as platform for embodied resistance to the state and capitalism. They galvanized community and gendered classed spaces into their politics. These were the places in which mothers and housewives worked, shopped, socialized and now organized, often sites of community significance and physical manifestations of the networks (Taylor, 1996). These spatial mobilizations reinforced their role as working-class women consumers which created opportunities for them to act and interact in the public sphere: in the streets, shops, in market squares (Hunt, 2010; Taylor, 1996). In this way, as Hunt observes "streets and marketplaces became at least as important as meeting rooms" (2010, p. 165).

The politics of the street publicized the domestic politics of the home, the private troubles and suffering of the working-class women in collective terms and meant that they were reclaiming public space in relation to gendered classed resistance (Fotaki & Daskalaki, 2021). They also took their protests into the heart of the state and masculine spaces of protest. Not only were they gendering urban protests through their protesting bodies and working-class feminist politics, challenging men's domination of the State, demonstrations and marches, but they were mobilizing classed bodies and politics in "gestures of resistance" toward other women (Tonkiss, 2018) Subverting middle and upper-class spaces, they deployed working-class feminized spaces to speak back to political orders around food and class, invoking class and gender-specific role in their challenges to the State and marketplace, emphasizing the politics of material deprivation, and domestic economies.

Acting publicly and politically in their roles as working-class workers, suffragettes, mothers, consumers and housewives, ELFS defined themselves not only in terms of their gender but also in terms of their difference from and antagonism to other social classes. They left their ordinary routines to demand change, and through their "corporeal

claims" to public space they brought into being new publics, spaces and political collectivities centered on gender and class, and the domestic (Butler cited Humm, 2017, p. 5).

6.2 | Radical welfare and community organizing

The colossal failure of state food policy occasioned another kind of ELFS mobilizing and politics: ELFS innovative food related community organizing focused on social reproduction, a topic of much interest in feminist organization studies of social movements (ADD). ELFS established what we would see today as social services and social enterprises, staffed and led mostly by women designed to meet the needs of local working-class women in crisis in the East End of London. They created cost price restaurants, alongside a Toy Factory employing out of work women at good pay rates, a child-care center, a milk distribution center in a pub for mothers and babies which they renamed the Mothers Arms, and a help-desk to help women understand and complete government forms and solve their war-related financial problems. These formed a key plank in ELFS welfare strategies and community organizing in the East End, and what's noticeable is how they bring gender and class together in their political operations.

ELFS used sites, spaces, and buildings to represent and facilitate feminism and classed based gender politics. The ELFS converted ordinary buildings: a pub, former butcher shop and old schoolhouse, and not the clubs, elegant front rooms and restaurants of the middle- and upper-class suffragettes into "architecture with a radical social purpose" (Walker, 2006, p. 190). As feminist architect historian Lynne Walker tells us, "no architects were involved, and the planning, design, and building work was done solely by Pankhurst and supporters of ELFS" (2006, p. 190). The first cost price restaurant was set up in August 31st, 1914 at 400 Old Ford Road, the HQ of ELFS. They established further restaurants followed in other parts of the East End, bringing working-class women together to form alternative solidarities around food. Aimed at providing cost price, and free nutritious food for "working women" and their children, eaten in the restaurants or taken home, women could either pay for tickets for the meal, or books of tickets to last the week, at the door, or if they were impoverished, get the tickets free. To avoid stigmatization, the idea behind the tickets was that no one sitting in the restaurant would know who was getting free meals. The menu was limited, a pint of soup and a chunk of bread for 1 penny for supper and a midday meal for 2 pennies for adults, and one penny for children. The *Dreadnought* reports that restaurant served 120 two-course reals to 120 adults and 40 children on Monday, September 4th a week after the Restaurant first opened.

Unlike many advocates for communal kitchens at the time, or since, Pankhurst did not see them simply as alleviating feminized working-class poverty. In contrast, she brought a feminist socialist politics to them on several counts (Rose, 1990). First, she wanted to ensure that the "stigma of charity", and classed condescension did not reproduce stigmatizing classed hierarchies and inequalities. Hence, she determined the restaurant would be called Cost Price, a slogan against charity and food profiteering (*Women's Dreadnought*, July 10, 1915). Secondly, she wanted to provide working-class women and mothers with affordable nutritious food, in a nurturing environment, but with a feminist aim of providing them with respite from the burden of domestic labor. She explained, "supplying first-rate meals at cost price, were in line with our hope of emancipating the mother from the too multifarious and often hugely conflicting demands of the home" (Pankhurst, 1932, p. 43). She understood that the war brought working-class women extra paid and unpaid work burdens and saw the collective shared food provisioning to liberate them from domestic "feeding work" (DeVault, 1994).

Thirdly, for Pankhurst, communal kitchens could also pave the way for a classed politics of future co-operative domestic labor schemes. Thus, the ELFS were not only socializing domestic labor, and making public space more "home like". The intention was to create feminist communal politics and future arrangements for working-class women, and not just the elites for whom communal politics was usually aimed (see Morrow & Parker, 2020 for US historical comparisons).

The political vision for the restaurants rested on feminist classed politics based on re-designing urban spaces, visibilising women's food and care work, easing the burden of working women's labor by de-privatizing foodwork

through a community-based infrastructure. The restaurants- as well as the other radical welfare initiatives of the creche, toy factory, milk distribution etc - were about creating and maintaining gendered, classed collective spaces of refuge, health, and work, a crucial element of women's urban politics which we see in various forms today but often without a feminist agenda (Tonkiss, 2018).

Scholars underline the political significance of the collective arrangements of extending the spatiality and social relations of the home and questioning the "privacy" of women's domestic work (Rose, 1990; Brown, 2017). Although middle-class women helped practically and provided funding, these welfare services were framed as co-operative undertakings generated by the community not as the charitable work of middle-class female philanthropists. They were seen as an attempt for working-class women, as housewives, mothers, and workers, to collectivize against profiteering, bad state pay and food inequalities identified by them as urgent needs (Brown, 2017, p. 61). Indeed, most of the women running the enterprises were neighbors, friends and colleagues of those they helped, and as with food banks today, often facing the same hunger as their recipients (Jackson & Taylor, 2014). Moreover, Rose (1990) argues that Pankhurst avoided the prevailing classist orthodoxy in mainstream and women's media of blaming the working-class mother for a child's ill health and not poverty. She saw this welfare as part of a wider radical and emancipatory political project of socializing domestic labor and challenging the effects of war unequally distributed by class.

6.3 | Food protest writing and mediated food activism

The third mode of gendered, classed mobilization we discuss is ELFS food writing in their newspaper, *The Women's Dreadnought* (1914–1917), named to symbolize women fighting for freedom, the policy of social care and awakening womanhood throughout the world (Pankhurst cited in Green). Later in recognition of support for working-class men, it was retitled the *Workers Dreadnought* (1917–1924). Alongside their embodied and public speech activism and community organizing, *The Dreadnought*'s political journalism represents an important political strategy against gendered and classed inequalities and a strategic alternative to embodied public speaking (Brown, 2017; Green, 2017) Hence, feminist periodicals such as the *Dreadnought* were also key in reconfiguring public space and creating new feminist subjectivities, political identities and consciousness (Green, 2017, p. 83). Our focus in this section is the ELFS food writing, which covered food shortages, food access, survival strategies, food budgeting and the vulnerability of white working-class women in relation to these. *Dreadnough*t did cover other food politics from national and global food labor rights, including those affecting Indian and Chinese workers abroad, but we focus on how it presented ELFS' constituency's food related problems (Brown, 2017; Green, 2017).

Twenty-first century feminist activism mobilizes social and digital media but in first wave feminism, newspapers and pamphlets were key to feminist politicking and were vibrant even during the war. Print media enabled women to circulate politics, frame and communicate social and political change (DiCenzo et al., 2011). In studies of feminist periodical culture and suffragette media studies, historians stress how this print culture transformed women's engagement with the public sphere in dramatic activist and quieter ways based on a politics of the feminist everyday like the ELFS food writing (Green, 2017).

Organization studies feminists understand writing as a form of activism (Mandalaki, 2020; Vachhani & Pullen, 2019). For instance, Vachhani and Pullen (2019) show how shared autobiographic memories and stories in the online Everyday Sexism project created a central organizing feature in feminist resistance against sexism and built momentum for change. But often the focus is on the content of the writing, and the connections and affects it produces. What's of note for us is that *Dreadnought* enacted creative classed feminist protest writing in all aspects of its production, representation, coverage and genres of writing.

The Woman's Dreadnought began publication in March 1914, under the editorship of Pankhurst, with an ardent socialist and feminist agenda (Scheopner, 2020). Pankhurst was chief editor and a major contributor, but women from the East End, the UK's first Black journalist, Claude McKay and other socialists also contributed to the paper

(Brown, 2017). In contrast to middle-class feminist print culture, the ELFS newspaper was a radical socialist feminist and later communist mouthpiece to advocate for a range of local and transnational political issues from global labor rights and suffrage, on behalf of working-class women and children in the East End.

Dreadnought content specialized in representing the conditions of white working-class women's everyday lives. And challenging dominant and middle-class Suffragette stereotypes of working-class women. *Dreadnought* encouraged working-class women's journalism, and cited working-class speech (Brown, 2017; Green, 2017). It consistently held an anti-imperial, transnational and anti-war stance and protested the war's effects on working class women and men. While it began as a suffrage paper, it soon became a paper that covered a broader swath of events and politics that affected East End women.

The problem of working-class food deprivation was key in *Dreadnought's* consistent critique of the government's and press' callous wartime treatment of working-class families (Brown, 2017; Green, 2017). *Dreadnought* carried out weekly protests against the government's refusal to address food profiteering, starvation wages and the classed inequalities of food supply. Its coverage of food politics expanded to politicking working-class women's everyday roles and practices of household consumption. Some suffrage journals embraced the State's requirement for women's thrift, efficiency and "sacrificial patriotism" (Green, 2017). As well as challenging such expectations through their demonstrations and community organizing, *Dreadnought* challenged stereotypes about female appetite and bodies; domestic thrift; and the sacrifices expected of working-class women as war effort (Green, 2017).

A significant way *Dreadnought* did this was through a representative politics in its textual and visual depictions of working-class women's experience of food culture. Dreadnought captured working-class women's hunger but without the sensationalist images of starving women's bodies or the pathologization of their domestic practices as found in other media (Green, 2017). ELFS focused on "treat(ing) the working woman's body with deference" (Green, 2017, p. 200).

Secondly, ELFS published working-class voices and arguments including direct quotes from working women and articles written by working-class ELFS. Some of the EFLS were trained how to write journalistically for the newspaper. These tactics, in British media historian Stephanie Brown's view, legitimated the working-class women's way of speaking but also their argumentative strategies about gendered, classed issues and struggles. (2017).

Thirdly, unlike the middle-class press, *Dreadnought* tried to avoid making working-class women and families into objects of pity or charity. Through interviews, and non-narrative food writing such as shopping budgets, *Dreadnought* ensure that the readers "did not forget the economic distance between classes as a form of ineradicable difference" (Brown, 2017). ELFS reproduced a political food culture in the food writing which did not condescend about household thrift or waste practices but described with dignity and empathy working-class women and children's suffering (Green, 2017).

What's also of relevance to exploring political mobilizing, is that feminist historians underline the political significance of the images, written genres and layout in *Dreadnought*. *Dreadnought* deployed many forms of food writing—quotations, recipes, food advice, interviews, budgets, and comparative analysis of food prices—offering a feminist discourse of everyday life, gender and domesticity and the experience of deprivation (Green, 2017). In this way, *Dreadnought* was the "flip side" of "suffrage as spectacle" (Lumsden, 2019, p. 30).

For example, Pankhurst deployed household budgets and food price comparisons—"non-narrative writing" - to highlight working women's food hardships, inequalities and the material conditions of poverty (Green, 2017). "Domestic data" in the form of budgets, became a feminist genre of wartime food writing drawing attention to working-class women's domestic labor - routines of shopping, cooking, and feeding; and classed, gendered inequalities (Fama, 2017 cited in Green, 2017). This genre highlighted working women's economic sensibilities (Green, 2017). Green discusses how the budget as a form of political writing "relied on a statistical language" but in pointing to the gaps in the social system also "called the very regulatory and governmental institutions that created such language into question" (2017, p. 207). She cites an article entitled "10 Shillings a Week" as an illustrative example of budgeting as form of political writing. This article detailed the weekly incomes and expenses of two single women working for a government project on extremely poor pay. Their incomes and experiences were listed as numbers and prices to underline how their pay, from a state sanctioned work program, would not cover their cost-of-living expenses.

In another article published under a heading "Whose Children are Starved?", *Dreadnought* used a classed food comparison to criticize a government decision not to provide free meals for working-class children. It compared their deprivations to the nutritious menu of breakfast, lunch and dinner for public school boys detailed a Times newspaper article. After elaborating the range of healthy foods and treats, the *Dreadnought* article finishes with a final question: "Do your boys get that, Fellow Worker?". In so doing, the ELFS made explicit class divisions around food equality and distribution.

In summary, *Dreadnought* constructed a structure though which white working-class women could gain political agency and express women's class-based politics, reformulating who comprised the politics-consuming public (Brown, 2017). Augmenting the ELFS embodied and street protests, and its feminist food organizing, *Dreadnought* expanded political journalism to focus on classed domestic politics and foregrounded the burden on working-class women in their social roles as housewives and mothers. Through *Dreadnought*'s production, content, representational politics, and deployment of feminized domestic genres and domestic data, the EFLFs highlighted working women's food survival strategies, de-stigmatized lived experience of poverty, and promoted white working-class women's voices. In so doing, they challenged circulating impossible wartime gendered and classist sexist stereotypes, promulgated by the state and less radical women's press (Green, 2017). In these creative, thoughtful, and collective modes of journalism and writing ELFS sought to make explicit the politics and everyday realities of class divisions in women's lives.

7 | CONCLUSION

In our article, we explore an historic case study—the ELFS war time food politics—to extend feminist understandings in organization studies of how mobilizing takes gendered and feminist forms. We contribute to feminist organizational studies of social movements by exploring class, an under-studied category in this journal according to Romani et al. (2021), and in so doing, respond to critiques about lack of attention to intersectionality in studies and practices of social mobilizing. Through our analysis of the ELFS food politics, we show how intersections of gender and class inflected ELFS' political identifications, the content of their struggles and their modes of mobilizing. Our focus on gender and class does not mean that we see race as unimportant in future studies of social movements but speaks to what we know about the history of race and the ELFS in the early 20th Century.

We focus on the ELFS, a first wave British feminist social movement which engaged in a package of food politics tactics from challenging patriarchal state institutions, capitalist businesses, middle-class women consumers to engaging in protests, demonstrations, community organizing and journalism. To date, historical case studies in feminist organization studies of social movements are few, especially those which profile women's food politics. The ELFS historic movement not only inspires us with their creativity, innovation and dedication in crafting protests, community support and feminist journalism but also provides potential insights for contemporary food politics in the wake of austerity and the cost-of-living crisis in the UK.

The ELFS historic movement and the recovery of feminist classed solidarities matters for organization studies because it "destabiliz(es) the notion of a singular feminist history…and unitary feminist identity" and challenges how we tell stories about feminist activism (Bazin & Waters, 2016, p. 351). As feminist historians, Victoria Bazin & Melanie Waters write

> tracing the histories of feminism…is one way of serving the interests of those women actively involved in organizing and campaigning for social and political change. It is one way of resisting accounts of history that are overarching and teleological, that stress key moments and individual actions, rather than the ongoing, everyday and collective nature of activism.
>
> (2016, p. 252)

We suggest this matters regarding histories of the British suffragettes because some women have been cast in heroic-individualist classed and raced ways which erase collectivism and difference. The historic case of the ELFS

movement highlights the significance of analyzing micro-histories of feminism, especially the traces of activism and politics that develop out of collective, often conflicted feminist identities, such as those enacted by the women involved in the ELFS movement and its fights against classed and gendered food inequalities.

By discussing ELFS' repertoire of identifications and mobilizations around food, we reveal their creativity and commitment which can inspire us, especially at a time of a severe cost of living crisis in the UK. Organization studies feminists ask questions about how intersectional social movements are in their demands, leadership, membership and organizing and how class, race and gender shape political activism and styles of organizing (Vachhani & Pullen, 2019). The EFLS case study reminds us of histories of working-class feminist struggles across difference, middle and upper-middle class exclusionary class privileges and tactics, and middle and upper -class erasures of gendered working-classed interests, inequalities, and material needs. All of which should raise questions for middle-class feminist activists and scholars and our own politics.

What's so impressive is how ELFS foregrounded class and gender through the content and modes of mobilization in their wartime food politics protesting the state, capitalism but also middle-class women's power against a backdrop of class conflict, othering, and war-time deprivation. They bring to the fore the importance of examining cross-class and cross-race conflict in our understandings of feminist organizing. Our discussion also underlines the centrality of food as a gendered and classed political demand around which diverse modes of mobilization and political identifications emerged and continue to emerge in the fight against inequalities, especially in today's context.

In foregrounding, three modes of mobilization: embodied food protests, community organizing and political food writing, we highlight the rich package of strategies they created and the different classed identities and struggles in these. We show the diversity of gendered and classed social roles around which the women politicked, as workers, mothers, housewives and consumers. These roles configured their politics but also help us understand the intersectional character of their political demands and the gendered, classed inequalities they were protesting including gendered class representations, and the classed divisions and conflict they experienced.

The ELFS committee were committed to food advocacy through protests and journalism. Minutes of the ELFS detailed the feminization of food poverty and working-class and feminist food protest strategies including raids on wealthier parts of London. They called for government control over food distribution, a scheme of nationalization in which the government would buy, produce, ration and distribute food to curb profiteering and enable equality of food supply by class. They devoted pages of the ELFS newspaper, to working class women's food activism in their own voices in the light of food shortages, inflated food prices, rationing, women's unemployment, and challenged classed feminized norms of self-sacrifice and thrift. But as well as their advocacy, ELFS knew they needed to mobilize in community organizing to assist local women and children and created welfare and relief organizations, many of which lasted the duration of the war. Thus, they mixed an array of modes of mobilizations, classed gendered food struggles and progressive representations of their everyday challenges and lives which should inspire us to reflect on how we understand and practise feminist food politics today.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors have no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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