Work Experiences of Polish Women in the Scottish Hospitality Industry – an Intersectional Study

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Abstract

A growing body of research examines the experiences of women and migrants in the workplace; however, the academic literature offers a limited insight into migrant women’s experiences of both privilege and disadvantage. The purpose of this study is to reveal the roles of intersecting social identities in migrant women’s work experiences, specifically (hetero)gender, migratory status and whiteness. To achieve its aim, the study investigates the case of Polish women in the Scottish hospitality industry, with the use of life history interviews with 20 women and 14 semi-structured follow-up interviews. Data was analysed using a thematic analysis approach providing an in-depth exploration of work experiences of the largest non-UK born group of women in Scotland and furthering our understanding of gender inequality in the hospitality industry.

The findings indicate that while research participants experienced a combination of privilege and disadvantage, disadvantage significantly outweighed the partial advantageous treatment which Polish women received. The data also provided an account of Polish women’s reflections on episodes which can be recognised as instances of inequality. Through an intersectional lens the relationships between (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness can be seen.

By presenting new findings on Polish women’s working experiences the thesis helps hospitality employers to understand and identify discriminating and privileging practices targeting a group of employees that is valuable for the industry. The study brings practitioners’ attention to inequality forming practices between Polish women and other groups of employees but also within the studied population. The thesis contributes to the intersectional understanding of work inequality in a twofold manner. Firstly, it demonstrates the importance of incorporating (hetero)gender in intersectional studies of organisations. Drawing on Ingraham’s call for the exposure of the “heterosexual imaginary” the study incorporates (hetero)gender along with other vectors of social categorisation to explain the roots of migrant women’s disadvantage and privilege. Secondly, the thesis identifies contextual factors shaping migrant women’s experiences of inequality. Situational influences catalysing migrant women’s privilege and disadvantage were revealed at individual, organisational and international levels.
Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to Stephanie and my parents. Your love and support has helped me get through this experience.
Acknowledgements

The completion of this thesis would not be possible without the heartfelt support of many people. Firstly, I would like to convey my deepest appreciation to my supervisors Dr Kate Sang and Dr James Richards, for their excellent supervision and constructive feedback. Thank you both for your invaluable advice and guidance. Thank you, Kate, for your professional mentoring and for going well beyond your duty.

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<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A8 or Accession 8</strong></td>
<td>Accession countries: Czech Republic, Republic of Estonia, Hungary, Republic of Latvia, Republic of Lithuania, Republic of Poland, Slovak Republic and Republic of Slovenia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A10</strong></td>
<td>Accession countries together with Republic of Cyprus and Republic of Malta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A levels</strong></td>
<td>General Certificate of Education Advanced Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACAS</strong></td>
<td>Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BBC</strong></td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CEE</strong></td>
<td>Central and Eastern European</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EE</strong></td>
<td>Eastern European</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EEC</strong></td>
<td>European Economic Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ESRC</strong></td>
<td>Economic and Social Research Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EU</strong></td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EU15</strong></td>
<td>Member countries of the European Union prior to May 1st 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HR</strong></td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HRM</strong></td>
<td>Human Resource Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IOM</strong></td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IRR</strong></td>
<td>Institute of Race Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IRS</strong></td>
<td>Industrial Relations Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OECD</strong></td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ONS</strong></td>
<td>Office for National Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SME</strong></td>
<td>Small and medium-sized enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SNP</strong></td>
<td>Scottish National Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TUC</strong></td>
<td>Trades Union Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UK</strong></td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UN</strong></td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>USA</strong></td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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</table>
Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In recent years scholars have revealed the complexity of intersectionality theory arguing that it should be employed to not only investigate stories of those who are disadvantaged but also those who are partly privileged (Nash 2008, Tatli and Özbilgin 2011, Zack 2005). While intersectionality was developed to improve our understanding of women’s multiple discrimination, the theory can also help us to investigate heterogeneous experiences of all women (Crenshaw 2011, Tatli and Özbilgin 2011). In line with this conceptualisation of intersectionality the study examines the case of Polish migrant women in the Scottish hospitality industry with an interest in exploring the impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness on the research participants’ everyday working experiences.

The thesis contributes towards a theoretical understanding of intersectionality in a twofold manner. Firstly, it adapts the concept of (hetero)gender in an intersectional investigation of work. Although, unwanted sexualisation of work is a common problem in the hospitality industry (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Hoel and Einarsen 2003, Kensbock et al. 2015), and workplaces in general (Hunt et al. 2007, McDonald and Charlesworth 2016), our understanding of how gender is interconnected in organisational practices with sexuality and heteronormativity is limited (Pringle 2008). By considering (hetero)gender as one of the vectors of social categorisation the thesis reveals migrant women’s experiences of privilege and disadvantage and presents a new perspective for studying intersectional inequality at work.

Secondly, the study identifies contextual factors shaping migrant women’s intersectional experiences of privilege and disadvantage. In an exploration of migrant’s work inequality the study searches beyond the previously discussed organisational practices (Dyer et al. 2010, Johansson and Śliwa 2013) and presents a more comprehensive, multi-levelled list of circumstantial influences. The findings illustrate, inter alia, the impact of contextual factors originating outside of employees’ workplaces, which shaped interviewees’ intersectional experiences of inequality.
The study also presents empirical insights on the under-investigated group of Polish women working in Scotland. By exploring their everyday experiences in hospitality work the thesis contributes to our understanding of how migrant women are privileged and/or disadvantaged on the basis of their intersecting social identities. The findings revealed a picture of dominating discrimination, where being “privileged” was also interlinked with one’s own disadvantage.

Finally, the study presents two methodological contributions. Firstly, by employing a combination of life-history interviews and follow-up, semi-structured interviews the thesis demonstrates how examinations of intersectionality benefit from usage of multiple points of data collection. Secondly, the thesis contributes to the reflexive discussion of the impact of the researcher’s emic and etic positions on the research process in an intersectional study.

1.2 Background of the study

On 1st May 2004, ten European countries joined the European Union: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia. The Accession Treaty from that day marked the biggest enlargement of the EU, ever, in terms of joined people and countries (European Union 2016). Eight of the new states: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia are commonly referred to as ‘Accession 8’ or ‘A8’ which together with Cyprus and Malta make ‘A10’. The UK, along with Ireland and Sweden, were the only countries of the 15 existing member states (EU15), which granted free access to their labour market for the A8 nationals (Hampshire County Council 2010).

In the first four years after opening the borders Polish people constituted 66 per cent of all A8 migrants to the UK (Home Office 2009) and created the largest single wave of migration to this country in recent times (Sporton 2013). Between 2001 and 2014 the Polish population in the UK increased from about 58,000 to 853,000 (Migration Observatory 2012, ONS 2015b), representing a thirteen-fold increase. In specific regions, such as Scotland, in the corresponding period, the population of citizens born in Poland grew almost thirty-fold, from 2,505 to 76,000 new residents (Migration Observatory 2013, National Records of Scotland 2016). With this new migration
movement Polish people became the largest group of foreign-born citizens in the UK and Scotland (ONS 2015b, Rienzo and Vargas-Silva 2013).

However, modern migration of Polish people to the UK has long preceded the 2004 EU enlargement. World War II (1939-1945) marked a period of increased Polish migration across Europe, with civilians being displaced or deported. After the war a communist government, under the Soviet political influence, was installed in Poland. Because of the Soviet repressions and executions of Polish citizens (1939-1946), former members of the Polish Home Army, who had survived the war, were forced to establish Polish Diasporas abroad, rather than return to their country. In light of the Soviet takeover of Poland and the contribution of Polish troops to the war efforts in 1947, the Polish Resettlement Act was introduced in the UK, which offered British citizenship to over 200,000 displaced servicemen. This led to the establishment of the first sizable Polish community in the UK (Burrell 2006).

After the Second World War Polish citizens were mostly immobilised under the communist regime. Apart from internal resettlement and travelling within the Eastern bloc (Cyrus 2006) outward migration was strongly restricted (Burrell 2008b). Citizens were not permitted to keep their passports at home. After an international trip a person had to return their passport to a local headquarters of Citizen’s Militia. In the 1980s, although emigration remained officially inaccessible, over two million Polish people left their country, mostly for the USA (Iglicka 2001). Migration to the UK was not significant in this period but the link and small mobility between the two countries, established during World War II, was sustained (Sword 1996).

The fall of communism in 1989 enabled Polish citizens to travel, work and live abroad (Iglicka 2001). The period after 1989 was marked by intensified migration, particularly short-term cyclical movements to Germany (Cyrus 2006). Kopnina (2005) describes this ‘a new era’ of internal mobility within the continent. Indeed, the ‘return to Europe’ of the former communist states and the economic gap between western and eastern European countries triggered increased migration (Fortier 2006). However, movement of Polish citizens remained limited by the regulating policies of the destination countries (Burrell 2008b). Joining the European Union in 2004 and opening the borders was a watershed moment in the history of Polish migration (Burrell 2012).
Scholars’ and authorities’ initial predictions strongly underestimated the scale of Polish migration to the UK post-2004. For example, Dustmann et al. (2003) estimated that migration from all accession countries would range from 5,000 to 15,000 per year. It was argued that potentially low earnings in the destination country, lost opportunities in the home country and high migration costs would prevent mass migration (Okólski 2004). Contrary to these predictions, within three years after the Accession Treaty Polish people alone became the largest foreign national group in the UK (Bachan and Sheehan 2011).

1.3 Rationale for this study

There is a substantial amount of studies on work experiences of Polish migrants in the UK. However, they discuss the occupational lives of Polish employees with limited consideration of gender (Bachan and Sheehan 2011, Baxter-Reid 2016, Cieslik 2011, Eade et al. 2007, Fitzgerald et al. 2012, Janta 2011, Janta et al. 2011, Johansson and Śliwa 2014, Kusek 2015, Lugosi et al. 2016, Parutis 2011b, Samaluk 2016, Śliwa and Taylor 2011, Vershinina et al. 2011) or they focus solely on men (Datta and Brickell 2009, Kilkey 2010, Kilkey and Perrons 2010). The literature on Polish women in the UK relates to material- (Burrell 2008a) and family-lives (Lopez Rodriguez 2010), leaving working lives under-discussed. Aziz’s (2015) recent publication on Polish women examines, with the use of biographical narrative interviews, how migrant women’s working trajectories can challenge or reinforce gender roles. The study sheds light on migrant women’s professional progression and agency. However, Aziz’s investigation does not explain Polish women’s everyday experiences of work. Previous research conducted on other social groups shows that migrant women may experience inequality at work on the basis of various intersecting social categories, such as gender and migration status (Dyer et al. 2010, Sang et al. 2013). Thus, the thesis aimed to fill the gap in our knowledge on Polish migrant women and explored how their work experiences are shaped by intersecting social identities.

The majority of studies on Polish workers focuses on England (Bachan and Sheehan 2011, Fitzgerald et al. 2012, Janta 2011, Vershinina et al. 2011) and specifically the area of Greater London (Bachan and Sheehan 2011, Cieslik 2011, Datta and Brickell 2009,
Eade et al. 2007, Kusek 2015, Lyons 2007, Parutis 2011b, Samaluk 2016, Śliwa and Taylor 2011). However, little is known about Polish people’s work experiences in Scotland. Previous research on the Polish community in Scotland has focused, thus far, on migrants’ psychological wellbeing (Weishaar 2008, Weishaar 2010), mobility (Shubin 2012), access to local employment (de Lima and Wright 2009), family integration (Moskal 2011, Ramasawmy 2014) or entrepreneurship (Lassalle et al. 2011). A gap in the knowledge about Polish workers exists despite Scotland being a distinct space for an investigation of migrants’ experiences. For Scotland, unlike for England, where the majority of studies on Polish migrants have been conducted, it is important to attract migrant workers (de Lima and Wright 2009). Although EU expansion and opening borders in 2004 created an opportunity for Scotland to improve fluidity and scale of immigration, attracting more workers remains an important concern for Scottish policy-makers (see de Lima and Wright 2009, SNP 2016). Polish migrants represent the biggest non-UK born community in Scotland (National Records of Scotland 2016). Nevertheless, little is known about this group’s everyday work experiences. The thesis focused on Scotland in order to enrich our understanding of working experiences of Polish migrants in this region of the UK.

More specifically, the study examined Polish women’s work experiences in the Scottish hospitality industry. Migrant workers are an important asset for British businesses serving food and beverage (Matthews and Ruhs 2007a, Matthews and Ruhs 2007b). With significant turnover rates and irregular working hours the hospitality industry is in constant need of a supply of new employees and migrant workers, who meet requirements both in terms of the quantity and quality of their labour (MacKenzie and Forde 2009, Matthews and Ruhs 2007a). Managers within the British hospitality industry demonstrate a positive view of migrant workers, arguing that they possess better skills and more experience than their British counterparts (Lyon and Sulcova 2009). Numerous studies have revealed hospitality employers’ positive stereotypical assumptions specifically related to Polish workers and their commitment, acceptance of low wages and ‘good work ethic’ (Anderson et al. 2006, Matthews and Ruhs 2007a, McDowell et al. 2007). As Polish workers have become a human resource (HR) asset in the UK hospitality industry (Janta et al. 2011), understanding of these employees’ working experiences may have significance for the development of the sector.
The study focused on the exploration of Polish women’s experiences of privilege and/or disadvantage. In addition to employers’ positive views of migrant workers (Matthews and Ruhs 2007a, McDowell et al. 2007) numerous studies also revealed discriminatory treatment of women in the hospitality context (Bloisi and Hoel 2008, Lu and Kleiner 2001, Mathisen et al. 2008, Mkono 2010b, Poulston 2008, Theocharous and Philaretou 2009, Yagil 2008). For example, research shows that sexual harassment, which under the Equality Act 2010 is a form of discrimination (Equality Act 2010), is more prevalent in the hospitality rather than other industries (Eller 1990). While sexual harassment affects both women and men, on the basis of perpetrators’ heterosexuality and homosexuality, in the hospitality industry these incidents are dominated by cases where women are harassed by heterosexual men (Ineson et al. 2013). At the same time, Polish women may be subject to advantageous treatment in the hospitality industry due to their identity of whiteness. As a significant majority of Polish migrants in the UK identify their ethnicity as white (Census 2011a), Polish women belong to a group of employees which is often preferred by hospitality employers for higher-paid and more visible positions (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Adkins 1995, Dyer et al. 2010, Jayaraman 2013). Whiteness has been identified as playing an important role in the organisational sphere (Al Ariss et al. 2014). It is one of the social vectors of categorisation which constructs norms and privilege. The concept of whiteness used by academics helps to explore procedures, attitudes or behaviour leading to a privileged treatment or position of people perceived as white (Ahmed 2012). Nevertheless, it is an unpopular subject in the field of organisational and management studies and researchers have been called to investigate more the elusive impact of whiteness (Tatli and Özbilgin 2011, Samaluk 2014).

Due to the location of Polish women at the intersection of social vectors of categorisation, such as (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness, which can be a source of both privilege and disadvantage, the study aimed to investigate the intersecting impact of social identities on their everyday working experiences.
1.4 Research aim and objectives

As explained in the previous section, the overarching purpose of the study was to understand the role of intersecting identities in migrant women’s work experiences. By exploring everyday work experiences, with the view of the impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness, the study aimed to:

- deepen the understanding of migrant women’s work encounters of (in)equality and further our knowledge about Polish employees in Scotland.

The research sought to fulfil this aim with the use of five specific objectives:

1: to examine the impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness on Polish migrant women’s work experiences in the Scottish hospitality industry;

2: to understand the intersection of Polish migrant women’s privilege and disadvantage in the Scottish hospitality industry;

3: to explore Polish migrant women’s reflections on experienced (in)equality at work;

4: to identify the impact of contextual factors on work (in)equality experiences encountered by Polish migrant women in the Scottish hospitality industry; and,

5: to advance intersectional understanding of inequality at work through the examination of Polish women’s work experiences.

In order to address these aim and objectives the study recruited twenty research participants, who were interviewed in two stages. First, twenty life-history interviews were conducted. Then, fourteen follow-up, semi-structured interviews were carried out, which gave a total of thirty-four interviews. Additionally, a researcher’s diary was kept to record details about the fieldwork and to aid the reflexivity of the study. The next subsection explains the detailed information on the study, which can be found in each of the chapters.
1.5 Thesis structure

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. The remainder of the thesis is structured as follows:

**Chapter Two** provides a literature review on the research context. It begins with a general discussion of women’s work inequality in British organisations. Then, the exploration of academic literature is narrowed down to investigations of migrant women’s work experiences and their different circumstances concerning migration. This is followed by a discussion on Polish migrants in the UK, their different reasons for migrating, and their work experiences. Here, the literature review reveals the popularity of the hospitality industry among Polish workers in the UK and a potential impact of whiteness on employers’ perceptions of Polish employees. Thus, the chapter proceeds to a review of research on the hospitality industry, specifically in relation to concepts of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness. The chapter concludes by emphasising the heterogeneity of women and summarising the revealed gaps in the academic literature.

**Chapter Three** explores literature on different theoretical perspectives which could shed light on Polish migrant women’s potential experiences of inequality. Specifically, the chapter focuses on intersectionality theory and presents the evolution of intersectional thought. The chapter also discusses different perspectives on adaptation of social categories in intersectional research. This part of the thesis also reviews empirical investigations of intersectionality in organisation studies and, specifically, in sectoral research on the hospitality industry. The concluding section of the chapter revises how the intersectionality theory can be employed in a study of Polish women’s work experiences and the theoretical gaps in intersectional research, which need to be addressed.

**Chapter Four** presents the philosophical stance and methodology adopted in the thesis. Following ontological and epistemological considerations, the chapter explains the constructionist and interpretivist underpinnings of the study. The chapter then presents a discussion on the qualitative approach that the study has adopted, together with the employed research methods: Life-history and semi-structured interviews. The chapter also outlines the logic behind research participants’ selection and explains considered
ethical issues. The chapter subsequently debates viable methods of data interpretation and the rationale for choosing thematic analysis. Finally, the chapter offers a reflexive account of the impact of the researcher’s own social identities on the research process and summarises the study’s methodology.

**Chapters Five and Six** present the research findings. Chapter Five focuses on the themes of Polish migrant women’s experiences of privilege and/or disadvantage, which were identified during data analysis. The chapter is divided into five main sections, namely: Sexual harassment, workplace bullying, othering, unequal distribution of tasks, and development and promotion opportunities. Chapter Six discusses contextual factors that were identified through a thematic analysis, which have contributed towards Polish women’s experiences of inequality. This chapter consists of two main sections, one dedicated to contextual factors at an organisational level, and the other focusing on contextual factors at an international level. Both chapters end with summaries of key findings.

**Chapter Seven** readdresses, respectively, each of the research objectives. For that purpose, the chapter relates findings reported in Chapters Five and Six to the literature, which was reviewed in Chapters Two and Three. Discussion in Chapter Seven, supported by the academic literature, reveals the latent elements of Polish women’s intersectional work experiences. The concluding section of the chapter highlights how the study’s findings contribute to our understanding of intersectional inequality at work.

**Chapter Eight** concludes the thesis, beginning with a review of the extent to which the study’s aim and objectives were met and a synthesis of the study’s theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions. The chapter then explains the practical implications of the thesis’ findings, and the studies’ limitations. The chapter concludes by identifying directions for future research on Polish migrant women’s work experiences.
Chapter Two: Migrant women’s work experiences in the UK

2.1 Introduction

The chapter presents a literature review on the thesis’s research context, which is that of Polish women’s work experiences of inequality in the Scottish hospitality industry. In order to discuss each of the elements of the study’s context the review’s aim is threefold: to discuss the recent history of women’s work in the UK; to review our knowledge of Polish migrants’ working lives in the UK and Scotland and, finally, to revisit literature on migrant workers in the hospitality industry.

The chapter begins with a historical overview of key developments, which occurred in the 20th century, regarding gender equality at work in the UK. The progress of introducing women to the paid labour market is later contrasted with women’s contemporary experiences of inequality. The chapter then narrows down the discussion to migrant women and work. Migrant women’s experiences are highlighted in this section, and attention is given to differing migration circumstances. The next section further confines the literature review to the case of Polish migrants, who constitute the largest group of foreign-born residents, both in Scotland and the United Kingdom (ONS 2015b, Rienzo and Vargas-Silva 2013). In this part of the chapter, studies on Polish women are revisited, and gaps in our knowledge about this community in the UK are disclosed. Following the popularity of the hospitality industry amongst Polish workers, and the importance of these employees for the food and beverage serving businesses (Matthews and Ruhs 2007a), the chapter then reviews literature on migrant workers in the hospitality industry. The final section of the chapter provides a conclusion, highlighting key arguments and gaps in the reviewed academic literature. The literature reviewed in the chapter reveals that an investigation of Polish women’s experiences of inequality requires sensitivity to specific social categories, which shape encounters of privilege and disadvantage. However, of key importance is recognition of how categories of social differentiation are intertwined and how, intersectionally, they can affect the work of employees, such as Polish migrant women.
2.2 Women’s work in British organisations

The literature review begins by discussing the impact of gender on work experiences. Firstly, a historical context is given in order to illustrate how women’s position in the sphere of paid work has changed in the last hundred years. This is followed by a discussion in subsection 2.2.2 of how, despite the introduction of gender equality legislation, numerous studies have indicated that women have a disadvantaged position in the British workplace in the 21st century. Subsection 2.2.2 introduces key terms related to gender inequality in an organisational setting and presents themes from the literature outlining the phenomenon of gender inequality. However, first a historical overview is presented.

2.2.1 Women’s participation in the British labour market in the 20th century

The twentieth century brought significant changes with respect to women’s participation in the British labour market. At the beginning of the 1900s the ‘feudal’ division of work between men and women began to break down (Beck 1992). The need to replace male workers, who fought during World War I, increased women’s opportunities in the paid labour market. Historians estimate that approximately two million men were replaced in employment between 1914 and 1918 (Bourke 1994). This increased the proportion of women in total employment from 24 per cent at the beginning of the war to 37 per cent at the end of the conflict (Bourke 1994). To maintain social order of gender norms the term ‘home front’ was introduced. This term sought to explain women’s supportive roles, and justify their presence, in occupations such as manufacturing (Grayzel 1999). By 1917 munitionettes, i.e., women who were employed in British munitions factories during World War I, were making approximately 80 per cent of British weaponry and ammunition (Grayzel 2002). The war not only opened up a wider range of occupations for British women but also improved their trade unionism. With the rising scale of women’s employment, female workers’ union membership also increased by approximately 160 per cent between 1914 and 1918 (Bourke 1994). However, increased participation in the paid employment and unionism did not bring a significant change to women’s pay. Women were paid less to prevent the idea that they ‘replace’ men. Several women were employed to replace one man and skilled tasks were divided into several less skilled
tasks (Bourke 1994). Furthermore, after the war many women were withdrawn from paid employment. This was caused, inter alia, due to the end of contracts signed for the period of the war, closure of day nurseries established during the conflict, and a high general unemployment level combined with men’s social unrest about women ‘taking’ their employment (Bourke 1994).

After the war, the suffrage movement further improved British women’s public rights, was acting as a stepping stone in the development of the future working statutes. In 1917, according to the law, men were entitled to vote in the election but only if they had been resident in the country for a year prior to the voting. This disqualified a significant number of servicemen who were deployed overseas during World War I. Thus, Parliament was forced to revise the voting franchise. Drawing attention to the women’s contribution to war efforts, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies persuaded the Leader of the Liberal Party to grant the right to vote for women who were property owners and above thirty years of age. In 1928 the age limitation for women to vote was equalised with men’s, i.e., 21 (Bourke 1994). The efforts of the protesters who helped to pressure the government was later called the first wave of feminism. The wave did not begin the fight for women’s equality; however, it was the first organised, self-conscious series of movements advocating women’s rights on a national scale. The developments of the first wave were a stepping-stone to women entering the public sphere (Bruley 1999).

The next significant step towards gender work equality involved allowing women to join the navy and army during World War II. At the outbreak of the war in 1939 approximately five million women were in employment. In 1943 this number peaked with over seven million at work. However, women were not recruited on equal terms to men, as women were not allowed to perform tasks involving guns. Military jobs were limited for women to occupations such as: nurses, typists and secretaries. Similar, to the previous war, after the conflict women were praised for their efforts but pressured to yield employment to the returning troops. By 1951 the level of women’s employment in paid work nearly reached the pre-war state (De Groot 1997).

Nevertheless, women shared with the next generation stories of their duties and efforts during the war, as well as the subsequent limitations imposed on them. This legacy was one of the factors that increased the emergence of feminist groups in the 1960s and
1970s leading to the formation of a movement known as the second wave of feminism (Thane 2010). While the first wave focused mainly on legal obstacles to gender equality and suffrage, the second broadened the debate to issues such as: Family, sexuality and the workplace (Nicholson 1997). A series of feminist movements helped to pass the Equal Pay Act in 1970, which prohibited unequal pay and unfair conditions of employment due to gender discrimination. Furthermore, in 1973 the UK joined the European Economic Communities, creating new pressure for the development of equal rights. In the following years numerous legislative acts were passed by the EEC (European Economic Community) and European Council improving women’s working rights, including directives on: Equal pay (1975), equal treatment in access to employment (1976) or parental leave (1996) (Casey 2011). Partly due to the European pressure in 1975 the UK also passed the Sex Discrimination Act, which provided legal protection for men and women from discrimination on the grounds of gender.

Nonetheless, the success of the legal acts, which helped women to enter labour markets, was only partial. Despite the increased number of employed women, studies revealed little improvements in pay and job status (Millward and Woodland 1995, Walby and Bagguley 1990). Walby and Bagguley found that during the period 1971-1981 there had been a sharper decrease in the number of female skilled manual workers than their male counterparts and a decline in women semi-skilled workers, juxtaposed against an increase of men within the same professions. Millward and Woodland (1995) reported that unskilled men could earn thirty per cent more in male dominated firms than in similar predominantly female establishments.

2.2.2 Gender work inequality in the 21st century

The historical and large-scale studies cited above, provide a crucial background to the context of gender inequality. However, it should be recognised that they present a basic understanding of gender, synonymous to sex. Academics as early as in 1960s claimed that concepts of ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ can be differentiated (Money 1965, Stoller 1968). Supporting this line of discussion, West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that gender is not something individuals possess, but rather something we do through social interaction. Similarly, according to Butler (1990) gender is constructed and performed, rather than being set or biological. Thus, according to Acker (2006, p. 444) gender concerns:
“socially constructed differences between men and women and the beliefs and identities that support the difference and inequality”.

This social constructivist conceptualisation of gender recognises gender as an identity negotiated and shifting across time and place. Gender refers to a multiplicity of masculinities and femininities (Kelan 2010, Knights and Kerfoot 2004, Linstead and Brewis 2004). Thus, it contrasts with the term sex which is: “the biological make-up of men and women (female and male)” (Kelan 2012, p. 6). Drawing on these definitions of gender and sex in the current study a ‘woman’ is understood as a person ascribing to socially constructed gender norms associated with females and/or a person with the biological characteristics of a female human. Meanwhile, a ‘man’ is understood as a person ascribing to socially constructed gender norms associated with males and/or a person with the biological characteristics of a male human. It is also recognised that some people identify themselves as neither a ‘woman’ nor a ‘man’.


These themes, investigated in the literature, contribute to our understanding of social inequality in organisations based on gender. Social inequality can be understood as:

“the disparate or unequal distribution of resources or opportunity according to socially defined categories of people, which is considered to privilege one social group, whilst working to the disadvantage of another” (Quick 2015, p. 24).

As explained by Quick (2015), social inequality (hereafter inequality) is most commonly understood by the dichotomy between privilege of one group and disadvantage of the other. Nevertheless, theories of inequality tend to be driven by the
concept of disadvantage (Quick 2015). Drawing on the conceptualisation of inequality by Quick, privilege is understood in this thesis as: An advantageous access to distribution of resources or opportunity for a socially defined category of people. Whereas, disadvantage is seen as: An unfavourable access to distribution of resources or opportunity for a socially defined category of people.

In the organisational context inequality can take the form of disparities in: Promotion opportunities, ability to organise work, levels of monetary and non-financial rewards or employment security (Acker 2006). Previous studies have examined inequality and work in relation to groups defined by social categories such as gender (e.g. Ridgeway 1997, Sayer 2005) or migration status (DeFreitas 1991, McKenzie and Rapoport 2007). This section continues to set the background of the study, by presenting recent research on gender inequality at work.

*Gendered organisations*

Acker’s (1990) study of gendered organisations is a seminal work, central to contemporary examinations of women’s inequality at work. Acker argues that organisations are not gender-neutral but rather gendered. Although presented as objective and rational, organisations reproduce and reinforce norms and values portraying a heterosexual man as an ‘ideal worker’. By denying this androcentric approach, organisations perpetuate gendered differences and, resulting from them, inequalities. According to Acker, the gendered organisational logic can be manifested in written work rules, managerial directives, job evaluations, in language used by employees and in organisational practices. For example, Sang et al. (2014), in their study of the British architect profession, found that a culture of long working hours marginalised women and subordinated masculinities. Similarly, Johansson and Śliwa (2013) found women academics were in a disadvantaged position in terms of access to promotion, networking, collaboration, and career progression, due to gendered organisational processes. These recent studies, drawing on Acker’s work, illustrate the importance of applying gender not only to individual but also organisational analysis of women’s work experiences.
In a critique of the imaginary ‘ideal worker’, Acker (1990) recognises a link between gender and sexuality. Sexuality can be seen as:

“a term to describe a person’s sexual identity with regard to the gender of people they are romantically, intimately and sexually attracted to”
(Cayley 2016, p. xiv).

However, Acker describes sexuality as a component constructing gender identities and organisational gender inequalities. In Acker’s work, and in this study, sexuality is understood as a socially constructed set of processes, which is not restricted solely to sexual relations and the associated policy implications. Rather, broadly defined, sexuality creates assumptions about gender-appropriate behaviour and influences management practices and everyday relations between employees (Acker 1990, Acker 2006). According to Acker (1990, 2006), employees within organisations are subjected not only to hidden gender norms, but also sexualised assumptions. Pringle (2008, p. 112) expands on this idea, arguing that to manage gender in a work environment means to manage heterosexuality and, thus, employment becomes a process of heterosexualisation. Arguing that sex and gender need to be examined together, Pringle introduces the concept of heterogender to organisational studies. Heterogender was originally coined by a critical sociologist Chrys Ingraham (2002, p.80) as:

“the asymmetrical stratification of the sexes in relation to the historically varying institutions of patriarchal heterosexuality”.

The term heterogender questions the naturalisation of heterosexuality, which is embedded in constructions of gender. According to Ingraham both gender and heterosexuality are socially constructed and, thus, open to various configurations and change. The concept of gender discussed in the absence of sexuality provides foundations for heteronormativity which, in turn, perpetuates hetero-patriarchal ideologies in society. Ingraham’s concept of heterogender de-naturalises the ‘sexual’ and unpacks it by considering heteronormativity together with gendered relations of labour, resources and production. According to Ingraham (1996), by examining heterogender the focus lies on the primary roots of discrimination rather than on one of its symptoms.
Following Ingraham’s argument, Pringle (2008) uses heterogender in a qualitative study of lesbian managers in New Zealand to reveal gendered and sexualised norms embedded in practice at the cultural and informal edges of organisational life. Pringle investigated whether openly lesbian managers would disclose organisational heteronormativity. The study found that work processes were constructed on the basis of heterosexual binary between femininity and masculinity. Thus, Pringle argues, the interconnection between gender and sexuality, which can be referred to as heterogender, should be incorporated in organisational studies “as an additional layer of explanation” (Pringle 2008, p.112). Heterogender is a new concept to the organisational studies; however, some inequality investigations in the field of sociology (Wolkomir 2012) and education (Stafford 2013) have adapted the concept as ‘(hetero)gender’ in order to investigate the intersection between gender and heteronormativity but also remain sensitive to the gendered processes discriminating women.

**Sexual harassment**

The role of (hetero)gender as an important concept explaining women’s work experiences becomes more apparent when we consider sexual harassment, one of the key problems of gender discrimination in the occupational setting. Women’s sexual harassment at work has been a subject of research and campaigning since the 1970s (Samuels 2003) and yet it continues to be an important social problem in British organisations (McDonald 2012). Sexual harassment is a gendered issue as in a significant majority of cases women are victims of men’s unwanted sexual conduct (Hunt et al. 2007, McDonald and Charlesworth 2016). According to the European Economic Community (EEC 1991):

“Sexual harassment means unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, or other conduct based on sex affecting the dignity of women and men at work. This can include unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct (p. 0001-0008)”.

Under the Equality Act 2010, sexual harassment is a form of discrimination in the UK and is unlawful (Equality Act 2010). Examples of sexual harassment include: Unwanted pressure for sexual favours, unwanted deliberate touching, leaning over, cornering, or pinching, unwanted sexual looks or gestures, unwanted pressure for dates, unwanted
sexual teasing, jokes, remarks, or turning work discussions to sexual topics (Citizens Advice 2016). Furthermore, women may be harassed in a workplace in the form of employment related bribery or threat, unwanted sexual attention or by perpetuating a hostile, offensive environment (Gelfand et al. 1995, Paetzold and O’Leary-Kelly 1996). A survey of 1500 women conducted by the Trades Union Congress (2016) found that more than half of the respondents experienced some form of sexual harassment at work. 35 per cent of the polled women have heard comments of a sexual nature about other women, 28 per cent have been the subject of such comments and nearly a quarter of the respondents have experienced unwanted touching. A study of sexual harassment policies in 112 British organisations found that 69 per cent of respondents recognised sexual harassment as a “fairly important problem for employers” and 17 per cent perceived it as a “major problem”, compared with two per cent who viewed it as “no problem at all” (IRS 2002).

Disparagement humour

Women’s experience of sexual harassment is partly linked to the concept of humour. With the increase of egalitarian policies - examples are reviewed in subsection 2.2.1 - people changed the way they express prejudice and harassment (Klonis et al. 2005). Employees who hold sexist attitudes towards women cannot openly reveal these attitudes without risking rebuke, disciplinary action or a lawsuit. Consequently, prejudice or harassment is more often expressed in more subtle ways and in a context that can be considered acceptable (non-offensive) (Crandall and Eshleman 2003).

Humour has been recognised by scholars as a context that provides space for communicating negative attitudes (e.g., McCann et al. 2010). Humour is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon that cannot be captured into a single definition (Foot and Chapman 1976). According to Cooper (2005), studies considering humour should specify the aspects of humour that are being discussed or examined. Here, the focus is on disparagement humour, which Ferguson and Ford (2008, p. 283) conceptualise as “remarks that (are intended to) elicit amusement through the denigration, derogation, or belittlement of a given target”. Disparagement humour in its sexist form is often linked to hostile dispositions and negative behaviour towards women initiated by men (Mallett et al. 2016). A TUC (2016) report revealed that approximately one third of the surveyed women were subject to sexualised, unwanted jokes at work. Sexual humour was the
second most prominent form of sexual harassment respondents recognised, after “hearing colleagues making comments of a sexual nature about another woman or women in general” (TUC 2016, p. 11).

As Mallett et al. (2016) argue, sexist humour both diminishes women and trivialises that diminishment as humour is meant to not be taken seriously or critically but, rather, playfully. Thus, it communicates that the denigration of women lies beyond the moral or ethical norms (Gray and Ford 2013). Sexism presented in a form of humour imposes ambiguity that protects it from opposition or challenges that other forms of sexist behaviour would most likely initiate (Bill and Naus 1992). The ambiguity increases the difficulty for women to confront the unwanted behaviour. Firstly, it creates the dilemma of whether the action has been interpreted correctly. Was it really sexist? Secondly, due to its ambiguity, women can have difficulty with finding an appropriate response to sexist humour, as it may be uncertain how others interpret the episode (Mallett et al. 2016). How employees reflect on and respond to harassment, such as sexual, has an impact on the maintenance of unwanted conduct (Bill and Naus 1992, Gray and Ford 2013, Wood 1994).

The reviewed literature illustrates that despite the egalitarian policies introduced in the 20th century, gender discrimination remains an important social problem in organisational settings. Organisations often operate in a (hetero)gendered manner, with patriarchal and heteronormative processes marginalising and sexualising women. Although, legislation de-legalises sexual harassment, unwanted sexual conduct is a common problem in organisations, which is often disguised at work as a form of humour. However, gender is not the only social category which shapes women’s encounters of inequality. Women’s work experiences are heterogeneous and subject to the influence of various intersecting vectors of social categorisation (Acker 2006). In order to set the context for the investigation of Polish migrant women’s experiences of privilege and disadvantage the following section confines the discussion to migrant women’s experiences at work. The next section considers how gender together with migration status can shape women’s work experiences. However, first the term ‘migrant’ is discussed.
2.3 Migrant women’s work in British organisations

As with many social concepts there is no universally accepted definition of a ‘migrant’ (Migration Observatory 2015). In the UK, government data sources use various conceptualisations of who constitutes a migrant taking into account aspects such as entering a country with intent to settle, subjection to the immigration control or the difference between foreign-born residents and foreign nationals (Migration Observatory 2015). The following definition, presented by the International Organization for Migration (2016), is useful in clarifying the meaning behind the word ‘migrant’. According to the IOM (2016) a migrant is:

“any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person’s legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is”.

The definition highlights that an individual can be considered a migrant regardless of their legal status or the circumstances of their migration. This description is contrasted by the IOM by the term ‘refugee’, i.e., a person who:

“owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (IOM 2016).

Thus, according to the IOM definitions while some migrants can be identified as refugees, the two terms are not synonymous. The definitions provide an important but basic understanding of who should be considered a migrant. Migrant identity in a social setting, such as work, is not qualified through definitions but rather cultural, economic and political phenomena which are interconnected with processes of migration (Dick 2010, Dong and Blommaert 2009, Koopmans and Statham 2014, Punch 2007, Smith and King 2012). For example, Dyer et al. (2010), with the use of semi-structured interviews, examined migrant workers in a chain hotel branch in London. Their findings suggest that migrant identities are constructed and negotiated through employers’ and
customers’ demands of their performance. In order to address a migrant’s identity as a form of social differentiation, Dyer et al. use the form ‘migration status’, which allows taking into account formal characteristics, such as a visa status or settlement rights but, also, ‘softer considerations’ such as the time spent in the host country (2010, p. 636). Following the example of Dyer et al. the current study also adapts the form ‘migration status’. By doing so it incorporates in its discussion the formal characteristics outlined by the IOM definition of a migrant, but also the social constructivist insights on the construction of migrant identity in workplaces. As argued by Dyer et al. (2010) migrant workers’ ‘migration status’ as a category of differentiation needs to be considered together with other social categories such as gender. Migration often reproduces and challenges gender performances as individuals transit to a new private and professional social environment. In this process they find themselves negotiating and renegotiating roles which can be gendered (Dyer et al. 2010). Taking into account the intersecting nature of gender and migration status the following subsection presents a discussion of literature on migrant women’s work experiences.

2.3.1 Common themes on migrant women’s work

In the last three decades women’s labour migration has significantly increased globally (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003, Fleury 2016), gaining more interest from academics and policy makers (Man 2004, Raghuram 2008). This occupational focus has complemented the well-established research of feminist scholars on the experiences of migrant women’s family lives (Salaff and Greve 2003). From the existing literature five key themes related to migrant women’s work experiences can be identified: Dirty work, deskilling, discrimination, workplace bullying and othering. Each will now be discussed in turn.

Dirty work

Much of the attention on researching migrant women’s labour has focused on their position in the labour market and their experiences of multiple discriminations. Although several studies have emphasised that migrant women contribute to different sectors of the labour market (Morokvasic 1991, Pio and Essers 2014, Raghuram 2008, Yeoh and Huang 2000), research on migrant women often focuses on occupations which can be described as ‘dirty work’ (Dyer et al. 2008). According to Hughes (1971),
the term describes tainted, unpleasant, undesired work which most people would not prefer to do. Occupations which are ‘dirty’, whether physically, socially or morally, are devalued in economically developed countries, creating staff shortages, which are often filled by migrants (Chiappetta-Swanson 2005). Thus, discourses of migrant women’s work experiences are dominated by studies on domestic services, care work, nursing, housekeeping and cleaning; that is, occupations making an important contribution to a society but associated with physical and/or mental taint (Anderson 2000, Brody 2006, Browne and Misra 2003, Kofman et al. 2005). Alternatively to Hughes’ (1971) theory of stigmatised, ‘dirty’ professions, Morales and Lambert (2013) argue that no occupation is dirty in itself but, rather, specific tasks can be perceived as dirty or unwanted. Employees can designate tasks, considered as dirty, to their colleagues (Emerson and Pollner 1976). Thus, even in occupations which are not popularly perceived as ‘dirty’, the unwanted tasks can be delegated to migrant workers (see e.g. Baxter-Reid 2016).

Deskilling

Migrant women often find employment in ‘dirty work’ or low paid jobs despite possessing education and skills at a higher level (Man 2004, Nowicka 2012a, Raghuram and Kofman 2004). Having arrived at the new destination, migrants often find that they cannot use their skills and have to repeat their training or undertake employment in low-paid, low-skilled jobs. Either due to limited financial resources, or lack of competence for more advanced jobs, they enter the labour market at the earliest opportunity, agreeing to undertake employment below the level of their skills (Janta et al. 2011). This process is referred to as deskilling, defined by Wren and Boyle (2001, p. 40) as a:

“downward mobility and potential loss of skill due to failure to recognize skills and qualifications gained during previous educational and professional background”.

While deskilling itself is not a gender specific phenomenon, it can lead to gendered occupational segregation and, thus, contribute to the gendered work experiences of migrant women. Migrant women subject to deskilling often find employment in the feminised labour market niches, such as housekeeping and cleaning work (Dyer et al. 2010, Raghuram and Kofman 2004). Moreover, as Man (2004) found in a study of
Chinese immigrant women’s deskillling in Canada, the limited social support system in the new country and the absence of the extended family members increases migrant women’s workload as they often have family responsibilities greater than migrant men. With the increased amount of unpaid work, deskillling affects migrant women more drastically than their male counterparts, and often forces them to seek employment in part-time or flexible labour, which does not provide the benefits of job security (Man 2004).

**Discrimination**

The literature also suggests that migrant women can be subject to discrimination on the basis of their gender and/or migration status. According to Dyer et al. (2010), both gender and migration status operate in a similar manner, affecting employees’ experiences of the work itself and occupational segmentation. The scholars found that the national and gender characteristics can construct employees as eligible for specific types of hotel work. For example, being ‘international’ and with feminine qualities can be part of the requirements necessary for front desk work. Dyer et al. claim that the intersection of migration status, with gender and other social identities creates and limits certain employment opportunities for migrant women. Similarly, as Carling (2005) argues, discrimination and racism often takes different forms for migrant men and women. In particular, female migrants can be subject to sexual harassment linked to ethnic minority status (Estrada-Claudio 1992, Lazaridis 2000). For example, Adib and Guerrier (2003) found that room attendants, in the hotel they studied, were subject to sexual harassment based on the intersection of employees’ gender and migration status.

**Workplace bullying**

Furthermore, minority workers are significantly more likely to be victims of workplace bullying based on their gender and/or ethnicity (Archer 1999, Estacio and Saidy-Khan 2014). Workplace bullying can be defined as:

“offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient” (ACAS 2013).
In some professions bullying is a common, almost expected phenomenon. For example, professional chefs are particularly prone to experience and perpetuate aggressive behaviour at work (Meloury and Signal 2014). Although workplace bullying can affect any employee, according to Archer (1999), those within the minority gender or ethnicity are more prone to be targets of such behaviour. Archer (1999) used mixed methods to examine workplace bullying in the UK Fire Service. Archer found that women and ethnic minority employees experienced sexist and racist behaviour, which was perpetuated by some workers to maintain ‘white male dominance’ and paramilitary culture. Similarly, Lewis and Gunn (2007) found in public sector organisations in South Wales that work experiences of ethnic minority workers often constitute bullying. Lewis and Gunn examined 13 state-run organisations with self-completed questionnaires and concluded that in these workplaces bullying affected ethnic minority women the most. Pai (2004), in a qualitative investigation of migrant cleaners in Canary Wharf, found that foreign workers are subject to day-to-day management bullying in the form of verbal abuse, aggression and public humiliation. Stevens et al. (2012), examining experiences of racism and discrimination among migrant care workers in England, found that foreign workers were prone to bullying from patients, peers and managers. Victims’ visible markers of being a minority such as dress code, skin colour, and low proficiency in the English language were indicators for higher rates of bullying.

Othering

Finally, the literature suggests that migrant women can be subject to a further, distinct form of discrimination, namely that of ‘othering’. According to Mountz’s (2009, p.328) definition, to other means:

“to distinguish, label, categorize, name, identify, place and exclude those who do not fit a societal norm”.

It is a process stigmatising ‘real’ or imagined differences, which leads to differentiation of an in- and out-group (Alexander and Mohanty 2013, Patil 2011, Zwingel 2012). As othering creates a discourse around persons or groups, which are labelled as deviant or non-normative, the concept has a long tradition in studies of gender inequality (Mountz 2009). Feminist scholars have sought to challenge the othering of women and include them as normative figures in facets of society, such as politics, media or work (Mountz
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2009). Othering of migrant women has been discussed in management literature; for example, Pio and Essers (2014), use the transnational feminist perspective to explore how professional Indian women invoked their agency to ‘decentre otherness’. In a similar study, Thomson and Jones (2016) examined how accountants migrating to Canada, who are othered, gain a recognition through mimicry. Thomson and Jones’s study illustrates othering barriers, faced by non-white, non-male, non-Western professionals, present in the accounting profession, despite the popular diversity management discourse.

While othering, occupational segregation or deskilling often shape migrant women’s work experiences they do not occur uniformly. Migrant women do not represent a homogeneous group but, rather, a cluster of variously defined subgroups, which may experience work differently. In order to recognise the heterogeneity of migrant women as a social group the following subsection discusses the multiplicity of circumstances under which women migrate.

2.3.2 Different circumstances of women’s migration

Migrant women’s work experiences can depend on the circumstances under which they migrate to another country. According to Jolly and Reeves (2005), most migrants decide to migrate in response to social, economic and political pressures. These pressures can be gendered. For example, Coyle (2007) argues the mobility of many Polish migrant women after 1989 was a form of resistance against the deterioration of their rights in the post-communist period. Faced with high levels of unemployment and gendered discrimination, many Polish women migrated as undocumented workers to neighbouring countries to work as domestic workers and carers in the informal economy. In Ghana, young girls are expected to migrate in order to earn money that can increase their chances of a better husband (Hashim 2007).

Income generation and employment are common motivators for migration, for both men and women. A person’s impaired economic power (for example low-paid job, unemployment or poverty), and higher standards of living in the destination area may influence the incentive to migrate. Increased transnational mobility may also be a response to the labour market shortages in the host country. Through the 1990s an
increased number of women have migrated to the UK in response to the labour shortages in education and health sectors (Kofman et al. 2005).

Although the gender division varies depending on the nationality, overall women are significantly much more likely than men to migrate due to family reasons (Salt 2011). Reports show that women constitute two thirds of spouses or civil or other partners coming to the UK (Home Office 2011). The overall employment rate for female migrant spouses is 44 per cent, compared to the UK average 53 per cent (Home Office 2011). Government research shows that national identity also affects the economic activity of migrant women. For example, employment rates for Pakistani and Bangladeshi female migrant spouses are particularly low, respectively 8 and 20 per cent. The highest economic activity shows Nigerian migrant women with a rate of 60 per cent. Furthermore, migrant women are low paid relative to the general population (Home Office 2011).

A fourth major factor underlying women’s migration to the UK is education. Women represent approximately half of all migrants in higher education (Kofman et al. 2005). Female migrant students work mostly in casual and low paid labour, which is often gendered. They constitute one of the groups that are vulnerable for work exploitation (Anderson and Rogaly 2005). Nevertheless, Croucher (2012) considers ‘students’ as one of the groups potentially falling into the category of ‘privileged mobility’. Croucher argues that migrant students, next to foreign skilled workers and investors, and retirees, represent a group of migrants that pursue enhancement of their lifestyle. This form of mobility contrasts with migration which is imposed by social, economic or political pressures.

A discussion about migration often requires a consideration of context in which mobility occurs. For example, the movement of Polish migrant women after 1989, examined by Coyle (2007), can only be understood in consideration of wider historical and political factors that occurred at the time in Poland. Focusing on a specific national group of migrants allows a more in-depth understanding of temporal and societal circumstances affecting the studying group of workers (see e.g. Janta and Ladkin 2013, Pio and Essers 2014). Taking into account the heterogeneity of migrant women as a social group, as well as a link between migrating experiences and national backgrounds, the following section narrows down the discussion to Polish migrants. The next section
first introduces key literature on Polish workers in the UK and then considers this migrant group’s gendered work experiences.

2.4 Polish migrants in the UK

The Polish community constitutes the largest group of foreign-born citizens in the UK (ONS 2015b). There is a substantial amount of studies on work experiences of Polish migrants in the UK. However, they discuss the occupational lives of Polish employees with limited consideration of gender (e.g. Baxter-Reid 2016, Fitzgerald et al. 2012, Janta 2011, Knight 2014, Kusek 2015, Lugosi et al. 2016, Śliwa and Taylor 2011, Vershinina et al. 2011). The aim of this section is to discuss the case of Polish men and women’s work experiences in the UK. In order to improve our understanding of the context in which many Polish workers in the UK operate, this section of the chapter first explores wider social circumstances facilitating the increased scale of Polish migration after 2004. Then, literature on Polish migrants’ occupational lives in the UK is discussed. Here, particular attention is given to recognition of gender differences and the impact of whiteness on Polish people’s working experiences. Finally, the section ends with consideration of Scotland as a distinct location for investigating Polish workers’ experiences.

2.4.1 Wider social circumstances of Polish post-accession migration to the UK

Numerous studies have examined the nature of Polish migration post-2004 and the reasons for the increased mobility of this foreign group. General explanations suggest that the increased movement was a result of demographic and economic factors in Poland as well as a shortage of labour in some sectors in the UK (Okólski and Salt 2014). Some studies presented empirical data discussing in detail the supply side of the movement, that is social issues related to migrants themselves. For example, Janta (2011) highlights that in 2003 Polish unemployment rates were at 20 per cent and the newly free market economy was beset by poor performance and low wages. Limited employment opportunities, particularly in underdeveloped regions of Poland, may have motivated workers to search for jobs in the newly open labour market in the UK. According to Janta (2011) the 1980s demographic boom in Poland also affected the
volume of migration. A large number of graduates from this generation, who faced a lack of opportunities and high unemployment in Poland, chose to leave the country. Pollert (2003) argues that Polish women, compared to men, may have felt a stronger pressure to seek economic opportunities abroad. The economic transition in post-communist countries, such as Poland, was both a class and gendered process. While both Polish men and women suffered from the recession, women were more affected. Thus, many Polish women may have had stronger economic reasons to migrate. Eade et al. (2007) have found that among young Polish migrants non-economic motivations were also popular. Many young people treated migration as an opportunity to gain new skills and experience. Migration to the UK was perceived as an opportunity to earn money and improve English language skills (Janta and Ladkin 2009).

At the same time economic, cultural and socio-economic circumstances in the UK have also attracted Polish people to migrate. For example, the demand for workers in blue-collar jobs (Janta 2011) and significantly higher employment rates in the UK than in Poland between 2002 and 2012 (Eurostat 2013) may have encouraged the migration flow. The choice of the UK as a key destination could have also been affected by the existence of Polish Diasporas established after World War II and new growing networks of recent migrants (Burrell 2012, White 2011). Finally, the decision of the younger migrants could have been facilitated by their knowledge of English. Unlike the older generation who had to learn Russian at school, those who were born after 1979 often studied French, German or English, but especially the latter (Janta 2011).

Having considered the wider social context of the increased Polish migration to the UK the following section moves on to the discussion of Polish people’s occupational lives after moving to the host country.

2.4.2 Polish migrants’ work experiences in the UK

Studies illustrating Polish migrants’ work environment and work experiences often cluster Polish workers’ stories with a group of migrants of other nationalities, using umbrella terms such as Central and Eastern European (CEE), Eastern European (EE) or Accession (A8) workers (e.g. Baxter-Reid 2016, Currie 2006, Parutis 2011a). For example, Parutis (2011a), in a study of relationships among different London communities, makes little differentiation between Polish and Lithuanian migrant
workers’ experiences. According to Parutis, migrants in the UK show high mobility between jobs in order to improve their economic position in the newly entered labour market (Parutis 2011a). When Polish and Lithuanian migrants arrive in the UK they are willing to take ‘any job’ to start generating income. The first job is often found via co-ethnic social networks or recruitment agencies and is perceived only as a temporary stage. Thus, initially work is often low-paid and deskill ed but is tolerated by the newcomers. Parutis (2011a) argues that after approximately one year, when Polish and Lithuanian migrants have better knowledge of how to move around in the British labour market, they may start searching for a ‘better job’ that is more rewarding and skill-based. In this transition migrants often move from being agency workers to directly contracted employees. Parutis claims that some migrants will continue to improve their working conditions until they find a ‘dream job’, i.e., work that they would like to do for a longer time or permanently. However, as Parutis highlights, it is also possible to become trapped in the initial precarious, low-skilled, low paid positions. Lack of skill recognition and language difficulties can limit migrants’ possibilities to transfer to high status jobs. Furthermore, for migrants with families, the economic flexibility and ability to pursue a ‘dream job’ is limited by private responsibilities (Parutis 2011a).

In a recent study, Baxter-Reid (2016) examined the extent to which CEE migrants in the UK conform to the ‘good worker’ rhetoric. The ‘good worker’ rhetoric can be used in relation to employees who are members of marginalised groups, who lack labour market power and are targeted by organisations, which aim to gain competitive advantage by minimising labour costs (MacKenzie and Forde 2009). Good worker rhetoric is particularly used by employers in relation to migrant workers. As MacKenzie and Forde (2009, p. 155) found in their study:

“Migrant workers were feted as valuable resources for a perceived ‘work ethic’ and reliability that elevated them, as ‘good workers’, above the local labour alternative”.

In relation to these insights Baxter-Reid (2016) found that CEE migrants only partly conform to the ‘good worker’ rhetoric. Even though the migrant workers interviewed by Baxter-Reid faced higher expectations of work effort and experienced work segmentation based on nationality, most did not ‘buy into’ the ‘good worker’ stereotype and presented work output as good as it needed to be. Furthermore, Baxter-Reid found
that in the examined organisations a hard HRM approach was used to manage migrant employees. The hard HRM model, based on the concepts of tight control of employees and economic goals, is often contrasted with a soft HRM model based on control through commitment (Truss et al. 1997). According to Baxter-Reid (2016), the examined companies followed the hard HRM approach, through strategies such as controlling the supply of labour, by opening training facilities in Poland, or treating employees as a disposable resource, with the use of zero hours contracts and continual redundancies.

Other studies focus specifically on Polish workers (e.g. Knight 2014, Kusek 2015, Lugosi et al. 2016). For example, Knight (2014) examines low-skilled and high-skilled Polish workers’ employment trajectories. The study illustrates Polish workers’ movement up the division of labour and questioned the idea that migrants require experience from several ‘3D’ jobs (dangerous, dirty and dull) before finding high-skill jobs. Knight also attempts to identify different stages in employment trajectories for different groups of Polish workers. The study recognises that Polish people represent a diverse group, with many arriving in the UK with different sets of skills and experiences. However, Knight (2014), like many other studies examining Polish workers in the UK, does not take gender differences into account.

*Polish men and women’s work experiences in the UK*

Even though the Polish community in the UK is close to equal in gender division (ONS 2015b), the discussion of gender in studies on Polish migrants’ working lives is underexplored. Most studies do not discuss differences between Polish male and female employees (e.g. Baxter-Reid 2016, Fitzgerald et al. 2012, Janta 2011, Knight 2014, Kusek 2015, Lugosi et al. 2016, Śliwa and Taylor 2011, Vershinina et al. 2011) or mention gender, but do not explore how it affects Polish migrants’ work in the UK (e.g. Eade et al. 2007, Janta et al. 2011, Parutis 2011b). For example, Janta et al. (2011) discuss the difference between Polish men’s and women’s motivations to work in the UK.

Amongst the studies, which consider work-related differences between Polish migrant men and women, gender is often not the prime subject of investigation but, rather, an additional observation. For example, Bachan and Sheehan (2011) investigated
employment progress of Polish migrants in the UK. By comparing their previous employment in the home country to their first job in the UK, Bachan and Sheehan found that Polish migrant workers face significant occupational downgrading. Ninety-three per cent of individuals who were at the intermediate or lower managerial position in Poland were then employed in lower positions. Furthermore, the majority of white collar/professional workers (69%), skilled non-manual (75%), skilled manual (68%) and semi-skilled Polish migrants (68%) found employment in the UK in a lower occupational group than in Poland (Bachan and Sheehan 2011, p. 121). While the study suggests that over time 75 per cent of white-collar workers and individuals in intermediate positions moved back to jobs of the equivalent level, none of the respondents moved to higher positions than those occupied in Poland. Among those insights Bachan and Sheehan found that Polish migrant men, on average, earn 5% more than Polish women, both in their first and current job.

Cieslik (2011) also briefly considers gender differences by examining how migrants’ work environment in the UK differs from that in Poland and how the evaluation of the working conditions in the host country influences migration decisions. Focusing on skilled workers the study found that Polish migrants in the UK experience higher job satisfaction, better relationships with line managers and higher salaries but also deal with more stress and have to work more than desired. Work in new market economies in post-communist countries is often characterised by anxiety and insecurity, thus British jobs in comparison to Polish may appear more secure. According to Cieslik (2011) job security may be especially important for Polish women who balance work and maternity responsibilities.

One of the few studies considering in-depth Polish migrant employees’ gender is Johansson and Śliwa’s (2014) investigation of intersectionality and occupational trajectories. In their qualitative study of Polish workers from various occupations they explore language as a social and professional differentiation. They have found that language skills, together with other vectors of social differentiation, such as gender, class and nationality, influenced Polish men and women’s occupational paths before and after migration to the UK. For example, Johansson and Śliwa’s study shows that the impact of language abilities, related to proficiency in Polish and limited English
language skills, can intersect with gender and class; consequently, positioning Polish workers as suitable for low-skilled, gender-segregated occupations.

Datta and Brickell (2009) is another study, which sheds light on heterogeneity of Polish migrants, by focusing on men’s stories. Datta and Brickell, in their investigation of male Polish builders, found their participants constructed own working identities through comparison with English counterparts. According to Datta and Brickell, differentiation from UK-born workers and a construction of ‘superior’ labour identities can be Polish men’s strategy of gaining competitive advantage in a booming building industry. Datta and Brickell also found that Polish builders construct overt masculine working identities and attempt to present them as more ‘refined’ than that of the English.

Kilkey and Perrons (2010) contribute to the insights on Polish men work by investigating the ‘migrant handyman phenomenon’. They discuss the growth in the outsourcing of stereotypically male domestic chores, such as household and garden repair and maintenance. Even though handyman-type work remains dominated by UK-born workers this type of job becomes increasingly associated with CEE migrants, specifically Polish men. Kilkey and Perrons’s (2010) quantitative analysis is complemented by Kilkey’s (2010) qualitative study on gendered and migrant domestic paid work. Kilkey found that British householders often have a preference for Polish handymen, due to perceived relative low labour costs and ‘strong work ethic’. The study showed that Polish handymen’s work identity was closely related to the national stereotyping, which reinforced their image as an appropriate choice for labour-based jobs.

While studies present fragmented information about Polish men’s working experiences in the UK, even less is known about Polish migrant women’s occupational lives. The literature on Polish women in the UK predominantly relates to family lives (Burrell 2008a, Lopez Rodriguez 2010). An exception is Aziz’s (2015) work on Polish women’s working trajectories. With the use of biographical narrative interviews Aziz examines how migrant women can challenge or reinforce gender roles through professional progression and their agency. Although Aziz’s study allows us to understand Polish women’s patterns and pathways of work, it does not explore their everyday working lives. This illustrates how Polish women move between jobs, occupations and levels of
organisational structure but, at the same time, little is known about their day-to-day experiences at work, such as encounters of privilege and/or disadvantage.

As Dyer et al. (2010) argue, migrants’ subjectivity at work should be considered not only in relation to gender but also ethnicity, such as whiteness. Nine out of ten Polish migrants identify their ethnicity as ‘Other White’ (Census 2011a) and they are a group of migrants recognised by co-workers and employers as ‘white’ (Dyer et al. 2010, Parutis 2011b). Thus, the following subsection introduces the concept of whiteness, explains why studying it is important in organisational research and then discusses how whiteness can affect Polish migrants’ work experiences.

2.4.3 Polish migrant workers in the context of whiteness identity

When conceptualising whiteness, looking beyond skin colour is key. As Warren (2001) argues, whiteness functions as a social norm, which grants the dominant group unspoken privileges and unequal access to aspects of life such as financial resources, educational and occupational opportunities, property rights or health care. Whiteness can be invisible as it is normalised to such an extent that its subjects fail to notice its mechanisms (Dyer 1999). Treated as a norm it can pass without remark (Macalpine and Marsh 2005). Individuals holding white identity often define themselves not by ethnicity or colour of their skin but other social categories such as nationality, gender, occupation or age (Nayak 2007). In contrast, ethnic minorities are othered; thus, perceived by the dominant group as dissimilar and defined by their otherness (Jensen 2011, Schwalbe 2000). McIntosh (1989) notes also that ethnic minorities are more likely to be subject to stereotypes, while individuals with a white identity tend to be free from collective generalisations due to their privileged position.

Whiteness is differently identified depending on temporal and spatial contexts (Guess 2006). During World War II anti-Semitic massacres in Europe forced Jewish refugees to seek asylum in countries such as Britain. Campaigns against the resettlement of Jews portrayed them as an ‘alien race’. Jewishness was associated with crime, disease, perversion or irremovable deterioration of blood quality (Miles 1993, p. 135). Braham and Janes (2002) argue that Jews at that time were not regarded as white but racially othered. They point out that Irish people were treated similarly in the UK; considered as an inferior ‘Celtic race’ they were seen as the evolutionary link between African slaves
and English workers. Together with slaves they were almost deprived of their humanity (Braham and Janes 2002).

Whiteness plays an important role in the organisational sphere, although it may be difficult to empirically investigate. Ahmed (2012) argues that institutions as a whole can be built around proximity of white bodies and thus the exclusion of others. Ahmed refers to such a structure as ‘institutional whiteness’. This concept is cognate with ‘institutional racism’, which can be explained as “the collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin” (MacPherson 1999, p. 28). Both notions highlight the structural rather than individual nature of social exclusion on the basis of ethnicity. It could be argued that they complement each other and create a framework to unearth hidden norms produced over time. The concept of institutional racism recognises exclusion when procedures, attitudes or behaviour lead to inappropriate action or inaction (Solomos 1999). Institutional whiteness highlights dominance of white norms and bodies, which is only further reproduced through superficial diversity management practices (Ahmed 2012). Compared to, for example, feminist studies investigations of whiteness are less common in the management literature. The reason behind this could be the difficulty of examining the silent and invisible. Macalpine and Marsh (2005) found that public sector managers and professionals had difficulties with discussing white subjectivity in their organisations. Not because they were unfamiliar with the subject, but because whiteness was so dominant and ‘natural’ in the workplaces there was little upon which to comment.

Although, whiteness is an unpopular subject in the field of organisational and management studies researchers have been called to investigate more the elusive impact of whiteness (Tatli and Özbilgin 2011, Samaluk 2014). The following subsection reviews research that helps to understand the impact of whiteness specifically on Polish migrants’ work experience.

*Polish workers’ identity of whiteness*

Previous research suggests whiteness can privilege Polish migrants at work. Cheng (2013) in an ethnographic study of domestic workers in Chicago found that white female employers preferred Polish migrant women as employees over Mexican women.
Polish workers were perceived and treated differently. They were more trusted and considered to be better at performing more responsible tasks, such as childcare compared to cleaning. According to Cheng Polish women were benefiting from positive stereotypes about their nationality, but also shared their employers’ white identity. Cheng found employers assumed that it would be easier to understand each other with Polish migrants, because of a shared white culture. Similarly, Parutis (2011b), in a study of relationships with London communities, found that Polish workers’ identity of whiteness can result in some employers’ positive attitudes towards them. As Parutis argues, this idea of available privilege is popular amongst the Polish migrants themselves who often differentiate themselves from non-white migrants. Parutis claims, Polish migrants found themselves in a more culturally diverse society than that in their home country and realised their ethnicity may be more important than their national or migrant identity. Facing difficulties in a labour market caused by barriers such as language, Polish workers attempt to utilise the potential advantage based on their whiteness identity, which is shared with the majority of British citizens; although, the extent to which Polish migrants’ ethnic identity is the same as that of white Briton is questionable (Parutis 2011b).

Halej (2015) found, in an investigation of Eastern European migrants and their boundaries of whiteness, that incorporation of A8 migrants into English society is both ambivalent and partial. According to Halej, Eastern Europeans’ set of observable characteristics, such as common European heritage, Christianity, as well as certain aspects of socialisation (such as alcohol consumption), made them, in English respondents’ views, ‘white like us’. These characteristics related to whiteness highlight the ethnic similarity between Eastern Europeans and English interviewees and contrast with identities of ‘visible’ ethnic minorities. However, as Halej also points out:

“references to perceived cultural and behavioural differences pushed East European migrants to the margins of this ‘whiteness’ in the English imaginary they seem to be seen as ‘white’, but not quite” (Halej 2015, p. 138).

Eastern European migrants’ whiteness has been mediated by other characteristics, which highlight their foreignness. This has positioned them in close proximity to English respondents, but not on equal footing. Such hierarchy of whiteness is further
reinforced by differentiation of Polish migrants from Bulgarians and Romanians. Racialised national stereotypes create a rhetoric of ‘good’ Polish people and ‘bad’ Bulgarians and Romanians, perpetuating a discourse of preferred ethnic minorities (McDowell et al. 2008).

So far this section has presented a discussion on Polish migrants’ experiences of work. Particular attention has been given to the recognition of gender differences among Polish workers and their potential advantageous position in comparison to other migrant groups, based on their socially constructed identity of whiteness. The next subsection problematises the consideration of the UK as a location where Polish workers’ experiences are uniform and identifies a gap in our knowledge concerning Polish migrants’ work experiences in Scotland.

2.4.4 Polish migrants’ work experiences in Scotland

As noted in Chapter One, with the new movement of European citizens after the enlargement of the EU in 2004, Polish migrants became the largest group of foreign-born citizens in Scotland (ONS 2015b, Rienzo and Vargas-Silva 2013). Between 2001 and 2014 the Polish community in Scotland grew almost thirty-fold, from 2,505 to 76,000 residents (Migration Observatory 2013, National Records of Scotland 2016). In comparison, the second largest migrant group in Scotland, i.e., people born in India, is less than half the size, with approximately 26,000 residents. Polish migrants represent 15 per cent of the non-UK born population of Scotland while constituting 8.4 per cent of the non-UK born population of the whole UK. It is estimated that Scotland hosts nine per cent of all people born in Poland living in the UK (Vargas-Silva 2013).

Despite the size of the Polish community in Scotland and its contribution to the Scottish labour force, academic literature is yet to widely investigate Polish people and their work experiences. The majority of studies on Polish workers focuses on England (Bachan and Sheehan 2011, Fitzgerald et al. 2012, Janta 2011, Vershinina et al. 2011) and, specifically, the area of Greater London (Bachan and Sheehan 2011, Cieslik 2011, Datta and Brickell 2009, Eade et al. 2007, Kusek 2015, Parutis 2011a, Parutis 2011b, Samaluk 2016, Śliwa and Taylor 2011). Previous studies look at Polish migrants in Scotland, but focus on issues such as psychological wellbeing (Weishaar 2008, Weishaar 2010), mobility (Shubin 2012), access to local employment (de Lima and
Wright 2009), entrepreneurs’ business strategies (Lassalle et al. 2011) or residents’ family integration (Moskal 2011, Ramasawmy 2014). However, little is known about Polish people’s everyday experiences of work in Scotland, such as their encounters of disadvantage and/or privilege at work.

A gap in the knowledge about Polish migrants exists despite Scotland being a distinct space for an investigation of migrants’ experiences. For Scotland, unlike for England, where the majority of studies on Polish migrants have been conducted, it is important to attract migrant workers. The UK Parliament, represented predominantly by English constituencies, has introduced Immigration Acts 2014 and 2016, which intensify the border control by reaching into areas of life beyond those previously associated with immigration policy. In contrast to this political stance the Scottish Parliament launched, in 2004, a framework called ‘The Fresh Talent: Working in Scotland Scheme’, popularly known as the ‘Fresh Talent Initiative’. The aim of the initiative was to allow overseas graduates from Scottish universities to remain for two years following graduation to seek employment (Gov 2004). Between the years 2004 and 2008, 7,620 students took on work in Scotland under the Fresh Talent Initiative (House of Commons 2016). The programme has also raised the profile of Scotland as a welcoming and open place to live and work (Rogerson et al. 2006). However, in 2008 the Fresh Talent Initiative was subsumed into the Tier 1 (Post-Study Work) points-based visa application programme, which was later closed by the UK government in 2012 (House of Commons 2016).

The Scottish National Party, which at the time of writing forms a government at the Scottish Parliament and holds 54 seats (out of 59 Scottish constituencies) in the UK House of Commons (Parliament 2017), highlights in its agenda pro-migration views. As stated on the SNP’s (2016) official website:

“Diversity is one of Scotland's great strengths. Effective immigration controls are important, but we must also remember that those who have come to Scotland from other countries make a significant contribution to our economy and our society. The SNP believe that immigration is essential to the strength of our economy and adds greatly to our cultural fabric”.

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The difference between Scottish and English views on migration was also partly reflected by the results of the ‘Brexit’ referendum which, in June 2016, proposed the UK’s withdrawal from the EU. As reported by the BBC (2016a), in all of the Scottish councils, the majority of voters supported the UK remaining in the EU. This contrasted with English voting in favour of Brexit (BBC 2016a).

Despite the political efforts of Scotland to increase migration, prejudice against migrant groups in this country is far from absent. The Institute of Race Relations (2013) shows that the ratio per capita of murders with a proven or suspected racial element was higher in Scotland (1.8 per million citizens) than in England (1.3 per million citizens). Netto et al. (2001) report in their audit on ethnic minority issues in Scotland themes of reoccurring racial harassment, discrimination and disadvantage in retention and progression of ethnic minority people in the workforce. A Scottish Social Attitudes survey (NatCen Social Research 2015) shows that although 69 per cent of the respondents felt that ‘Scotland should do everything it can to get rid of all kinds of prejudice’ 30 percent agreed that ‘People who come to Scotland from Eastern Europe take jobs away from other people in Scotland’. Thirty-three per cent of respondents held a view that they would rather live in an area where ‘most people are similar to you’ and 22 per cent said that ‘sometimes there is good reason for people to be prejudiced against certain groups’. Answers to these questions show that under some circumstances respondents accept discriminatory behaviour or may hold a discriminatory opinion.

Due to the political differences between Scotland and England, Scotland presents a distinct setting for studying Polish workers’ experiences. However, the Scottish context is also an interesting and contradictory setting for the study due to the contrast between the political initiative to attract migrant workers and prejudicial views of many Scottish citizens. On the one hand, the Scottish government’s efforts to promote local work among migrants could suggest existence of conditions providing advantageous treatment of foreign employees. On the other hand, the results of previous research illustrate that migrant groups can be subject to prejudice and discriminatory treatment. For those reasons, and the previously discussed gap in the literature on Polish migrant’s work experiences, Scotland was selected as the specific region for this study.

So far this chapter has reviewed literature on (hetero)gender inequality at work, migrant women’s work experiences and Polish migrants’ work experiences in the UK. The
reviewed studies suggest that Polish migrant women can be subject to various forms of privilege and disadvantage at work, on the basis of the interconnected impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness. However, previous research on inequality at work also shows that discussion of employees’ privilege or disadvantage should consider the context of specific organisational settings. For example, the visible characteristics related to identity of whiteness makes Polish people and other A8 nationals desired employees, specifically for low-paid service sector jobs (Dyer et al. 2010, McDowell et al. 2007, Samaluk 2014). Thus, the following section is dedicated to the discussion of inequality experiences in hospitality work, i.e., types of organisations on which this study focuses.

2.5 (Hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness in the hospitality industry

This section of the chapter brings together previously discussed vectors of social categorisation, which impact Polish migrants’ work experiences, and discusses them in relation to the hospitality industry, which is the setting for the study. The last Accession Monitoring Report examining A8 migrants’ employment has shown that the hospitality industry was the second most popular sector of employment amongst Polish employees, after work for recruitment agencies, which represents employment in an undefined variety of industries (Home Office 2009). Employment in the hospitality industry provides an opportunity for Polish migrants to earn higher wages than in their home country and improve their English language skills (Janta et al. 2011). An examination of Polish people in this widely popular sector can contribute to our understanding of migration choices based on economic grounds.

Furthermore, discussing Polish migrant workers’ experiences in the hospitality industry is also important for practitioners operating in this form of business. Polish workers are said to be an important asset for British hospitality businesses (Matthews and Ruhs 2007a, Matthews and Ruhs 2007b). With significant turnover rates and irregular working hours, the hospitality industry is in constant need of a supply of new workers, and Polish migrant workers have met employers’ requirements both in terms of the quantity and quality of their labour (Matthews and Ruhs 2007a, MacKenzie and Forde 2009). As Janta et al. (2011, p. 1009) argues:
“Given the widely accepted positive effects that the Polish migrant workers have brought to the UK hospitality industry, the management of these human assets has significance for the longer term development of the sector”.

Finally, the hospitality industry presents an important context for studies of gender inequality. The hospitality industry in the UK is heavily gendered, with a majority of women finding employment in low-paid occupations (Women First 2010). According to Pritchard (2004), this gendered labour stratification reinforces gender norms and stereotypes as low paid women are assigned to perform what has been traditionally constructed as ‘women’s work’. Numerous studies have reported frequent episodes of women’s exploitation, sexual harassment and discrimination in the hospitality industry (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Hoel and Einarsen 2003, Kensbock et al. 2015). While previous research reports information on migrant women’s work experiences in the hospitality industry (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Ghodsee 2005), according to Rydzik et al. (2012, p. 138): ‘the impact of A8 female migrants remains under-explored in hospitality studies’.

Having identified that the hospitality industry is an important work setting for exploring Polish migrants’, and specifically Polish women’s work experiences, this section proceeds to discuss literature on female and migrant workers in food and beverage serving businesses. The section also reviews studies on whiteness and its impact on employees’ work in the hospitality industry.

2.5.1 Women’s work experiences in the hospitality industry

Both, international and British studies show that women are frequently segregated into undesirable and low status work in the hospitality industry (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Korczynski 2003). Women tend to be horizontally clustered in occupations which correspond to gender stereotypes (Ng and Pine 2003). For example, in the British hospitality industry women dominate in customer-facing occupations such as waiting staff (72%) and catering assistants (70%). On the other hand, men constitute the majority of staff in occupations such as hotel porters (100%), chefs and cooks (61%) and managers of licensed premises (60%) (Women First 2010). Furthermore, as studies from the US demonstrate, within the chefs’ occupation gendered hierarchy also occurs.
Women tend to occupy positions in the kitchen with less responsibility and it is more difficult for them to progress in their careers (Harris and Giuffre 2010a, Harris and Giuffre 2010b).

Women tend to be vertically clustered in work regarded as low status not only in culinary professions but across the hospitality industry (Purcell 1996). In the UK, on average 18 per cent of the female workforce is employed in senior or management positions, compared to 25 per cent of males (Women First 2010). Due to visible aspects and less tangible, informal practices, women often face different barriers to career development in the hospitality industry. Visible aspects, which can discriminate against women, relate to practices such as long working hours (Hicks 1990, Knutson and Schmidgall 1999, Mooney 2014). For women, who tend to be the main care-giver in a family, participation in long work day operations is limited due to the need for balance between household and organisational responsibilities (Lopez-Claros and Zahidi 2005).

The invisible, less formal aspects of discrimination are related to elements of organisational culture, which reproduce patriarchy and male exclusionary practice (Mooney and Ryan 2009). For example, in hotel businesses, homosocial practices present men as more culturally active and proficient at fostering solidarity. In this context, women attempt to improve their organisational position by drawing on different forms of capital (Halford and Leonard 2001). This invisible barrier is illustrated, for example, by female hotel managers’ need to blend in with male norms in order to fulfil the necessary social elements of the job (Guerrier 1986). Informal practices can also be discriminatory in recruitment and selection processes, when the requirements are not transparent and women face an invisible masculine networking web (Li and Wang Leung 2001).

Another aspect of work, popularly discussed in reference to women’s experiences in the hospitality industry, is sexual harassment. Sexual harassment in the hospitality industry has been discussed within different areas of the sector and in different national contexts (Bloisi and Hoel 2008, Lu and Kleiner 2001, Mathisen et al. 2008, Mkono 2010b, Poulston 2008, Theocharous and Philaretou 2009, Yagil 2008). Studies suggest that sexual harassment is more prevalent in the hospitality than other industries (Eller 1990, TUC 2016) and managers recognise the incidence of the problem (Woods and Kavanaugh 1994). While unwanted sexual conduct affects both women and men on the
basis of perpetrators’ heterosexuality and homosexuality, Ineson et al. (2013) show that within the hospitality industry the majority of such incidents is caused by men sexually harassing women. Unwanted sexual behaviour can be displayed by both male peers and customers (Poulston 2008). In the context of restaurants Matulewicz (2015) argues that precarious nature of work leaves employees at high risk of sexual harassment. Insecurity of restaurant employees’ schedules, duration of shifts, regulation of tips and overall income create work environment where employees are heavily reliant on customers’ and employers’ good will. This, in turn, can leave workers subject to unwanted sexual behaviour. For example, the practice of customers tipping restaurant employees pressures workers to accept customers’ behaviour even when it’s sexually harassing them. According to Matulewicz (2015) insecure nature of restaurant work creates asymmetrical power relations between workers, customers and employers, institutionalising sexual relations. In a similar manner, Kensbock et al. (2015) found that the gendered nature of the hotel organisational culture ‘normalises’ women’s sexualisation of work. Highlighting the importance of the organisational context in investigations of sexual harassment, Kensbock et al. argue that room attendants’ uniforms, working space and workplace protection are crucial elements leading to sexualisation of work which is gendered. At the same time, Kensbock et al. recognise employees’ rationalisation of sexual harassment as ‘normal’ behaviour for men reinforces the view that sexualised interactions at work are an element of a broader socio-cultural setting.

For migrant women, the gendering of hospitality work also intersects with the impact of migration status. While women in general tend to occupy less ‘respectable’ positions in the hospitality industry, migrant women often find themselves performing the worst-paid roles (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Lucas 1995). For example, in hotels, cleaning work, which is often considered dirty and demeaning (Brody 2006), tends to be done by migrant women (Dyer et al. 2010). However, as recognised by Rydzik et al. (2012) academic literature pays little attention to migrant women’s work experiences in the hospitality industry beyond the recognition of potential double or triple discrimination. In a study examining migrant women’s mobility in the UK hospitality industry Rydzik et al. (2012, p. 141) state:
“Very rarely are these [migrant] women given voice and space to share their experiences, which leaves us with a partial and misleading understanding of hospitality employment experiences”.

Recognised by Rydzik et al., the gap in the literature highlights the need to further explore work experiences of migrant women in the hospitality industry. As has been identified in subsection 2.4.2, Polish women constitute one of the groups whose voice has been lost in the academic literature concerning migrants in the UK. The following section turns the discussion to an exploration of literature on the hospitality industry and Polish migrant workers, in an attempt to review information about Polish women’s work experiences in the food and beverage serving businesses.

2.5.2 Polish migrant workers in the hospitality industry

One of the key studies on Polish migrant workers in the hospitality industry was conducted by Janta et al. (2011). With the use of a survey they examined Polish workers’ reasons for entering employment in the UK hospitality industry. The study found that the most popular motives were related to migrants’ self-development, such as improving foreign language skills or gaining work experience. However, among the popular motives was also the ability to start working as soon as possible. The same study also used a netnography and conducted six interviews to present a picture of Polish workers’ positive and negative experiences from working in the hospitality industry (Janta et al. 2011). Positive experiences included the opportunity to meet people from various cultures and work in a lively environment. Negative experiences consisted of physically demanding work, poor working conditions, low pay, abusive management and perceived discrimination in comparison with local staff. Although Janta et al. (2011) do not explore in-depth the subject of Polish migrants’ experience of disadvantage the study does suggest that Polish workers may face unequal treatment on the basis of their migrant identity in the form of lower payment, more frequent reprimands and co-workers’ expectations to work harder.

Using the same mixed-methods as Janta et al. (2011) Janta and Ladkin (2013), examining Polish workers’ strategies of searching employment in the hospitality industry, highlight the key role of the internet and, specifically, social media as a platform for transnational ‘job hunt’. They found that with the use of online
communities, Polish migrants were able to exchange crucial information about the British hospitality job market before even leaving their home country. In a similar manner, Lugosi et al. (2016), highlight the importance of migrant networks in job search activities. Unlike Janta and Ladkin, Lugosi et al. (2016) focus on Polish migrants’ networking in work spaces. Lugosi et al. use a mixed-method approach, consisting of a survey, netnography and interviews and examine both the hospitality and food processing industries. The scholars found that low-paid occupations can provide migrants opportunities for networking. Polish workers’ occupational status, language skills and work-related attitudes, together or separately, determine the extent to which they choose to capitalise on those opportunities.

Janta (2011) presents a range of further important insights on the studied group such as the demographic profile, an overview of positions occupied by Polish migrants within the hospitality industry, methods of accessing employment, plans for future migration and mobility across industries. Janta found that women dominated their study sample group yet did not take into account gender differences when analysing the data. The omission of gender in the investigation of Polish migrants in the hospitality industry is also apparent in other, similar studies (e.g. Janta and Ladkin 2009, Janta and Ladkin 2013, Janta et al. 2011, Lugosi et al. 2016). For example, Janta et al. (2011) present an overview of Polish employees’ work experiences in the hospitality industry. Here the researchers treat Polish workers as a homogenous group. Although, they recognise that Polish migrants may experience discrimination at work on the basis of their migrant identity, as highlighted in other studies, women’s experiences of disadvantage (Guerrier and Adib 2000, Kensbock et al. 2015) or interconnected impact of gender and migration status (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Dyer et al. 2010) remains unexplored.

Furthermore, previous studies also omit, in their analysis, the impact of whiteness on Polish migrants’ experiences of hospitality work (e.g. Janta 2011, Janta and Ladkin 2009, Janta and Ladkin 2013, Janta et al. 2011, Lugosi et al. 2016). This is a surprising gap in the literature as studies reviewed in the following section illustrate that whiteness often shapes employees’ work experiences in the hospitality industry.
2.5.3 Studies of whiteness in the hospitality industry

The literature suggests that employers in the hospitality industry often prefer workers who are perceived as ‘white’ (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Adkins 1995, Dyer et al. 2010). This preference is also related to specific occupations. For example, Dyer et al. (2010) found that employees who are ethnically white and come from a foreign country tend to be selected for front desk staff. In the hotel investigated by Dyer et al. being a foreigner was considered to represent cosmopolitan values and aspirations of the organisation. However, not every migrant employee was perceived to embody cosmopolitan values equally. As found by Dyer et al. (2010), white ethnicities were preferred for the front desk over non-white ethnic minority workers. This division, facilitated by HR practices, appeared to be shaped by both employers’ and customers’ stereotypes and preferences. Although the segregation was imposed by management it can also be reinforced by the employees who are subjected to it. Dyer et al. (2010, p. 648) found that ethnically white staff, who were thereby perceived as suitable for interaction with customers, explained their advantageous position by their ‘happy gene’. They justified the dominance of white employees at the front desk with essentialist explanations, which naturalised attributes of their nationalities.

Adkins (1995) highlights how a preference for ‘white bodies’ is also frequently gendered. In a study of UK hospitality and leisure businesses Adkins argues that black women can be excluded from many jobs in this line of work as they may not be deemed as attractive as white women, by typically white and male customers. Ethnic whiteness interacting with gender constructs non-threatening bodies whose labour can be unmarked and invisible as they blend in with dominant social groups (McDowell 2009). For these reasons, white female bodies are designated for contact with customers while non-white faces and bodies are deployed as back room staff. The physical appearance and presentation of workers is important as they are a symbolic and literal embodiment of their organisation (Halford et al. 1997). However, Adkins (1995) and other scholars (e.g. Adib and Guerrier 2003, Dyer et al. 2010) recognise that customer-facing staff should be not only friendly, helpful and attractive, but also female and white. This segmentation and naturalisation of certain roles to specific bodies devalues the skills required for the jobs as the work performance becomes dependent on the bodies which perform it (England and Folbre 1999).
While the literature recognises the preference for white, female, migrant employees, whiteness in the hospitality industry remains an unexplored subject. Beyond the insight about segregation and preference of white workers little is known about the construction and reproduction of whiteness in food and beverage businesses. This gap in the literature is particularly apparent in light of the expansions of the EU in 2004 and 2006, which increased the pool of white-skinned desirable workers. In addition to being female and white A8 migrants are also, by comparison with other ethnic minorities, easy to recruit because they constitute one of the largest migrant groups in the UK (Dyer et al. 2010). Nevertheless, Polish workers’ social constructions of whiteness in hospitality have not been investigated. The final section attempts to summarise and conclude the literature review presented in the chapter with recognition of gaps in the discussed research.

2.6 Conclusion

The aim of the chapter was to explore previous research conducted in the context of the study. The reviewed literature shows that despite progress in women’s rights in the twentieth century gender inequality remains an important social problem. Contemporarily women are often clustered in sectors of work which are low-skilled and low-paid; are often trapped in mid-level positions, without prospects for promotion; face unequal division of paid and unpaid work; encounter visible and invisible barriers in work settings due to gendered and heterogendered fabric of organisations and are at a significantly higher risk of sexual harassment than men.

A more refined literature review shows that women are not a homogenous group evenly affected by (hetero)gender inequality. Migrant women can be particularly prone to discrimination at work. Previous research, as discussed in the chapter, reveals that migrant women are often deskilled, vulnerable to exploitation and clustered in low-paid occupations. However, their work experiences are not uniform but, rather, subject to factors such as different circumstances of migration, nationality or ethnicity.

In an attempt to recognise these aspects, the chapter focused on a group of Polish workers, in order to review information about migrant women who are a part of the largest group of foreign-born citizens in the United Kingdom. While available studies
on Polish workers are informative about migrants’ profiles or working trajectories they offer limited insights on the working experiences of Polish women. With the exception of Polish migrant women’s career paths, their working lives remain largely unexplored. Furthermore, the literature review has revealed that despite high interest in Polish migrants in England and the UK as a whole little is known about this community and their working experiences in Scotland, where the political and social indicators suggest mixed predispositions towards migrants.

The reviewed literature on the hospitality industry, the second most popular sector among Polish workers, suggests that Polish people are often perceived favourably by employers on the basis of their migrant and white identity. At the same time, in this industry migrant women are frequently subject to discrimination on the basis of their (hetero)gender and migration status. This potential combination of privilege and/or disadvantage poses the question of how Polish women’s work experiences are affected by a combination of their (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness. In light of the discussed invisibility and ambiguity of some forms of inequality a question also arises of how Polish women would reflect on their experiences of privilege and/or disadvantage. The next chapter aims to identify and discuss a theory which will help to address the outlined gaps in the study of migrant women’s work experience.
Chapter Three: Intersectionality theory

3.1 Introduction

The literature reviewed at the beginning of Chapter Two shows how (hetero)gender can disadvantage women at work. However, women’s experiences of disadvantage are not uniform. Migrant women may face disadvantage based on their (hetero)gender, as well as their migration status. For example, migrant women are a group of employees which can be segregated into worst-paid roles in the hospitality industry (Dyer et al. 2010). They are also often more vulnerable to sexual harassment than non-migrant women (Adib and Guerrier 2003). Furthermore, as Chapter Two illustrates, in addition to different forms of discrimination, migrant women may also be privileged at work due to their white identity. The literature suggests that (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness, depending on the organisational context, can lead to varying migrant women’s experiences of inequality at work.

Previous studies have noted that empirical explorations of the interconnected impact of social positioning and identities require a compound and intersectional approach (Brah and Phoenix 2004, Crenshaw 1990). Analysing discrimination exclusively sequentially or by ‘adding on’ variables can conceal extreme, multiple forms of disadvantage and lead to misleading conclusions (Bradley 2007, McCall 2005). Therefore, to understand the complexity of Polish women’s work experiences a theoretical framework is needed that can take into account simultaneous and intersecting processes of disadvantage and privilege.

The aim of this chapter is to discuss intersectionality theory as a lens to understand how different vectors of social categorisation impact our working lives. This is achieved through a review of different approaches to examining intersectionality and a comparison of the theory against other theoretical frameworks. The intersectionality is considered as a theory which can explain Polish women’s work experiences of privilege and disadvantage, as will be investigated in this study.

The chapter begins with an introduction and definition of intersectionality theory. Then, the evolution of intersectionality is reviewed and different although similar theories are
discussed. This part of the chapter begins with a recognition that a form of modern intersectional thought has been present from as far back as the nineteenth century. Thereafter, the chapter discusses a more recent contribution of black feminists to intersectional ideas and a development of similar theories shedding light on experiences of inequality. The most recent evolution of intersectionality is also discussed, i.e., as a theory to examine and explain privilege and disadvantage. Then, the chapter presents different theoretical approaches on how to use social categories of differentiation in intersectional research. The penultimate section reviews the theory’s previous adaptations in organisational research. Finally, the chapter ends with a section providing concluding remarks on intersectionality theory and its applicability in the current study.

3.2 Definition of intersectionality theory

The intersectionality theory is currently one of the leading ideas to conceptualising social inequality (Davis 2008, Hancock 2007, McBride et al. 2015, Özbilgin et al. 2011). Although a relatively young theory, intersectionality has been employed in various fields of social sciences, for example, feminist studies (Davis 2008, Yuval-Davis 2006), sociology (Acker 2009, Choo and Ferree 2010), cultural studies (Fowler 2003), political science (Hancock 2007), social psychology (Warner 2008), migration studies (Bastia et al. 2011, Bürkner 2012) and organisational studies (e.g. Adib and Guerrier 2003, Atewologun et al. 2016, Boogaard and Roggeband 2010, Carrim and Nkomo 2016, Dyer et al. 2010, Healy et al. 2011, Holvino 2010, Johansson and Śliwa 2013, Johansson and Śliwa 2014, Kensbock et al. 2015, Martinez Dy et al. 2016, McBride et al. 2015, Özbilgin et al. 2011, Sang et al. 2013). Like many other theoretical constructs, it has been differently defined in academic literature (Anthias 2013, Hancock 2007, Martinez Dy et al. 2016, McBride et al. 2015, Syed 2010). A common idea behind intersectionality is how social identities (such as (hetero)gender, migration status, whiteness or other categories) interact to form different meanings and experiences (Warner 2008). This approach contrasts with the idea that social identities function independently in shaping our experiences and can be examined solely in an additive manner. In other words, whether applied in psychology, sociology, feminist studies or organisational research, intersectionality scholars agree individuals’
experiences are influenced by an intersection of their social identities, and not by each category alone (Warner 2008).

However, academics have developed multiple approaches to studying intersectionality. For example, Syed (2010) argues that intersectionality should be applied as a framework, rather than a theory. Employed as a framework, intersectionality serves as a strategy for studying social identities. This approach highlights the importance of incorporating multiple social categories of identity as units of analysis. However, intersectionality adopted as a research framework does not allow examining subtle practices involved in (re)production of inequality. Alternatively, Hancock (2007) describes intersectionality as a research paradigm. Hancock argues that intersectionality represents an ontological position between reductionist, i.e., research aiming to provide generalisable insights, and specialised particularised research. Hancock also claims that, in line with constructivist efforts, intersectionality asserts that ‘reality’ is historically and socially constructed. This constructivist element is highlighted by Anthias (2013) who views intersectionality as a range of theoretical positions that allow understanding boundaries and hierarchies of social life. Anthias (2013) argues that intersectional framing requires questions about the levels of analysis, arenas of investigation and historicity. Further, Mooney (2016a) discusses intersectionality as both theoretical and methodological framing. Focusing on the methodological dilemmas of intersectional studies, Mooney calls for ‘nimble’ and less complex research projects. Intersectionality has also been conceptualised as a theory in numerous studies across social disciplines (Levine-Rasky 2011, Mann 2013, Manuel 2007, Martinez Dy et al. 2016).

In this study, intersectionality is perceived as a theory used in organisational research to:

“recognize the simultaneity of the different social categories to which individuals belong and that inform their identities but also the ways they structure organizations and people’s experiences within them” (Carrim and Nkomo 2016, p. 262).

The key advantage of this approach is an emphasis on intersections of social identities, which impact not only personal experiences, but also institutional and organisational
arrangements in which individuals function. Organisational practices, processes, actions, and meanings, although theoretically shaped on the basis of merit, are underpinned by assumptions about intersecting social identities and normativity of masculinity, whiteness and heterosexuality (Acker 1990, Acker 2006). Intersectionality theory provides a means to explain how these inequalities span across structures and activities with a view to examining dynamic processes and variation by context (Choo and Ferree 2010). At the same time, recognising the significance of contextuality and unevenness of social categories Anthias (2013) argues that intersectionality cannot be simply reduced to an axiom of mutual constitution of identities. Rather, in intersectional research categories also need to be considered separately as markers of discourse and practice.

Alexander-Floyd (2012) argues that in the multiplicity of intersectionality adaptations the epistemological or political assumptions underlying intersectionality are often ignored. Yet, in order to fully understand intersectionality it is important to refer to the language and politics, which led to its development. Thus, the next section explains the origins of intersectionality, how it has evolved as a theory and its political underpinnings.

3.3 Evolution of intersectionality theory

Within the tradition of intersectional studies there are different positions of who is intersectional and how intersectionality should be investigated (Nash 2008). This part of the chapter aims to shed light on the plurality of intersectionality adaptations, by tracing its origins and evolutions, to clarify the position employed in the current study.

3.3.1 Origin of intersectionality thought

The debate on intersections of gender and other vectors of social identity has a long history (Brah and Phoenix 2004, Davis 2008, Lykke 2010). Brah and Phoenix (2004) track genealogy of reflections on gender and ethnicity back to the nineteenth century. They revisit a debate between the feminist and anti-slave movements in the USA and the paradox of black women being ‘trapped’ in-between political arguments of white middle-class feminism and men-dominated anti-racist campaign. Brah and Phoenix
(2004) quote a former slave, Sojourner Truth, who in 1851 at the Women’s Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, repeatedly asked the question ‘Ain’t I a woman?’ In the fight against slavery and patriarchy, Sojourner tried to deconstruct racialised and gendered assumptions about political identities. Although, Sojourner’s speech is the most famous testimony it was only one of many manifestations of American black women facing complex forms of inequality. According to Brah and Phoenix (2004) these challenges of what it means to be a woman laid foundations for the explanation of intersecting gender, ethnicity and class.

In a similar manner, Lykke (2010) revisits early feminist intersectional analysis from the beginning of the twentieth century in Eastern Europe. Eastern European women in a socialist movement for decades fought for recognition of the ‘invisible’ intersection of gender and class. They were challenging the boundaries of the socialist movement dominated by men and the ideology of masculine proletariat, as well as the selectiveness of the feminist movement organised by women from a bourgeois class. To support the argument Lykke quotes the Russian communist revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai, who was appointed in 1917 as the minister of Russian Soviet Socialist Republic. Kollontai questioned the idea of unproblematic unity under a ‘joint women’s banner’, highlighting the inability of a gender movement to recognise class differences. Similarly to Sojourner Truth, Kollontai heavily criticised the exclusiveness of feminist identity politics. However, unlike the American former slave, the minister of Russian Soviet Socialist Republic focused on complexities of relations between gender and class, rather than gender and ethnicity.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the critique of linear approaches to equality movements remained relevant. As Acker (2006) argues, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the majority of studies concerning the production of gender, ethnicity or class inequalities in organisations have focused on one or another of these categories. Black feminist scholars from the USA have reflected on this unitary approach and the oversight of gender experiences complicated by ethnicity, sexuality and other differences (Davis 1981, hooks 1984). For example, bell hooks (1984) criticises feminist movements for ignoring non-white women. Hooks highlights how not everyone is oppressed equally and how the least disadvantaged are the voice of women’s movement against inequality. The American feminist recognises that white,
middle class women need liberating. However, the scholar criticises them for ignoring the problems of the majority of poorer women and treating black women with contempt. Hooks highlights that black women are in a disadvantaged position in comparison with both black men and white women. Facing white bourgeois leaders, minority women often reject the feminist movement. Hooks argues that the campaign against gender discrimination should not exclude other fights for equality. The idea of ‘sisterhood’, propagated by white women, creates a false assumption that all women are equal. The American scholar challenges this illusion and suggests accepting and embracing differences (hooks 1984).

Early concepts that were critical of feminist and anti-racist movements focused on the analysis of ‘triple oppression’, i.e., oppression on the basis of race, class and gender (Segura 1990). Oppression can be understood as:

“any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society” (Collins 1990, p. 4).

The term ‘triple oppression’ was used to discuss, for example, the systemic, economic disadvantage of black women (King 1988). However, scholars such as, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1983), criticise the ‘triple oppression’ approach for mechanical addition of race, class and gender. Anthias and Yuval-Davis emphasise the need for a theory, which, rather than simply summing up different categories of disadvantage, would allow analysing specificities of each category and, involved with it, intersections. Furthermore, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1983) notice the importance of understanding different processes creating inequalities based on social identities, and the contextual way in which these disadvantaging processes shift.

The debate raised by critical feminisms led to the development of several theoretical conceptualisations of discrimination. The next subsection firstly explains the origins of intersectionally. Then, alternative theories are discussed, which emerged in the similar period of time, before intersectionality became the most popular theoretical lens for explaining discrimination on the basis of various social categories.
3.3.2 Intersectionality and other black feminist theories

The term *intersectionality* was first introduced by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989). In its original form, Crenshaw’s intersectionality was a critique of American antidiscrimination law focusing solely on the interconnection of gender and ethnicity. Crenshaw recognised how the social position of black women is defined by intersections of gender and ethnicity, and that the nature of these connections can vary, depending on the involved social context. For example, the same person may face discrimination of the basis of different interconnected social categories, depending on time and situation. Using the image of crossing roads, Crenshaw introduced a framework for investigating and resisting intersectional discrimination of ethnic minority women. The road-crossing metaphor demonstrates a need for simultaneous analysis of both gender and ethnicity differentials. The significance of this conceptualisation is illustrated in Crenshaw’s (1989) analysis of a court case from 1976, on gender and ethnicity discrimination, DeGraffenreid versus General Motors. In this legal case, five black women sued General Motors for their discriminatory hiring practices. Instead of employing African American women, the company appointed black men for the heavy industrial work and white women for the front office jobs. The five black women complained that they were not hired due to the interlocking effects of sexism and racism. However, the women lost their case as the anti-discrimination law could only consider one type of disadvantage. Crenshaw (1989, 1990) introduced the term intersectionality to represent the anti-discrimination discourse cases of women simultaneously affected by their gender and ethnicity.

Crenshaw’s idea of intersectionality demonstrates ethnic variations within gendered experiences and gendered variations within racialised experiences. More importantly, it provides vocabulary which responded to the critiques of identity politics. As such, intersectionality transcends difference and provides a theoretical framework to analyse marginalised individuals at the intersection of various social categories. For these reasons, intersectionality quickly became one of the leading theoretical frameworks in feminist studies and other areas of the research concerning inequality (Davis 2008, McCall 2005). However, intersectionality was not the only concept developed at the time to theorise interconnectedness of social categories.
Other similar theoretical conceptualisations

As far back as the 1970s, USA-based critical feminists were using the term ‘interlocking oppressions’. Here, ‘interlocking’ relates to the inseparability of social structures creating oppression. The term focuses on the macro-level link between interrelated systems of oppression such as race, class and gender (Collins 1990). Examining interlocking oppressions contributes to our understanding of heterogeneity of discrimination. Similar to intersectionality theory, it provides vocabulary to reflect on interconnections between social categories. However, unlike intersectionality theory the concept of interlocking oppression does not provide a framework against which women’s everyday experiences can be explained (Collins 1990). Intersectionality provides the means to discuss interconnected social vectors of stratification at multiple-levels, starting from socio-cultural practices, through organisational and institutional processes to individual and group experiences (Ali 2013, Bilge and Denis 2010). It provides a more robust theoretical framework for exploring the construction and impact of various social categories. Furthermore, intersectionality theory captures the complex reality of discrimination and its contextuality. As Brah and Phoenix (2004 p. 76) argue:

“intersectionality signify[s] the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific context”.

This insight into intersectionality theory is particularly important because it denotes that inequality processes are social in nature and can take different forms depending on the context. Through contextualised investigations of individual and group disadvantage, intersectionality provides insights into inequality formation and resistance (Syed and Pio 2010). For example, Syed and Pio (2010), found that Muslim migrant women working in Australia face challenges due to the interweaving effects of gender, ethnicity, religion and country of origin. Muslim women’s qualifications and experience were not recognised in the labour market as hindering their employment opportunities or promotion. Those who found employment were often othered due to their ethnicity and/or display of religious markers, such as a veil. Syed and Pio’s intersectional investigation sheds light on the significance of ethnic and religious negotiations for
Muslim women, as well the role of agency in resisting and challenging discrimination in the work setting.

Another key theory, explaining the intersection of different vectors of social categorisation, is a ‘matrix of domination’. The matrix of domination was introduced by Collins (1990) in order to illustrate “overall social organization within which intersecting oppression originate, develop and are contained” (Collins 1990, p. 228-29). The matrix of domination, similar to intersectionality theory, is useful in explaining the working of different social identities through structural, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power. Collins’s theory also recognises experiences of disadvantage are partial and situated in specific contexts. However, its scope is predominantly focused on the investigation of oppression, making it less relevant for the study. Collins recognises some individuals are only partly disadvantaged, but examines and explains this through the lens of oppression. As Collins states:

“depending on the context, an individual may be an oppressor, a member of an oppressed group, or simultaneously oppressor and oppressed” (Collins 1990, p. 225).

While the matrix of domination recognises no-one is oppressed on the basis of all vectors of social categorisation, its underlying emphasis lies in investigating individuals and groups who face multiple oppression. In contrast, according to Lutz et al. (2011), intersectionality applies to everyone’s experiences, and “helps us grasp the complex interplay between disadvantage and privilege” (p. 8). Thus, unlike the concepts of ‘interlocking oppressions’ or ‘matrix of domination’ intersectionality provides a theory which can more effectively capture the interplay between Polish women’s experiences of disadvantage and privilege. While , Crenshaw’s (1990) original focus was on the experiences of women’s multiple marginalisation (specifically black women), intersectionality theory has evolved and has been adopted to explain experiences of individuals privileged or partly privileged, such as those of men or white women. This contribution of intersectionality theory is further discussed in the following subsection.
3.3.3 Intersectionality as a feminist theory of privilege and disadvantage

Intersectionality theory was developed with the idea of recognising experiences and voices of people who, like black women, are disadvantaged on the basis of multiple social categories. However, Kwan (1996) was one of the first scholars to highlight that partly privileged individuals are also affected by intersectional experiences and processes. Kwan argues that the positions of those partly privileged, like those multiply-disadvantaged, are constituted through interconnected social differentials of gender, ethnicity and other categories. Zack (2005) expands this idea by arguing that while intersectionality theory particularly helps us to understand the position of non-white and poor women, it refers to the heterogeneous experiences of all women. Due to differences in class, age, sexuality, and able-ness, all women are intersectional subjects. This perspective suggests that being privileged along particular axes (whiteness or heterosexuality) should not question women’s intersecting subjectivity. In other words, it should be acknowledged that privileged women’s experiences are not uniform. Nash (2008) supports this perspective and revisits arguments against intersectional studies of non-multiply disadvantaged subjects. Nash recognises that the opposition comes from a theoretical and political standpoint to ‘recover’ voices, which used to be excluded from racial and feminist discourses. However, the scholar criticises this approach of limiting intersectionality theory due to the ‘lifelong spirit injury of black women’ (Nash 2008, p.10). Intersectionality, adopted solely as a theory about black women’s experiences, counters the work of feminist and anti-racist scholarship in developing a theoretical framework that captures diversity of experiences along various social categories (such as gender, ethnicity, class, able-ness, migration status, age, sexuality). Crenshaw (2011), who developed the term intersectionality, agrees that everyone is subject to interconnected experiences of privilege and disadvantage. According to Crenshaw, theoretical perspectives on intersectionality are less important than intersectionality’s diverse accomplishments and contributions across disciplines to studies of inequality.

Tatli and Özbilgin (2011) highlight that focusing inequality research on oppression locates the ‘problem’ on the side of disadvantaged workforce. Rather than solely looking at the ‘different’ and ‘other’, analyses should also make visible the unmarked norms around masculinity and whiteness. According to Tatli and Özbilgin, limiting investigations to multiply marginalised individuals and groups can substitute dominant
identities, such as whiteness, as an implicit standard against which disadvantaged individuals are examined (Tatli and Özbilgin 2011). Thus for example, Özbilgin et al. (2011) argues that work–life studies should reveal individuals’ and groups’ disadvantage and privilege related to the work–life interface. In a similar vein, Sang et al. (2014) argue that in order to explain and challenge domination of white men in an academic profession, it is crucial to adopt the theoretical lens of intersectionality and critical whiteness. Through the application of critical race theories, Sang et al. reveal academic and cultural practices which are built around normativity of whiteness. They found, inter alia, how whiteness can position migrants in a privileged position in comparison to non-white migrants.

In order to understand how interconnected vectors of categorisation affect work experiences, it is necessary to take into consideration relations between privilege and disadvantage. Intersectionality theory provides a means to explain how Polish women’s potential disadvantage on the basis of social identities, such as (hetero)gender and migration status, is interlocked with the privilege derived from white identity. Unlike other theories intersectionality highlights the importance of examining individuals partly privileged and the contextuality of individuals’ experiences.

So far the chapter has introduced intersectionality theory, reviewed its development and discussed it against similar theoretical frameworks. By presenting the intersectionality theory’s definition and evolution, the chapter has addressed two common debate points related to intersectionality theory, that is, a) a dispute on how intersectionality should be defined (Mooney 2016a, Nash 2008) and b) a dispute on whether intersectionality should be used to investigate individuals experiencing multiple disadvantage, or whether it should be used to examine stories of those partly-privileged (Davis 2008, Nash 2008). Another theoretical debate concerning intersectionality theory relates to how to approach social categorisation in intersectional studies. The following section addresses these questions.

3.4 Uncertainties in intersectional studies on social categories

Scholars have highlighted that intersectionality theory remains open-ended and does not clarify which or how many dimensions of social categorisation should be studied (Davis
2008, McCall 2005, Nash 2008). However, some authors have already attempted to answer these questions by further conceptualising intersectionality theory. For example, McCall (2005) proposes three separate approaches to the use of social categorisation in intersectional studies. The first, called ‘anti-categorical complexity’, is based on an assumption that social categories are too simplistic to capture the irreducible complexity of lived experiences of intersectionality. This approach calls for more attention to be given to the social processes of categorisation itself. The approach can be adopted by scholars when they are interested in deconstructing or problematising meanings behind ‘master’ categories such as gender. According to McCall (2005), the second approach, ‘intra-categorical complexity’, describes research which acknowledges mutual relationships between social categories but, in order to reconstruct the complexity of lived experiences it focuses on a specific group. Employing this approach, scholars can problematise categorisation, but would not necessarily reject the use of categories themselves. Studies adapting intra-categorical complexity tend to examine intersectional experiences within a specific social group. The third approach, ‘inter-categorical complexity’, focuses its investigation on a mutual reinforcement of social categories that are already constituted, despite their imperfect description of lived experiences. Such research focuses on “‘relationships of inequality among already constituted social groups” (McCall 2005, p. 1785). Studies adopting this approach aim to analyse in detail the nature and modifications of relationships among groups, using the language of categories as anchor points.

The thesis focuses on an examination of intersectional experiences within a specific social group, that is, Polish migrant women. Thus, the current study falls into the intra-categorical complexity approach. As in other studies adopting an intra-categorical approach (McCall 2005), the thesis focuses on a social group which is located at a neglected point of intersection (see subsection 2.4.2 for literature review on Polish migrant women and their experiences of work). It is recognised that social categories are a simple means of capturing complex social dynamics. The literature reviewed in Chapter Two revealed social construction, interconnectedness and elusiveness of categories, which may impact on Polish women’s work experiences. Nevertheless, as in other intra-categorical studies, vocabulary of social differentiation, although imperfect, is considered necessary for a discussion of experienced inequality (McCall 2005).
However, McCall (2005) does not address how many vectors of differentiation should be used in inter- or intra-categorical approaches, beyond a recognition that the number of used categories may be limited by the available data. Hancock (2007) argues that one category is enough to form a foundation for an intersectional study, whereas Anthias (2013) claims that at least three are required. Butler (1990) does not provide specific numbers, but warns scholars that exceedingly inclusive approaches considering numerous intersecting social identities can lead to analyses of individual differences. Tatli and Özbilgin (2011) claim that intersectional research should not begin at all with pre-established categories but, rather, start with unpacking operating social processes in an organisation, and then identify which individuals are in privileged or oppressed positions. Conversely, according to Winker and Degele (2011), a literature review can indicate what categories of difference will matter in an examination of a specific social group. Mooney (2016a) proposes a middle ground between an ‘etic’ approach, where vectors of social categorisation are predetermined, and an ‘emic’ approach, where categories are identified from an organisation’s historical and geographical background (see also Tatli and Özbilgin 2011). Mooney (2016a) argues that a comprehensive examination of the literature before data collection can help to identify the main categories of difference and the impact of other vectors can emerge at later stages of the study. This middle-way approach has been adopted in the study. Once ‘silence’ of Polish migrant women’s working stories has been identified, a broad and sectoral literature review has been conducted to identify gender, migration status and whiteness as the key dimensions of the study. Then, during the data analysis, the impact of (hetero)gender has been recognised. This approach to the study of social categories allowed the studied phenomena to be theoretically examined, while remaining open to what the data will present (Mooney 2016a).

Having discussed different theoretical debates about intersectionality theory the following section reviews intersectional empirical investigations in organisational studies and hospitality research.
3.5 Intersectional investigations in organisational studies

In recent years there has been an increase of intersectional investigations in organisational studies (e.g. Atewologun et al. 2016, Barnum and Zajicek 2008, Essers and Benschop 2009, Foweraker and Cutcher 2015, Healy et al. 2011, Johansson and Śliwa 2013, Samaluk 2014, Sang et al. 2013, Soni-Sinha and Yates 2013, Weigt and Solomon 2008, Wright 2013, Wright 2014, Wright 2015). New intersectional empirical research, which sheds light on organisational and work experiences, has also been conducted recently from the perspective of other disciplines, such as migration studies (Datta et al. 2009, Näre 2013), feminist studies (Cruz 2015, Sang 2016, Woodhams et al. 2015) or interdisciplinary studies (Ammons et al. 2016, Wright 2011). Nevertheless, despite the growth of interest in interlocking social categories and the popular recognition of intersectionality’s explanatory potential (Acker 2006, Holvino 2010) intersectionality research remains in its infancy in organisational studies (Carrim and Nkomo 2016, McBride et al. 2015). Similarly, in sectoral studies of hospitality thus far, academics have predominantly focused on a single category of social differentiation, such as gender, ethnicity or migrant identity (Cothran and Combrink 1999, Mkono 2012, Pinar et al. 2011, Watt 2012) or a combination of different vectors without the use of intersectionality (Harris et al. 2011).

This section of the chapter first reviews examples of intersectional investigations in organisational studies in general, and then revisits previous intersectional research specifically related to hospitality work. The review is conducted with recognition that intersectionality theory is often differently applied and is presented by some scholars as a theoretical concept or theory-informed analysis (see section 3.2). The section ends with a discussion of intersectional research limitations in the field of organisational studies and hospitality work.

One of the previous studies which applied intersectionality theory (in the paper “intersectional theory”) is Harris’s (2017) investigation of organisational knowledge. By using both, intersectionality theory and standpoint theory, Harris illustrates how whiteness, masculinity and heteronormativity are embedded in organisational knowledge. The study shows how US University practices conceal heterogeneity of understanding of how to interpret and define sexual violence on campus. Harris collected data by making field notes and conducting interviews with university
members who were mandated to prepare reports about sexual violence on campus. The study found that presenting the organisation’s knowledge as ‘neutral’ and uniform prevented the organisation from accounting for heterogeneity of sexual violence. According to Harris this organisational practice, in consequence, can contribute to experiences of inequality and reinforcement of whiteness, masculinity and heterosexual normativity.

Martinez et al. (2016) applied intersectionality theory to a study of women digital entrepreneurs. The study collected data by using semi-structured interviews with British women who pursue economic opportunities via information and communication technologies. Martinez et al. explored how intersecting social positions affect the accumulation of entrepreneurial resources. They challenged the idea that the internet is a meritocratic space for entrepreneurial activity. According to Martinez et al. entrepreneurs who experience inequality offline, on the basis of gender, race and class status, are also disadvantaged in the digital space due to social positionality that is produced and reproduced by the online environment.

Wright (2015) uses intersectionality as both an approach to investigate organisational inequality and a form of analysis. The study looked at women’s workplace experiences in male-dominated work. Wright tested in a qualitative research McCall’s intercategorical approach (see section 3.4) to intersectional investigations. For that purpose Wright used a mix of semi-structured interviews and focus groups with heterosexual and homosexual women employed in construction and transport. The study explored women’s every-day work experiences in professional and non-professional occupations in these industries. Wright found that gendered and sexualised norms in ‘masculine’ work disadvantage both heterosexual and homosexual women. Thus, the study challenges the stereotypical association of lesbians with male-dominated work.

The limitations of the above cited studies and similar investigations are examined in sub-section 3.5.2. However, first, the discussion focuses on intersectional investigations related specifically to hospitality work.
3.5.1 Intersectional investigations in the hospitality industry

Adib and Guerrier (2003) are two of the first and most influential scholars to apply intersectionality in hospitality research. With the use of semi-structured interviews they explore narratives of women working in hotels in the UK and abroad, setting a precedent for future intersectional empirical studies. Using intersectionality as a theoretical concept they found that social representations, such as gender, nationality, race, ethnicity and class, are interlocking and constructed through organisational practises, rather than separate and fixed. Their findings furthered knowledge of the disadvantaged position of women in hotel work, a type of work which is characterised by ‘dirty’ jobs and vulnerability to sexual harassment.

Dyer et al. (2010) extend the scope of intersectional investigations in the hospitality industry by providing insights into the impact of migration status, ethnicity, gender, class, age and class on work and gendering of service. With the use of semi-structured interviews they examined the case of a chain hotel branch in London. Although, Dyer et al. (2010) did not clarify how they conceptualise intersectionality they used its theoretical scope to contribute to knowledge about embodied and emotional labour of migrant workers in service occupations. Their findings illustrate that stereotypical assumptions about migrant workers and their nationalities construct meanings about employees as more or less eligible for different types of tasks. However, the influence of migration status on employees’ work was not isolated but intersected with other vectors of social categorisation. Similar to Adib and Guerrier (2003), Dyer et al. highlight that intersectional experiences of migrant workers were subject to context specific practices in each of the examined organisations.

Soni-Sinha (2013) investigated hotel workers’ discursive constructions of gender, race and class, as well as their investments into collectivism and unionised identities. The study used semi-structured interviews and participant observation to investigate locked-out employees and the workers supporting them by picketing outside the hotel. Soni-Sinha searched beyond the Marxian analysis for an understanding of industrial relations. With the use of intersectionality as a theoretically informed analysis Soni-Sinha found that work identities constituting the collective actors are not fixed but negotiated through gendered, classed and racialized subjectivities.
Kensbock et al. (2015) do not use intersectionality as a part of their primary theoretical framework, although they proceed to shed light on women’s intersectional experiences of sexual harassment. In a study of hotel room attendants, intersectionality assisted Kensbock et al. in theorising the interlocking impact of age, race/ethnicity and gender on sexual harassment. With the use of in-depth interviews they found, that on the basis of these social categories, some room attendants were more likely to be targets of customers’ unwanted sexual conduct.

Finally, intersectionality has been used in investigations of hospitality careers by a similar group of scholars as a form of analysis (Mooney and Ryan 2009, Mooney et al. 2014, Mooney 2016b, Mooney et al. 2016). Mooney and Ryan (2009) examine whether women’s desire for promotion in hotel work is affected by the notion of choice or a system of organisational practices. Adapting semi-structured interviews as a source of data they investigated a hotel group in Australia and New Zealand. Mooney and Ryan (2009) found that, due to the combination of gendered and age-related organisational practices, women perceive ‘glass ceiling’ barriers differently depending on the stage of their career. Mooney et al. (2014), Mooney et al. (2016) and Mooney (2016b) used semi-structured interviews and memory-sessions to examine individuals who used to work in various hospitality businesses, such as clubs, bars, restaurants and hotels. All three papers help to shed light on the impact of age, gender, ethnicity and class on career progression. Mooney et al. (2014), with the use of intersectionality, analyse why employees remain in a hospitality career. They found that, although employees perceive equal access to promotion opportunities, development possibilities are available to a different extent to individuals with specific age, gender, ethnicity and class. Mooney et al. (2014) also contribute to intersectional research by applying symbolic representation analysis to the process of data interpretation. Mooney et al. (2016) explore why hospitality workers remain in a hospitality career. With the use of intersectionality as a means of analysis they challenge portrayal of careers in the sector as temporary and unsatisfactory. Finally, Mooney (2016b) examines why employees in the hospitality industry build and maintain long careers. The paper shows that the youngest workers in the industry are not valued and it reveals intersectional relations creating this disadvantageous status quo. Mooney (2016b) also brings to the attention of hospitality studies the element of privilege in a discussion of youth-related identities.
3.5.2 Limitations of intersectional investigations in organisational literature

The significant majority of intersectional investigations in organisation and work studies focuses on individuals’ interlocking identities and experiences (e.g. Ammons et al. 2016, Atewologun et al. 2016, Barnum and Zajicek 2008, Cruz 2015, Datta et al. 2009, Essers and Benschop 2009, Soni-Sinha and Yates 2013, Woodhams et al. 2015, Wright 2013, Wright 2014, Wright 2015), rather than contextual factors or processes shaping inequalities. Some scholars, in their analysis of findings, discuss key separated contextual influences (Foweraker and Cutcher 2015, Näre 2013, Samaluk 2014, Sang 2016, Sang et al. 2013). For example, Näre (2013) examines intersectionality of gender, social class and migrant identity in domestic and care work in relation to labour demand. With the use of mixed, qualitative and quantitative, research methods Näre discusses the industry’s demand for gender and class-specific housekeepers, and gender-nationality specific demands for care workers. Sang (2016), with the use of focus groups, explores experiences of feminist academic women in UK higher education. In the discussion of intersecting experiences of feminist identity, gender and ethnicity, Sang considers the effect of the changing context of higher education on feminist-oriented research.

More attention to the context of intersectional experiences is evident in studies such as Healy et al. (2011). Healy et al. (2011, p. 467) interviewed Bangladeshi, Caribbean and Pakistani women working in public sector organisations in order to identify “complexity and unevenness” which shapes inequality regimes. Their study identifies at the organisational level various processes, which influences intersectional experiences of gender, religion and ethnicity inequality. Similarly, Johansson and Śliwa (2013) examine foreign academics’ work experiences and, in doing so, identify the impact of organisational context, e.g., the international nature of business schools and promotion procedures, on social differentiation. Johansson and Śliwa (2013) use narrative interviews to explore how gender and foreignness emerge as vectors of inequality in gendered, racialized and classed organisational practices.

Partial recognition of contextual factors, predominantly related to a discussion of organisational practices, is also characteristic for intersectional investigations in hospitality organisations. For instance, Dyer et al. (2010) prioritise examination of work experiences based on migration status, ethnicity, gender, age and class, but they explore
differences in intersectional positioning depending on work settings. Dyer et al. argue that in the examined hotels experiences of inequality were different for front desk and housekeeping employees. Soni-Shina (2013), in a study of lock-out hotel workers, identifies the role of labour union on intersectional experiences and identity constructions. Soni-Shina found that social contractions of gender, race and class were shaped through collective action and vice versa. Kensbock et al. (2015) present a more in-depth exploration of contextuality. Focusing specifically on sexual harassment, they explore organisational practices and wider societal influences shaping women’s intersectional experiences of inequality in hotel work. Their discussion of social categories focuses on the gender–age–race–ethnicity intersection. Adib and Guerrier’s (2003) study focuses on experiences shaped by interlocking gender, nationality, race, ethnicity and class but does not consider what factors or processes influence work inequality. Finally, several papers examining intersectionality and career progression discuss the influence of contextual factors on professional pathways in the hospitality industry (Mooney 2014, Mooney 2016b, Mooney and Ryan 2009, Mooney et al. 2016). Examining intersections of age, gender, ethnicity and class intersections, they consider the organisational practices that affect hospitality workers’ unequal career opportunities.

Despite the importance of contextual factors in the intersectional investigations (see for e.g Anthias 2013, Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983, Brah and Phoenix 2004, Choo and Ferree 2010), the majority of studies either do not explore this element (Ammons et al. 2016, Atewologun et al. 2016, Barnum and Zajicek 2008, Cruz 2015, Datta et al. 2009, Essers and Benschop 2009, Soni-Sinha and Yates 2013, Woodhams et al. 2015, Wright 2013, Wright 2014, Wright 2015), or present a partial discussion (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Dyer et al. 2010, Foweraker and Cutcher 2015, Mooney 2014, Mooney 2016b, Mooney and Ryan 2009, Mooney et al. 2016, Näre 2013, Samaluk 2014, Sang 2016, Sang et al. 2013, Soni-Sinha and Yates 2013). When the context of intersectional experiences is examined it is restricted to organisational practices and does not consider wider societal influences (exception inc. Kensbock et al. 2015). As the thesis explores work inequality experiences of migrant women it is important to recognise that little is known about factors shaping these employees’ encounters of privilege and/or disadvantage. Intersectional studies examining migrant employees’ experiences thus far have focused on selected organisational processes and do not present a more comprehensive exploration of wider contextual factors (e.g. Dyer et al. 2010, Johansson...
and Śliwa 2013). The impact of societal factors related to migrant women’s home and host countries, which can shape intersectional experiences of privilege and/or disadvantage, remains unexplored. By helping to close this gap in knowledge the study can provide better contextual understanding of migrant women’s work experiences, which is crucial in intersectional studies.

Literature on organisational studies also does not sufficiently take into account the interconnection between gender and heteronormativity (Pringle 2008, Wright 2015). With the exception of a few studies (Pringle 2008, Wright 2013, Wright 2014, Wright 2015) little research has been done on how gender and heterosexuality reproduce masculine norms and heteronormativity. Due to this limited knowledge the experiences of women are often inadequately investigated with the presumption of heterosexuality as the standard for organisational norms and practices (Wright 2015). For example, the literature discussed in Chapter Two shows that sexual harassment is a form of discrimination and is a well-known problem in the hospitality industry. Nevertheless, the subject of heteronormativity and its link with gendered constructions is unexplored in intersectional investigations of hospitality work. Kensbock et al. (2015) and Adib and Guerrier (2003) relate to sexual harassment in their findings and discuss it with reference to intersecting social vectors, such as ethnicity or age. However, the interconnection between gendered and sexualised, or gendered and heteronormative nature of these identified experiences remains unexplored in these studies. The concept of (hetero)gender, introduced and discussed in Chapter Two (see subsection 2.2.2), although key to understand discrimination and sexualisation of women in organisational setting, has not yet been tested in an empirical intersectional investigations. Previous studies of (hetero)gender and intersectionality were related to examinations in other fields of research, related to lesbians’ and gay men’s experiences of ‘coming out’ (Brown 2011), queer Fijian bodies (Thompson 2014), teachers’ perceptions of students’ sexuality (Preston 2013) and analysis of Biblical texts (Jodamus 2015, Kartzow 2012). However, (hetero)gender has not yet been tested in intersectional investigations in organisational settings. By filling this gap the study can help to portray women’s experiences of work from a new theoretical perspective and further understanding of how gender and heteronormative practices are entangled in workplaces.
3.6 Conclusion

The chapter introduced and discussed intersectionality, which has been identified as the most suitable theory for the examination of work experiences of Polish migrant women. As the literature reviewed in the chapter has shown the term ‘intersectionality’ represents a wealth of different perspectives and approaches, which require recognition (Alexander-Floyd 2012). The chapter discussed early accounts of modern intersectional thought, reviewed and evaluated similar theoretical frameworks and revisited a debate on whether all individuals should be considered as subjects of intersectionality or only those multiply-marginalised. Until recently, due to black feminism’s heritage theorists have resisted investigating the experiences of social groups which are subject to the advantageous impact of whiteness or masculinity (Tatli and Özbilgin 2011). However, intersectional theorists have argued that while voices of women facing multiple disadvantage should not be neglected, intersectionality research should also recognise the element of privilege in the complex structure of social differentials (e.g. Crenshaw 2011). Ignoring advantaged and partly-advantaged individuals only reinforces their positions as a default-dominant group in organisations (Acker 2006).

After explaining how intersectionality theory can be defined and employed the chapter discussed the use of social categories in intersectional research. In accordance with the literature gaps discussed in Chapter Two it was recognised that the thesis falls into the intra-categorical approach outlined by McCall (2005), which uses social categories to examine intersectional experiences within a specific, previously omitted in the literature, social group.

Finally, the chapter reviewed previous intersectional investigations in organisational studies and specifically in hospitality research. The review showed a variety of approaches to intersectionality and to the selection of social categories. Despite the scholars’ recognition of employees’ sexualised experiences previous studies have yet to incorporate intersectional investigations of heterogender (or (hetero)gender), the concept which highlights how gender together with sexuality reinforces heteronormative and patriarchal processes at work (see Pringle 2008). Furthermore, the literature has not explored how the broader context shapes migrant workers’ intersections of privilege and disadvantage. This is a surprising gap in the literature as theoretical discussions about intersectionality have highlighted the potential
significance of organisational as well as non-organisational contextual factors (Anthias 2013).

To conclude, the chapter has identified the most suitable theory for the current study. Furthermore, the discussion in the chapter enabled a theoretical approach to intersectionality theory to be found most fitting for the research problems recognised in Chapter Two. The chapter also discussed theoretical gaps, which the thesis can help to close. The following chapter moves on to a discussion of employed methodology and research design.
Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter identified the most suitable theoretical framework for an investigation of Polish migrant women’s work experiences related to privilege and/or disadvantage. Chapter Four outlines the research methodology, presenting information that will allow future scholars to replicate the study. This part of the thesis also discusses the rationale behind the methodological choices made, which have been recognised as the most appropriate for the study’s aim and objectives. As outlined in Chapter One, the overall aim of the study is to deepen the understanding of migrant women’s work encounters of (in)equality and further our knowledge about Polish employees in Scotland. This overarching aim is fulfilled with the use of five specific objectives: 1: To examine the impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness on Polish migrant women’s work experiences in the Scottish hospitality industry; 2: to understand the intersection of Polish migrant women’s privilege and disadvantage in the Scottish hospitality industry; 3: to explore Polish migrant women’s reflections on experienced (in)equality at work; 4: to identify the impact of contextual factors on work (in)equality experiences encountered by Polish migrant women in the Scottish hospitality industry; 5: to advance intersectional understanding of inequality at work through the examination of Polish women’s work experiences.

Chapter Four is organised as follows. After the introduction, the chapter begins with a discussion of the adopted philosophical position. In order to explain the thesis’s philosophical logic and assumptions, the first section outlines the study’s ontological and epistemological considerations. Outlined here perspectives concerning what reality is and how we investigate it played a significant role in shaping the research process. The next main section in the chapter, presents a discussion on the qualitative approach used in the study. Influenced by the study’s aim and objectives, as well as the underlying philosophical assumptions, this section explains the choice of qualitative over quantitative approaches. Subsequently, the next section proceeds to a description of the fieldwork design, presenting a debate on the most suitable research methods for the study. Section 4.5 describes information about research participants. In this part of
the thesis, a discussion is presented on criteria for recruiting research participants and the recruitment process. The chapter then proceeds to a description of ethical issues which have been taken into consideration before data collection. The following section, 4.7, represents a discussion of data analysis. Subsequently, the penultimate section of the chapter explains, in a reflexive manner how, in line with the concept of emic and etic perspectives, the researcher’s coincident status of insider and outsider could be identified as one of the study’s strengths and limitations. Finally, the chapter concludes with a review of suitability between different elements of the study’s methodological design.

4.2 Research philosophy

The discussion surrounding methodology begins with an exploration of the research’s philosophical underpinnings (Crotty 1998). Research philosophy is a set of assumptions on the most general features of the world, including aspects such as the reality, matter, truth and nature of knowledge (Hughes and Sharrock 1990). In other words, research philosophy describes the author’s views of the world, which influence the nature of the study and the methods used to conduct it. Research philosophy is the backbone of any research inquiry (Collier 1994). Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) identify three specific reasons why it should be explored in the methodological discussion. Firstly, research philosophy helps to refine the overall research strategy and specifies the research methods to be adopted in a study. Philosophical assumptions influence the type of collected data, its origin, the process in which data is interpreted and how it is used to answer the posted research questions. Secondly, good understanding of the research philosophy can help to evaluate different methodologies, identify the strengths and limitations of particular approaches and enable the avoidance of unnecessary work. Finally, research philosophy can assist the researcher in selection or adaptation of more creative methods, which were previously outside of their experiences (Easterby-Smith et al. 2012). As outlined later in the chapter, in the current study the use of creative methods had a secondary importance. Priority was given to the use of methodology suitable to the investigation of research participants potentially vulnerable to discrimination. Nevertheless, Easterby-Smith et al.’s first two arguments for the
importance of discussing research philosophy have been recognised and have influenced the study’s methodology.

Various scholars presented different perspectives on what standpoints can be adopted as a research philosophy (Bryman 2012, Crotty 1998, Hughes and Sharrock 1990). For example, Hughes and Sharrock (1990) locate research philosophy in a broader theoretical framework providing a general overview of numerous standpoints, but they do not examine more thoroughly different perspectives. Crotty (1998) discusses key epistemological and theoretical standpoints, but does not explore ontological perspectives in social research. Bryman (2012) provides a clear framework, which considers the main ontological and epistemological standpoints. As different authors present certain strengths and weaknesses in their discussions of philosophical positions, the current study used references to a variety of scholars in order to best describe its own adapted perspectives. The next two subsections explain the main philosophical standpoints in social research, and which positions are adopted by this thesis to address its aim. Philosophical standpoints are discussed in relation to ontological and epistemological considerations.

4.2.1 Ontological considerations

The nature of research is influenced, either explicitly or implicitly, by the scholar’s assumptions about what is ‘real’ and how it can be examined. Questions of ‘what is’ and ‘what it means to know’ are key subjects of ontological and epistemological discussions (Crotty 1998). Ontology is a study of being (Crotty 1998). It is concerned with the nature of what exists and what the social reality is (Blaikie 2007). According to Bryman and Bell (2011), in management research, ontology is primarily concerned with whether social reality exists externally to social actors; thus, whether social reality can be objectively examined, or whether social entities should be considered as socially constructed, subjective and context specific. Bryman (2012) identifies two main ontological perspectives, which can address these considerations, objectivism and constructionism. According to Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 21) objectivism is:

“an ontological position that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors”.

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Objectivism implies reality and its meaning exists independently of human consciousness. Things have meaning residing in them and therefore they can be studied as objects (Crotty 1998). The objectivist perspective implies organisations and work processes operate according to rules and regulations external to individuals who participate in them. An extreme objectivist position may question whether migrant women experience privilege and disadvantage in a workplace. As explained by Gill and Johnson (2010), from the objectivists’ perspective, organisations operate according to predetermined rules and regulations to increase profitability. People perform their jobs and follow standardised procedures. Employees who fail to follow the rules are reprimanded or fired (Gill and Johnson 2010). According to this logic, there is no space for an irrational system of privileging and oppressing employees and therefore it should not exist. As such, the objectivist perspective is fundamentally contrary to the findings of the literature review presented in Chapter Two. Numerous scholars have shown that ‘objective’ organisational procedures are underpinned, for example, with gender assumptions and what leads to irrational but systematic discrimination of women (e.g. Acker 1990, Acker 2006, Bell et al. 2002, Kelan 2009, Kelan 2010, West and Zimmerman 1987, West and Zimmerman 2009). The literature demonstrates that work experiences of women are influenced by their intersecting social identities, which are socially constructed (Brah and Phoenix 2004, Crenshaw 1990, hooks 1981, Phoenix 1994). Thus, in order to embrace the role of social actors in the shaping of Polish women’s work experiences it is necessary to consider an alternative position to objectivism.

Objectivism can be contrasted with constructionist ontology. Crotty (1998, p. 42) defined constructionism as:

“the view that all knowledge, and therefore, all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context”.

Advocates of constructionism assume that there is no absolute truth, as truth is not external to social actors (Crotty 1998). Meaning is dependent on the interpreting social actors, which constantly construct and shape the social order. An assumption that meaning is constructed by social actors through their continued interaction implies that
multiple truths and realities exist, which can be interpreted in different ways (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, Fish 1990). From this perspective, Strauss et al. (1963) argue that organisations are constructed through a ‘negotiated order’. Everyday interaction tends to neglect formal properties, such as organisational rules or regulations. Individuals’ actions in an organisation are an outcome of negotiations and patterns of action between different parties involved (Strauss et al. 1963). For instance, Strauss et al. (1963) found, in their study of a psychiatric hospital, that agreements in an organisation can be constantly established, revised, renewed but also terminated or forgotten. Strauss et al. (1963) argue that employees interact on a basis of general understanding rather than formal commands.

Acknowledgment that reality and meaning are relative to social context is crucial for the current study. The reviewed literature in Chapter Two suggests that there is no single truth about migrant women’s work experiences. Instead, numerous scholars have emphasised the importance of situatedness in studies of migrant women (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Essers et al. 2010, Palenga-Möllenbeck 2013, Sang et al. 2013). For example, Adib and Guerrier (2003), in their study of women in hotel work, found that social identities and their intersections can be intentionally performed or denied. Social identities can be emphasised or downplayed by employees in order to gain personal advantage or as a form of resistance to unequal treatment. Thus, the intersecting social identities to be the focus of this study cannot be regarded as uniform or fixed (see also Butler 1990, Man 2004, Warren 2001). Consequently, the thesis adopts a constructionist stand and argues that the thesis findings cannot represent definitive and universal knowledge about Polish women in Scotland but a systematically studied, context-specific case of migrant women’s work reality.

4.2.2 Epistemological considerations

The ontological considerations link with epistemological considerations. To discuss the nature of ‘the reality’ is also to make assumptions about how the meaning of reality is constructed or discovered (Crotty 1998). While the questions of ontology are concerned with the nature of entities, epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge. It is the role of epistemology to examine the kind of knowledge that is possible, its scope, how it can be acquired and how we can ensure it is legitimate (Maynard 1994).
The adopted ontological position determines what is considered a valid epistemological stance. From the constructionist perspective, meaning is constructed rather than discovered. The world and objects may have a potential of meaning, but for the actual meaning to emerge consciousness is necessary (Gill and Johnson 2010). Meanings are constructed by humans through interaction with each other and with the world that is interpreted. Although the physical world has existed long before the origins of humanity it holds no meaning before it was interpreted (Humphrey 1993). From the adopted constructionist perspective, the process of creating and revising meanings is continuous and knowledge is considered as indeterminate (Crotty 1998).

Bryman (2012) identifies two main epistemological perspectives, positivism and interpretivism. Positivism refers to a philosophical position that originated during the Enlightenment and has been differently adopted by many scholars (Bryman and Bell 2011, Crotty 1998). As explained by Crotty (1998), positivism implies that social sciences should be studied in the same manner as natural sciences, i.e., gathering knowledge only in an objective and systematic manner. Advocates of positivism assume that, in social sciences, things inherently have objective meaning which is value free. Therefore, from this perspective it is possible to discover meaning, which is independent of our opinions, feelings, beliefs or assumptions. A positivist aims at gathering facts, which would provide the basis for establishing laws (Crotty 1998). However, the complexity and contextuality of the social phenomena studied in the thesis, such as inequality in the form of privilege and/or disadvantage, would make it unfeasible to create a basis for universal laws. Thus, the positivist epistemological stance, suggesting application of methods from natural sciences, contradicts the overarching aim of the study, which is to deepen the understanding of migrant women’s work encounters of (in)equality and further our knowledge about Polish employees in Scotland.

It is reasoned that the subject matter of this thesis is significantly different from that of natural sciences. The view that social sciences require a different logic, than that used for natural sciences, is concerned with interpretivist epistemology (Bryman and Bell 2011). According to Blaikie (2007, p. 124) interpretivism focuses on:

“understanding the social world that people have constructed and which they reproduce through their continuing activities”.

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Interpretivist studies tend to focus on the meaning of social phenomena and providing in-depth understanding of the studied subjects. Insights generated from these studies, although presenting great explanatory contributions, tend to offer weak predictions (Myers 2008). The interpretivist approach focuses on understanding how individuals engage with each other to generate meaning and how that shapes their experiences (Alvesson et al. 2008). As such, the relationship between the study and research participants is also important. From the interpretivist perspective researchers partly create what is studied, as a project’s insights are based on the investigators’ own interpretation of research participants’ interpretation (Alvesson et al. 2008).

The interpretivist epistemology corresponds with the thesis’s objectives in exploring how social processes shape work experiences. As identified from the literature review in Chapter Two, in order to explore migrant women’s experiences of privilege and disadvantage it was crucial to consider how research participants reflect on their experiences and what contextual factors have shaped it. As explained by Deetz (1996), interpretivism is about attempting to explore phenomena through meanings that individuals assign to them. Thus, the enquiry to understand how Polish women reflect on their experiences, which can be identified as privileging or disadvantaging, lies at the domain of interpretivist epistemology. Moreover, from the interpretivist point of view, equally important is locating the studied phenomena in context (Myers 2008). According to interpretivists, without understanding the broader context of the subject, it is impossible to correctly interpret meaning behind the data. This interpretivist attention to the context of studied phenomena coincides with the need to explore intersectionality’s situatedness, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three.

Having outlined how the study was based on philosophical traditions of constructionism and interpretivism, the following section presents a discussion on the decision to choose between qualitative over quantitative approaches.

4.3 Qualitative approach

Research philosophies, discussed in the previous section of the chapter, do not impose a qualitative or quantitative approach for an investigation (Bernard 2012). For example, interpretivism, theoretically, does not rule out quantification of data as an interpretation
of numbers can also be performed from the employed in the study’s epistemological perspective (Crotty 1998).

Nevertheless, the chosen method(s) of data collection has to be best aligned with the focus of the study. As the aim of the thesis was to deepen the understanding of migrant women’s work encounters of (in)equality and further our knowledge about Polish employees in Scotland, the exploration of everyday events and episodes was at the core of the study’s interest. Exploring behaviours and experiences lies also at the focus of qualitative inquiries. According to Johnson et al. (2006, p. 132), qualitative research relates to:

“capturing the actual meanings and interpretations that actors subjectively ascribe to phenomena in order to describe and explain their behaviour through investigating how they experience, sustain, articulate and share with others these socially constituted everyday realities”.

Qualitative research allows an exploration of social phenomena from the perspective of those who experience it (Patton and Haynes 2014). It transcends the simplistic analysis of ‘what’ and ‘how many’, providing answers to ‘how’ and ‘why’ (Miles and Huberman 1994). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative data captures naturally-occurring events and provides a means to explore what ‘real life’ is. As argued by Merriam (2002), qualitative inquiry compels researchers to uncover nuanced experiences. All of these features of qualitative research corresponded well with the study’s aim and objectives, which focus on studying Polish women’s work experiences (see sections 1.4 and 4.1).

In contrast, quantitative research presents data numerically or with numerical value. As explained by Lancaster (2005), this research approach is only applicable to phenomena that can be measured and quantified. It is used to estimate relationships between variables, which can be controlled. It seeks verification of hypothesis and production of generalisable findings (Hakim 2000). Thus, this approach would not meet the study’s objectives concerned, for example, with exploration of behaviour and identification of social processes.
Furthermore, scholars have questioned the applicability of quantitative methods in intersectional research and expressed preferability towards a qualitative approach. As Shields (2008, p. 306) argues:

“The theoretical compatibility and historic links between intersectionality theory and qualitative methods imply that the method and the theory are always already necessary to one another. Intersectionality theory, by virtue of its description of multidimensional nature of identity makes investigation through qualitative methods seem both natural and necessary”.

Bowleg (2008) attempted to shift the debate from the superiority of qualitative or quantitative approaches to a critique of positivist epistemologies. Nevertheless, Bowleg also admitted that interdependent, context-specific, multi-dimensional and mutually constitutive relationships, which are the foundation of intersectional research, conflict with quantitative approaches. The scholar identified practical disjunctions between intersectional focus and close-ended questions, measurement and self-administration of quantitative methods. Taking into account the critique of quantitative methods and the relevance of a qualitative approach to the aim and objectives outlined in Chapter One, the study employed qualitative research methods. The following section first explains why multiple research methods were used for data collection then discusses which research methods were used and how.

4.4 Data collection

In order to examine a subjective phenomenon, such as work experience, the current study used a multi-method strategy. According to a multi-method strategy the researcher collects different types of qualitative or quantitative data. This is different from a mixed-method strategy, where both qualitative and quantitative data are used (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). The benefits of adapting multiple research methods have been frequently mentioned in the literature (Flick 2002, Kanter 1977, Layder 1998, Neuman 2000, Punch 1998). According to Layder (1998), the researcher should employ as many methods of data collection as possible, in order to present the depth of the examined social problem. Similarly, Kanter (1977) argues that adapting a combination
of methods is the most suitable approach for understanding complex social reality in the organisational setting. The multi-method approach also improves the validity of the findings and helps to establish a more critical perspective (Kanter 1977). Finally, according to Cheng (2004) in order to investigate in-depth intersectional experience the researcher has to establish a level of trust with the research participants. This can be achieved by employment of different qualitative methods of data collection ranging from being less intrusive and allowing more flexibility to more thorough tools. Following Cheng and other scholars’ recommendations the study has adapted the multi-method approach.

The remainder of this section provides a discussion of the employed research methods and the process of data collection. Thus, the section serves as both a discussion of methodological theory and a presentation of information on how the data was collected. The first two sub-sections discuss the choice of adopting two research methods, i.e., life-story interviews and semi-structured interviews. Information is also presented in these two consecutive subsections with regard to how the research methods were used and how their adaptation corresponds with the study’s aim and objectives. The following sub-section explains the use of a researcher’s diary. Researcher’s diary was not a source of empirical data; rather it served a methodological purpose. It was kept in order to record details about the fieldwork and to aid the reflexivity of the study. Subsequently, sub-section 4.4.4 discusses research methods piloting. Finally, the last part of the section clarifies why the data were collected in Polish and how they were translated to English. The following section, 4.5, presents information related to the criteria of recruiting research participants, the recruitment process and demographic information on research participants.

4.4.1 Life-history interviews

Interviews are the most popular method of gathering data in qualitative research (King 2004a). Kvale (1983, p. 174) defines a qualitative interview as:

“an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomenon”.

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The interview method is conducted in research in order to view the studied phenomena from the perspective of the interviewee. Interviews are ideal for studies where the aim is to examine topics at a deeper level of meaning (King 2004a). Among different types of interviews, life-history interviews are a fundamental method of studying how people experience and make sense of their environment (Musson 2004). McAdams (1989, p. 161) defines life-history interviews as:

“an internalized narrative integration of past, present and anticipated future which provides lives with a sense of unity and purpose”.

Thus, the method allows presentation of an overall picture of research participants’ life and daily experiences (Sang et al. 2013). It also gives participants a chance to freely speak for themselves. For that reason, the method is firmly established in intersectional research, which often focuses on studying groups whose voices were previously neglected (e.g. Rafnsdóttir and Heijstra 2013). Particularly, life-history interviews are popular among researchers who examine intersectional work experiences of migrant women. This is because the method allows an examination of migrant women’s agency, an aspect which is often neglected in the literature (Erel 2007). It also helps to extrapolate the broader social location embodied by women (McCall 2005) and reveals heterogeneity and complexity in groups of women (Ludvig 2006), such as migrants.

As argued by Musson (2004), life-history interviews are a research method strongly rooted in the interpretivist and social constructivist standpoints. Subjective interpretations of individuals’ past and present experiences are cornerstones of both the life-history method and interpretivism. From the study’s adopted epistemological point of view, if a research participant defines her experiences as ‘real’, these experiences are real in their consequences. Thus, individuals’ interpretations of events can be used by the researcher as lenses through which meaning about human experiences can be accessed (Musson 2004). Moreover, the study assumed that meaning and knowledge in the social world is fabricated through social interaction. Socially constructed meaning is not static but dynamic and multidimensional. Meaning is evolving, overlapping, colliding, in a constant process of creation and/or re-creation (Crotty 1998). According to this philosophical standpoint historic recreation of events is central to capturing meanings constructed through interaction. The involved actors’ reflections of their past
and present experiences facilitate theorisation about the meaning behind the described events.

As suggested by Thompson (1981), life-history often relates to historical change, either social or organisational, experienced by the individual. The current study adopted the life-history method in order to understand Polish women’s paths into the hospitality industry in Scotland. In this case, the life-history method was not used to examine participants’ biography but their organisational life-history (see Musson 2004).

Conducting life-history interviews was the first stage of data collection. All together twenty face-to-face life-history interviews were carried out, one with each of the research participants. Similar studies, adopting the method have conducted fewer interviews (e.g. Funnell and Chi Dao 2013). However, this research used life histories to investigate stories of employment and, as shown in Table 3 (subsection 4.5.3), the research participants were aged 18 to 34. Due to the typically short length of participants’ work experience more life-history interviews were conducted in order to reach data saturation. As research participants’ length of work experience in the hospitality industry ranged from two months to seven years some of the interviewees were more informative than others. Due to migrant workers’ high turnover in the hospitality industry (Devine et al. 2007, Janta 2011, Matthews and Ruhs 2007a) and high mobility of Polish migrants (Burrell 2010) it was imperative to give voice to employees who had only a few months of working experience. However, it also meant that some employees had more experience to report than others. Depending on the amount of participants’ work experience, the interviews lasted from approximately one to two and a half hours. The interviews were conducted in locations convenient for the participants, that is, mostly cafes located in the Edinburgh city centre or near the participants’ workplace. The life-history interviews were audio recorded by the researcher. They were transcribed in intelligent verbatim by the researcher and a professional transcription service. All interviews were conducted in Polish and translated according to the processes described in subsection 4.4.5.

During the interviews research participants were asked to tell their story of migration, their route into the hospitality industry and their personal and professional experiences of this process. Life-history interviews were not only used to collect data, but also to establish a level of trust with the participants. According to Cheng (2013), gaining
participants’ trust in studies of inequality experiences is of the utmost importance. Questions investigating experiences of privilege and/or disadvantage are often sensitive in nature. Thus, research participants may need to trust the researcher to answer them truthfully (Cheng 2013). Therefore, preceding the semi-structured in-depth interviews, the questions asked during the first interview were designed not to be challenging or related to sensitive subjects. In order to ensure the interviewees maintained focus on the objectives of the thesis, the interviewer used a list of prompts based on similar studies (Cheng 2013, Sang et al. 2013). The life-history interviews used the following prompts:

a) participants’ move from Poland to the UK (e.g., reasons, barriers, sense of establishment)
b) paths to hospitality industry (e.g., reasons, finding employment)
c) role of significant others (e.g., social and professional networking)
d) interpersonal relations at work (e.g., with superiors, colleagues, customers)
e) future migration plans

The use of these themes helped explore the context in which the research participants entered their employment contracts and began work in the hospitality industry. Thus, life-history interviews were primarily concerned with acquiring information for research objective four (see Table 1, p. 83). However, the first stage of data collection also provided insights in order to address objectives one, two and three. Following the methodological instructions of Cheng (2013) during the initial interview the researcher did not ask about experiences of inequality. Nevertheless, research participants’ stories provided some insights which were instrumental in understanding the impact of social categories on their work experiences and in understanding intersecting experiences of privilege and disadvantage. The data collected from life-history interviews was supplemented by information gathered from follow-up semi-structured interviews. The following sub-section provides a discussion on how follow-up semi-structured interviews were employed in this study.


Table 1: Use of life-history interviews to address research objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research objectives</th>
<th>Used prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness on Polish migrant women’s work experiences in the Scottish hospitality industry</td>
<td>a) interpersonal relations at work (e.g., with superiors, colleagues, customers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: intersection of Polish migrant women’s privilege and disadvantage in the Scottish hospitality industry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Polish migrant women’s reflections on experienced (in)equality at work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: impact of contextual factors on work (in)equality experiences encountered by Polish migrant women in the Scottish hospitality industry</td>
<td>a) participants’ move from Poland to the UK (e.g., reasons, barriers, sense of establishment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) paths to hospitality industry (e.g., reasons, finding employment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) role of significant others (e.g., social and professional networking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) interpersonal relations at work (e.g., with superiors, colleagues, customers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) future migration plans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.2 Follow-up semi-structured interviews

Following Cheng’s (2013) suggestions, the first round of data collection was coordinated with follow-up interviews. At this stage more in-depth questions were asked about work experiences, which could suggest privilege and/or disadvantage. For this purpose a semi-structured form of interviews was used. Semi-structured interviews are a method of data collection particularly popular among scholars studying intersections of social identities (e.g. Mooney and Ryan 2009, Pryce and Sealy 2013, Smith and Joseph 2010, Soni-Sinha and Yates 2013, Tatli and Özbilgin 2012, Weigt
and Solomon 2008, Wright 2011). Mooney and Ryan (2009, p. 5), in their intersectional study on women in hotels, state how:

“Semi-structured, conversational style interviews appeared the best method to understand how each of the participants gave meaning to their work experiences”.

Indeed, one of the strongest advantages of semi-structured interviews is that they allow participants ‘freedom’ to express their experiences in their own terms, while the researcher ensures that they share their views on the topic of their interest (Arksey and Knight 1999, Bryman and Bell 2011).

The interview script, with a list of questions and discussion prompts (see Appendix III), was based on intersectional studies conducted by Adib and Guerrier (2003), Cheng (2013) and Smith and Joseph (2010). Rather than asking directly about encounters of privilege or disadvantage it was anticipated that experiences of inequality will surface during a more open discussion of work. This approach was used in similar intersectional studies and was praised for the methodological openness to blatant and salient forms of inequality (Atewologun and Sealy 2014, Smith and Joseph 2010). Thus, the questions were open-ended and related to the identification of episodes at work which provoked research participants’ response and problematic episodes with co-workers and customers (for a full list see Appendix III). Here, an episode is understood as an event occurring at the workplace, which carried an important meaning for the research participant. Similar, to Adib and Guerrier’s work (2003), in addition to the general questions, which helped to identify different intersectional experiences, some were specifically related to encounters of sexual harassment, e.g., whether a person encountered sexist language at work or felt uncomfortable by any behaviour. Moreover, following methodological reflections of Smith and Joseph (2010), during the discussion of work episodes research participants were encouraged to compare their experiences to that of their colleagues. The questions began with less off-putting topics, such as episodes at work, which research participants considered important, in order to gradually progress to more sensitive discussion related to sexist language and sexual harassment (see Cheng 2013).
All of the scripted questions (for full list see Appendix III) of semi-structured interviews aimed to provide data for research objectives one and two. Examples of questions used to address these objectives are show in Table 2. Prompt questions, such as ‘How did you respond?’, ‘How did you feel’ or ‘Why do you think you responded in this way?’ enabled exploration of interviewees’ reflections on the discussed work experiences. These prompts were designed to gather information for research objective three. Additionally, research participants’ interview responses related to experiences of inequality presented insights on the context under which privilege and/or disadvantage occurred. Thus, during follow-up interviews data was also collated which helped to address research objective four. As will be argued in Chapter Seven, the data gathered from both life-history and semi-structured, interviews addressed the final, fifth research objective, which was to advance intersectional understanding of inequality at work through the examination of Polish women’s work experiences.

*Table 2: Use of follow-up semi-structured interviews to address research objectives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research objectives</th>
<th>Examples of used questions and prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness on Polish migrant women’s work experiences in the Scottish hospitality industry</td>
<td>- What episodes that you experienced at work do you consider important?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Have you experienced any incidents or problems with customers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Have you experienced any incidents or problems with your colleagues or superiors?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Probe: How did you respond?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Probe: How did you feel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Probe: Why do you think you responded in this way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: intersection of Polish migrant women’s privilege and disadvantage in the Scottish hospitality industry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: migrant women’s reflections on experienced (in)equality at work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: impact of contextual factors on work (in)equality experiences encountered by Polish migrant women in the Scottish hospitality industry</td>
<td>- What is your current job role?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What episodes that you experienced at work do you consider important?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What episodes at work provoked your strong response?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Probe: What happened?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fourteen of the twenty recruited research participants agreed to take part in follow-up face-to-face semi-structured interviews. When planning the fieldwork, it was anticipated that some of the participants may not take part in the second phase of data collection for one of two reasons. Firstly, employees working in the hospitality industry often work long hours and experience an excessive workload (Wright 2007). Thus, it was recognised that some of the research participants may not have enough time or will to also attend the follow-up interview. Secondly, Polish migrants often temporarily move between the host and home country (Burrell 2010). It was anticipated that Polish migrants’ high level of mobility may additionally disrupt the process of data collection and some participants may leave the country before the fieldwork ended. The follow-up interviews were conducted within one month after the first interview. It was the researcher’s aim to conduct the interviews with each of the participants within one or two weeks. However, this period was prolonged by some of the research participants’ busy working rotas, illness, holidays and trips to Poland in between the interviews. The conducted follow-up semi-structured interviews lasted approximately between thirty minutes to one hour. As in the case of the life-history interviews, the follow-up meetings were arranged in centrally located cafés in Edinburgh. As was the case of life-history interviews, the follow-up interviews were audio recorded by the researcher. They were transcribed in intelligent verbatim by the researcher and a professional transcription service.

4.4.3 Researcher’s diary

In addition to life-history interviews and follow-up semi-structured interviews a researcher’s diary was kept as a methodological tool, in order to record details about the fieldwork and to aid the reflexivity of the study. Researcher’s diary, although characteristic for ethnographic studies (Bryman and Bell 2011), has already been used by some scholars in organisational studies as a part of methodologies utilising interviews (Tatli 2008, Vassilopoulou 2011). It can benefit the process of data collection in several ways (Nadin and Cassell 2006). Firstly, a researcher’s diary can act as a reminder to report on the processes of recruiting participants and collecting data. For example, notes can be made about who was contacted and how in order to gain access to the research participants. Furthermore, a diary can be used to record the researcher’s impressions and feelings of data collection as a form of social interaction.
This information can allow the researcher to examine in a reflexive manner the impact of their own interpersonal relations on fieldwork (see section 4.8). Finally, a diary can be used during the analysis as an aide-memoire to significant or interesting points that were observed in the fieldwork (Nadin and Cassell 2006). Taking advantage of these three benefits a researcher’s diary was used in order to make notes throughout the fieldwork. Graph illustrates stages of fieldwork, and demonstrates at which points research methods were employed (squares) and when the researcher’s diary (flag) was used. As Graph illustrates, the first notes for the researcher’s diary were taken during the pilot study. At this stage feedback on the tested research methods was recorded. Then, fieldnotes were taken on the process of recruiting research participants and on the role of gatekeepers in gaining access to potential interviewees. For example, the diary recorded information on the social interaction with the gatekeepers (see sub-section 4.5.2 recruitment process) and research participants themselves (see sub-section 4.8.2 on reflexive account of the data collection).

Graph 1: Stages of data collection and processing
Finally, notes in the diary were made on the interaction with research participants during both stages of interviewing. Information was recorded on the general perception of how interviews went or how research participants reacted to a discussion of episodes, which can be identified as forms of discrimination or privilege. In the process of conducting interviews information was also recorded on the dominant themes emerging from participants’ stories and responses. Notes on the patterns in the recorded data helped to quicken the analysis after data collection had been completed. Information on the social interaction with research participants during the recruitment process and interviews help to reflect on the influence of the researcher’s own person and identities on the research process. The style and format of a research diary differs depending on the study’s requirements and researcher’s approach. Thus, it is important for methodological clarity to explain how the diary was kept and maintained (Burgess 1981). In the study, apart from keeping the notes in chronological order, the diary notes were marked by keywords such as ‘Fieldwork’, ‘Methods’, ‘Interviews’, ‘Findings’ and ‘Reflexivity’. This form of organising notes was loosely adapted from Newbury’s (2001) guide on keeping field notes. Both, a digital and paper copy of the diary were used. The paper copy was used to take notes in the field and the digital copy was used to refine and organise notes.

4.4.4 Pilot study

The fieldwork began with a pilot study, a small scale process of pre-testing particular research instruments (Baker 1994). One of the benefits of a pilot study is that it can give advance warning if the sampling strategy is ineffective or if the employed methods are inappropriate (Kim 2011). In accordance with Kim’s (2011), suggestions the test was not used to produce empirical results but to help improve the actual interviews and observations.

The pilot study was conducted in three stages. First, the research project’s supervisors were asked to cast a critical eye on the life-history interview themes (see section 4.4.1) and semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix III). Then, two female migrant doctoral students were asked to take part in life-history and follow-up interviews. The aim of the first two stages of the pilot study was to test whether the used questions were clear and exhaustive. In the final stage of the pilot study the gathered feedback was used
to conduct the necessary revisions and to improve the research tools. The research project’s supervisors suggested small corrections of some questions to make them easier to understand. For example in a question ‘What episodes at work in the past provoked your strong response?’ the phrase ‘in the past’ was deleted. They also suggested writing down in the interview schedule more prompt questions. Feedback from the pilot interviews suggested not using the word ‘consequence’ as a prompt to the question ‘What was the consequence of this episode? For you/others?’ academic and unnatural, thus the phrase was later changed to ‘outcome’.

4.4.5 Translation of findings

According to previous studies, Polish migrants in the UK can experience difficulties with the English language (e.g. Janta 2011, Janta and Ladkin 2013). As the aim of the study was to *deepen the understanding* of migrant women’s work encounters of (in)equality, it was crucial to avoid a potential language barrier and consider gathering data in the research participants’ native language. For example, conducting interviews in English could limit findings to a narrow range of English vocabulary that the research participants were familiar with. Furthermore, choosing to recruit only Polish women who would be comfortable with conducting an interview in English could exclude stories of women whose work experiences were affected by their language skills. For these reasons it was decided to conduct interviews in Polish and translate the findings. This is a common approach in studies involving Polish migrants in the UK (e.g. Aziz 2015, Janta et al. 2011, Kusek 2015, Lugosi et al. 2016) and in intersectional research (Funnell and Chi Dao 2013, Grünenfelder 2013). Following the approach of Janta et al. (2011) the data were analysed in Polish with selected quotations being translated into English. The chosen excerpts were translated by the researcher into English and then revised after discussion with a fellow bilingual Polish person. After small corrections were made, the translated excerpts were used in the thesis as quotations.

As the study’s focus lies in the meaning behind responses and experiences, rather than language, discourse markers and filler terms such as ‘you know’, were removed alongside other repetitions. Preventing over-interpretation of the meaning behind interviewees’ responses, the excerpts were translated as literally as possible while maintaining linguistic correctness. The literal translation did not include, for example,
idioms, such as ‘wpadłam w oko’ [I fell into an eye], which means ‘I caught (somebody’s) fancy’. In the Polish language nouns are modified by gender, masculine, feminine and neuter. Thus, some interview responses in Polish included information important for the study, such as whether the perpetrator of harassing behaviour was male or female. For that reason, some of the translated quotations include annotations describing the gender of the noun, for example, “chef [he]”. The translated excerpts did not contain words posing translation difficulties, such as derogatory racial words, which were encountered in some studies of Polish migrants in the UK (e.g. Aziz 2015, Nowicka 2012b).

4.5 Research participants

This section of the chapter provides information about research participants and is divided into three subsections. First, the basis of the criteria of participants’ recruitment is discussed. Then, the process of how participants were recruited is explained. Finally, research participants’ demographic similarities and differences are discussed.

4.5.1 Recruitment criteria

On the basis of the identified gaps in the literature, the aim of the study was to deepen the understanding of migrant women’s work encounters of (in)equality and further our knowledge about Polish employees in Scotland. Thus, research participants had to be female, Polish and working in Scotland. Similar to Syed and Pio (2010), who examined employment experiences of Muslim women in Australia, the study focused on first-generation migrants, as their migration status may have had a stronger impact on their occupational lives, than in the case of the second generation. Furthermore, focus on the first-generation of Polish migrants sheds light on the largest portion of the Polish community in the UK (Migration Observatory 2012, ONS 2015b) and reflects the methodological approach taken in similar studies (Bachan and Sheehan 2011, Kusek 2015, Judd 2011).

As discussed in Chapter Two the organisational context of the thesis was the hospitality industry. Syed and Pio (2010), in their intersectional study of workplace experiences of Muslim women in Australia, focus on three industries: Education, banking and
engineering. However, such a wide scope of a study prevents examination of industry-specific experiences. Thus, following the example of other intersectional investigations (e.g. Mooney 2016b, Mooney et al. 2016), the current study has refined its context to the hospitality industry. Furthermore, similar to other intersectional research examining food and beverage businesses (e.g. Adib and Guerrier 2003, Dyer et al. 2010, Mooney 2016b, Mooney et al. 2016, Soni-Sinha and Yates 2013) the current study did not specify in the selection process a job title within the industry. Narrowing down the scope on the basis of participants’ identities as well as type of organisation within a specific industry could have produced findings too refined to make a contribution to our understanding of Polish women’s work experiences in Scotland. However, in order to increase the richness of the data, each of the research participants was recruitment from a different workplace.

As the study’s aim and objectives were related to the investigation of work experiences, another requirement of participating in the study was the period of employment in the industry of interest. The literature shows that migrant workers in the hospitality industry often change occupations (Devine et al. 2007, Janta 2011, Matthews and Ruhs 2007a). For example, Devine et al. (2007), in their study of migrant hospitality workers in Northern Ireland, found international employees retain their position for a short period of time, approximately eight to twelve months. Similarly, Janta (2011) found that, on average, Polish migrants work in British hospitality industry jobs for fifteen months. In order to accommodate the stories of short-term workers, but also to ensure that the interviewees possessed the relevant knowledge, it was required that research participants have at least two months of work experience in the hospitality industry. Thus, to summarise, the selection criteria were:

a) Woman
b) Born in Poland
c) Working in Scotland
d) With at least two months of work experience in the Scottish hospitality industry

Once the defining characteristics of the study’s population were clarified different methods of sampling were considered. Sampling is a process of selecting a fraction of the study’s total population of interest (Herbst and Coldwell 2004). A sample, which is a part of the population that is of interest to the researcher, can be selected randomly or
purposively (Bryman and Bell 2011). While random sampling is almost invariably adapted for quantitative research (Bryman and Bell 2011), purposive selection is usually chosen for qualitative studies (Given 2008). Purposive sampling allows a researcher to “use their special knowledge or expertise about some group to select subjects who represent the population” (Berg 2004, p. 36). Although the purposive method of sampling increases probability of personal bias (Bryman and Bell 2011, Panneerselvam 2004), it ensures the selected participants share the characteristics necessary for gathering relevant information (Berg 2004). To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, there is no list of all the people in the desirable population, hence a representative, randomly generated sample was not possible. Thus, the study employed a purposive sampling method, which also reflects the adapted qualitative approach. The following subsection explains the process according to which research participants were recruited.

4.5.2 Recruitment process

Having defined the criteria for participating in the study, the next step was to plan how to access and recruit research participants. The aim of the study was to deepen the understanding of migrant women’s work encounters of (in)equality and further our knowledge about Polish employees in Scotland. Edinburgh was chosen as a fieldwork location due to accessibility to interviewees and the city’s largest community of Polish people in Scotland (Census 2011b). Approximately every fifth Polish person resident in Scotland lives in the City of Edinburgh Council area (Census 2011b).

Due to the study’s primary focus on the individual level of analysis, the project did not require institutional research access. Nevertheless, gatekeepers of various kinds were encountered throughout the recruitment process. Gatekeepers are individuals who provide and facilitate access for a researcher. Being beyond the researcher’s control they can impede contact with potential research participants (Gummesson 2000). The description below explains how the researcher gained access to the research participants and the role that gatekeepers played in this process.

Research participants were recruited by visiting different hospitality businesses operating in Edinburgh and inviting Polish women working there to participate in the study. Targeted businesses served food and beverage. They included cafes, restaurants, pubs, sandwich bars, hotels, hostels, guesthouses and cinemas. Due to the high number
of operating firms, the search was concentrated around Edinburgh city centre (Old Town, New Town), along and in the area of major roads (e.g., Gorgie, Dalry, Leith, Newington, Morningside, Stockbridge) and at the shopping centres (Princes Mall, Saint James Shopping Centre, Cameron Toll, Fort Kinnaird, Ocean Terminal, Gyle Shopping Centre, Edinburgh Airport). On average a day spent in the field resulted in the recruitment of one participant.

While visiting local businesses numerous gatekeepers were encountered. These were employees, managers and business owners. Almost all were polite and helpful. In businesses where at least one Polish woman was working gatekeepers gave their permission to talk to their Polish colleague, provided information about their colleague’s shift or offered to forward to them the researcher’s contact details. When the researcher spoke directly to a Polish female employee, this usually resulted in the recruitment of the research participant.

None of the encountered employees or gatekeepers was rude or impolite. However, in some cases, the encountered non-Polish gatekeepers would politely but proudly inform the researcher that there were no Polish people in their workplace. This clear emphasis on the lack of Polish staff was encountered only in small non-chain businesses. This raises a question for further investigations whether there was a discriminatory reason behind the emphasis of the lack of Polish staff in some businesses.

In the process of searching for interviewees numerous guesthouses were visited (e.g., on Pilrig Street, Hermitage Place). Some of the early recruited participants used to work in guesthouses; hence, extra time was spent searching for other Polish women working in this type of service. However, according to employees, none of the dozens of visited guesthouses employed even one Polish person. In total, participant recruitment lasted for approximately seven months and was conducted simultaneously with collection and transcription of the data.

The described process resulted in the recruitment of 20 research participants. Research participants were recruited until the point of data saturation. During the fieldwork the last few research participants provided few additional insights, thus, the interviewee recruitment ended at 20. As mentioned earlier (see section 4.4) each of the participants took part in life-history interviews. Fourteen participants attended the follow-up semi-
structured interview. The size of the sample was close to the methodological designs of previous PhD theses investigating intersectionality, e.g., Mooney (2014) who conducted three group memory sessions and 19 semi-structured interviews, Lim (2012) conducted 30 biographical interviews and Bowring (2010) conducted 34 semi-structured interviews. The following subsection presents a discussion on the demographic similarities and differences of the recruited research participants.

4.5.3 Demographic and working profile

The recruited participants share certain demographic similarities and differences. As shown in Table 3, the majority of research participants were in their twenties, the oldest being 34 years of age. All of the participants have high school qualifications and slightly more than half have a university degree. A few interviewees have completed formal education in the subject area of hospitality. All of the participants came to Scotland in the last 10 years. A few participants moved out from Scotland at some point within the last 10 years and then returned. Three research participants had caring responsibilities with two working full-time. Most interviewees worked full-time, with only three working less than the standard number of hours. One of the part-time workers had care responsibilities and the other two balanced work with studying at a college or university. The presented in Table 3 average weekly working hours does not include the time participants spend travelling to work. Two of the participants travelled more than an hour, each way, to work. Two other participants worked in ‘split shifts’, i.e. had two or more separate periods of duty in a day. This meant they spent in total two hours each day to commute to work. Several of the participants worked six days a week.

Table 3: Research participants’ major demographic data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>First long term arrival in Scotland</th>
<th>Care responsibility</th>
<th>Approx. working hours per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beata</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>A levels, The Landscape Architecture Technical College</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Yes - Child</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ela</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>MSc in History of Art and Culture MSc in Computing (British)</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 presents general information on the research participants’ work. As the table illustrates, slightly more than half of the participants worked in a café or chain café. At the time of data collection most of the interviewees were employed in large companies (more than 250 employees). Four worked in small companies (between 10 to 49 employees) and five worked in micro enterprises (less than 10 employees) but none of the participants were hired at the time in medium size companies (between 50 and 250 employees).

### Table 4: General information on research participants’ work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Type of company</th>
<th>Size of the company</th>
<th>Job description</th>
<th>Time in current job</th>
<th>Previous job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beata</td>
<td>Café</td>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>Waitress</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Cleaner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ela</td>
<td>Chain Hotel</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>Guest house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Restaurant Type</td>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamila</td>
<td>Cafe</td>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>Barista</td>
<td>14 months</td>
<td>Catering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danuta</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Waitress</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>Waitress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ewa</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Waitress team leader</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Waitress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halina</td>
<td>Cafe</td>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>Barista</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>Barista</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irena</td>
<td>Chain Cinema</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>Waitress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iwona</td>
<td>Chain Restaurant</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Waitress team leader</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Waitress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaja</td>
<td>Chain Cafe</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Barista</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Office worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karolina</td>
<td>Cafe</td>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>Assistant manager</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>Barista</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinga</td>
<td>Chain Cafe</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Barista</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>Barista</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaneta</td>
<td>Chain Cafe</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Barista supervisor</td>
<td>13 months</td>
<td>Housekeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lidia</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Receptionist / Waitress</td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>Barista</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliwia</td>
<td>Cafe</td>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>Barista</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Waitress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Bar</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Barista supervisor</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Waitress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylwia</td>
<td>Chain Cafe</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Barista</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Assistant teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weronika</td>
<td>Chain Restaurant</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Waitress</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>Factory worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiola</td>
<td>Chain Hotel</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Housekeeper supervisor</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Office worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zosia</td>
<td>Chain Cafe</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Barista</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>Cleaner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zuza</td>
<td>Chain Cafe</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Barista</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Barista</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The clear majority of the interviewed participants worked as customer-facing staff, although most of the participants had also gained experience working as backroom staff. Participants’ period of employment varied from one day to seven years. While the majority of interviewed Polish women have been in their current job for less than six months, several have not changed their jobs for more than two years.
4.6 Research ethics

A key element of planning the study was to consider research participants’ wellbeing with regard to ethical issues. Ethics can be defined as moral principles or norms, which govern a person’s behaviour, moral choices and relationships with others (Blumberg et al. 2005). Research in social sciences, whether involving human beings or other animals, requires a consideration of the study’s ethics. The Economic and Social Research Council (2012) highlights the researcher’s responsibility to avoid or minimise any potential risk or harm to individuals or social groups involved in a scientific project. A researcher has to protect the well-being and interest of their informants (ESRC 2012). To ensure that the study was conducted in an ethical manner several aspects were carefully considered.

First, full consent from participants was obtained before interviewing. It was sought to allow potential respondents to make a well-informed choice of whether to participate. Thus, prior to the interviews research participants were presented with information about the aim of the study, different stages of data collection, full confidentiality of participants’ records and potential publication of the findings. All these details were explained by the researcher verbally and provided to the informants on paper in the ‘Participant’s information sheet’ (see Appendix I). Research participants were also provided with a consent form (Appendix II), which explained their rights and required their signature to confirm that they voluntarily participated in the study and agreed to the interviews being recorded. Moreover, mentioned in the consent form were research participants’ rights, including the right to refuse to answer any questions and to withdraw from the study at any given moment (see Berg 2004).

It was recognised that the time which respondents would spend on participating in the study could mean compromising other activities, such as paid and unpaid work, or leisure. This concern was particularly important as migrant employees working in the hospitality industry often face long working hours (Janta 2011) and may possess little free time. Therefore, the information sheet made a clear statement about the expected time required for participation in the study to allow participants a free choice.

As Patai argues (1987), research participants’ trust placed in the researcher should not be taken lightly. Thus, in the consent form, research participants were reassured about
the confidential use of the data collected. The interview recordings were secured in a password protected personal computer and paper copies of the researcher’s documents were kept in a lock-protected private desk. In order to protect research participants’ anonymity, they were assigned code names and any information, which could lead to identification of their private details, was excluded (Yow 1994).

In addition to the common ethical considerations the study required recognition that research participants belonged to a group of potentially vulnerable workers. As illustrated in Chapter Two, migrant women are susceptible to discrimination not only on the basis of (hetero)gender and migration status but also the intersection of these and other social identities. Thus, it was of the utmost importance not to exploit research participants’ potential vulnerability and, instead, offer them respect. Taylor (2001) highlights that a designer and conductor of the study has more knowledge of the project’s content and process. Thus, participating in a study can be intimidating for some respondents. Consequently, it was crucial to be reflexive about providing a friendly environment and a more balanced position between the researcher and research participants. This was achieved, for example, by the use of friendly and polite language, as well as expressions of sincere appreciation for the participants’ time. All of the participants but one mirrored this friendly attitude. Similar, to Kusek’s (2015) study of Polish professionals in London, several research participants offered to join them in their everyday activities after the formal part of the data collection has ended. For example, the researcher was invited on numerous occasions for coffee and to different social events organised by research participants. Such behaviour suggests that the researcher managed to conduct the interviews in a friendly and welcoming manner.

Discussing privilege and/or disadvantage could be a disturbing experience for the research participants and even for the researcher. It was recognised that the interviewees may feel uncomfortable with the reflexive outcomes of the data collection. Thus, it attempted to reduce and minimise anxiety or distress by asking participants during the interview how they feel about the discussed subject or whether they would like to take a break. After the interview the researcher again asked the interviewees how they feel and talked with them for a few minutes to ensure they were not distressed.
The study received full ethical approval from the Heriot-Watt University Research Ethics Committee. The following section explains the process used to interpret the gathered data.

4.7 Data analysis

Some scholars have argued for a use of intersectionality as an analytical framework rather than a theory (Mooney 2014, Winker and Degele 2011). However, the analytical approach does not take advantage of the theoretical potential of intersectionality discussed in the literature (Carrim and Nkomo 2016, Davis 2008, Harris 2017, Jaramillo 2010) and, as explained in Chapter Three, it does not align with the aim and objectives of the study. Thus, similar to other empirical intersectional investigations (e.g. Alberti et al. 2013, Carrim and Nkomo 2016, Martinez Dy et al. 2016), the current study has adapted a separate method of analysis.

Previous intersectional studies have employed various methods of qualitative data analysis, such as content analysis (Hancock 2004), autobiographical/biographical analysis (Brah and Phoenix 2004), discourse analysis (Jordan-Zachery 2009), narrative analysis (Smooth 2001) or grounded theory (Carrim and Nkomo 2016). Each of these methods of analysis is appropriate for specific research designs and objectives. For example, content analysis is the most suitable for an interpretation of inferences about antecedents, characteristics and effects of communication (Holsti 1969). Autobiographical/biographical analysis locates accounts of someone's life story at the centre of investigation (Mason 2002). Narrative analysis is concerned with an interpretation of how people create meaning in their lives as narratives (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). Discourse analysis provides a refined approach to interpreting language in a specific social context (Sang and Sitko 2015). Finally, grounded theory can be used as a method of analysing qualitative data in order to construct new theories (Martin and Turner 1986).

Due to the combination of data collection methods, the study employed thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79), thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data”. It is a widely-used method of analysing qualitative data, within and beyond organisational studies.
(Boyatzis 1998, Roulston 2001). One of its main advantages is that it allows the researcher theoretical and methodological flexibility. It can be employed in combination with different methods of data collection (Braun and Clarke 2006). This is an important feature as the data in the study were gathered from a mix of life-history and semi-structured interviews, presenting different depth and nature of testimonies. Thematic analysis enables adaptation of the same method of interpretation across the whole data set and is preferable for large datasets (Braun and Clarke 2006). Furthermore, due to subjective interpretation of themes emergent from the dataset this method is well-established in an interpretivist research philosophy (see Creswell 1994), which informed the study. Similar to the other analytical methods it has been previously adapted in intersectional investigations (Alberti et al. 2013, Martinez Dy et al. 2016, Riggs 2013).

In order to ensure a structure for the interpretation of the data, the study used a procedure for thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). More specifically, Braun and Clarke’s ‘theoretical’ approach to thematic analysis was employed. This approach is used in research designs where the researcher collects data after conducting a thorough literature review. Emergent from the literature review specific research objectives guide the data collection and analysis. As argued by Braun and Clarke (2006) the theoretical approach contrasts with an inductive thematic analysis, which is conducted with little or no theoretical knowledge. Comparing to an inductive approach, theoretical thematic analysis may present a less rich description of the gathered data; however, it offers a more detailed analysis of phenomena related to specific research objectives.

Although Braun and Clarke specialise in psychological studies, their conceptualisations of thematic analysis have been adapted previously in management (Niemann et al. 2016, Vermeulen et al. 2016) and intersectional studies (Martinez et al. 2016). The data analysis procedure consisted of six phases and was based on identifying codes and linking them into themes (Braun and Clarke 2006). The first phase began during the data transcription and focused on familiarisation with the data. Interviews which were transcribed by a transcribing agency were read at least once by the researcher before coding in order to understand the depth and breadth of the content. The second phase involved generating initial codes. As King (2004b, p. 257) explains, a code is:
“a label attached to a section of text to index it as relating to a theme or issue in the data, which the researcher has identified as important to the interpretation”.

According to Boyatzis (1998), codes are the most basic element of the raw data that can be used for an assessment of the phenomenon in a meaningful manner. Thus, the second stage involved organising data according to meaningful codes (Braun and Clarke 2006). Coding was done manually with the basic tools provided by Microsoft Word software. To test the coding technique an excerpt of one transcript was coded as a sample and discussed with the study’s supervisors. The coding technique was adjusted according to the feedback and applied to the rest of the transcripts. The whole dataset was coded, identifying as many patterns related to the study’s aim and objectives as possible. Theoretical knowledge gained during the literature review allowed identification from the data codes related to concepts such as ‘sexual harassment’ or ‘bullying’. Some extracts of data produced multiple codes simultaneously while other parts departed from the ‘dominant story’. However, this uneven saturation of the data is typical for qualitative research (Braun and Clarke 2006).

The third phase of the analysis focused on a broader level of identifying patterns. At this stage, the relationships between the identified codes were considered and analysed. The identified codes were combined into overarching themes. Some examples of early themes, which were later refocused or abandoned due to weak links with the study’s objectives, included ‘Polish boss’ and ‘partner’s help’.

The fourth phase involved refinement of the identified themes. The aim of this stage was to organise themes in a way that they were clearly distinct but coherent with the entire set of data. In the fifth phase, themes’ names were refined in order to ensure that each theme appropriately represented a given aspect. Some of the themes, which were generated at this stage, included sexual harassment, othering or contextual factors at the organisational level.

The sixth and final phase, related to reporting themes in Chapters Five and Six. The account of the meaning derived from the data was based on the analysis within and across the identified themes. To support the prevalence of the themes, data extracts were provided as quotations (Braun and Clarke 2006). In order to further clarify how the data
identified from the theoretical concepts are understood by the researcher, references were made to the relevant literature discussed in Chapter Two where the concepts have been introduced.

Although the current study did not adopt intersectionality as an analytical framework, in order to aid the identification and reporting of themes Bowleg’s (2008) reflections about interpreting intersectional data were taken into account. Bowleg (2008) argues that although intersectionality explains the impact of multiple social identities in a nonlinear manner, in an empirical investigation a consideration of categories’ separate impact is a crucial step in an analysis. According to Bowleg, in order to present a full picture a researcher should analyse inequality both separately and simultaneously. Furthermore, when analysing intersectional data, researchers have to overcome the often invisibility of inequality. While some forms of subordination, such as harassment, are open and obvious to the victim, other practices, which re-create gender (heterogender) or ethnic inequalities, can be difficult to unearth (Acker 2006). Certain identities and their intersection can also be more visible than others. Therefore, according to Bowleg (2008), raw data may not present all the intersectional links and need to be discussed in relation to the already established knowledge. Taking into account Bowleg’s methodological suggestion, Chapters Five and Six, present themes emergent from the data and Chapter Seven discusses the findings in relation to the existing academic literature, shedding more light on Polish women’s intersectional experiences.

While thematic analysis was used to interpret data gathered through life-history and semi-structured interviews, the researcher’s diary produced already interpreted and processed information. Notes from the researcher’s diary were used to guide the data collection and analysis with recognition of reflexive issues identified by the researcher. The following section provides a discussion of the considered reflexive aspects.

**4.8 Reflexivity**

As individuals with social identities and particular perspectives researchers have to reflect on the influence of their interpersonal relations on fieldwork (Temple and Moran 2011). Many scholars have argued that this element of methodology is particularly important when the research topic involves intersections of social identities (Bell et al.
2003, Douglas 2002, Kamenou 2007, Pio 2005). Therefore, this section of the chapter discusses how the researcher’s own social identities could have an influence on the fieldwork. The first part introduces the concept of reflexivity and explains its role in research. The second part provides a description of the researcher’s intersecting social identities and a self-reflexive discussion on how they may have influenced the research process. While numerous factors influence studies, particular attention is given to the explicit account of the researcher’s social identities, for they are both the source of insight and blind spots in research (Bell 2009).

4.8.1 Reflexivity as a research practice

O’Leary (2004, p. 11) defines reflexivity as “the ability of the researcher to stand outside the research process and critically reflect on that process”. It allows recognition of the relationship between the self and research participants, and how those dynamics can become a source of data (Stoeltje et al. 1999). Reflexivity also helps researchers to reflect on how their knowledge shapes meaning and comes into existence (Hertz 1997).

A breadth of literature discusses the significance of differences and similarities between the researcher’s and participants’ social identities (e.g. Broom et al. 2009, Gilbert 2008, Golombisky 2006, Holmgren 2011, Phoenix 1994, Takeda 2012). For example, it is argued that gender has a strong impact on the interaction between the interviewer and interviewees (Kane and Macaulay 1993). Some feminist scholars have argued it is of primary methodological concern to establish non-hierarchical relations with the research participants and to share with them common identities and experiences (Finch 1984, Oakley 1981). Thus, studies about women conducted by men are criticised by some scholars on such methodological grounds (Jones 1996, Maynard 1994). However, other feminist scholars have highlighted that identities such as ethnicity, social class or culture also have a significant influence on the researcher-participant relationship (Collins 1990, Phoenix 1994). Due to the complexity and intersectionality of social identities, a perfect match between the researcher and participants may not be attainable. Phoenix (1994) argues that while identities such as gender or ethnicity impact interviewing, this does not happen in any predictable or generalisable manner. In a similar vein, Broom et al. (2009, p. 63) claims:
“What is clear is that such processes should not be viewed in a linear fashion; gender, as one example, is neither inherently problematic nor beneficial. Rather, it can present as resource and as limiting concurrently”.

In line with these arguments, no preconceived assumptions about shared or different social identities between the researcher and participants should be made. The impact of social vectors is intersectional, non-linear and can be discrepant. Taking into account this complexity and contextuality of the impact of social vectors, the following subsection attempts to identify the role of the researcher’s specific intersecting social identities on the research process in this study.

4.8.2 Researcher’s personal background

In order to navigate between the researcher’s identities, this sub-section relates to the concepts of etic and emic perspectives, ideas derived from ethnographic studies, but also used in interview-based intersectional research (Bettinger 2008). The emic perspective is a viewpoint of a member of the community that is at the focus of the study. Researchers, who have an insider’s personal familiarity with phenomena influencing their participants, have the ability to elicit emic perspectives and unravel, hidden within them, importance (LaSala 2003). The etic perspective, or outsider standpoint, offers explanation of individuals’ behaviours and experiences with the use of ideas that are applicable to all groups and cultures (Sands and McClelland 1994, Wimsatt 1986). Many scholars have argued that good research incorporates an integration of both etic and emic perspectives (Lett 1990, Pike 1990, Sands and McClelland 1994). The study aimed to maintain awareness of the researcher’s role as both an insider and outsider to the group being examined. It is assumed that the researcher’s intersecting identities has balanced the benefits and limitations of etic and emic positions.

In emic investigations, where the subjects are studied from the insider perspective, the researcher may begin fieldwork with certain advantages (Bettinger 2008). For example, potential research participants can be more willing to engage with a study (Hash and Cramer 2003). Indeed, during the recruitment stage it was possible to successfully invite almost all of the research participants who were personally approached. This was a
surprising outcome as most of the research participants work long hours with limited free time available. One of the factors which helped to recruit the participants was the native language shared with research participants. Firstly, it allowed communication during the recruitment in a more efficient manner. This was a crucial factor as the recruitment occurred at research participants’ work in front of customers or other employees. Thus, information about the study had to be exchanged quickly but effectively. Secondly, as the recruitment occurred in public, the language differentiated the researcher and research participants from surrounding spectators creating a link of shared understanding between the researcher and participants. The relevance of this link was confirmed later during data collection. Interviewees enquired about the researcher’s migration and work experiences and expressed contentment in being able to share their experiences of ‘what it is like to be Polish and work in hospitality’, with someone who understands them.

As in the recruitment process, during the data collection the researcher’s emic position, based on a migration status, has proven to be beneficial. Speaking the same native language improved communication with the research participants allowing an expression of more nuanced thoughts and story details. As argued by Takeda (2012) a native language allows communication in the fieldwork on a deeper, more intuitive level, providing more space for expressing meaning. Thus, being Polish improved the communication with the research participants during data collection.

Recognition of the researcher’s etic perspective based on gender played a crucial role in designing the fieldwork. Considering the sensitivity of some of the questions asked in the interviews, particularly related to sexual harassment at work, the researcher prioritised building trust with research participants in the fieldwork design. As mentioned earlier, following Cheng’s (2013) suggestions, the process of interviewing was conducted in a two-phase manner and dynamics between the researcher and participants were under critical observation. After the interviews the researcher asked the participants whether being interviewed by a man influenced their participation in the study. None of the research participants said or indicated that the cross-gender nature of the interviews mattered to them.

The researcher’s middle-class upbringing and occupation as a PhD student also positioned him as both an ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ of the studied group, and may have
also influenced the interviewer-interviewee dialogue. While the majority of the participants have a university degree, some finished their education at A levels. The social, economic and cultural capital of the researcher was similar to some of the participants, but different to others. In order to minimise rather than highlight any economic, cultural or social differences, in interaction with interviewees the researcher focused on his identity as a student rather than researcher. Lay and common language was used not only for clarity during the interviews but throughout wider fieldwork communication.

In addition to the researcher’s social identities, which impact on the research process and were recognised from the diary notes, other identities and factors could have also affected the fieldwork in a more implicit form. For example, the researcher shared with the participants an identity of whiteness which, according to Cheng (2013), can result in a positive perception and treatment of the in-group members. The researcher was also in the same age group as most of the participants. Thus, the interviewees could talk at ease about the importance of getting education, socialising or settling down, knowing the researcher could have similar experiences.

It is recognised that the researcher’s own social identities may have influenced the fieldwork. A simultaneous combination of emic and etic perspectives were both resourceful and limiting. However, as Narayan (1993, p. 27) points out, “all researchers are simultaneously insiders and outsiders to varying degrees”. From that perspective, the specific combination of certain emic and etic elements of the study was its unique feature. It is hoped that with the use of the researcher’s diary notes and the reflexive account of the researcher’s insider/outsider position, the intersecting influence of social identities on the research process has been made more visible.

4.9 Conclusion

As Edmondson and McManus (2007) point out, a researcher faces constraints such as timing of data collection, a complex relationship with research participants and management of mid-project changes to the planned research framework. Nevertheless, a researcher’s duty is to ensure that despite these challenges the research design remains cohesive and supports the scientific contribution set out by the study.
The purpose of this chapter was to discuss and outline a coherent research methodology, which would correspond with the study’s aim and objectives. It sought to achieve a ‘methodological fit’ where the research philosophy, design and analysis would create a single story. The literature reviewed in Chapter Two identified an important gap in our understanding of migrant women’s work experiences, related to the impact of their intersecting, socially-constructed, identities. The experience and meaning-centred focus of the study imposed philosophical standpoints that would allow an effective examination of the socially constructed and individually interpreted reality.

Due to the study’s meaning-centred focus, a qualitative rather than quantitative approach was identified as more adequate to provide in-depth insights into research participants’ everyday work experiences. Furthermore, as the studied phenomena are socially constructed and subjectively perceived, two different methods of data collection were used to provide a non-linear point of reference. As Kanter (1977) argues, adapting a combination of methods is the most suitable approach for understanding complex social reality in the organisational setting. It is hoped that combining a set of interviews and keeping a researcher’s diary not only improved the validity of the findings, but also helped to establish a more critical insight into the gathered data.

Research participants were recruited in accordance with the discussed literature and interaction with them was carefully considered from an ethical point of view. The ethical issues were one of the main shaping factors of the fieldwork influencing the process of data collection, use of research methods and relations with research participants. The gathered data were interpreted with the use of thematic analysis, allowing interpretation of insights from both narrative and semi-structured testimonies. This method, advantageous for analysing large datasets, has been employed together with that suggested by Bowleg (2008) of sensitivity to intersectional insights. The following Chapters, Five and Six, involve presentation of the findings with a further literature-related discussion of intersectional meaning behind Polish women experiences presented in Chapter Seven.
Chapter Five: Polish women’s experiences of privilege and disadvantage

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of Chapters Five and Six is to present the findings related to the first four research objectives (see sections 1.4 or 4.1). Subsequently, all five objectives, including the last, overarching one, are re-addressed in Chapter Seven through a discussion of gathered data and reviewed literature. Chapter Five focuses on Polish women’s everyday experiences of privilege and disadvantage at work. The chapter findings are presented specifically in relation to the impact of identities, which were found to be the most prominent, i.e., (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness. Moreover, Chapter Five examines Polish migrant women’s reflections on episodes which, during the analysis, were identified as examples of inequality.

Each of the main sections of the chapter represent an overarching theme, identified in accordance with those discussed in Chapter Four process of thematic analysis. The main themes in this chapter were labelled as: ‘Sexual harassment’, ‘Workplace bullying’, ‘Othering’, ‘Unequal distribution of tasks’ and ‘Development and promotion opportunities’. As in the case of similar intersectional studies, which used a combination of qualitative methods, the themes emerged from across of the entire dataset (e.g. Mooney 2014, Wright 2015). Thus, a combination of excerpts from both life-history and semi-structured interviews, were used to illustrate the themes identified during the data analysis.

As explained in the discussion on interpretation of intersectional findings, in section 4.7, separated examination of the impact of social identities is a crucial element in intersectional investigations (see Bowleg 2008). Thus, the chapter presents findings emergent from the data illustrating both the individual and intersectional impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness. In Chapter Seven, in relation to the literature, the depth of the intersectional nature of Polish women’s experiences is discussed.
5.2 Sexual harassment

One of the themes identified during the analysis and related to participants’ experiences of inequality, was “sexual harassment”, which is a form of sex discrimination (Equality Act 2010). The data suggests that research participants experienced sexual harassment in all three forms (see EEC 1991), i.e., as physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct. Furthermore, all of the examples identified during the thematic analysis, were sexual harassment as a “condition of work,” rather than sexual harassment “quid pro quo”. Sexual harassment as a “condition of work” refers to instances when a woman is taken advantage of at work by physical, verbal or non-verbal advances, for example by being stared at, commented upon, manipulated into being found alone, or being surreptitiously kissed (MacKinnon 1979). This is different from sexual harassment, quid pro quo, which captures incidents when sexual compliance is expected to be exchanged for an employment benefit (MacKinnon 1979).

All of the episodes which, during the analysis, were identified as sexual harassment had a cross-gender and heterosexual nature. They were conducted exclusively by men, who were either interviewees’ co-workers or customers. The underpinning intersecting gendered and heterosexual nature of those episodes illustrate the impact of (hetero)gender on research participants’ work experiences. The episodes that were identified during the analysis as sexual harassment were of different intensities. Some examples show that sexual harassment has influenced the matter in which research participants have reflected not only upon their workplace but also on themselves.

5.2.1 Physical, non-verbal and verbal sexual harassment

As mentioned above, the data suggest that sexual harassment of research participants occurred in different forms. Physical unwanted sexual conduct happened, for example, to Lidia. During a semi-structured interview she referred to one of the episodes with her manager at a restaurant:

“Lidia: Once, he touched my ass, so I told him that I do not like that. (...). As I say, at *restaurant name* they like to cuddle.

Interviewer: Does this happen to other women or men?
Lidia: To other women, yes.” [Semi-structured interview]

Lidia’s metaphor of “cuddling”, for unwanted sexual behaviour of her co-workers, was conveyed sarcastically. Her comment suggests that episodes, similar to that when her manager touched her body, are common in her workplace and that only women are victims of this behaviour. This shows that Lidia’s experience of unwanted conduct was (hetero)gendered, i.e., it was both heterosexualised and gendered.

Zosia’s experience can be recognised as a form of non-verbal sexual harassment. As a part of her responsibilities as a housekeeper in a hotel she regularly used an elevator. Whenever she used the elevator with one of her male co-workers he would invade her private space by standing too close for her comfort. This is how she explained the experience:

“There was once a situation and it was a Polish man. It was not anyone from here. It was an older man and he was so disgusting ... But this situation did not happen just to me. While working on my floor, I was on the 3rd floor, he was cleaning the stairs, to get to my floor I had to take the elevator. And he was cleaning all floors, vestibules, stairs, so he always was somewhere nearby. With him I was struggling for two weeks until I talked to Mary to solve the situation because it was horrible. He would do something like, I come into the elevator, he was already there. He would stand so close to me that all my self-protective instincts would go off. ‘Go away, you're too close!’ Although I told him many times to not come anywhere near me, to let me have my personal space, he would turn it into a joke. I do not know, maybe he thought that I liked it, that I accepted it, but of course I didn’t” [Zosia - semi-structured interview].

According to ACAS (2013) standing close to a person can be recognised as a form of sexual harassment. Although Zosia clearly communicated to the male colleague that she felt uncomfortable, he did not stop his actions. Luckily for Zosia, her intervention with the manager (Mary) brought results and ended the unwelcomed behaviour. Similar to Lidia’s comment, Zosia explained that she was not the only victim at her workplace of such behaviour.
Furthermore, some participants were subject to verbal sexual harassment. This type of unwanted behaviour included unwanted sexual advances and sexist language. For example, Lidia on a recurring basis had to defend herself against the advancements of her manager. During a discussion of episodes which made Lidia uncomfortable at work she said:

“This manager X gives me hints all the time. I told him from the very beginning I have a boyfriend” [Lidia - semi-structured interview].

Her use of the phrase ‘all the time’ [org. “cały czas”] suggests recurrence and continuity of the manager’s unwanted advances. For Lidia this form of unwanted behaviour was connected to her experiences of physical harassment as ‘manager X’ was the same person who touched an intimate part of Lidia’s body, as described earlier in this section.

5.2.2 Intersecting underpinnings of sexual harassment

Research participants’ experiences of sexual harassment illustrate the impact of (hetero)gender on their working lives. The interviewees’ interconnected sexuality and gender become manifested and negotiated through men’s unwanted heterosexual advances. However, for some interviewees the experiences of unwanted sexual conduct was also interconnected with their migration status. Karolina, referring to the owner of the restaurant where she used to work, said:

“He has a child with a Polish woman, he is in a happy relationship for 10 years, before that he had an unsuccessful marriage. He likes Polish people. He has a theory that Polish women in Turkey are great wives and he was trying to make me date his buddies” [Karolina - life-history interview].

It can be argued that in Karolina’s case the sexual harassment was based on the intersection of her (hetero)gender and migration status, specifically being a Polish migrant. As in Lidia’s response, the pressure to engage into romantic relationships came from Karolina’s superior.

Intersectionality of the unwanted sexual behaviour was also embedded in the language used to harass the interviewed Polish women. Research participants were addressed by
their male co-workers with phrases implying women’s inferior or subordinate position, such as ‘sexy baby’ or ‘bitch’. Depending on the workplace, Polish women, together with other female staff, would hear these and/or other sexualised phrases such as ‘nice tits’, ‘nice ass’. The phrases were said in English, Polish or Spanish, i.e., languages shared by a group of men in their workplaces. During the follow-up interview Ewa mentioned episodes when her male co-worker used sexist language in Polish:

“There was a girl, for example, who was standing next to me and person X came. I cannot remember if he was English or Scottish. And he said, it was exactly... I do not know whether to quote, because it was a little uncool, but it was basically ‘Give me a blowjob’ and it was regarded as OK, and she laughed at this, because someone taught him that. And when, there was a situation that I heard ‘Hi bitch’ well, I grabbed a broom and broke the broom on that person” [Ewa - semi-structured interview].

It could be argued that although both, Ewa and her non-Polish female co-worker, were affected by sexist and sexualised language, the experience was more offensive for Ewa as the phrases were said in her native language. According to Dewaele (2004) the more proficient a person is with a language the more emotional impact swearwords that are said in that language will have. Thus, Ewa’s experience of sexual harassment, similar to Karolina, was underpinned by an intersection of her (hetero)gender and migration status. The difference in meaning carried by the native language and the subsequent emotional impact of the offensive phrases could explain the difference in Ewa’s and her and her co-worker’s reaction.

5.2.3 Influence of sexual harassment on work experiences

Sexual harassment had a varying impact on research participants’ working experiences. While some interviewees downplayed the significance of the unwanted sexual harassment others were explicit in its meaning for their working lives. For example, explaining her experience of hearing sexist Polish phrases Ewa said:

“There was a lot of it. It was such a daily… basically, some sort of competition I think. It is a strange workplace. There's a reason why I
call it ‘Hell’, because for me personally it was ‘Hell’ when it comes to such relations with employees. (…) That was more than anything that I have ever heard in my life. It is not cool, when you come to work and you hear ‘Hi bitch.’ Really?” [Ewa - semi-structured interview].

Ewa’s comment reveals that the prevalence in her workplace of sexist language has influenced her perception of relations with co-workers in general. Moreover, the experience of verbal sexual harassment and its everydayness shaped her description of the workplace as ‘Hell’. This emotive negative language used to describe a workplace could suggest a significant negative emotional impact of the harassing behaviour.

Lidia’s interview response also illustrated the impact of sexist language directed at her:

“(…) when I go to work and I'm wearing this red uniform and he says to me, ‘Sexy baby make me coffee’ it just makes me want to puke. That's the truth. Because I feel a completely different person, some kind of sexy doll… The way people talk to you the way you think about yourself, sometimes” [Lidia - semi-structured interview].

According to Lidia the manager’s sexist language together with the uniform, which she was wearing, had a negative effect on her to an extent that she felt physical sickness. The quote suggests that the unwanted sexual conduct affected her own perception of who she is in a demeaning way. Her manager’s behaviour has led to a perception of herself as a ‘sexy doll’, i.e., a sexualised object. This may not be coincidental as Lidia’s manager has also used language to objectify her. According to Bartky (1990) sexual objectification “occurs when a woman’s body or body parts are singled out and separated from her as a person and she is viewed primarily as a physical object of male sexual desire”. Lidia was one of the research participants who also experienced this form of sexualisation of work:

“Manager [X] came over and said, ‘But Lidia, you do not have a big butt, if someone tells you that, don’t believe it.’ And I looked at him… ‘But why are you telling this to me?’” [Lidia - semi-structured interview].
Manager X was the same person who physically harassed Lidia, proceeded with unwanted romantic advances and used sexist and objectifying language. Despite the occurrence of these different incidents and their impact on Lidia, during the interview she diminished the meaning of the unwanted sexualised behaviour:

“These are not very serious things. They are the kind of things that you can handle yourself. They think it is a joke or something, that it is not really harassment. But if you exaggerate a little you could… (…) For me it is an idiot who does not know what he is talking about and I do not take it seriously and I do not give a damn” [Lidia - semi-structured interview].

Firstly, this comment suggests that, according to Lidia, perpetrators of sexual harassment at her workplace perceive unwanted sexual conduct as a joke. Perpetrators presenting unwanted sexual behaviour as a form of humour were a common subtheme that was also illustrated, for example, in Zosia’s earlier story about the elevator. Secondly, Lidia hesitates whether to label her experience as sexual harassment. According to her, it would be a slight exaggeration to do so. Instead she chooses to trivialise the occurrences by calling the perpetrator an “idiot who does not know what he is talking about” and distances herself from the experience (“I do not give a damn”).

Mentioned by Lidia, objectification and its emotional impact on the victim was also illustrated by Ewa. In her workplace sexual objectification, in addition to the popular sexist and sexualised language, also took a more direct form as she was treated by her male co-workers as an object of a sex bet. As she explained this had a negative emotional impact on her:

“This place was weird. There were strange things happening there, for example, having sex was very popular there, everyone with anyone. The more the better. So, bets were made who with whom and why. (…) I felt not nice, the moment when I found out about a bet on me. It was, who will succeed. I was sorry that anyone bet on that because I am really not an object” [Ewa - semi-structured interview].

Ewa was objectified both in a sexual manner, as an instrument of sexual interest, and in a more literal meaning of the concept. By placing a bet on who will have sex with her
first, co-workers saw her as an object and deprived her of her agency. Unlike Lidia, rather than distance herself from the experience, Ewa explained the emotional impact on her of these occurrences.

Finally, an interview with Zuza shows that interviewees were sexualised at work even when language was not used to directly to harass or objectify a person:

“This manager from [restaurant's name] was hitting on me but I told him no and he understood it but sometimes he asked for a second or third time. (...) to meet or go out for wine and was very honest on personal subjects. He was giving too much information and I was not interested in it at all. For example, that he got very drunk, that he went somewhere with some girl… and I was like 'please do not tell me that!'” [Zuza - semi-structured interview].

Although, the manager talked about his relations with another woman, in the context of his unwanted advances, the sexualised conversation made Zuza uncomfortable. Zuza’s manager’s unwanted conduct, similar to previously discussed examples, had an underlying (hetero)gendered nature.

5.3 Workplace bullying

Another theme emerging from the dataset, which described a pattern of research participants’ inequality experiences, was workplace bullying. Sexual harassment and bullying can overlap (ACAS 2013) and some of the episodes described in the previous section, such as sexualised language, also match the definition of bullying (see ACAS 2013). However, for purposes of reporting the findings this section focuses on episodes that were identified during the analysis as bullying and can be seen as a form of disadvantage or privilege but were not related to sexualisation of work. Thus, the section presents three subthemes emergent from the dataset: 1) Bullying conducted by kitchen employees on interviewees who worked as waiting staff; 2) bullying conducted by the interviewees’ Polish co-workers; and, finally 3) racialised bullying, which was directed at non-white co-workers. The following discussion examines each of these
subthemes and explains the role of interviewees’ social identities in the shaping of the described experiences.

5.3.1 Bullying conducted by kitchen employees

The data revealed that some waiting staff research participants were bullied by co-workers working in the kitchen. However, due to the gendered division of work, in practice, bullying behaviour was perpetrated solely by male chefs on female waiting staff. This is how Sara described this division of work at her pub:

“There were stereotypes. Baker, they make their own bread there, chef – men. The one who makes salads, a woman. Stereotypes, no? Waitresses are women, they make salads at the canteen” [Sara - life-history interview].

The gendered division of work, where the majority of women work as customer-facing staff and the majority of men working as kitchen staff was common among the research participants’ workplaces, and is a common practice in the hospitality industry in general (Women First 2010). Reflecting this division of work, all of the interviewees’ reports of problematic incidents caused by the kitchen staff were caused by men. Oliwia described examples of regular incidents that can be identified as bullying, and which were, in practice, gendered:

“They were very slight, for example, it would happen that a chef [he] after serving food on a plate threw the whole plate together with the food under a grill for 15 seconds, then gave it for serving. The plate was at this point so damn hot that you could not hold it through a cloth, two cloths. You just could not hold it because it burned the skin... It could even burn to flesh if held without a cloth, God forbid. Small pranks… heating up the counter... One waitress had a tendency of leaning out and checking if it’s ready to serve, she leaned on this counter. At some point, the head chef [he] decided to heat up this metal counter to simply incredible temperatures, so she would unlearn it. She burned herself two times, slightly. Slightly fortunately, but ...” [Oliwia - life-history interview].
Here Oliwia tells a story from a hotel restaurant where some shifts were so busy she had to rush, in a standing position, her only meal during an eight-hour, or longer, working day. Particularly, in those conditions of intense manual labour, chefs’ ‘pranks’ that could burn her posed a threat to her health and safety. Oliwia’s use of the word ‘pranks’ is not coincidental. Research participants’ stories show that episodes, which can be identified as a pattern of bullying, were often perceived as a form of humour. For example, Zaneta said:

“They had a very strange sense of humour. Like, burning us with a spoon. Hot tea spoon burning, or hitting us on the head. (...) With a hand, or kitchen towel. For no reason. Such jokes, such pranks” [Zaneta - life-history interview].

The use of ‘humour’ to describe incidents that can be identified as a form of cross-gender bullying resembles the language used to describe sexual harassment, discussed earlier in section 5.2.

5.3.2 Bullying perpetrated by Polish co-workers

The second pattern of bullying behaviour, identified from the dataset, revealed that in some cases the shared Polish migration status between co-workers was a catalyst for an abusive relationship, rather than a base for support or privilege. The interview responses suggest that some of the research participants’ Polish co-workers with more working experience bullied their subordinates or less experienced co-workers. For example, referring to her Polish co-workers at a chain café in general, and one Polish colleague specifically, Kinga said:

“It was hard to get along with Polish women, with other nationalities there were no problems and with Polish women there actually were. These relations with some people were heavily strained. (...) There were several problematic situations, in which one girl picked on me, pushed me, trampled me a little, wiped me against the floor. It was a problematic situation, in which she picked on me at every step, at every possible turn. So I did not want to work with her, and when I came to work I was nervous from the very beginning. From the very
beginning till the very end, because I could not stand still even for a minute. You had to work. ‘They do not pay you for standing! Go wipe that counter top for the tenth time’” [Kinga - life-history interview].

The episodes that illustrated bullying behaviour conducted by Polish co-workers, with more working experience was a distinct theme. For Lidia this experience, which can be identified as workplace bullying, had a cross-gender nature. Referring to her experience with Polish chefs at the fish and chips shop where she used to work, she said:

“They were trying to use me, in the sense that I was new, and I did not know what are my responsibilities, what are theirs, and they were burdening me with their job. (…) I remember they cleaned the containers. There is a lot of oil in them, and he poured all this oil on the floor. There was a lot of it there. It was his job to do and he said to me, ‘Clean it’. I was new so ... you know, I wasn’t going to discuss (…) it was three years ago ... and he tells me to clean it… he stands over me, and he is watching” [Lidia - life-history interview].

According to Lidia she was taken advantage of by her Polish co-workers because as a new employee she was not aware of her responsibilities. Her testimony, above, illustrates this argument, and shows elements of intimidating behaviour and abuse of a higher position.

The identifiable bullying patterns conducted by Polish more experienced co-workers is further complicated by interview responses of research participants who worked as supervisors. Although, they did not talk about bullying Polish co-workers they admitted either negative bias towards Polish migrants or open discrimination of compatriots. For example:

“I, as a person who used to employ people, avoid employing Polish people, honestly. Because... from my experience, as I worked with Polish people, whenever I was in a higher position, I had a feeling that because we are from the same country, we are on the same level mentally and with the same or similar past, I would have to do them favours. Or I would have to allow them more than others. It was used,
the fact that you are from Poland. I was trying to avoid it” [Sara - semi-structured interview].

In other words Sara admitted that she discriminates against Polish people in hiring. The quotation also reveals that she holds a general opinion about Polish people based on negative experiences of being expected to privilege fellow compatriots. The comment about negative bias towards Polish co-workers is repeated by Wiola, who works as a hotel supervisor of housekeeping staff. According to her, Polish subordinates were taking advantage of good relations with her. She explains this with reference to two newly hired Polish women:

“Wiola: We have two new girls, they started this week. Polish (haha).

Interviewer: Yes?

Wiola: Yes, unfortunately (haha). (…) I think it is not very good. Staff should be a little more mixed” [Wiola - semi-structured interview].

Sara and Wiola’s responses present an important finding in relation to the emerging data concerning episodes of bullying behaviour conducted by more experienced Polish co-workers. Firstly, their disadvantageous bias towards Polish migrants adds weight to the research participants’ reflections that they were bullied at work by Polish senior co-workers due to their migration status. Secondly, Sara and Wiola’s comments reveal a more complicated relationship between Polish employees that result in unequal treatment. Their responses suggest that one of the reasons for disadvantageous treatment of Polish co-workers can be compatriots’ expectations for favourable treatment.

5.3.3 Racialised bullying directed at non-white co-workers

The data suggests that the research participants could be privileged, when compared to their co-workers who were victims of racial bullying and were a visible ethnic minority. Referring to her work in a hotel, this is how Wiola explained work experiences of colleagues from other ethnic minorities:

“I have a Chinese woman at the reception, for whom it was very hard. She is my best employee and it was very difficult for her to break
away from the receptionist team because the director did not like her. 

(…) We had a restaurant manager who was Hindu and what he was 
doing he was doing fantastically. He was a fantastic manager but the 
job was so stressful for him, because the director didn’t like him, so 
much that at some point he just resigned. Even though he was really 
good in the eyes of all the others. You can see it often and I have 
heard even from my colleagues at the office, some comments about 
skin colour. Because I do not know ... they do not like Pakistanis”

[Wiola - semi-structured interview].

Wiola’s interview responses suggest that her visible ethnic minority co-workers were 
treated in a malicious manner at work. She reported her co-workers making a comment 
about other employees’ skin colour and related to this racial differentiation 
disadvantage. She further explained examples of malicious behaviour, which targeted 
specifically non-white colleagues:

“Interviewer: And in what way does the director put additional 
pressure on employees…

Wiola: Who have a different skin colour? Usually he has a lot of 
comments for them. For the others he doesn’t. Simple things like 
years ago when I worked at the reception I wore some sort of a 
receptionist uniform with a shawl around the neck. I had no shawl 
around the neck, Jane also didn’t have it on the same day, Jane is a 
Chinese woman, for the Chinese woman he had comments, to me he 
did not say nothing. Those kind of things. Comments that were small 
but very painful… or when she didn’t understand something… or the 
company name when she was switching the phone line to him. And 
when it is someone else who didn’t understand but they have white 
skin colour, he won’t comment on it. This is not like anything direct, 
but Jane is a very intelligent girl and she knows” [Wiola - semi-
structured interview].

According to Wiola her co-workers who were not identified as white were subject to 
regular malicious treatment. The bullying behaviour did not relate to ethnicity directly:
however, according to Wiola its racial nature was visible when the experience of employees with white and non-white skin colour was compared. According to Wiola the pattern of disadvantageous treatment was also clearly identifiable for the victims. Paradoxically, although Wiola was able to recognise the disadvantage of her colleagues, who were of visibly ethnic minority, her privilege of identity of whiteness was left unnoticed. This is how she commented her own relationship with the director who she accused of being racist:

“To me he refers with a lot of respect. I think that this is solely due to the fact that I can defend myself and I never pretended that it’s great (...) At my work, I know that everyone respects me exclusively because of how much I have done at this workplace and because I have a much better knowledge than they do. And they cannot at this point treat me negatively because if I leave suddenly they won’t be able to manage” [Wiola - semi-structured interview].

Wiola’s responses contradict each other. First she suggests that the racialised behaviour which her co-workers experience is not related to a quality of work, it targets employees who, according to her, are excellent workers. Then, when she explains her very good relations with the director who disadvantages visible ethnic minority employees, she uses her personal and professional merits to justify the advantageous treatment. Although, in the previous statement she recognised the impact of ethnicity on other employees’ work experiences she fails to reflect on the role of her whiteness identity.

5.4 Othering

Another theme identified from the data was ‘othering’. As explained in Chapter Two, othering is a process which makes the ‘Other’, i.e., a person or group of people who are located on the margins, outside of the centre. It is a form of discrimination (Mountz 2009). Some of the examples of bullying discussed above, whether gendered or racialised, as well as those pertaining to sexual harassment, can be perceived as manifestations of othering. For instance, objectifying language indirectly named and labelled women as not belonging to ‘the norm’ in the workplace shaped by a masculine culture. However, this section focuses on interviewees’ experiences that can be
identified as a form of othering and does not involve previously discussed elements of sexualisation, humiliation or injuring of the recipient. It is recognised that the concepts of sexual harassment, bullying and othering overlap. However, following the procedure of thematic analysis each of the themes is discussed in a separate manner.

5.4.1 Othering behaviour

With the confined conceptualisation of what constitutes othering the dataset revealed that some research participants were subject to othering behaviour, which was based on their migration status. For example, interviewees’ co-workers’ ‘humour’ targeted elements of Polish women’s migrant identity, thereby othering them. Sylwia and Ela’s follow-up interview responses illustrate such episodes:

“I had this one colleague, who does not work anymore but he had a very black sense of humour and often laughed. For example, he asked at what point my parents told me that I am from Poland” [Sylwia - semi-structured interview].

“Managers, they are my co-workers, with whom I sit at the office and with whom I joke, who make fun of my accent” [Ela - semi-structured interview].

Sylwia and Ela’s comments suggest that at their workplaces co-workers in a non-malicious manner used as a subject of jokes either their migration status or elements related to it, such as accent. However, repetition of characteristics, even in the form of humour, which distinguished Sylwia and Ela from other employees labelled them as the Other. Ela explained how she reflects on her co-workers’ behaviour:

“I have nothing against laughing at myself and Polish culture because I also laugh at Scottish people. (…) I am not a patriot anymore, maybe that is why I do not pay attention to it anymore but I would not take these seriously” [Ela - semi-structured interview].

Ela’s comment suggests that she gives her permission for the jokes as they are reciprocated. Furthermore, she pays less attention to the jokes than before and, according to her, it is a result of her lost sense of patriotism. However, as Ela has
worked at her workplace for seven years it is also possible that she has become accustomed to the othering jokes.

The behaviour of some of the research participants’ customers can also be identified as othering. The most direct instances, which were also offensive, were mentioned by Irena:

“I had a few episodes, when it comes to customers, that I was called a ‘foreigner’ with that adjective on ‘f’ in front” [Irena - semi-structured interview].

Due to the mentioned ‘f word’, the context in which the label ‘foreigner’ was used is clearly negative. The explicitness of the phrase, which Irena heard from her customer, suggests that the idea to distinguish her from the ‘norm’ was intentional. Even when customers’ language was less explicit and less intentional in distinguishing between “them” and “us” it could have been an othering experience for the research participants. For example, unlike Irena, Sara was not labelled in an offensive manner; however, her migration status was often identified and highlighted by the customers. Referring to her work at a pub Sara said:

“I often heard from customers: ‘Where are you from?’ It’s not your business. Often. But you know, when he looks at me… I'm not from Turkey, Italy, I have high eastern European… I often got this immediate ‘Where are you from.’ Either because of the accent or… predominantly when you deny someone something. Immediately, immediately it is negative. Immediately… it does not matter, where they are from, where this person is from, you deny them service, ‘Where are you from?’ This was always the next question. Even if you are very polite, it doesn’t matter” [Sara - semi-structured interview].

Sara’s response shows that her migration status was often identified and commented upon due to her accent. As she explains customers behaved in this manner especially when she refused them service. The label of her being an outsider could have been consciously or unconsciously used to question her decision to refuse service.
Furthermore, it can be argued that some of the research participants’ conversations with the customers, while not malicious or insulting could have also been an othering experience. For example, Danuta who works at a restaurant said:

“I had this pair, I was serving, and this gentleman asked me where am I from. We talked a little and he asked me what are my plans and whether, for example, my plan is not to go back to Poland. But the way he said that, it felt more like it is not a question but a suggestion (haha), he was trying to send me back (haha)” [Danuta - semi-structured interview].

Danuta and other research participants had conversations with customers who inquired whether they plan to move back to Poland. Articulating this question during short service encounters can leave an impression of expectancy for Polish women to migrate back to their home country. Regardless of whether customers intended to other interviewees by making their inquiries, it can be argued that focusing on the research participants’ migrant identities distinguishes them as the Other.

5.4.2 The impact of othering on work experiences

Research participants’ reflections on being an outsider or insider of the ‘norm’ in the workplace illustrate othering’s influence on interviewees’ work experiences. For example, according to Karolina the self-perception of being an outsider can have an impact on one’s work. Referring to her work at a restaurant she said:

“Polish people are more effective. It is cleaner. We are constantly doing something, trying to find something, while the Scots do not overwork themselves, sometimes. They will stand, chat a little. Are we going to say ‘Mate, get to work, for how long you are going to talk?’ We will not, because we are not at home. Although sometimes you would like to do it. Perhaps as a joke make a comment, but in the end we will never feel here like at home, I think” [Karolina - life-history interview].

Karolina’s comment suggests that due to her own feeling of being an outsider she was not able to reprimand her Scottish co-workers for not doing their share of the work.
Karolina’s perception of being an outsider is related to her migration status. It can be argued that the previously discussed examples of othering behaviour, which directly or indirectly identify research participants as outsiders on the basis of their migration status, can reinforce research participants’ self-identification as the Other. If so, othering behaviour present in interviewees’ workplaces not only differentiates between ‘us’ and ‘them’ but can also effectively create, or contributes to the creation of an informal hierarchy between employees. As suggested by Karolina’s comment, this hierarchical differentiation between ‘us’ and ‘them’ can have implications on division of work.

Zuza’s interview response suggests that the othering behaviour can affect some Polish employees more than others. Referring to her work at a chain café she said:

“They saw me as more local because I have been here for long, since childhood. So, in a way they treated me differently than that other Polish girl, who has been here for two years, because I was raised here and she came here. They treated her slightly differently. I cannot explain it” [Zuza - life-history interview].

Zuza mentioned that there was a difference at her café in how her co-workers treated her and another Polish colleague. In Zuza’s opinion she was perceived by her co-workers as a ‘local’ person, which was different from her colleague who has recently migrated to Scotland. According to Zuza the difference in their period of residence in Scotland was the reason for different treatment. Firstly, Zuza’s observation suggests that othering can have an impact on how employees treat each other. Secondly, her story illustrates that the Other is socially constructed and context-specific rather than based on a definitive characteristic such as country of origin.

Being the Other, could also mean receiving positive treatment. Respondents also reported that due to their limited English skills they received additional help from their colleagues or customers. They have highlighted, in their stories, colleagues’ patience and forgiveness. For example, Zosia and Irena said respectively:

“Always on the plus side. They’ve always been very good people, people who taught me everything and showed me a lot of things. They had a lot of patience for me. As I remember myself from then, with my confidence and language. I really admire them, that they had so
much patience for me and warmth and heart” [Irena - life-history interview].

“There was never a situation when they would make me feel that I am worse because I did not understand, that it is my fault. There was never such a situation. They always tried to explain it in such a way that I understood it. They said that everything takes time” [Zosia - life-history interview].

The feeling of not being ‘worse’ reported by Zosia corresponds with similar comments made by some research participants. It can indicate that some of the interviewees felt equal at their workplace despite their migration status. The feeling of not being ‘worse’ could have been reinforced by the received help as a newly arrived migrant. The first few jobs for many Polish women were an opportunity to learn the British, Scottish and local culture. For example, Ela said that her first employer, the owner of a small guest house, was helping her with English and explained to her where it is safe for a woman to walk around Edinburgh after dark. She said:

“I was working at a small Guest House with a woman who is Scottish, who is the owner and she helped me a lot, even when it came to learning the language, because I was with her at all times, I talked a lot and she was also a very talkative person. Or paper work, she helped me a lot and told me about Edinburgh, where to go, where not to go. Those kind of basic things but when you move somewhere you do not know it. Especially, when you are a woman. (…) She already told me that for her, I am simply like a daughter. For her I was her daughter” [Ela - life-history interview].

According to Ela, her past employer perceived her as a daughter. This close, family-like, relationship and the received helped as a new arrival could have reinforced her feeling of belonging and equality.

Finally, it should be recognised that while the data predominantly revealed episodes where research participants were treated as the ‘Other’ on the basis of their migration status, interviewees have also been a group othering the remaining employees. For example:
“I can feel isolated in some way, but the fact is that we dominate at the workplace in a given moment and there are six of us, Polish people, and two people who are not from Poland. At this point we start communicating in Polish and people who are not from Poland start feeling isolated, because they are not included, because they do not understand, they are not included in the conversation” [Danuta - semi-structured interview].

At Danuta’s restaurant the majority of employees were Polish. It can be argued that their use of native language was excluding non-Polish co-workers from the dominant in the workplace social group. Her example shows that Polish women’s migration status can be othered as well as othering.

5.5 Unequal distribution of tasks

The fourth main theme that emerged from the dataset, which illustrates research participants’ daily experiences, is unequal distribution of tasks. The follow-up interview responses suggest that research participants experienced a disadvantageous pattern in allocation of chores, where they were perceived as default employees for additional, unwanted or difficult tasks. The data from the previous section, illustrating Karolina’s inability to rebuke her Scottish co-workers for not doing their share of work, together with a full analysis of the wider socio-cultural context, which is presented in the next chapter (section 6.3) allow one to assume that the pattern of unequal distribution of tasks was based on research participants’ migration status. It is argued that a particularly important role in an unequal distribution of tasks played a stereotype, popular in the majority of research participants’ workplaces, about the good working ethic of Polish employees (see section 6.3.4).

The data revealed that some of the research participants were regularly responsible in their workplaces for what can be referred to as ‘dirty work’, i.e., tainted, unpleasant, undesired work, which most people would not prefer to do (Hughes 1971). For example, Zaneta and Sara said respectively:
“I was getting more difficult tasks to do than someone else, because they knew that I can handle them, because I work hard, or because… Cleaning a bin inside, picking up trash from the sidewalk torn by seagulls. I always got those chores” [Zaneta - semi-structured interview].

“There are toilet checks, so I had to do them. I was doing them more and more often, because they knew that I will do it right” [Sara - semi-structured interview].

While Zaneta and Sara refer to different tasks the described chores can be considered as unpleasant or undesired work. Some research participants were allocated to tasks that required more intense labour:

“I saw that in other shifts there were more people than in mine. Those kind of basic things where you can see that someone knows that you can manage it so you will be working more, you will be working more just because you can” [Ewa - semi-structured interview].

“I always, always work on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, always every week. It will not happen that I will not be working on these days. Always the most difficult days. These are the busiest days, the hardest, most demanding, the hours are long” [Sara - semi-structured interview].

Ewa was working during shifts when less staff was assigned and as a consequence she had to work harder. Sara was persistently, allocated to work during the days which were most labour-intensive. Neither of the research participants received extra remuneration for their additional work. Working during the busiest shifts also did not correspond with earning additional tips as research participants who were serving customers had to share their tips on a weekly basis with the whole staff.

5.5.1 Justification of unequal distribution of tasks

The allocation of unwanted or most labour intensive tasks was justified at the workplaces by interviewees’ ability to perform the tasks well. This was called by the
Interviewees’ for example as the ability to ‘do it right’, ‘to handle it’ or ‘to manage it’. For example:

“True, I was appreciated there as a person who works well. Because when it came to difficult days, when, for example, we had a lot of rooms booked, or a huge breakfast for a group of 30 people who had breakfast at the same time, I was assigned to help, ‘Because you can handle it’” [Zaneta - life-history interview].

While participants’ managers were presenting additional unpaid work as a form of recognition of the interviewed Polish women’s skills, positive perception of potentially discriminatory work allocation was also preferred by some of the affected interviewees themselves. As Zaneta’s comment shows, she viewed the experience as a form of appreciation of her as a person who works well. Similarly, Irena focuses on the positive element of being responsible for additional work:

“I've always had good relationship with people, I know that people… it’s not that I'm not modest, but people really liked me. They liked to work with me. Sometimes I suspected also that… I’ve heard that they liked to work with me especially at the end of the day, especially on the so-called closing because they knew that I will do everything. And they can stand leaning on a mop. That as well… I do not know if it was an expression of sympathy but… I think it was rather positive and I remember it positively” [Irena - life-history interview].

Research participants’ focus on the positive elements of unequal division of work could be a form of strategy to cope with the experienced inequality. For example, by focusing on good relations with her co-workers Irena could maintain a good overall memory of her past working experiences, minimising the reflection of working more than her co-workers. In some cases participants were less idealistic in the evaluation of their additional tasks. For example, Kaja and Sara said respectively:

“There are shifts morning and evening. Evening is the worst, because you have to clean up everything, you have to wash everything. Then who? Ideally leave it to Kaja, a Pole, because she will do it. It was the
worst job, you know, the worst job for that person” [Kaja - semi-structured follow-up interview].

“There were a lot of Polish stereotypes, so people did not rush because they knew that this person or that one will finish earlier and help. They do not have to rush” [Sara - life-history interview].

According to Kaja and Sara, the questionable allocation of tasks was related to their migration status. This reasoning may be argued plausible in the light of the contextual factors influencing Polish women’s work experiences such as the popular stereotype about Polish migrants’ ‘good work ethic’ (Anderson et al. 2006, Matthews and Ruhs 2007a, McDowell et al. 2007). Sara, directly links additional work with stereotypes about Polish employees. Research participants’ comments suggest that they have complied with expectations to undertake additional work. A wider analysis of contextual factors presented in the next chapter suggests that the majority of the research participants’ were in a vulnerable position at their workplaces and labour market and, as a result, were reinforcing behaviour that led to unequal allocation of tasks. Furthermore, as Karolina’s interview response suggests (see section 5.4 Othering) Polish women labelled in their workplaces as outsiders may not see themselves as able to reprimand their co-workers for not doing their share of work.

5.6 Development and promotion opportunities

Finally, interview responses suggested that some of the research participants had privileged access to development and promotion opportunities. The treatment, which they received, was not available to other employees and their advantageous position was context-specific, i.e., it was related to a specific workplace and received from a specific male superior. The advantageous treatment of these few research participants occurred in the background of their managers’ (hetero)gendered advances. This was most prominent in Ewa and Karolina’s stories, as explained below.
5.6.1 Ewa’s story

Privileged access to development opportunities can be identified, for example, in Ewa’s story. She was hired at a pub although due to her limited English she did not understand the questions during the job interview. When asked why she was able to secure the position despite not understanding the interview questions she said:

“Technically, the head of this ‘Hell’ fancied me. When I came in I caught the boss’s fancy” [Ewa - life-history interview].

Once she started working at the pub she was invited to serve customers at the bar rather than on the floor faster than other new employees:

“There was a general rule, when they hired me, that for three, four months depending on how good was your English, you were working on the floor. If you were lucky at some point you would be moved to the bar. (...) For me it was offered after a month, although I still was not speaking English too well. I agreed to move to a bar. (...) There, I started to learn alcohols and many other things” [Ewa - life-history interview].

Ewa highlights in her comment that ‘for her’ the path of development at the pub was different form the ‘general rule’. Even though she had not yet worked at the pub for a few months, and she still did not speak English ‘too well’, she was invited to move behind the bar. The experience of working behind the bar was initially difficult for Ewa because of her limited language skills; nevertheless, it was an opportunity to gain new skills such as serving drinks. Ewa’s access for development, which was not available for other employees serving customers on the floor, caused discontent with some of her colleagues, as she explained:

“It was not particularly well received by the majority. Especially since some of them were still working at serving the tables and they were waiting for their chance. (...) There was generally discontent of what is happening. Because, how is this possible since I do not speak English that well and have been working for so short, then why did I go behind the bar?” [Ewa - life-history interview].

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Ewa was also quickly approached with an invitation to work as a supervisor:

“Ewa: At some point an offer was made for me to become a supervisor there. I did not agree, I declined it and at some point I simply quit.

Interviewer: How quickly did you receive the offer of a supervisor?

Ewa: Very quickly, within… It was a conversation whether I would be interested and I declined it, within four months, something like that”. [Life-history interview]

Furthermore, even though Ewa used physical violence against some of her male co-workers, including the general manager (see 6.2.2), she was able to avoid any consequences. According to her she was able to escape disciplinary action because of her ‘working’ skills. She said:

“Honestly, a few times, I should have got fired from there because of my behaviour, but I work well. It happened to me a couple of times, when I should have ended up with at least proper disciplinary action but I did not” [Ewa - life-history interview].

Ewa’s claim that she was not held responsible for her violence due to her working skills is questionable in the light of her comments about the working relations:

“For me working was really good because I was the boss’s favourite (laughs). (…) For sure I could have said a lot more than anyone else so I did not have to mince my words. Besides, I was enjoying myself telling him that he has to eat carrots because he’s too fat and he has to lose some weight, if he wants to have a chance. I was allowing myself for a lot. For me it was a funny situation because it was an older gentleman. Not particularly well built with a very average sense of humour. To be honest, I would say, yes, I simply took advantage of the situation” [Ewa - life-history interview].

Ewa admitted that she took advantage of a privileged position, which was based on her general manager’s advances towards her. The advantageous treatment was available to
her due to her (hetero)gender. According to Ewa, due to the circumstances she was able to escape the consequences of her actions; however, it could be argued that for the same reason she was not held accountable for her physical violence towards her co-workers (see section 6.2.2). Her reflection on own advantage could suggest that her access to development and promotion opportunities, despite the lack of necessary language skills or experience, was also based on the general manager’s advances. Especially, that Ewa admitted that her boss’s sympathy also allowed her to adjust her working conditions:

“It is not a matter if someone is attractive or not attractive, if someone likes you they will allow you for a little more. I, at some point, had a bit of a free hand. When my boss was not there I was deciding if I am working on top or on the bottom and with whom. If it did not suit me, then I did not work and I was saying that I am not going to work. If I wanted to finish earlier I was finishing earlier. If I wanted on that day, that in general I did not want to stay there, then I could make it that the moment my boss ended I ended with him and we went for beer. There were many examples like this. Was it because they treated me a little bit… better? Better, worse, I do not know. I had to drink beer and I am not keen on beer” [Ewa - life-history interview].

Ewa’s statement suggests that due to her general manager’s gendered sympathy she was in a position where she had significant influence over her own working times and related working arrangements. As mentioned earlier, according to her she was employed despite her limited English because of the general manager’s attraction to her. It can be argued that the same (hetero)gender based privilege, of her general manager’s sympathy, has provided her an advantageous access to development and promotion opportunities, allowed her to escape the consequences of her actions, and provided an opportunity to advantageously adjust working conditions.

5.6.2 Karolina’s story

Karolina’s story also suggests privileged access to promotion, which was linked to her manager’s (hetero)gendered and unwanted sexual conduct. She was a customer at a restaurant when the owner, who was also a manager, approached her and offered employment even though she was not looking for work (see section 6.2.3). According to
Karolina, the same manager had a Polish wife, believed that Polish women make great wives and suggested Karolina date some of his male friends (section 5.2.2). According to her interview responses she was treated by the owner in a more polite and friendly manner than her co-workers. When Karolina resigned from the restaurant and moved abroad the owner offered her the position of assistant manager in order to persuade her to return to his restaurant. She said:

“In Malta I was working at a hotel reception, when I got a phone call from the owner to come back, that I will get the assistant manager position. So I came back to the restaurant on [street name] after the call” [Karolina - life-history interview].

The business owner offered Karolina employment after merely seeing her, even though she was not applying for a job. He later offered her promotion to a managerial position, even though she had already left the workplace. His sexualised treatment of her at work (see 5.2.2) may suggest that access to these opportunities had (hetero)gendered underpinnings, similar to the Ewa’s case.

5.7 Conclusion

Due to the open and exploratory nature of the data collection, interviewees’ full responses painted complex pictures of love, personal fulfilment, adventure and pursuit of self-development. However, the purpose of this chapter was to present findings related to the first three research objectives (see section 1.4) which furthered our understanding of Polish women’s experiences of inequality. The discussed in the chapter findings reveal impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness on research participants’ work. However, it is recognised that other social categories such as religion or age, although located beyond the scope of this study and the dataset, may also have shaped participants’ experiences.

Interview responses suggest that all the research participants in at least one workplace were treated in an unequal manner on the grounds of their social identities. Participants’ stories revealed a picture of dominating discrimination and elements of privilege. It could be argued that Polish women were privileged, for example, due to their whiteness.
identity. The interview responses allow identification of this privilege in relation to racialised bullying affecting their co-workers who were a visible ethnic minority. The impact of a whiteness identity was imperceptible to the research participants, even after they compared their experiences with the position of a co-worker who, according to them, was the subject of racialised bullying.

Some of the research participants were also privileged on the basis of their (hetero)gender. However, special treatment on this basis was available only to women who were found attractive by their male superiors. Privilege on this basis was particularly identifiable in relation to promotion opportunities and succession planning. However, this sexualised impact of gender was also linked to research participants experiences of disadvantage as they had to cope with their manager’s sexualised advances.

While the experience of privilege was either partial or limited to a few interviewees the majority of the interviewed Polish women were affected in a negative manner by a combination of disadvantages based on (hetero)gender and/or migration status. Discrimination in the form of sexual harassment, bullying, othering and unequal distribution of work presented a picture of discrimination that arguably outweighed privilege.

In the majority of the discussed episodes research participants did not reflect on their experiences as examples of inequality or privilege/disadvantage. Even when the discriminatory occurrences were explicit, for example as in the case of sexual harassment or bullying, research participants did not identify them as such. Nevertheless, interviewees with several years of working experience revealed more reflexivity presenting less idealistic and slightly more critical responses.

Research participants’ experiences of privilege and/or disadvantage were not only affected by their intersecting social identities. As the data discussed in the chapter suggests the identified patterns were also facilitated by specific circumstances. The most identifiable contextual influences are discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter Six: Contextual factors influencing work inequality experiences

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented and analysed findings addressing the first three objectives of this thesis. Firstly, it examined the impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness on Polish migrant women’s work experiences in the Scottish hospitality industry. Secondly, the themes presented in the chapter shed light on the intersection of Polish migrant women’s privilege and disadvantage in the Scottish hospitality industry. Thirdly, the chapter explored Polish migrant women’s reflections on experienced (in)equality at work. Consequently, this chapter presents answers to the fourth research objective, which seeks to identify the impact of contextual factors on work (in)equality experiences encountered by Polish migrant women in the Scottish hospitality industry. Similar to the previous chapter the themes discussed here emerged from the process of data analysis described in section 4.6 and have been supported by literature references.

According to intersectionality theory, configurations of social categories are context- and time-contingent, rather than fixed and ahistorical (Bürkner 2012, McCall 2005, Winker and Degele 2011). Different context-specific frameworks may impose different experiences of inequality for the same person (Crenshaw 1990). However, academic literature is unclear as to what constitutes the context of intersectionality and how it should be analysed (Nash 2008). According to McCall (2005), investigations of intersectionality often require recognition of multilevel or hierarchical contextual discussion. The thematic analysis of the dataset has revealed two distinct groups of contextual factors shaping Polish migrant women’s experiences of privilege and disadvantage, contextual factors identified at the organisational level and contextual factors identified at the international level. The chapter is divided into two main sections, reflecting these two groups of themes.

After the introduction, the first main section of the chapter is dedicated to contextual factors identified at the organisational level. The themes discussed here are related to
6.2 Contextual factors identified at the organisational level

Identification of contextual factors at the organisational level is an established practice in the intersectionality literature (Acker 2006, Acker 2012). Acker (2006, p.443), in an influential paper on inequality regimes, highlights the importance of “looking at specific organisations and the local, ongoing practical activities of organizing work that, at the same time, reproduce complex inequalities.” In line with Acker’s and Bilge and Denis’s (2010) argument this section discusses themes identified from the data, which illustrate the impact of organising work on participants’ experiences of inequality.

6.2.1 Organisation size and type of services

The data revealed differences in research participants’ businesses that affected interviewees’ experiences of inequality at work. Firstly, research participants’ stories have shown a difference in experiences between participants working in independent micro-enterprises and other businesses, either small or large. According to the European Commission (2003) an enterprise is considered micro when it employs fewer than 10
people. A small enterprise has between 10 and 49 employees and a large business has over 250 employees. None of the interviewed Polish migrant women worked at a medium sized business (see subsection 4.5.3).

Research participants who worked at independent micro-enterprises were unable to recall any problematic episodes that would suggest an experience of inequality. Instead, they praised their relations with co-workers. For example, Beata relating to her job at a local independent café said:

“I just think I am lucky because my working relationship with other employees, with my boss, are very good. (...) We are on such good terms, that apart from the fact that he is my boss, and I am someone who works for him, we are also friends” [Beata - life-history interview].

Beata worked in a local café where a total of three employees were employed. The micro size of the business and good relations with the co-workers could have influenced Beata’s lack of problematic episodes. Moreover, participants who worked in local micro cafés reported good relations with their customers. For example, Halina said:

“The customers are great, really. And this is probably the main advantage of this work, that all customers really are very nice. Because it’s mostly regular customers, everyone from the nearby offices comes for lunch. Every day there are regular customers and everybody is really nice” [Halina - life-history interview].

Halina and Beata, similar to other research participants who worked at micro cafés, described their interpersonal relations at work, with co-workers and customers, as entirely positive. These experiences were different from the interview responses of participants who worked at small businesses and branches of large organisations. For example, when Karolina worked at an independent restaurant the business owner pressured her to date his male friends (see 5.2). When Oliwia worked at a restaurant of a hotel chain she was physically bullied by the male kitchen staff (see 5.3). The episodes discussed in the previous chapter, which suggest encounters of privilege and/or disadvantage on the basis of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness, were related to research participants’ work experiences from small businesses and branches.
of large companies. Interview responses describing work at independent micro-businesses did not reveal any episodes which could be identified as examples of unequal treatment. As qualitative research this is anecdotal, but worthy of further investigation.

Apart from the distinctive characteristics of work at micro-enterprises discussed above participants’ difference in experiences of inequality could also be related to the type of offered services. For example, Zuza, who had an opportunity to work in a chain café and a chain restaurant, contrasted her experiences with customers from the two workplaces. Commenting on the chain restaurant first, she said:

“It was OK, sometimes customers looked differently at my friend, because you could hear her Polish accent. You cannot hear it from me because I have been here longer. (...) Sometimes customers were not nice because [restaurant's name] is open at late hours, it is the busiest then and people are already drunk... they were not pleasant customers [restaurant's name]. In [cafe's name] they were very pleasant” [Zuza - life-history interview].

Zuza recalled how customers at a restaurant were approaching her colleague, who was also a Polish woman, differently because of her more pronounced Polish accent. Zuza has lived in Edinburgh for eleven years since she was seven years old, thus, as she argues, her foreign accent is less noticeable and she was approached in a different manner. Zuza’s unpleasant encounters with customers were related to the fact that they were often drunk. This resonates with Sara’s experiences, who works at a local pub where her customers are often denied service because they have had too much alcohol. She was often distinguished by her migration status on the basis of her accent (see subsection 5.4.1). Similarly, experiences of Ewa and Lidia who worked at branches of businesses which serve alcohol, stood out as the as the most prominent in terms of incidents revealing inequality (see section 5.2). These research participants’ interview responses revealed a strong impact of (hetero)gender, often intersecting with migration status, in the form of experiences which can be identified as sexual harassment. Experiences of research participants where alcohol was part of the working environment contrasted with the customer and employee relations of participants who worked at cafés. This points for further research on the extent to which alcohol can contribute to migrant women’s experiences of discrimination.
6.2.2 Ineffective grievance management

One of the key factors identified from the data, which affected research participants’ experiences of inequality was the organisation’s ineffective management of grievances. This theme provides more insights on that reported in Chapter Five where episodes can be identified as sexual harassment and workplace bullying. Data examined in this section illustrate the link between experiences of inequality, the ineffective management of grievances and the consequence of these occurrences for the research participants.

As mentioned in section 5.3.2 Lidia was bullied in her first job, which was in a fish and chips restaurant, by a Polish male chef. Although she made a complaint to her manager, this did not stop the unwanted behaviour. In the follow-up interview she said:

“I complained to my Italian boss that they behave in certain ways. He said ‘fine, fine, I will talk to them’ but nothing ever happened” [Lidia - semi-structured interview].

Similarly, when she was working in a different restaurant she was verbally harassed in a sexual manner by a manager. Again, she attempted to challenge this unwanted conduct by making a complaint to the main manager:

“I went to complain to the main manager that this is inappropriate and that the job is hard enough as it is. And the manager said to me: “But, repeat exactly the words”... I say, he said this and that. He went to the office, disappeared, and the case blew over. There were thousands of complaints against that manager [X], official complaints from the staff and clients and nothing ever happened. I do not know, we suspect that they blow each other, because I do not know how to call this” [Lidia - semi-structured interview].

As in the previous case Lidia’s complaint was ineffective, similar to numerous other complaints raised by her co-workers regarding the same manager. Lidia’s statement, in a vulgar way, illustrates her surprise and anger that the manager who is persistently the subject to numerous complains is able to escape the consequences of his actions. She further explained that she was not able to file an official complaint effectively:
“There was no justice in [the restaurant]. There were so many complaints against that manager [X]. I said myself I do not know if I want for it to be an official complaint because I am in a situation that I want to buy a flat and I cannot be afraid about my hours. And if he threatens and does such things then I know that he will also cut my hours if I file a complaint against him. (...) He told me that in his country they have a saying, something about pulling out weeds, and that he will be pulling out weeds from the restaurant. Everyone who he wanted to get rid of he got rid of very easily. Simply, he cut the hours and then pretended he does not know what is happening” [Lidia - semi-structured interview].

Lidia has heard the manager metaphorically warn that he will discipline employees who oppose him. She saw him succeeding in removing employees from the workplace by reducing their number of hours. In light of the manager’s vindictive behaviour and due to her own financial responsibilities she decided not to file an official complaint. Being unable to stop the unwanted behaviour Lidia decided to find other employment and eventually resigned from the restaurant. Referring to the managers she said:

“Both of them have a God complex, they think that they are God knows what. One way or another I am already changing the job. I already had an interview, I am going there tomorrow as well. (...) The main reason are those fights with the managers, I do not have strength anymore to wrench with brats” [Lidia - semi-structured interview].

During the interview Lidia explained that, according to her, the managers’ inappropriate behaviour was childish, thus she referred to them as ‘brats’. The reference to God complex could illustrate the managers’ top-down approach to managing staff and lack of responsiveness to the grievances highlighted by Lidia.

Similar to Lidia, Ewa also encountered unwanted sexual conduct, in the form of sexualised and offensive language (5.2.2) at her workplace and faced lack of response to her complaints:

“I do not tolerate this in any case and if I say it once and it does not connect… because it is not like someone says it to me once and I
immediately react by saying ‘you idiot what are you doing?’. I will explain, but if it happens again… if one method does not help then the other usually does” [Ewa - semi-structured interview].

Unlike Lidia, Ewa decided to use physical violence to challenge the unwanted behaviour. During the interview she said:

“Ewa: I threw a kitchen knife at him.
Interviewer: At your boss?
Ewa: Yes.
Interviewer: Did he find out about it?
Ewa: He knew, because he was running out of the kitchen and it was just the moving doors that saved him...
Interviewer: Unbelievable story. The kitchen knife?
Ewa: Yes, the big one.
Interviewer: How did he react to it?
Ewa: Fast!! (Laughs) How did he react? He fled (laughs).
Interviewer: Yes, but later?
Ewa: He stopped coming to the kitchen… and he did not use bad words anymore” [Semi-structured interview]

Ewa, used the threat of physical violence in response to her main manager’s harassing comments. Unlike Lidia, she did not have the possibility of making a complaint to the main manager of her workplace as he was one of the co-workers who was harassing her. Her further comments show that she recognises her behaviour as an act of violence but it was not an isolated occurrence:

“I had a couple of those…. Usually, it ended with something like physical violence. I put one of the supervisors in the trash. That kind of things. (...) It is their stupid… form of comments, they think it was funny and they came across the wrong person. I hate something like this, I do not like it” [Ewa - semi-structured interview].

Ewa’s responses show that despite her complaints her male co-workers, including the main manager did not stop the unwanted sexual conduct. Thus, in response she used physical violence. Unlike Lidia, Ewa was able to continue challenging harassment in a
form of violence as she was also privileged at her workplace due to her general manager’s advances. During the interview she admitted that the main manager, at the pub where she was working, was attracted to her in a sexual manner. She was aware of this and took advantage of it (see subsection 5.6.1).

Interestingly, experiences of grievances regarding harassment were different for research participants who complained to their female managers. For example, when Zosia reported an episode, which could be identified as sexualisation of work (see section 5.2.1), to her female manager she received help. This is how Zosia explained her manager’s reaction and the following result:

“She told him that it cannot continue, that we complain. The subject fizzled out, he has never done it again, I also did not dwell on the subject since there was no more problem. Then, suddenly there was no ‘hi Zosia’ only ‘good morning madam’. So, something worked (laughs)” [Zosia - semi-structured interview].

With the help of her female manager Zosia was able to stop the unwanted behaviour. This is similar to Zaneta’s experience. Referring to the harassing behaviour of her male co-workers she said:

“I do not know where they got it from, but there was this opinion that intellectually we do not stand out. That we are simply stupid. They were laughing at me or my girlfriend that we are stupid. That, ‘oh you Polish people you do not know anything, you do not have education.’(…) I once made a big deal out of this, because I was simply tired that they are laughing. I knew that it is only jokes to provoke us. But I said I have had enough of this, that you are pointing me out as a Polish woman. Judge me as a person not nationality. And another manager heard that, who made a huge fuss out of this, that she does not want anyone to treat me negatively in any way” [Zaneta - life-history interview].

Unlike in the previously discussed episodes, when the research participants made complaints to male managers, in Zaneta’s case the manager took action and
reprimanded the harasser, even though she only accidently heard about Zaneta’s complaint. As Zaneta explained, this successfully stopped the unwanted behaviour:

“And because she was important, because she was in a way a partner of the hotel’s owner, the colleague got scared that she heard it and he will be in trouble now. So he never said anything more. I mean, he never laughed at me again” [Zaneta - life-history interview].

Comparing the experiences of Lidia, Ewa, Zosia and Zaneta it could be argued that some of the male managers and their practices facilitated research participants’ experiences of inequality through their unresponsiveness to grievances or participation in the harassing behaviour. These findings are further unpacked and discussed in the next chapter in relation to literature on gendered organisations (Acker 1990) and on the prevalence of hidden (hetero)gendered norms (Pringle 2008). The following section examines a recruitment practice that has also affected interviewees’ experiences of inequality.

6.2.3 Ad hoc employee recruitment

The third contextual factor identified from the data, which has affected research participants’ experiences of inequality, was related to the organisations’ ad hoc recruitment, i.e., situational rather than planned and strategic recruitment (see Ogbonna 1992). While the previous section shed light on the interviewed Polish women’s experiences of discrimination, the factor discussed here provides contextual insights on interviewees’ instances of both privilege and disadvantage. The context under which research participants and their co-workers have joined their workplaces has contributed to some of the interviewees’ subsequent everyday experiences of inequality.

As the gathered interview responses suggest, some of the research participants who underwent an unstructured recruitment process could have been privileged on the basis of their appearance and (hetero)gender. For example, Karolina was able to secure employment at a café and restaurant without an interview. Referring to both of these jobs respectively Karolina said:

“Actually, I did not even have an interview, I asked whether they are looking for someone and the guy says, "yes, yes. When can you
start?", And I started a few days later. It was lucky. It is just luck. I found a job in the same way, where I currently work. I came in for lunch… The café owner came up to me, started talking to me and as a result offered me a job. I was not applying for this job, I just was not working at that time” [Karolina - life-history interview].

According to Karolina in both cases she was hired for the same reason, i.e., her ‘luck’. However, it can be argued that what Karolina calls ‘luck’ is, in practice, an elusive impact of her appearance and (hetero)gender. In the episode cited above she was approached by the business owner and offered employment although she was not applying for a job. She was simply a customer. When she started working at the café the same business owner tried to make Karolina date his male friends (see subsection 5.2.2). The ease with which Karolina received employment at the restaurant, after the owner has merely seen her, may be related to her subsequent experiences of sexualised and (hetero)gendered work.

Referring to the first workplace, where the employer simply asked her ‘When can you start?’, Karolina explained:

“In the last job it helped me to get this work the fact the owner was looking for a girl who would smile” [Karolina - life-history interview].

Thus, according to Karolina, her appearance and gender also had an impact on her recruitment. This further questions the role of ‘luck’ and suggests an instance of (hetero)gendered privilege available to Karolina. The advantageous treatment which she received was concealed due to the situational and unstructured recruitment process.

It can be argued that Oliwia has also benefitted from the ad hoc process of recruitment. As a fresh high school graduate she did not have any work experience. Nevertheless, she was able to find employment within 24 hours of searching:

“Apparently, the employer noticed something in me because on Tuesday when I was already working there, I noticed they have a very large pile of CVs, really big, it would fill two full directories with these CVs. I do not know, I do not know, why he hired me. Maybe it
is the face, perhaps it is just that ... I do not know, he saw something in me (laughs), something nobody saw and somehow I found work within 24 hours” [Oliwia - life-history interview].

Although, Oliwia could not explain why she was able to find employment so quickly despite strong competition, she speculated the positive impact of her appearance. Unclear job requirements and selection criteria meant that Oliwia could have benefitted from her appearance.

Unlike Karolina and Oliwia, Ewa was indirectly affected by the ad hoc recruitment in a disadvantageous manner. This is how she explained the context of her story:

“A Spanish girl was hired, who did not speak any English. I do not have a problem with this as I myself was employed in such a way a few times. But, the problem is that... there is a division of responsibilities, if your English does not have to be that good then that is OK. But, if someone hires someone just because they are pretty to a place where this person cannot do any work without English. Then, what is this person for?” [Ewa - life-history interview].

According to Ewa one of her co-workers at the pub was hired owing to her looks, despite her lack of work experience or language skills. Her new colleague’s lack of qualifications affected Ewa’s work:

“I tried to help her to the point when ... it was an example of a situation when someone knows that they are attractive and they are trying to use it. Okay, she does not understand but she is trying to make beautiful eyes. It does not work on me in this situation. If it comes to this that I have to work on two lines, I am sorry but this does not look good. There was a serious quarrel, because it turned out that the person who hired her went to work with her and after 30 minutes, some short period of time, this person said that it is some sort of nightmare. So I said: “if it is a nightmare for you, then why do I have to work”, “because you can handle it”. I know that I can handle it; it is just that I do not want to handle it. (…) It was expected from me that I
will do two persons’ jobs, where the other person will receive payment for it” [Ewa - life-history interview].

Due to the co-worker’s lack of qualifications Ewa was forced to undertake additional work. The burden of the additional work was significant to the extent that even the person who hired the new co-worker was not able to work with her. Nevertheless, rather than dismiss the newly hired person it was decided that Ewa had to work harder. Effectively, Ewa was expected to perform the work of two employees without additional remuneration. The fact she was assigned an additional task, unwanted by her superior, without financial compensation resonates with other participants’ experiences of unequal distribution of work described in the previous chapter (see section 5.5). Interestingly, when discussing this episode during the interview, Ewa did not reflect on her experience from a previous workplace, where she was privileged due to her boss’s advances towards her (see section 5.6.1).

The data discussed above suggest that an ad hoc recruitment practice has enhanced the impact of one’s appearance and influenced research participants’ experiences of disadvantage and privilege. It can be argued that the informal recruitment practice has also facilitated research participants’ privilege on the basis of the shared identity of whiteness. Interviewed Polish women mentioned international diversity at their workplaces during the interviews. For example, Zuza who used to work in a café, said:

“The majority was from abroad, two people were British and the rest was from somewhere else. We had Italians, Latvians and Polish. Four people from Poland, two from Italy and three from Latvia” [Zuza - semi-structured interview].

Despite national diversity the majority of the employees shared a white social identity. As Danuta recognised about staff in her restaurant:

“Actually, this is interesting. They are all white, now that I think of it” [Danuta - semi-structured interview].

Participants’ description of their staff’s national diversity did not reflect the ethnic diversity of migrants in Scotland. The largest non-UK born group of migrants are Polish people with an estimated number of 71,000 residents in Scotland. However, the second
largest community is Indian with approximate 27,000 residents and, after German
migrants (with 20,000 residents), the fourth largest population is Pakistani with
approximate 20,000 residents (ONS 2015a). The demographic composition of the
discussed workplaces did not reflect this diversity of migrants in Scotland and, instead,
revealed a dominance of employees whose ethnicity research participants identified as
‘white’. This skewed ‘diversity’ in the workplace poses a question as to whether
research participants’ were privileged on the basis of that shared with co-workers’
identity of ‘whiteness’.

6.3 Contextual factors identified at the international level

Intersectional examination requires recognition of the spatial and temporal context
(Bürkner 2012). Studies of migrants’ experiences of inequality require also a macro
perspective, encompassing the international nature of spatial and temporal context
(Johansson and Śliwa 2013). Although the data were collected with a focus on the
participants’ work experiences its analysis has shown the impact of factors transcending
national borders. Thus, this section presents the analysis of circumstances, which may
have influenced research participants’ privilege and disadvantage, and are related to the
international element of their experiences. The analysis presented here provides a wider
perspective, which allows one to identify the impact of the Polish and Scottish socio-
cultural environment.

6.3.1 Language barriers for Polish women

The language barrier was the most pronounced theme, which emerged from the analysis
of the whole dataset, and research participants’ responses suggest that language was
related to their experiences of inequality. With the exception of one interviewee, who
had moved to Edinburgh when she was seven years old, all the other interviewees
reported incidents when a language barrier has affected their work in the hospitality
industry at some stage. While some participants have not received any formal education
of English the majority argued that the teaching they received was ineffective or
insufficient. For example, Irena and Oliwia said respectively:
“I lived here as if I have been in China. I did not know what was happening around me because of the language” [Irena - life-history interview].

“For 15 years I have learned English. I come here and suddenly I find out that I actually do not know English” [Oliwia - life-history interview].

The oldest Polish woman participating in the study was born in 1981, thus all of the interviewees belong to the generation which had an opportunity to learn modern languages other than Russian at school. However, Irena entered primary education before the collapse of the communist state and throughout her education she has focused on learning Russian. She migrated to Scotland with an MSc in Russian but no English skills. Unlike Irena, Oliwia had an opportunity to learn English at school. Nevertheless, she discovered after the migration that their knowledge of English was impractical, even though she learned the language for 15 years. As the literature suggests Polish migrants often chose the UK as their migration destination due to their fair knowledge of English (Milewski and Ruszczak-Żbikowska 2008), only to discover that what they saw as a competence in the English language in Poland (grammatically correct general proficiency) has little application in the UK (Blommaert et al. 2005).

The collected data illustrated how the language barrier affected interviewees’ experiences of work in general. Miscommunication affected customer service for Karolina, when she was working at a café and Ewa when she worked at a restaurant:

“Someone asked me for a restroom. I thought… where is restroom? Probably in a hotel, a room where you can rest!” [Karolina - semi-structured interview].

“The problem there was that they would come sometimes also to order at the bar. I learned, I crammed, names of each of the things that we were selling. I had a dictionary, I was asking him [the owner] and I tried to listen as much as possible. (...) It was not easy. It was often very stressful” [Ewa - life-history interview].
As can be seen from Karolina’s interview response a language barrier can lead to, at times, amusing misunderstandings. However, Ewa’s story illustrates that limited language skills can also increase work related stress. Due to her difficulties with using English Ewa had to rely on a dictionary and the owner’s help. Even though customer interaction is one of the fundamental duties of front-facing staff in the hospitality industry (Lugosi 2008), for Ewa it was difficult and stressful.

In addition to limited knowledge of the English language, research participants had difficulties with understanding different accents, especially Scottish. While Scottish accents may be difficult to understand even for native English speakers, for the interviewees who reported problems with using English, in general, heavy accents were an additional challenge. The difficulty of understanding Scottish accents and its impact on communication in the workplace was highlighted by Weronika, who worked at a chain restaurant. Asked to describe her relations with customers she said:

“Oh, Jesus. I try to avoid them (laughs). Because usually they speak in Scottish and I hate it! I do not know what they are saying to me. I have no clue. Some speak a little more clearly, without that typical Scottish accent, but some, especially the elderly... I have a strategy that I answer 'yes, okay' and I move on because (laughs) I do not know what to say” [Weronika - life-history interview].

Depending on a shift Weronika served customers or cleaned the restaurant’s facilities. Similar to Ewa she had a negative experience of serving customers due to the language barrier and she has developed her own strategy for coping with situations when unable to properly communicate with a customer. In a similar manner Zosia’s interview response illustrates her difficulty of understanding both written English and Scottish accents:

“All these standards ... they were all in English. Also, a lot of my supervisors are from Glasgow, they have this heavy accent. I was horrified. From what they were trying to tell me I was able to understand maybe 50, 60%, and sometimes those errors, those things which I did not understand, they would come out. Because they said
something and I did not understand what to do in a given situation’”
[Zosia - semi-structured interview].

Zosia’s response illustrates the difficulty of understanding English either in written or spoken form. As she explains, the communication gap has sometimes led to her making mistakes at work. In this context she was happy to undertake longer and more exhausting shifts:

“Zosia: Once, it even happened to me, that I did a 16 hours shift because there was no one else. And after 16 hours, when you have to serve customers (laughs) you do not have the strength to smile anymore because your cheeks are burning (laughs).

Interviewer: How did you approach this?

Zosia: I come and do my thing. For me, it is even better sometimes.

Interviewer: Why?

Zosia: Because when they need you they cannot blame you for doing something wrong (laughs). They do not pay attention to your problems because there are bigger around (laughs). So I think that for me it is even better” [semi-structured interview].

Zosia’s comment suggests that in order to compensate for her mistakes which can be caused by her limited English she was willing to undertake additional work. As mentioned later in this chapter (see subsection 6.3.4) she has previously undertaken extra shifts, which she knew was breaking her working rights. Zosia’s honest response about the “benefit” of working additional shifts may indicate that the language barrier, consisting of insufficient English and a difficulty to understand Scottish accents have facilitated her experiences of unequal distribution of responsibilities (discussed in 5.5). This finding is similar to Zaneta’s experiences, when she was working at a chain café:

“Although I was aware that I can speak English, sometimes I had difficulties. But I was trying to make it up with fast, hard work. (…) I have proven that I am helpful at work” [Zaneta - life-history interview].
Zaneta’s difficulty when using English, whether it was perceived or objectively recognised, influenced her choice to work faster and harder. Her response suggests that she needed to “prove” to her co-workers that despite her difficulty with understanding English she can be helpful at work. However, this approach contributes to the unequal distribution of tasks discussed in section 5.5. By compensating for the lack of language skills Zaneta was reinforcing a context in which she could be asked to do additional or otherwise unwanted tasks.

Furthermore, Iwona’s interview comment suggests that limited English can hinder your ability to verbally defend yourself. Commenting on her work at a restaurant Iwona said:

“I felt so little because of the fact that I cannot even talk back to someone (laughs). I mean, you would not talk back to the customer, but to defend yourself somehow, explain in English or something” [Iwona - life-history interview].

Iwona’s description of feeling defenceless due to her English skills poses a question as to what extent the language barrier experienced by participants has affected their ability to verbally defend themselves from co-workers’ discriminating behaviour described in Chapter Five.

6.3.2 Migrant women’s deskilling

The second most prominent theme describing the impact of an international contextual factor on interviewees’ experience of inequality was deskilling. None of the eleven research participants who had a higher education degree from Poland (see Reference source not found.3 in subsection 4.5.3) worked, after migration, in a position reflecting their formal qualifications. For example, since Kaja arrived in Scotland four years ago she has been working as a barista at a chain café. She and her husband have MScs in Architecture from a Polish university. However, as she explained, neither of them was able to find jobs in their professions:

“We work only in those, say, gastronomy jobs, but simply we do not have a choice here. I tried, and my husband, we tried to find work in our profession, but we need to finish here at least some basic degree,
or some kind of training to get a job in this field, in this profession, which in Poland we could do” [Kaja - life-history interview].

This lack of recognition of professional qualifications was also pronounced by Sara. Despite an undergraduate degree in German Philology she was not able to start working in her profession (teaching) without repeating the expensive training:

“My certificate from Poland, which I hold, the bachelor, which is not the worst, does not allow me anything here. It is basically worthless. I would have to make a new certificate again, which costs hundreds of pounds. It is very hard to pass it” [Sara - life-history interview].

In addition to the unrecognised educational qualifications some of the participants were unable to use their work experience gained in Poland. For example, Iwona in Poland used to work as a childcare worker. However, in Edinburgh she works at a restaurant. This is how she explained the change of occupation:

“I came here with lots of experience as a nanny but here you have to have pretty nice qualifications. Which you have to organise. First of all, I do not know all these ... These qualifications have their own names. I do not know them, I do not know how to achieve them. Also, they have different levels. I do not know where the bottom of it is and where the top is. And to get to the top you have to start from the bottom. Well, I came here to work as a childminder... and you also have to have that criminal record thing, also done. I do not have it. And I even did not consider to do it because you have to find work quickly (laughs)” [Iwona – life-history interview].

While participants such as Kaja, Sara or Iwona, were unable to work in their profession due to the lack of recognition of their knowledge or skills, others were deskilled due to their insufficient language skills. For example, although Irena has a master’s degree in Russian Philology from University of Warsaw, due to her limited English she started working in hospitality as a cleaner. She said:

“I did not know English because I never learned English. So I remember that it was incredibly difficult for me because I knew the
phrase "I'm looking for a job" and that really that was all. (...) So you have to do these not very interesting jobs at the beginning, such as cleaning or working at the kitchen sink" [Irena - life-history interview].

Confronted with the language barrier and/or lack of recognition of their experience some research participants lowered their work expectations. For example, Zaneta openly stated in the interview that she dispensed of any preferences from her first job:

“I did not have any requirements when it came to work. I said that in the beginning I can do absolutely anything; just to quickly acclimatise somehow, to see what it looks like and to use the language in practice. Because, I had the theory and school knowledge but no practice with British people” [Zaneta - life-history interview].

As discussed in the previous section, Zaneta relates to a lack of practical knowledge of English. In order to improve her language skills she has lowered her requirements for potential employment to a minimum. Her willingness to “do absolutely anything” indicates her difficult position in the labour market and desperate resolution to find work. This is how she commented on securing employment at a café:

“At this point it was a dream job for me because I really lowered the bar for myself” [Zaneta - life-history interview].

Working at a café was Zaneta’s second job in the hospitality industry. The desperation of some research participants to find employment, highlighted above, was related to interviewees’ first few jobs. It was not present, for example, in Ela’s responses describing more recent experiences who, during the data collection, was changing employment and has been working in the industry for eleven years.

The circumstances under which research participants entered the employment may have facilitated their approach to work. For example during the interview Kaja, highlighted her compliance at work after she was hired:

“Whatever was required of me. I have to do nine hours, sure, will you stay ten? Okay. 12? Also fine. I agreed to everything. Will you come on an extra day? And another? If needed, obviously. Some will say
no, because I am tired. And I always: yes, yes, yes. (...) Sometimes, I allow myself to be taken advantage of, that is also my fault, but it also later gives results, because everyone sees you in a good light” [Kaja - life-history interview].

According to Kaja such distribution of work may be seen as being taken advantage of. She blames herself for this experience and similarly to other participants in this position (5.5.1, 6.3.4) chooses to focus on the positive aspect. Although, Kaja made a conscious decision to take on any additional work it could be argued that it was the broader contextual circumstances, such as the language barrier and the experience of deskilling that have facilitated her decisions. The same circumstances may have influenced Kaja and other participants’ compliance to undertake tasks unwanted by other employees (see 5.4.2). Indirectly speaking about her own experiences Kaja explains that, according to her, Polish people’s attitude to work is based on fear:

“Sometimes there are those who do something slower because they are at their home, because you really do not have to rush. Only I think that everything has to be quickly, quickly. I think that we Polish people are terribly scared and insist to do something well, and then it turns out that we are ambitious and everything and everyone else around us is lazy” [Kaja - life-history interview].

This comment further questions whether Kaja’s compliance with unequal division of work was based on her good will or subject to broader circumstances. Kaja’s feeling of being “terribly scared” and the consequential motivation to work harder can be related to the difficulty of finding and maintaining employment and losing what has been achieved, as discussed in this section and the previous section. Finding and securing employment in a foreign country can already count as an achievement for a migrant person according to Irena:

“I think, or at least in my case and my friends’, that maybe we appreciate work more, the fact that we have it, maybe because we tried to get to this moment in a foreign country, in order to achieve something, not even some outstanding achievements, just simply in order to get that job after we came here, then to keep it, to be able to
provide yourself decent living. And maybe because of that we respect it” [Irena - life-history interview].

Thus, according to Irena, the achievement of finding and securing employment has changed her and her Polish friends’ attitudes towards work.

### 6.3.3 Reluctance of Polish women to migrate back to Poland

The third factor identified at the macro level, which has influenced the contextual setting, in which the interviewed Polish women experienced inequality, was a reluctance to migrate back to Poland. It is argued that this factor, along with the previously discussed language barrier and deskilling, has contributed to the research participants’ limited employment opportunities locating them at a vulnerable position in the labour market. This section provides contextual insight into why, despite disadvantageous positions in the labour market and discriminating working experiences (such as sexual harassment or bullying) the interviewed research participants did not consider a return to Poland.

None of the interviewees planned to return to Poland in the near future. For Lidia the reason to stay was her emotional bond with Edinburgh and her partner. Explaining why she does not consider moving back to Poland she said:

“I love Edinburgh, it is a beautiful city. (…) This is where I found love and that is it. In Poland I only have family” [Lidia - life-history interview].

A few of the interviewed Polish women highlighted that they do not plan to return to Poland because their skills and experience gained in Scotland would be lost once again in the process of migration. For example, Zaneta said:

“I would like to stay and since I am already in a phase of some development, I would rather continue it, than go back to Poland and collide with that reality from the beginning. Frankly, my experience... it would not be that useful there in Poland (...) I would go back there and I would start at the very beginning of the path. I would feel that I
have to start from the bottom, as I started here, so rather I would continue here and settle down here” [Zaneta - life-history interview].

Zaneta was reluctant to once again ‘start at the very beginning’ of an occupational path. Using Janta (2011) and Anderson et al. (2006) terminology she has made a ‘sacrifice’ to come to Scotland and now is committed to continue her employment in Scotland. The lack of work experience from Poland also discouraged Ela from migrating back. Talking about future migration plans she said:

“We were actually thinking about this with my husband because we often go to Gdansk [Polish city], my friend lives there. A very nice city, it would be quite interesting to move there but the financial conditions scare me a little, and the very fact that I have never worked in Poland. I know my Polish language is not at a high standard, when it comes to ... I do not know, writing an official letter to someone in Polish, and in Poland official language is really official. I just do not know if I can go back to something like this” [Ela - life-history interview].

Ela has lived in Scotland for eleven years. Being used to English she admitted that, for her, the Polish language could be a barrier to returning to her home country. This suggests that research participants’ employment opportunities could be negatively affected not only due to undeveloped language skills (see 6.3.1) but also over time due to lost language skills. Furthermore, Ela’s comment reveals that she is ‘scared’ by the ‘financial conditions’ in Poland. Oliwia’s response explains specifically what a difference in financial conditions between Poland and Scotland can mean:

“Scotland is a really interesting place and you can live here much better than in Poland. For example, I do not know anyone who is 19, I am still 19 or 20, who is able to live in a separate flat with their partner, girlfriend, boyfriend, does not matter, making money, having time for developing. Not taking money from the parents but actually sometimes sending money to the parents. I do not know anyone in Poland who would be 19 and would be able to do something like this for the minimum wage. Let’s be honest you usually make the
minimum at that age. We are not going back to Poland” [Oliwia - life-history interview].

Some participants explained that they do not want to move back specifically because of their perceived lack of opportunities in their home country. For example, Kinga said:

“I know that there is nothing waiting for me there in the long term… thirty or forty years. (...) On the one hand, I would like to, but on the other I know that I have no future there. There is no future for me there” [Kinga - life-history interview].

The idea of ‘no future’ could be related to the perceived lack of employment opportunities, which was expressed, for example, by Zuza:

“I am a creative person and I think that I would not be able to find work in Poland, for example after a degree in art. It is very hard to find a job in Poland in general” [Zuza - life-history interview].

Interviewee’s strong reasons to stay could explain why they did not migrate back to Poland despite the language barrier and deskilling, or despite the experienced discrimination. In the light of economic anxiety and insecurity characteristics for a post-socialist country, British jobs appear more attractive to Polish employees (Cieslik 2011). Polish migrants evaluate the quality of work in the UK by comparing it with their and their friends’ experiences from Poland (Cieslik 2011). Having low expectations and low standards as a point of reference, the interviewees might have been less critical of experienced disadvantage. Furthermore, the perceived higher standard of living in Scotland could explain participants’ gratitude to local employers for their welcoming gestures and interviewees’ downplaying reflections on occurrences of discrimination (see subsection 5.4.2).

6.3.4 Stereotype about Polish people’s work ethic

Another theme identified from the dataset, which was related to wider international contextual factors, was a shared at workplaces stereotype concerning Polish people’s work ethics. Interview responses indicated that research participants, as well as their managers, reinforced the stereotype about Polish workers’ good work ethic. This view
was shared, for example, by Zaneta’s two area managers. On the day of the research interview she had a visitation at work from two senior managers. As Zaneta explained, one of them mentioned the link between Polish employees and their diligence:

“Today, even the senior manager said he is absolutely not worried about the fact that I am Polish and that there will be any problems with the post, because the fact that I am Polish only means that I work hard. Because he says, “I already employ so many Polish people, and they all do really well, for the most part, yes. Now I have this opinion that it is simply worth having Polish people” [Zaneta - life-history interview].

Zaneta’s conversation with her upper manager may suggest that he favourably assesses Polish employees. His opinion that it is “worth having Polish people” is based on his prejudicial assumption that Polish employees work hard. Karolina’s employers shared a similar assumption about Polish employees:

“I think we have the opinion of hard-working. We have this opinion, for example, in the cafe, where I work now. He really likes to work with the Polish people and wants to find Polish people to work because they know that they have some ethic of work, they work hard” [Karolina - life-history interview].

The dataset suggests that some of the customers could have also shared the positive opinion about Polish employees. As Oliwia said:

“I have heard stories of more local people, clients who come to the bar, regular customers, I heard stories that there were a lot of Polish people here after the war that new jobs were created, that those Polish people worked a lot, worked well. (…) A lot of older people talk with me when they hear that I am from Poland, they talk with me about World War II” [Oliwia - life-history interview].

Oliwia’s comments illustrate that the stereotype about Polish people’s scrupulous attitude to work was shared also among older customers. It also indicates that the stereotype is older than the recent EU accession migration wave. After World War II the
first sizable Polish community was established in the UK, reaching over 160,000 migrants (Burrell 2006). Polish settlement caused by military and civilian displacement stretched throughout England, Scotland and Wales (Burrell 2006). The heritage of Polish-Scottish friendship during and post war has been immortalised by monuments in Scotland (BBC 2015, Gasiorek 2016). However, as Oliwia’s interview suggests it is also alive in the local community’s stories.

The dataset suggests that the stereotype was shaped not only by the managers and customers but also by the participants themselves. Irena’s interview response reveals that she agrees with the stereotype and she attempted to conform to it in her work at the cinema:

“A friend of mine used to work there, who has already returned back to Poland and he said “they welcomed you there because I am so great, so hard-working, that is why”. But I think that it is this Polish diligence, which I have also later repeatedly proved actually, with my attitude and work” [Irena - life-history interview].

As the stereotype could have appeared positive for Irena, she attempted to support it in her workplace. Similarly, Zosia reinforced the stereotype during one of the challenging moments in her work at a café:

“Once, a shift happened when I had seven hours of break between shifts, which is illegal. I finished work at 10.30 pm and I had to start at 5 am, where it takes me an hour and a half to get home, so I was also a little tired. And I think it was Jane who said ‘Zosia, you can pull it off, but I guess all Polish people are like this.’ And I was like, yes, I guess so” [Zosia - semi-structured interview].

Zosia, was aware that such a short break between shifts is against the current working legislation (see Gov 1998). Nevertheless, she decided to undertake the shift and afterwards she confirmed the stereotype. However, supporting the stereotype whether verbally or through actions can raise managers’ expectations from the person and over a longer period of time lead to unequal distribution of tasks. The paradoxical negative consequence of a conscientious approach to work was highlighted by Kaja. Referring to Polish employees in general and herself she said:
“I think, we think, that more is demanded from us. We always have to do more… I am that kind of person that when I have to do something I do it, I do not pretend that I am doing something. But, on the other hand it is taken advantage of, because if she can do this, she can do that, she can do everything, let her do it. Yes, we are taken advantage of a little as Polish people, here at work. As I say if you show that you let this happen then, of course, they take advantage of this” [Kaja - life-history interview].

Thus, if a Polish employee stands out from the rest of the staff, due to their conscientious approach to work, whether consciously reinforcing the stereotype or not, he/she raises the manager’s expectations and forms circumstances which can lead to exploitation. Reinforcing the stereotype not only has consequences for the person who supports it but also other employees who share the identity of a Polish migrant.

The disadvantageous impact of the stereotype was visible, for example, for Ewa:

“Certainly, it works in a way that we work better, faster, you can call it differently. Sometimes you can call it a compliment, sometimes as exploitation. I personally in most situations perceive it as a compliment. It is always nice to hear from someone that they work with Polish people and that you are really well-working, hard-working, it is nice to have such people on the team” [Ewa - life-history interview].

Ewa recognises that the stereotype can be seen either as a compliment or a form of exploitation, although she chooses to perceive it from a positive point of view. This positive approach can be in the form of a coping mechanism against the raised expectations from the co-workers. It can also be linked to the fact that Ewa believes the stereotype to be true and enacts it at her workplace. Nevertheless, Ewa, similar to other research participants, can also reflect on the negative consequences of the stereotype.

Zaneta’s story shows that the stereotype about Polish workers can also be a source of othering treatment from non-Polish co-workers (see also 5.4). Referring to her previous job at a hostel Zaneta said:
“Despite the fact they were very... they were contemptuous towards Polish people, they knew that we work hard. So often when they were laughing at me, they would even say to me: “you are Polish, you have to work hard”. But they knew that I will, because this is how they see us here, that we work hard and we do not value ourselves as much as the Scots do” [Zaneta - life-history interview].

Zaneta’s experience was unique in comparison with that of other research participants who were praised for their stereotypical approach to work. Nevertheless it shows that the stereotype can also facilitate othering (see section 5.4).

6.3.5 Peer pressure to conform to the stereotype about work ethic

The final theme, illustrating an international contextual factor, is closely related to that discussed in the previous section concerning stereotyping and sheds light on patterns of bullying behaviour between Polish co-workers reported in subsection 5.3.2. The majority of workplaces discussed during the research interviews had hired Polish employees other than the research participants. The data shows that research participants were often pressured by Polish peers to work harder. For example, Lidia said:

“I consider it to be the worst thing possible to work with Polish people abroad, because Polish envy comes out (…) if you are having fun at work, then you cannot have fun. You have to work fast and be focused on work” [Life-history interview].

According to her, working with Polish migrant employees can be a very negative experience. More specifically, it would lead to increased pressure to focus entirely on work at the cost of enjoying it. Lidia’s opinion that Polish migrant co-workers pressure each other to work harder coincides with Zuza and Kinga’s experiences. Zuza, referring to her Polish colleague at a chain restaurant, said:

“They wanted us to run around like dogs, and sometimes she ... even the manager did not rush as much as she rushed me. She was an ordinary employee, so sometimes I had to tell her to drop it” [Zuza - life-history interview].
As mentioned in subsection 5.3.2. Kinga’s experience from a chain cafe was more hostile and long-lasting. Kinga’s story shows that Polish peers’ pressure to work harder can turn into bullying behaviour. The previous section identified the prevalence of the stereotype about Polish people’s hardworking approach to work, both among research participants and their co-workers. Thus, a question arises whether Kinga was pressured and bullied by a Polish co-worker to work harder, because her more relaxed approach to work was questioning the shared stereotype about Polish employees’ good work ethic. This could be one of the possible explanations as, according to Kinga, she did not experience similar pressure to work harder from colleagues from other countries at the cafe:

“It was hard to get along with Polish women. With other nationalities there were no problems and with Polish women there actually were. These relations with some people were heavily strained” [Kinga - life-history interview].

Not all participants had negative experiences of working with Polish peers. For example, Kaja did not report any negative episodes; instead she mentioned help which she received from Polish staff in her first job at a chain cafe:

“there was also help, because where I worked half of the staff were Polish women, actually it was all girls. When I did not know something they helped me. We talked basically in Polish” [Kaja - life-history interview].

Oliwia’s story represents another example of positive experience:

“About three months have passed since we started work there, our manager hired a supervisor, who was Polish, Bartek, that was his name. A very nice person with a lot of experience when it comes to work in the catering industry. (…) He did not have that sense of power over us, he treated us like colleagues rather than... I do not know, you can say, serfs. Sometimes some people do that. Especially Polish people like to do it at senior positions. But working together was really fine” [Oliwia - life-history interview].
While Oliwia’s experience of working with a Polish supervisor was positive it is interesting that she judged it against her negative expectations of working under a Polish co-worker. This stereotypical belief about hostility between Polish migrant workers in the UK was voiced by several research participants. Some interviewees explained that they have heard about a belief that Polish migrants are hostile to each other in the UK while still staying in Poland. For example, Weronika said:

“When I was coming here everyone was warning me, that I can trust anyone, Spanish, Arab, God knows from what end of the world but not a Polish person” [Weronika - life-history interview].

The last two sections of analysis may suggest that these two stereotypes about Polish migrant workers can be related. As the interview responses demonstrate, a failure to conform to the stereotype of a good work ethic could lead to increased hostility from Polish co-workers who support the stereotypical image. This, in turn, contributes to the assumption that Polish co-workers abroad are hostile to each other and can create conflict among the staff.

6.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss data revealing the contextual factors affecting participants’ experiences of inequality. Having examined individuals’ experiences in Chapter Five, this chapter focused on the analysis at the organisational and international level. While the report of findings in this chapter has been divided into two main parts, for the purpose of structuring the discussion, the ‘boundaries’ between the identified levels are blurred and symbolic. Identified in both groups organisational and international factors can overlap.

The data have revealed that the organisational setting, such as size and management practice has facilitated research participants’ disadvantage, privilege and the intersection of the two. The same management practice of ineffective grievance processing has facilitated interviewees’ experiences of inequality based on different social vectors such as gender and migration status. Furthermore, one of the identified data themes illustrated that the same management practice of ad hoc recruitment has both privileged
and disadvantaged different research participants depending on the circumstances. This contextual variability coincides with that highlighted by Acker (2006) concerning the importance of examining forms of organising work in intersectional investigations.

The data illustrating contextual factors at the macro level have revealed that the international context has positioned research participants in a vulnerable position in the labour market and in their workplaces. Due to the identified language barrier, lack of recognition of skills and reluctance to return to Poland, the participants were more prone to the episodes illustrating discrimination discussed in the previous chapter. In order to compensate for the language barrier and its negative consequences on their work the interviewed Polish women agreed to undertake more tasks. For the same reason they have reinforced and conformed to the popular stereotype that Polish employees are hard working. Participants’ comments concerning their managers’ opinion on Polish employees suggest that the stereotype could have provided a significant privilege when the research participants were searching for employment. However, the stereotype and participants’ conformation could have also reinforced the managers’ opinions that the interviewees have the skills and willingness to undertake additional or unwanted tasks, even if they are not remunerated. Additionally, the data suggests that lack of conformation to the stereotype can cause bullying behaviour from other Polish co-workers. Thus, although the stereotype about Polish employees’ work ethic could have been advantageous for the interviewees when they were searching for employment it has also affected interviewees in a disadvantageous manner in their everyday working experiences.

This chapter discussed contextual factors that, according to the analysed data, could have influenced participants’ experiences of inequality, as identified in Chapter Five. While there may be multiple other factors affecting each of the participants’ disadvantage and privilege in a unique manner, the interview transcripts allowed identification of the most prominent influences in this study. Overall, the chapter has demonstrated the importance of the immediate, international and historical context. The following chapter discusses the findings from Chapters Five and Six in relation to academic literature and sheds more light on the intersectional nature of Polish migrant women’s experiences of inequality.
Chapter Seven: Discussion and revisit of the research objectives

7.1 Introduction

Chapters Five and Six presented the research participants’ experiences of intersectionality as a complex and context-specific phenomenon. This chapter discusses previously reported themes with reference to the academic literature and the study’s research objectives. The chapter’s structure follows the order of the research objectives set out in section 1.4. The final section provides a conclusion of the outlined discussion simultaneously addressing the final and overarching objective of the study.

As explained in the theoretical part of the thesis (Chapter Three), intersectionality cannot not be reduced to merely an axiom of mutual constitution of categories. Rather, it should also deal with how social identities mark discourse and practice separately (Anthias 2013). Although intersectionality explains the impact of multiple social identities in a nonlinear manner, in an empirical investigation a consideration of categories’ separate impact is a crucial initial step (Bowleg 2008). According to Bowleg, in order to present a full picture a researcher should analyse inequality both separately and simultaneously. Following the arguments of Anthias (2013) and Bowleg (2008), as well as an example of a similar thesis studying intersectionality in organisations (Mooney 2014), the discussion first considers examined social categories individually in order to subsequently explore their intersections.

7.2 Impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness on Polish migrant women’s work experiences in the Scottish hospitality industry

The findings presented in Chapters Five and Six show that Polish women’s work experiences were affected by their (hetero)gender, migration status and, indirectly, whiteness. These three social vectors were the most salient categories, but they did not influence the interviewed Polish women’s positions equally. Depending on the context the impact of some of the discussed identities was pronounced more than others and the degree of intersection between these social vectors also varied. This finding is supported
by Anthias (2013), who argues that social categorisation and its impact on individuals is not equally distributed and visible at all times.

7.2.1 (Hetero)gender

The findings indicated an impact of research participants’ (hetero)gender on their everyday working experiences. The role of this social category was particularly explicit in relation to the episodes of sexual harassment identified during the data analysis. All of the reported episodes of unwanted sexual contact were underpinned by the cross-gender interaction and predators’ heterosexuality. Findings of similar studies on sexual harassment in the hospitality industry (Ineson et al. 2013, Kensbock et al. 2015) are consistent with the role of male perpetrators and heteronormativity of unwanted behaviours experienced by the interviewed Polish women revealed in Chapter Five. According to Kensbock et al. (2015) sexual harassment of women at work is related to wider patriarchal norms operating in organisations and society. It contributes to unequal gendered relationships in the workplace, reinforcing women’s subordinate positions (Kensbock et al. 2015). Such a perspective on sexual harassment may explain why none of the research participants’ reported experiences of unwanted sexual behaviour conducted by women.

The stories of Polish women revealed in Chapter Five show examples of men’s attempts to dominate in interpersonal relationships at work, through heterosexualised behaviour. For example, this is seen in some male co-workers’ disregard of interviewees’ protests against sexualised conduct, or in the used degrading and sexualising language. Phrases, such as, ‘Sexy baby make me coffee’ were both sexualised, as they endow with sexual characteristics interaction between employees (Warhurst and Nickson 2009), and sexist in a hostile manner, as they reinforce woman’s subordinate positions through derogatory characterisation (Glick and Fiske 1997). These findings are confirmed in the literature by a well-established discussion of sexual harassment as a form of exercising control to enforce gendered workplace hierarchy (MacKinnon 1979, McDonald 2012, Zippel 2006).

The data suggests that unwanted sexual conduct was also connected with broader processes of socialisation, constructions of masculinity and reinforcement of heteronormativity. For example, Ewa’s experience of male co-workers teaching each
other sexist phrases in different languages (see section 5.2) can be seen not only as a form of organisational norm, reinforcing the subjectivity of women, but also a custom of male bonding and constructing masculinities (cf. Gregory 2009). The establishment (or maintenance) of gendered hierarchy becomes a shared experience between men. This constructs relations among genders in the workplace and consequently establishes what constitutes femininity and masculinity. Collective sexual harassment of women also reassures men about each other’s heterosexuality. For example, by placing bets on who is going to have sex with which female co-worker and when (see section 5.2), men recognise that they share the same sexuality. By expressing their heterosexuality in physical gestures, language and non-verbal behaviour, even though these acts are unwanted and harassing (see section 5.2), men sexualised not only research participants’ working experiences but also their occupational space. This contributed to an establishment of heterosexuality as a dominant form of sexuality, especially in instances when sexual harassment was a collective form of behaviour. As Bell et al. (2011) argue, different vocal mechanisms and behaviours exclude employees who are sexual minorities, creating challenges for HR managers with an increasingly diverse workforce. Previous intersectional investigations of hospitality work examined experiences such as sexual harassment from the perspective of different social categories (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Dyer et al. 2010, Kensbock et al. 2015), but omitted in their discussion the interlocking role of gender and sexuality in relation to sexual harassment and other occurrences.

The impact of (hetero)gender on research participants’ working experiences was also identifiable in relation to available promotion and development opportunities. Ewa and Karolina’s reported episodes of unwanted sexual conduct initiated by their managers (see section 5.2) were correlated with favourable treatment received from these managers (see section 5.6). Ewa’s interview responses reveal that although she has communicated the unwanted nature of her manager’s sexist phrases she has also performed her (hetero)gender to gain favours and other desired ends at her workplace. As Watkins et al. (2013) explain, the workplace is one of many ‘marketplaces’ where people construct and exercise sexuality. Due to uneven hierarchal relations between the genders, men and women perform sexualities in a different manner. In sexual performances men may use their higher status in organisations, whether to offer or coerce sexual interactions. Finding that they are in subordinate positions, women may
use strategic sexual performances as a resource to attain desired outcomes (Watkins et al. 2013). While some of the general manager’s sexual behaviour was unacceptable for Ewa, she also consciously took advantage of the manager’s sexualised liking. Ewa mobilised a gendered performance of emotion to gain influence over her main manager as social influence over others is one of the most important means in achieving one’s organisational goals (see Barrick et al. 2009, Mintzberg 1983). Mooney et al. (2016) and Mooney (2016b) argue that when analysing promotion paths in the hospitality industry it is important to consider intersections of gender with age, ethnicity and class. However, the findings presented in Chapter Five further complicate this argument suggesting that (hetero)gender is also an important social category that may shape promotion opportunities in hospitality work.

Moreover, it should be recognised that although the impact of (hetero)gender was pronounced in research participants’ stories some experiences indicate the influence of gender on its own. For example, interviewees reported gendered segregation of roles in their organisations, where women were employed for customer-facing roles and men worked as kitchen staff. This finding is supported by numerous extant studies highlighting gendered segregation of work in the hospitality industry (Hicks 1990, Kensbock et al. 2015, Mkono 2010a, Mooney and Ryan 2009, Ng and Pine 2003, Purcell 1996).

The interviews also revealed that research participants experienced bullying based on tensions between customer-facing and backroom staff. Gendered segregation, reported by interviews, suggested that this bullying had, in effect, a gendered nature where female waiting staff reported malicious treatment by male chefs (see section 5.3.1). Workplace bullying has been identified as an ongoing element of the culinary profession (Meloury and Signal 2014). However, as argued by Hearn and Parkin (2001), organisations are constituted through gender and interactions at work such as bullying also need to be understood through the lens of gender. Professional cooking is considered a male-dominated occupation (Jonsson et al. 2008) and although the ratio of men to women may be gradually becoming less imbalanced the profession is still gendered by the number of employees (Women First 2010) and the working culture (Harris and Giuffre 2010b). While aggression may be an element of the kitchen staff’s working culture it does not mean that the interviewees’ experiences of bullying
behaviour, in interaction with the kitchen staff, was not gendered. In fact, the cross-gendered nature of the reported incidents suggests the relevance of gender impact. None of the research participants reported malicious behaviour conducted by female chefs. Furthermore, some of the male chefs behaved in a manner that interviewees considered sexist. This occurrence of gender influence questions Pringle’s (2008) arguments that heterogender could replace the concept of gender in organisational investigations. Although the findings from Chapter Five illustrate the influence of heterogender on research participants’ work they also reveal instances where gender, separately, has marked interviewees’ experiences.

7.2.2 Migration status

The second category of difference, which has influenced research participants’ working experiences, was their migration status. The findings reported in Chapters Five and Six revealed that while some of the interviewed women were bullied on the basis of their gendered work, others experienced regular malicious treatment, which was underpinned by the shared with other co-workers migration status. Literature on organisational studies provides evidence of aggression displayed by local employees and customers towards migrant workers (Estacio and Saidy-Khan 2014, Stevens et al. 2012). Previous studies have also shown abusive treatment of undocumented migrant workers of the same nationality in the hospitality industry (Joppe 2012, Wright 2007). However, the concept of workplace bullying within the same migrant group of documented A8 migrants remains unexplored.

Research participants described episodes where Polish migrant co-workers acted towards them in a malicious manner (see subsection 6.3.5). The antisocial incidents were caused by compatriots who had more working experience than victim research participants or held a higher position at the workplace. This finding corresponded with interview responses of research participants holding supervisory positions, who admitted disadvantageous treatment of compatriots in their workplaces. The experiences described by interviewees are reflected by insights from a study by Eade et al. (2007) about Polish workers in London. Eade et al. found that according to the majority of examined Polish migrant workers one should be careful when doing business with compatriots. According to Eade et al. the opinions presented by Polish people may be
the result of competition and can lead to experiences of inequality and discrimination. The findings from the current study illustrate examples of episodes where such relationships occur. While previous studies have revealed that Polish people tend to exchange resources and information within their migrant group (Fitzgerald et al. 2012, Lassalle et al. 2011), interviewees’ stories demonstrated that shared migration status can also facilitate discriminatory behaviour.

The interviewees’ migration status also shaped their working experiences due to co-workers and customers’ othering behaviour. Research participants’ reported incidents when their language skills were used to highlight differences between them and other employees or customers. According to Berger and Luckman (1966) language is the most important system of signs that humans utilise. As such, through conveying ideas, language and discourse are central in teaching individuals socially acceptable norms (Layder 1998). Making fun of the Polish accent highlighted research participants’ position outside of the norm.

Othering based on migration status did not affect all research participants’ experiences equally. Zuza’s story (see subsection 5.4.2) illustrated that the migration status used to target a person or a group was not rigid but, rather, socially constructed and fluid. According to Zuza due to her long stay in Scotland and the British school education she was treated differently, than her Polish colleagues who have recently migrated. This is confirmed by Dyer et al. (2010) who find that in hotel work non-British workers’ migrant identities are constructed by contrast not only with British employees but also co-workers of the same origin who have been in Britain for a longer period of time. This affirms that being the other, similar to the vectors of social categorisation on which othering is based, is constructed rather than predefined (Mountz 2009).

Interview responses suggest that the construction of others had tangible consequences on research participants’ work experiences. According to the interviewees they were expected to undertake at their workplaces the most unwanted and/or tiring tasks. For example, Sara was regularly expected to work in the bar during the busiest days and was asked more often than other employees to do toilet checks (see section 5.5). The theme of unequal distribution of tasks can be related to othering at work experienced by the interviewees. Employers are more likely to give dirty, unwanted and difficult tasks to those who are considered ‘outsiders’ (Waldinger and Lichter 2003). Specifically,
constructions of migrants as the ‘Other’ carry assumptions about work suitable for these outsiders. According to McDowell (2008) the discourse of the ‘hard working Polish plumber’ has created an image for recent Eastern European migrants as suitable for specific types of work in the contemporary British labour market. According to interviewees in their workplaces there was a strong assumption, shared by employers about Polish people’s work skills and work ethic (see subsection 6.3.4).

The discriminatory expectations of work effort, which research participants reported, can be related to the employers’ perceived good ‘work ethic’ of migrants (see MacKenzie and Forde 2009). Thompson et al. (2013) argue that too often employers attribute work skills to essentialist cultural attributes neglecting the specific setting in which employees’ labour skills are displayed. Baxter-Reid (2016) argues that employers’ expectations of migrant workers’ good ‘work ethic’ can be a result of a preference for a workforce over which mechanisms of control can be exercised. Polish people, similar to other Accession migrants, have a weak position in the labour market, making them prone to exploitation and heightened dependence upon employers (TUC 2008). Research participants’ responses illustrated this in Chapter Six, where reported by Polish women poor language skills and deskilling were discussed. Reported by participants difficulties with the language and the lack of recognition of their skills and qualifications in the labour market, limited interviewees’ employment opportunities (see sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2). As shown by MacKenzie and Forde (2009), companies target specific marginalised groups, such as Polish or Estonian migrants, in order to minimise the labour cost and maintain competitive advantage. From the perspective of employers’, one of the perceived benefits of marginalised groups is that they are ‘good workers’ with a strong ‘work ethic’, which manifests:

“in terms of a perceived willingness to work hard, follow management instruction and, crucially, work long hours as and when the firm required” (MacKenzie and Forde 2009, p. 150).

The hard approach to HRM described by MacKenzie and Forde can explain why, according to research participants, they were expected to perform the least wanted or most labour-intense tasks. Taking advantage of the research participants’ vulnerable position was made easier for employers as most of the interviewees’ who reported episodes suggesting unequal distribution of tasks did not have any previous work
experience or had a different frame of reference regarding wages and job security (see subsections 6.3.2, 6.3.3). These are elements which, according to Piore (1979), affect the level of effort an employee exerts after entering the employment relationship.

### 7.2.3 Whiteness

The data discussed in reference with the literature suggests an indirect impact of whiteness on interviewees’ working experiences. The fact that whiteness was less pronounced in the dataset is unsurprising, since whiteness is concealed as a neutral and invisible norm in organisational and wider societal settings, against which other ethnic identities are measured and identified (Al Ariss et al. 2014, Moreton-Robinson 2006). As found by Macalpine and Marsh (2005), in their study of public sector managers and professionals, even when asked directly about whiteness, white employees find it difficult to comment due to its ‘normality’ or embarrassment about the topic.

The data revealed dominance of white employees in research participants’ workplaces. Participants’ description of ethnic diversity at work did not reflect the ethnic makeup of the Scottish population (see subsection 6.2.3). However, as reported by the research participants, dominance or exclusivity of white employees corresponds with findings of previous studies suggesting employers’ preferences to hire white employees (Parutis 2011b, Royster 2003), especially for customer facing occupations (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Adkins 1995, Dyer et al. 2010). When asked about the ethnic makeup of their workplace interviewees were surprised to notice that despite the perceived diversity of staff their co-workers were exclusively or almost exclusively white (see subsection 6.2.3). Research participants’ idea of ‘employees diversity’ was related to migrant identities rather than ethnicities (see subsection 6.2.3), contributing to the concealment of the whiteness hegemony. The interviewed Polish women’s unawareness of the whiteness dominance in their organisations correlates with organisations’ interests to present their workplaces as ‘neutral’, denying any differences between social groups (see Macalpine and Marsh 2005). Due to the qualitative nature of the study the findings related to dominance of white employees is anecdotal. Nevertheless, this points future research to further investigation of the ethnic makeup of hospitality workers in Scotland and potential privilege and discrimination based on ethnic categories such as ‘whiteness’.
The numerical and cultural dominance of whiteness in an organisation can lead to disadvantageous treatment of non-white workers (Acker 2006), for instance, in the form of bullying (Archer 1999). This can explain why, according to some interviewees, there was a difference in their workplaces in treatment of white and non-white employees. According to Wiola, her colleagues, who are visible ethnic minority, faced numerous regular malicious incidents on the basis of their ethnicity (see subsection 5.3.3). However, during the interviews Wiola did not consider herself a target of any malicious treatment and highlighted her harmonious relationships with co-workers. The difference reported by Wiola between own work experiences and those of her visible ethnic minority co-workers’ can suggest an impact of whiteness, which was unrecognised by the interviewee. As found by Stevens et al. (2012), among visible markers, which differentiate migrant workers, skin colour is the strongest indicator for incidents of discrimination and racism. Similarly, Estacio and Saidy-Khan (2014), in a study of migrant women employed as nurses, found that visible ethnic minority respondents reported bullying behaviour of managers and advantageous treatment of white nurses. These findings from previous studies and Wiola’s story may suggest that she was privileged on the basis of her whiteness (see subsection 5.3.3). British people tend to perceive Polish migrants as a white ethnic minority (Halej 2015). The identity of whiteness shared with the dominant group can explain why, although racilaised bullying was present in Wiola’s workplace, she reported an absence of any malicious treatment which would target her. A discussion of advantageous treatment of Polish workers on the basis of their whiteness has already been identified in relation to employment opportunities (Parutis 2011); however, its impact on malicious behaviour has not yet been explored. At the same time it is important to recognise that findings from this study, similar to other empirical investigations of whiteness and advantageous treatment at work (Cheng 2013, Leonard 2010), provide insights through comparison of experiences and discussion with prior research. Due to the elusive nature of whiteness the discussed here findings are indirect and descriptive.

Dyer et al. (2010), and other intersectional studies (Ammons et al. 2016, Samaluk 2014, Woodhams et al. 2015), argue that whiteness needs to be considered in relation to other social categories of difference in the organisational setting. The intersectional discussion of social categories allows to further explore their direct and indirect effects on work experiences. Thus, the next part of the chapter discusses how whiteness
7.3 Intersection of Polish migrant women’s privilege and disadvantage in the Scottish hospitality industry

This section readdresses the second research objective, discussing intersections of social categories and the resultant disadvantage and/or privilege. Social categories individually outlined in the previous part of the chapter are now considered in their interconnected effects. The section is divided into three segments debating how social categories created intersectional experiences of 1) disadvantage, 2) privilege and 3) disadvantage and privilege.

7.3.1 Intersectional experiences of disadvantage

The data presented in Chapters Five and Six reveal a complex and intersectional picture of research participants’ disadvantage. For example, interview responses show that for some research participants the experience of sexual harassment was based on an intersection of (hetero)gender and migration status. For instance, Karolina’s experience of unwanted sexual behaviour conducted by her employer was related to his essentialist and sexualised assumptions about Polish migrant women (see subsection 5.2.2). This finding, on the interconnected impact of (hetero)gender and migration status, corresponds with insights provided by Adib and Guerrier (2003). Although Adib and Guerrier (2003) do not consider (hetero)gender in their investigation, but merely gender, they found that migrant women in hospitality work were more prone to sexual harassment than their local co-workers. According to Adib and Guerrier (2003) migrant women can be more susceptible to sexual harassment due to their vulnerable position at work, caused by their migration status.

The findings presented in Chapter Five also reveal the intersectional dimension of unwanted sexual conduct related to Polish migrants’ language. Interview responses suggest that Polish sexualised phrases used at work by male colleagues can make sexual harassment more harmful for Polish women who encountered it (see subsection 5.2.2). Language and psychological studies show that the more proficient a person is with a
language the more emotional impact swearwords have on them that are said in that language (Dewaele 2004, Pavlenko 2007). Thus, while sexist phrases said in Polish were a form of harassment for all women in the given workplace, it is likely that they had a stronger emotional impact on Polish women such as interviewees.

The sexualised language, especially crude Polish phrases, used in research participants’ workplaces was a recurring display of offensive, insulting behaviour, which can be recognised as a form of workplace verbal violence (see Chappell and Di Martino 2006). Workplace verbal violence can have multiple consequences for employees’ physical and mental wellbeing (Hogh and Viitasara 2005, Rowe and Sherlock 2005). From a health point of view, victims of verbal abuse may suffer from anxiety and depression (Gimeno et al. 2012) or cumulative stress leading to numerous physical disorders, such as hypertension or heart disease (Antai-Otong 2001). By using sexualised and sexist Polish phrases interviewees’ male co-workers created harmful work environments, where verbal violence was a part of Polish women’s everyday interpersonal relations with colleagues.

The findings presented in Chapter Five also suggest that research participants were bullied at work by men working at the kitchen (see subsection 5.3.1) and Polish compatriots (see section 5.3.2). However, in some cases bullying was underpinned by both, shared migration status and gendered staff relations (see section 5.3.2). In other words, the data shows that some interviewees were bullied by Polish male chefs. According to Lee et al. (2013) workplace bullying is a gendered phenomenon. Horizontal gendered division of labour often means that men can use their organisational position to bully subordinate women. Interviewees reported episodes of compatriots’ malicious behaviour and in some cases these also had a gendered nature. As discussed in the previous section, studies on the hospitality industry illustrating malicious or abusive treatment of the same ethnicity workers is predominantly related to undocumented workers (Joppe 2012, Wright 2007). The findings from Chapter Five reveal that documented migrant workers can be subject to bullying conducted by compatriots, and this behaviour can be underpinned by gendered work division. Research participants’ stories of bullying contribute to our understanding of the underexplored relationship between workplace bullying and employees’ intersecting social identities (see Lee et al. 2013).
7.3.2 Intersectional experiences of privilege

The interview responses also revealed intersectionality of advantageous experiences. For example, reported by interviewees employers’ essentialist assumptions about Polish people’s work ethic and related to them preference to recruit Polish people privileged research participants on the basis of migration status and, indirectly, whiteness. Studies on the UK’s low-wage economy show that employers across different industries often demonstrate preference for foreign employees with good a ‘work ethic’ (Dench et al. 2006, MacKenzie and Forde 2009, Scott 2013, Thompson et al. 2013), even though the term ‘work ethic’ is ambiguous and can relate to a range of factors (Ruhs and Anderson 2010). The findings presented in Chapter Six reveal that in interviewees’ workplaces the rhetoric of a good work ethic was related specifically to the research participants’ Polish migrant status. This is confirmed by the findings from other studies, discussing the existence of employers’ presumptions about Polish employees (Anderson et al. 2006, Parutis 2011b). Just as idealisations of workers are gendered and sexualised (Acker 1990, Acker 2006) they are also geographically located and based on migration stereotypes (Anderson 2006, Brush and Vasupuram 2006, Dyer et al. 2010).

However, employers’ preferences for Polish workers, revealed in section 6.3.4, were also indirectly privileging employees who identify themselves as white. More than 90 percent of Polish migrants in the UK identify themselves as ‘white other’ (Census 2011) and British citizens tend to perceive Polish people as a white ethnic minority (Halej 2015). Some British employers perceive being ‘white’ and hardworking as the main strengths of Polish migrant employees (Parutis 2011b). The stereotype about Polish people’s work ethic, popular in interviewees’ workplaces (see 6.3.4), represents and intersection of migrant advantage (Eade et al. 2007, Dench et al. 2006, MacKenzie and Forde 2009, Scott 2013, Thompson et al. 2013) and whiteness advantage (Dyer et al. 2010, Parutis 2011b). By making decisions on the basis of the ‘Polish migrants’ work ethic’ stereotype employers not only privilege Polish workers but also exclude potential non-white employees.

Furthermore, presented in Chapters Five and Six findings on the ease with which some research participants entered employment, despite lack of language skills and work experience, raises a question of intersecting impact of (hetero)gendered and white appearance. For example, Karolina cited several incidents (see subsection 6.2.3), when
she was offered employment without a job interview. This included an occurrence when she was approached by an employer and offered a waitress position when she was a customer at a restaurant. Her appearance also mattered when she was offered a job at a café since “the owner was looking for a girl who would smile” (see 6.2.3). Karolina’s comment and described experiences suggest her gendered appearance was favoured by her male employers. The fact that Karolina was also sexually harassed in a heterosexual manner by some of her managers indicates that the favoured appearance was related to (hetero)gender.

However, Karolina’s account, discussed in relation to previous studies, suggests that her favoured appearance also carried in the labour market the advantage of whiteness. White ethnicity interacts with gender to construct “non-threatening and unremarkable labouring bodies”, advantageous in labour markets (Dyer et al. 2010 p.651). Studies show that favouring feminine and white appearances occurs especially in the hospitality industry and customer facing jobs (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Halford et al. 1997), where employees become an embodiment of the organisations they work for (Warhurst and Nickson 2007, Warhurst and Nickson 2009). This means that the body, which performs the labour, becomes one of the job requirements, devaluing the skills necessary to perform the labour (England and Folbre 1999). England and Folbre’s argument explains why Oliwia was also able to receive employment only after meeting her employer and despite her lack of experience or language skills (see 6.2.3). While the interviewed Polish women joined their workplaces on the basis of advantageous impact of migration status and (hetero)gender the literature also suggests that these social categories were intersecting with the privileging impact of whiteness. However, as the next subsection shows, these intersectional advantageous circumstances, under which research participants have entered their workplaces, had long-term discriminatory after-effects.

### 7.3.3 Intersectional experiences of privilege and disadvantage

Research participants’ interview responses depict complex experiences of intersecting privilege and disadvantage. The findings suggest that research participants were privileged due to their employers’ essentialist expectations about their work ethic (cf. Anderson et al. 2006, McDowell et al. 2007, Wills et al. 2010). Previous studies have found a link between the elevated status of Polish migrant workers, on the basis of the
migrant stereotype, and the privilege of whiteness (Parutis 2011b). Employers can prefer Polish employees on the basis of both the workers’ whiteness and assumptions about Polish workers’ ability to work hard (Parutis 2011b). By focusing on hiring Polish people interviewees’ employers privileged a group of workers who identify themselves as white. At the same time, employers’ and co-workers’ presumptions about Polish people’s work ethic could be the reason why, according to the research participants, they were expected to undertake the most unwanted or labour-intensive tasks (see 5.5). While interviewees may have been privileged during recruitment, due to employers’ stereotypes about the Polish migrants’ ability to work hard (see 6.3.4 and similar findings in the literature: Anderson et al. 2006, McDowell et al. 2007, Wills et al. 2010), on the basis of the same underlying assumption they may have been disadvantaged in terms of everyday distribution of tasks. Thus, research participants’ experience of privilege on the basis of their migration status and, indirectly, whiteness was relative. It needs to be considered in proportion to the essentialist expectations of employers’ and co-workers’ related to Polish migrants’ work performance, and reported by interviewees unequal distribution of work.

Similarly, some of the interviewed Polish women who were favoured by their male employers on the basis of their (hetero)gender revealed a picture of interconnected short-term advantages and long-term disadvantages. On the one hand they were hired on the basis of advantageous treatment and had access to development opportunities unavailable to other employees (see sections 5.6 and 6.2.3). On the other hand, they were facing their employers’ unwanted sexual conduct (see sections 5.2 and 5.6) which, in Ewa’s case, took the form of verbal violence and led to physical violence (see subsection 6.2.2).

Finally, the data discussed in reference with the literature suggests that the interviewed Polish women may have received advantageous treatment on the basis of their whiteness concerning how they entered employment and how they were treated by co-workers. However, the identity of whiteness is not fixed but, rather, socially constructed (e.g. McDowell 2009) and mediated through status, language, and other features of an individual that affect or can be discussed in social interaction (Colic-Peisker 2005). According to Roediger (1999) the social category of whiteness presents a spectrum of groups with ‘white’ minorities occupying different spaces in the hierarchy of
acceptability. While the research participants may have been in a privileged position compared to visible ethnic minority co-workers and job applicants (see subsections 5.3.3 and 6.2.3), they were in a disadvantageous position compared to local white co-workers (see sections 5.4 and 5.5). This is because interviewees’ identity of whiteness was mediated by their migration status. While interviewees avoided racial bullying experienced by their visibly ethnic co-workers they experienced othering based on their migration status (see 5.4). Following the conceptualisation of Sivanandan (IRR 2001) this could be identified as xeno-racism, that is, racism meted out to individuals of the same ethnic group who are displaced and dispossessed in a given matter (IRR 2001). The concept of xeno-racism and its impact on Polish migrants’ work in Scotland or the UK has not yet been explored.

7.4 Polish migrant women’s reflections on experienced (in)equality at work

Thus far, the chapter has addressed research objectives one and two discussing how (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness have separately and intersectionally influenced research participants’ work experiences to form interlocking occurrences of privilege and/or disadvantage. This section revisits the third research objective concerned with the Polish women’s reflections on their experiences which can be identified as inequality.

7.4.1 Non-labelling of sexual harassment

Research participants reported episodes which, on the basis of a definition provided by the European Economic Community (EEC 1991), can be identified as sexual harassment. However, interviewees themselves described their experiences in a manner which avoided the use of phrases such as ‘harassment’ or ‘sexual harassment’. For example, Lidia, commenting on when her manager touched her intimate body part said, “As I say, at [restaurant name] they like to cuddle” (see subsection 5.2.1). Lidia’s metaphor of ‘cuddling’ was conveyed sarcastically, but also downplayed the significance of the occurrences. It is noteworthy that Lidia’s description of unwanted sexual conduct is connected to its regularity. A high rate of unwanted sexual conduct incidents in the workplace can lead to normalisation of the harassment and can explain
the reluctance of ‘labelling’ the episodes (Adikaram 2016, Kensbock et al. 2015, Shepela and Levesque 1998). The normalisation of unwanted sexual harassment is illustrated in Lidia’s reflections as, according to her, it would be an exaggeration to call her experiences ‘harassment’ (see subsection 5.2.3), even though she regularly experienced physical and verbal sexual harassment from her manager (5.2.1, 5.2.3), regularly challenged it (5.2.1, 5.2.3) and reported it to the general manager (6.2.2).

Lidia’s description of the reported episodes (i.e., touching her body, sexist and sexualised language, unwanted advances) as “not very serious things” (see subsection 5.2.3) is supported by findings from similar studies suggesting that when the severity of unwanted sexual conduct is considered low women tend not to label their experiences as sexual harassment (Fitzgerald et al. 1988, Gruber and Smith 1995, Stockdale et al. 1995). Lidia’s hesitation whether to label her experiences as sexual harassment also corresponds with other women’s uncertainty of what constitutes sexual harassment (Kensbock et al. 2015, Magley et al. 1999). Her responses appear to trivialise the occurrences by calling the perpetrator an “idiot who does not know what he is talking about” and she distances herself from the experience “I do not give a damn” (see subsection 5.2.3).

Ewa’s comparison of her workplace to ‘Hell’ due to the recurring sexist and sexualised language (see section 5.2.3) leaves no doubt that the unwanted sexual conduct played a crucial role in shaping her relations with co-workers and overall experience of working at the pub. Unlike Lidia she did not downplay the significance of the harassing behaviour but, rather, explicitly described it. Nevertheless, nowhere during the interview did she use Polish words equivalent for ‘sexual harassment’ (molestowanie seksualne) or ‘harassment’ (molestowanie). The gathered data does not present a straightforward answer as to why most of the participants downplayed their experiences of sexual harassment, while Ewa was vocal about the negative effects of unwanted sexual conduct on her work. One explanation could be that Ewa’s experiences were more pervasive than that of other interviewees. Her interview responses suggest that sexual harassment was not only accepted by some employees, but it was also a part of practices used by male co-workers to socialise. The experiences of Lidia, Zosia or Karolina were related to specific managers or co-workers. In Ewa’s case, unwanted sexual conduct had a dimension of a group activity. This, according to Ewa, has defined
relations between employees at her workplace (see subsection 5.2.3). However, it is also possible that Ewa’s reflections on her own experiences of unwanted sexual conduct were linked to the length of her work in the hospitality industry or personal reflexivity. Unlike most of the research participants she also recognised that employers’ compliments about Polish people’s work ethic can be used to exploit employees (see subsection 6.3.4).

According to previous studies, non-labelling of sexual harassment, sometimes referred to as ‘non-acknowledgement’ or ‘non-claiming’, hinders the fight against unwanted sexual conduct in a two-fold manner (Adikaram 2016, Denissen 2010, Kensbock et al. 2015). Firstly, if targets of sexual harassment remain silent about the issue the unwanted behaviour becomes invisible or trivialised making policies and practices of challenging sexual harassment redundant. According to some research non-labelling sexual harassment disempowers its victims, who are predominantly women, and unwillingly conforms them to the continuation of the unwanted behaviour (Hinze 2004, Quinn 2000, Watts 2007). Secondly, non-labelling provides arguments for parties which deny the existence of the problem. It is seen as one of the reasons why, despite the prevalence of sexual harassment at work, formal report rates of incidents are low (Adikaram 2016, TUC 2016).

Interviewees’ avoidance of labelling unwanted sexualised conduct as ‘sexual harassment’ is supported with findings from previous research in the context of the hospitality industry (e.g. Giuffre and Williams 1994). However, the data presented in Chapter Five illustrates that even research participants who responded actively to the unwanted sexualised conduct, challenging it with verbal contest or physical violence (see sections 5.2 and 6.2.2), did not refer to their experiences as ‘sexual harassment’. The avoidance of acknowledging sexual harassment not only contributed to naturalisation of this unwanted behaviour but also concealed the impact of (hetero)gender. By non-labelling and trivialising sexual harassment research participants contributed to the invisibility of gendered and heteronormative norms operating in their workplaces. The idea of heterosexuality as a ‘norm’ in the workplace, shaped through normative understandings of women’s and men’s interaction, like the unwanted behaviour, was unchallenged.
7.4.2 Perception of discriminating acts as humour

Humour was the basis of different forms of discriminating behaviour described by the research participants. For example, episodes, which can be identified as gendered bullying, were presented by the interviewees’ as ‘jokes’. When Oliwia explained how male chefs heated up plates and the metal counter “to simply incredible temperatures” that burned the skin she recalled it as ‘small pranks’ (see subsection 5.3.1). Similarly, Zaneta called burning her with a hot spoon and hitting her on the head with a hand or towel “a very strange sense of humour” (5.3.1). According to Wang et al. (2011) micro-aggression carries the additional burden for targets of not overreacting. Thus, some individuals are compelled to downplay the meaning of incidents by dismissing them as ‘jokes’ or ‘humour’ (Burdsey 2011). In the context of interactions with the kitchen staff research participants may have been particularly pressured to disregard the episodes, as bullying and hostility are normalised as a part of the chef’s working culture (Ram 2015) often presented as ‘banter’ (Alexander et al. 2012). As such the gendered nature of bullying exercised by chefs on waiting staff may have also be displayed as ‘humour’ and remained unnoticed.

‘Humour’ was also used by research participants to describe less hostile acts carried out by their co-workers, which highlighted interviewees’ migration status (see subsection 5.4.1). The use of humour in other examples is not coincidental. According to Burn (2000), humour is used by groups to determine boundaries between insiders and outsiders. It provides a setting where acceptance into a group or rejection from it is performed. Humour also provides space for ideas which may not be transmitted directly. Research participants’ co-workers utilised humour as a form of othering in order to draw, in an ‘acceptable’ form, boundaries between interviewees’ and non-migrant employees. By highlighting, in a humorous manner, differences such as language skills or accent co-workers positioned interviewees’ as the Others on the basis of their migration status.

It is worth recognising that in cases of sexualised episodes the research participants distanced themselves from their perpetrators’ perception of unwanted behaviour as a form of ‘humour’ (see 5.2). For example, referring to male colleagues sexualising Lidia’s work experience, she said: “They think it is a joke or something”. Previous studies on sexual harassment have found that recurring sexual conduct confirms the
perpetrator’s hostile intent, consolidating perceptions of the harassing behaviour (Knapp et al. 1997, Osman 2007, Wasti and Cortina 2002, Yoder and Aniakudo 1995). Thus, even though Lidia hesitated whether to label her experiences as sexual harassment, she did not adopt the perpetrator’s explanation of humour.

The findings presented in Chapter Five are confirmed with previous studies illustrating that humour can communicate prejudice (Evans et al. 2014) and disguise sexual harassment (Mallett et al. 2016). The data also reflects McCann et al.’s (2010) argument that negative humour serves in a social context a role of expressing control or influence over others. The disparagement humour can be used to determine the joker and target’s positions within a social hierarchy (McCann et al. 2010). It can display where acceptance or rejection from a group is enacted. The element of setting control or influence over someone was pronounced in the reported discriminating incidents, which were portrayed in the research participants’ workplaces as humour. For example, male chefs burned female waitresses’ skin to influence and alternate their work behaviour (see subsection 5.3.1).

Presenting disadvantageous behaviour as humour hid the impact of social categories, and whether vectors such as gender affected research participants’ experiences separately (e.g. a sexist phrase) or in intersection with other categories (e.g. a Polish sexist phrase). However, it is argued in this study that by presenting discriminatory behaviour as humour the difficult to recognise intersectionality of inequality experiences was further concealed. Intersectionality is difficult to identify even for researchers when systematically studied (Bowleg 2008). For individuals who are subject to the effects of intersecting social categories the processes of intersectionality are mostly impenetrable (Ludvig 2006). By presenting discriminating behaviour, such as Polish sexist phrases, as humour the underlying intersectionality of the conduct is even more difficult to recognise. The person who is subject to such treatment has to first assess whether a given conduct was a form of joke or discrimination, as well as potentially recognising the underlying, intersecting basis on which they were treated in a disadvantageous manner.
7.4.3 Mixed perception of unequal distribution of tasks

The unequal distribution of tasks identified from the data was differently perceived by research participants. Some of the interviewees viewed it as a compliment regarding their working skills (see sections 5.5, 6.3.4). Constructing a positive identity in relation to work activities is a common phenomenon (Dutton et al. 2010), also utilised by employees performing dirty work (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999). According to Alvesson and Willmott (2002), employees are more likely to actively construct their positive work identity when interaction with others raises their worry and/or self-doubt. Thus, it is possible that some of the research participants, having recognised that they are being asked to perform the most labour demanding tasks, choose to perceive this as a compliment. This focus on the positive aspect of the unequal distribution of tasks was reported, for example, by Ewa (see subsection 6.3.4). According to her expectations about Polish employees’ work output can be seen as either a compliment or exploitation. However, she chooses to view it as a compliment as it is pleasant to hear that someone likes to work with Polish people.

Presentation and affirmation of unequal distribution of work as a result of someone’s merit negates employers’ strategies of targeting migrant workers as low-paid efficient workforce (see section 7.2.2) previously discussed in the chapter. It also negates organisational scholars claims that systems such as job specifications and definitions of work obligations are influenced by subjective, rather than objective, assessment of employees who belong to the domain’s social group (Acker 2006). Instead, perception of unequal distribution of work as recognition of one’s abilities reinforces the idea of meritocracy in the work setting. Previous studies suggest that Polish migrants tend to perceive the British labour market as more merit based, compared to the seemingly protectionist Polish labour market (Eade et al. 2007, Lopez Rodriguez 2010). As argued by Lopez Rodriguez (2010), migrants rely on meritocratic values seeking promotion in their social status. Working predominantly in occupations below their qualifications and lacking different forms of social capital in the host country they believe in advancing through social hierarchy with work merits. This explains why most research participants were willing to follow managers’ justification of unequal distribution of work. According to interviewees their employers justified such treatment on the basis of research participants’ skills and abilities. However, by accepting the meritocratic
explanation of employers’ essentialist assumptions about employees, interviewees did not challenge but reinforced the process of inequality operating in their workplace. This process, as explained in section 7.3, privileged employment workers with specific migration status but also, indirectly, with an identity of whiteness. Through the acceptance of a meritocratic explanation for the unequal distribution of work, interviewees contributed to the maintenance of employers’ practice which, in an intersectional and indirect manner, presented advantageous employment opportunities for white migrant employees.

Research participants with several years of working experience in Scotland were more sceptical in their perception of the distribution of work and recognised the exploitive element of the issue. For example, Kaja linked being assigned the most labour intensive tasks to her migration status, highlighting her dissatisfaction with the disadvantageous distribution of work (see 5.5). Interviewees’ reflections, reported in section 5.5, are supported by Baxter-Reid’s (2016) findings on work experiences of CEE migrants in Scotland. In the study, Baxter-Reid found that supervisors had unfair and disproportionate expectations of migrant workers. Some of the migrant workers interviewed by Baxter-Reid complied with the employers’ increased expectations while others worked only as good as they needed to. Nonetheless, unlike this thesis, Baxter-Reid’s study does not explore how the migrant workers reflected on their employers’ raised expectations. Having focused on other elements of migrant work, such as the bargaining process, Baxter-Reid’s study does not discuss employers’ meritocratic justification and its affirmation by unexperienced Polish migrant workers.

7.5 Impact of contextual factors on work (in)equality experiences encountered by Polish migrant women in the Scottish hospitality industry

As explained by the title of the section, in this part of the chapter the discussion focuses on the impact of contextual factors on research participants’ encountered experiences of (in)equality. Chapter Two outlined that numerous scholars have highlighted the importance of contextuality in intersectional investigations (e.g. Adib and Guerrier 2003, Anthias 2013, Brah and Phoenix 2004). For example, Anthias (2013) explains that unequal relations and practices are outcomes not only of the interconnected
categories but also of the complex array of social factors, within which intersections are embedded, present in specific temporal and spatial settings. This section readdresses the fourth research objective dedicated to identification of contextual factors in two main subsections dedicated to the contextual factors identified at the organisational and international level.

7.5.1 Contextual factors identified at the organisational level

One of the key elements of intersectional investigations of work experiences is examination of organisational processes that shape inequality (Acker 2006, Acker 2012, Healy et al. 2011). However, Kensbock et al. (2015), in their study of sexual harassment in hotel work, expand this focus on context by including a discussion of specific features of the work environment and related practices which cause discrimination. The findings reported in Chapter Six reflect this more inclusive approach to exploring contextual factors presented by Kensbock et al. (2015). The contextual factors discussed in this subsection identified at the organisational level are related to: organisations’ size and type of services, ineffective grievance management and ad hoc employee recruitment.

Organisations’ size and type of services

The data reported in section 6.2.1 reveal variability in research participants’ experiences of inequality depending on the size of their workplace and the type of services they were involved with. For example, research participants who worked in micro, independent business were unable to recall any problematic episodes that would suggest experiences of inequality. Rather, these interviewees, from workplaces that hired up to 10 employees, painted a picture of close and friendly relations with co-workers and customers. However, these experiences were different from that of interviewees’ stories who worked in small workplaces or branches of large business, who reported various episodes of discrimination and/or privilege depicted in Chapter Five. As explained in section 7.3 these experiences of inequality were based on the intersecting impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness.

The existing literature on micro enterprises and social inequality examines experiences of individuals who run such businesses and belong to traditionally disadvantaged social
groups (Sandberg 2003, Strier and Abdeen 2009). However, experiences of inequality in micro-enterprises are under-researched. The thesis’s finding on the absence of inequality episodes in micro enterprises reflects conclusions of early literature on employment relations in small businesses (Bolton Committee Report, 1971 cited in Rainnie 1989). According to these studies small businesses are characterised by an informal and flexible approach to management and harmonious relations with co-workers that develop into close interpersonal relationships. These organisational characteristic were true to research participants’ stories from micro businesses. In contrast, interviewees’ experiences of working in small businesses illustrated practices related to inequality in the form of bullying, othering or sexual harassment. The findings on reported forms of disadvantage are confirmed by more recent research suggesting employees’ high vulnerability to mistreatment, such as sexual harassment or bullying, in small organisations (Baillien et al. 2011, Dionisi and Barling 2011). Previous studies investigating inequality in organisations tend to consider small business as a uniform group (e.g. Dionisi and Barling 2011, Woodhams and Lupton 2006). However, findings from the current study demonstrate that investigations of inequality would benefit from recognition of differences between micro and small businesses. The findings reported in subsection 6.2.1 show that a differentiation between micro and small business is required for a more precise consideration of the organisational context which facilitates employees’ experiences of inequality, based on the intersecting impact of various social categories.

The findings in section 6.2.1 also illustrate that the most regular and intensive experiences of sexual harassment were caused by co-workers of research participants who worked at alcohol-serving businesses. This provided a contrast between experiences from cafes and pubs/restaurants. Numerous studies have illustrated that customers’ alcohol consumption increases incidence of sexual harassment in service occupations (Boyd 2002, Guerrier and Adib 2000, Yagil 2008). In such environments sexual harassment becomes a part of the work routine and is normalised by customers and employees (Guerrier and Adib 2000). In a cultural setting where sexual harassment is common or even an expected element of occupation (Adkins 1995) co-workers may be more daring to sexualise female colleagues. As suggested in the literature, normalisation of unwanted sexual conduct in alcohol-serving businesses explains and
further confirms the contrast identified in the dataset in research participants’ experiences of sexual harassment between workplaces serving alcohol or not.

*Ineffective grievance management*

Another factor at an organisational level, which facilitated interviewees’ experiences of privilege and/or disadvantage, was ineffective grievance management at workplaces. For some research participants formal complaints were not a viable means to challenge harassment. Grievances to general managers did not bring any results or general managers were one of the perpetrators of the unwanted conduct (see subsection 6.2.2). This related specifically to the experiences identified from the dataset of sexual harassment, based on the intersecting impact of (hetero)gender and migration status. Lack of availability of sympathetic and effective figures in the workplace to complain to is one of the organisational features, which contributes to the presence of harassment (Gutek 1985). Research participants, who mentioned episodes, which can be identified as forms of unwanted sexual conduct, worked in an environment tolerant of harassment (see section 5.2). The unwanted behaviour was a form of socialising between men or was normalised by interviewees. The literature suggest sexual harassment between co-workers is linked with a broad organisational tolerance of harassment (Willness et al. 2007), which is perpetuated by perceived lack of concern of officials and managers to effectively handle sexual harassment (Pryor et al. 1995). As Pryor et al. (1995) argue, sexual harassment in the workplace is restrained only when the organisation makes a visible and thorough effort to manage the unwanted behaviour by condemning harassment and promoting intolerance of it. In workplaces, such as Ewa’s pub or Lidia’s restaurant, managers not only presented a lack of concern about handling sexual harassment but were one of the perpetrators of unwanted conduct (see sections 5.2 and 6.2.2). By harassing research participants managers limited their victims’ formal means of challenging the unwanted behaviour and contributed to the organisational tolerance of harassment.

In relation to managers who did not harass interviewees, the data revealed a theme of female managers being more active and successful in resolving reported grievances of harassment, related either to sexism or sexualisation. This could be explained by
women’s higher sensitivity to the problem of unwanted sexual conduct (Blumenthal 1998, Rotundo et al. 2001). Meta-analytic studies have indicated a gender difference in a) perception of sexual harassment as inappropriate behaviour (Blumenthal 1998, Rotundo et al. 2001) and b) belief that sexual harassment perpetrators should be punished (DeSouza 2004, DeSouza et al. 1998, Pryor et al. 1997, Sigal et al. 2005). These studies correspond to findings from section 6.2.2 and support an argument that grievance management, which can be subject to gendered differences, influences occurrence of Polish women’s discrimination based on intersecting with other identities’ (hetero)gender.

Ad hoc employee recruitment

The findings in reference with literature indicated that due to situational, rather than planned, recruitment (Ogbonna 1992) some of the research participants were privileged due to their appearance and their employers’ expectations related to intersecting (hetero)gender and whiteness. For example, Karolina was able to secure employment several times without an interview. On one of the occasions, when she was a customer at a restaurant, she was approached by the owner and offered a waitress position (see section 6.2.3). Karolina’s stories suggest that she possesses an appearance sought by certain employers. Due to situational recruitment interviewees such as Karolina and Oliwia (see section 6.2.3) were able to benefit from their appearance and their employers’ expectations of the ideal worker. As Acker (2006) argues, employers’ definitions of suitable employees is affected by intersecting images of appropriate gender, sexuality and ethnicity. A considerable body of literature shows that white bodies are often preferred and privileged (see Royster 2003) and heterosexuality is often presented as the accepted and normalised form of sexuality in hospitality work (Harris et al. 2011). As found by Brunner and Dever (2014) employees in the hospitality industry for some occupations may have to present a readiness to engage in gendered and heterosexualised, interactions with customers or co-workers.

Research participants’ ability to benefit from their appearance in the context of small organisations is not coincidental. A study of small and medium enterprises in the UK found that nearly one third of examined SMEs applied different selection criteria to men and women (Woodhams and Lupton 2006) and 35 per cent stated that appointments in their organisations were “guided by instinct”. Commenting on the results of the survey,
Woodhams et al. (2004) argues that many SMEs which participated in the study were “actively perpetuating direct and indirect discrimination”. Further, studies have also shown a preference for informal human resource management by SMEs (Barrett and Mayson 2007, Harris 2000, Harris 2002, Matlay 2002) and poor practice in these organisations in the field of equal opportunities (Woodhams et al. 2004) and diversity management (Woodhams and Lupton 2006). The lack of structured selection processes, demonstrated in section 6.2.3, provided an opening for the research participants, who possessed the employers’ sought after look, to be privileged on the basis of their (hetero)gendered and ‘white’ appearance.

### 7.5.2 Contextual factors identified at the international level

Intersectional studies of migrants’ work experiences have identified factors shaping inequality at the organisational level (e.g. Näre 2013, Sang 2016). However, wider influences, which originate outside of workplaces, are under-discussed. Based on the findings revealed in Chapter Six this subsection discusses contextual factors identified at a level which can be called ‘international’ due to the factors’ cross-national nature.

**Language barriers for Polish women**

The language barrier reported by interviewees was one of the most pronounced themes that emerged from the data analysis. Research participants’ responses revealed that their language skills affected their interpersonal interactions at work and, consequently, the working experience in general. While some responses related to English (e.g., written) others described the *additional* difficulty of understanding the Scottish accent (see 6.3.1). Polish migrants’ language barrier has been well documented in literature on migration in relation to various occupational groups (e.g. Grzymała-Moszczyńska et al. 2011, Judd 2011, Lassalle et al. 2011, White 2011). For example, Grzymała-Moszczyńska et al. (2011) found that English was a major hindrance in Polish priests’ attempts to operate as Catholic clergy in the UK. Unlike previous studies, the findings presented in section 6.3.1 show a relationship between Polish women’s limited English and their willingness to work harder and faster. Some research participants attempted to compensate for their difficulties with communication by adopting a more conscientious approach to work. The relationship between the language barrier and increased work effort made research participants more vulnerable to the employers who often
deliberately employ migrant workers to take advantage of their weak labour market position (see MacKenzie and Forde 2009). Furthermore, the data have revealed that the language barrier has affected the extent to which interviewees were able to verbally defend themselves, e.g., from a customer (see subsection 6.3.1). Compensation of English skills with increased work effort and increased difficulty to verbally defend yourself, can facilitate employees’ vulnerability and subsequently experiences of disadvantage, based on the intersectional impact of social categories. Neither of these aspects has been explored in the literature discussing Polish migrants’ experiences of work in the UK (e.g. Aziz 2015, Baxter-Reid 2016, Datta and Brickell 2009, Grzymała-Moszczyńska et al. 2011, Janta 2011, Janta and Ladkin 2013, Janta et al. 2011, Judd 2011, Knight 2014, Kusek 2015, Lassalle et al. 2011, Lugosi et al. 2016, Parutis 2011b).

Migrant women’s deskilling

Most of the research participants were employed in low-skilled occupations despite their high-education (see subsection 6.3.2). Interviewees responses suggest that they were deskilled either due to the lack of recognition of their qualifications and/or their limited language skills. This additional barrier to finding employment has been confirmed by previous studies on Polish migrants in the UK (Anderson et al. 2006, Home Office 2009, Parutis 2011b, Pollard et al. 2008). Although, deskilling of Polish migrants in the UK has been well documented in the academic literature, it is an important contextual factor that needs to be discussed in relation to the Polish women’s experiences of inequality. In the thesis this is illustrated, for example, through Kaja’s weak position in the labour market, leading to the necessity to undertake low-waged occupations (see subsection 6.3.2). Polish migrants’ weak position in the labour market renders them vulnerable to abuse from employers, especially in industries with low coverage of collective bargaining (see Baxter-Reid 2016, Lucas 2009). As illustrated by MacKenzie and Forde (2009, p. 150), organisations can deliberately target marginalised groups of employees, such as Polish or Estonian migrants, to take advantage of their “willingness to work hard, follow management instruction and, crucially, work long hours as and when the firm required”. The deskilling of research participants’ and resulting weak labour market position, reveal interviewees’ higher susceptibility to the unequal distribution of tasks reported in section 5.5.
Reluctance of Polish women to migrate back to Poland

Despite a disadvantageous position in the labour market, language barriers, and reported episodes which suggest intersectional experiences of inequality, none of the Polish women interviewed planned to return to Poland. According to Favell (2008), post-accession migration is characterised by temporary circular and transnational mobility, rather than long-term, permanent migration. However, the data gathered in the thesis, rather, reflects White’s (2011) argument that UK Polish post-accession migrants are reluctant to move back to their home country. In line with Kaczmarycz’s (2013) conclusions, the data suggest that for A8 Polish migrants ‘return’ to Poland usually means merely a short break between periods spent abroad.

The reasons presented by the interviewees for not moving back to the home country were mostly concerned with economic arguments such as losing the work experience gained in the UK, perceived lack of employment opportunities in Poland or perceived difference in financial conditions between Poland and Scotland (see 6.3.3). These reasons, which can be identified as pull and push migration factors (Ferrante 2012), idealise the opportunity of working in Scotland and can explain why, despite the language barrier and experience of deskilling, interviewees seek not only to work but also settle in the host country. According to Janta (2011), Polish migrants in the UK are willing to make ‘sacrifices’ such as commitment to work in low paid employment in order to improve their future living prospects. The determination not to return to Poland but settle down, combined with the weak labour market position, increases Polish migrants’ vulnerability in relationships with employers. Nevertheless, according to Piore (1979), migrants’ weak position in negotiations with employers diminishes further with time as they become more settled in the receiving country.

Stereotype about Polish people’s work ethic

Another theme revealing the importance of the international context was a stereotype about Polish employees’ ‘work ethic’ shared in the research participants’ workplaces. According to the interviewees, the stereotype was popular amongst their employers, co-workers and customers (see subsection 6.3.4). As previously discussed in the chapter, the stereotype about Polish workers has provided during recruitment an intersectional privilege for interviewees based on their intertwined migration status and, indirectly,
whiteness. However, it is also argued in this study that the stereotype was linked to the unequal distribution of work reported by interviewees (see e.g. section 7.3.3). Employers’ positive perception of Polish workers in the UK has been previously recognised in the organisational literature. Polish migrants have met companies’ requirements in terms of both, quantity and quality of work (MacKenzie and Forde 2009, Matthews and Ruhs 2007a). Employers started to display stereotypical assumptions and expectations with regard to Polish workers’ dedication and willingness to work hard (Lyon and Sulcova 2009, McDowell et al. 2007). This phenomenon affects, inter alia, the hospitality industry, where some businesses began to rely in their recruitment on CEE migrant workers (Matthews and Ruhs 2007b). The data reported in section 6.3.4 shows research participants not only respond to but also conformed to the stereotype about Polish workers’ inclination to work hard. For example, Irena believed in the stereotype and attempted to confirm it with her behaviour, thereby reinforcing the positive image of Polish employees at her workplace (see subsection 6.3.4). This is confirmed by Dyer’s (2010), argument that preferences for idealised workers are constructed through a dual interpellation. Managers and customers hold expectations concerning employees on the basis of own and common stereotypes, as well as past experiences. In return, employees respond to these essentialist assumptions and often conform to them. As illustrated by the data from sections 5.5 and 6.3.4 the reinforcement of assumptions about idealised workers can also be perpetuated by other employees. According to the interviewees their co-workers also hold expectations about the performance of Polish workers. As suggested by the interviewees’ responses this has contributed to the distribution of tasks which disadvantaged research participants.

Moreover, Oliwia’s story suggests that the popular stereotype exhibited in the research participants’ workplaces had historical roots (see subsection 6.3.4). Oliwia reported her common conversations with customers who talked about post-war Polish migrants and their ability to work hard. This theme is confirmed by Burrell’s (2006) finding on a strong narrative related to the post-war generation of European migrants in the UK. People who have memories of post-war European migrants, most of whom were Polish, recall these individuals’ dedication and ability to work hard (Burrell 2006). Olivia’s story shows that some of her customers hold an assumption about Polish migrants’ work ethic on the basis of their historical understanding of post-war Polish migration. This
finding demonstrates that Dyer’s (2010) construction of idealised workers is not only subject to employees’ and customers’ past experiences but also historical context.

Peer pressure to conform to the stereotype about work ethic

Although previous studies have illustrated employers’ (Lyon and Sulcova 2009, McDowell et al. 2007) and employees’ (Lugosi et al. 2016) perpetuation of the stereotype about Polish migrants’ work ethic, the discussion on how it affects Polish employees’ work experiences remains unexplored. The previous section suggests that reinforcement of the stereotype by employers and employees can lead to the unequal distribution of tasks in the workplace. However, the data reported in section 6.3.5 also shows a link between interviewees’ experiences which can be identified as workplace bullying and the pressure from their Polish co-workers to work harder. For example, Kinga’s co-workers bullied and pressured her to behave in a manner that matched the stereotype about Polish employees (see subsection 6.3.5). According to Eade et al. (2007), the behaviour of certain Polish migrants can be a liability affecting others’ chances in the labour market. If, according to Kinga’s Polish co-workers, she did not match the popular expectation of the distinct work ethic, her behaviour was a threat to the image of Polish workers and a liability to her Polish colleagues’ future employment prospects. As highlighted by Eade et al. (2007), Polish migrants carefully manoeuvre between ethnic solidarity and pragmatic relationships. Ethnic solidarity, displayed in the form of mutual cooperation, such as exchanging information and resources, can be contested by personal interest. Despite the high level of Polish migrants’ networking, conflicts within this group are common (Eade et al. 2007). Thus, in Kinga’s case, it is possible that her Polish co-workers saw a priority in protecting the image of the ‘Polish work ethic’ over the ethnic solidarity. The pressure from Polish co-workers to work hard was a reason why some research participants considered working with Polish people abroad as a negative experience (see subsection 6.3.5). The pressure to conform to the stereotype about Polish employees’ work ethic reveals grounds for in-group ethnic bullying and further illustrates the impact of the stereotype on unequal distribution of tasks. Although the stereotype based on migration status may lead to privileged treatment during the employment process it also forms discriminating expectations from employers and co-workers, and can cause malicious behaviour among the Polish employees.
7.6 Conclusion

The purpose of the chapter was to readdress the research objectives and discuss the findings presented in Chapters Five and Six in relation to the academic literature. The debate in this chapter’s insights answers scholars’ call for intersectional investigations of privilege and disadvantage at work (Tatli and Özbilgin 2011), and specifically within a given migrant group (Samaluk 2014). In an exploration of inequality experiences the findings illustrate dominance of discrimination faced by Polish women with elements of privilege, which is also linked to disadvantage. For example, the discussion in the chapter shows that the (hetero)gender based attraction of male colleagues, often interconnected with migration status, can lead to women’s advantageous treatment in recruitment and in access to promotion opportunities, but for many research participants it resulted in everyday sexual harassment. At the same time advantage in employment opportunities based on employers’ stereotypical assumptions about Polish migrant workers can contribute to disadvantaging distribution of work and peers’ bullying pressure to conform to the stereotype. The chapter findings show that in interviewees’ workplaces existed normalised assumptions about ‘ideal workers’. These assumptions, related to intersecting (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness, shaped research participants’ everyday work experiences predominantly in a disadvantageous manner.

The findings also revealed that the so far unexplored in intersectional investigations of work impact of (hetero)gender was one of the most pronounced categories of difference. (Hetero)gender, originally introduced to organisational literature by Pringle (2008), presented in this study a new perspective on the well-documented problem of sexual harassment in the hospitality industry (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Hoel and Einarsen 2003, Kensbock et al. 2015) and on the underdiscussed women’s privileged access to promotion opportunities in hospitality businesses.

Furthermore, the discussion presented in the chapter contributes to our understanding of intersectional inequality by discussing migrant women’s reflections on specific elements of experienced privilege and/or disadvantage. Polish women’s reflections confirm that the privileging effects of social categories are unnoticed by their receivers (Acker 2006) and ‘humour’ is often used in workplaces to downplay the meaning of discriminatory episodes such as sexual harassment (TUC 2016), othering (Burdsey 2011, Wang et al. 2011), or gendered bullying (Mallett et al. 2016). Research
participants’ reflections also confirm that victims of unwanted sexual harassment avoid labelling their experiences as sexual harassment, which often has intersectional underpinnings (Adikaram 2016, Kensbock et al. 2015, Shepela and Levesque 1998). However, the findings discussed in section 7.4 reveal that ‘non-labelling’ occurs even when migrant women openly challenge sexual harassment with verbal protests or physical violence. This section of the chapter also brings attention to Polish women’s affirmation of their employers’ and co-workers’ stereotypical assumptions about Polish workers. These insights highlight the importance of migrant women’s agency, and its impact on experienced privilege and/or disadvantage based on intersecting social categories.

Finally, the last section of the chapter discussed the identified organisational and international level factors that facilitated migrant women’s experiences of disadvantage and privilege. As shown in the literature review in Chapter Three despite the importance of contextual factors in the intersectional investigations the majority of studies either does not explore this element (Ammons et al. 2016, Atewologun et al. 2016, Barnum and Zajicek 2008, Cruz 2015, Datta et al. 2009, Essers and Benschop 2009, Soni-Sinha and Yates 2013, Woodhams et al. 2015, Wright 2013, Wright 2014, Wright 2015) or present a partial discussion (Foweraker and Cutcher 2015, Näre 2013, Samaluk 2014, Sang 2016, Sang et al. 2013). The findings examined in section 7.5 show that in order to understand migrant women’s intersectionality their experience needs to be examined in relation to various situational factors including the undiscussed wider international influences.

Together, these insights address the final, overarching research objective aiming to advance intersectional understanding of inequality at work. The following and final chapter provides an overall conclusion for the whole thesis. The original input of the thesis is further discussed with a distinction between theoretical and empirical contribution.
Chapter Eight: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The thesis explored Polish women’s experiences of (in)equality in the Scottish hospitality industry, with a view to investigate intersections of privilege and/or disadvantage. The study revealed a complex picture of the impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness on Polish women’s everyday working lives and contributed to our understanding of intersectional inequality. This final chapter of the thesis concludes the whole study in six further sections. Firstly, the chapter revisits the study’s aim and objectives. Secondly, the study’s theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions are summarised. Thirdly, the chapter explains the implications of the findings for policy makers and hospitality practitioners. Subsequently, the study’s limitations are discussed and directions for further research are considered. Finally, the chapter ends with closing remarks.

8.2 Overview of the study’s aim and objectives

The overarching aim of the study was to deepen the understanding of migrant women’s work encounters of (in)equality and further our knowledge about Polish employees in Scotland. The research attempted to fulfil this aim with the use of five specific objectives. Table 5, on page 200, revisits these research objectives and provides a summary on how each of them was met in the study. Collectively the addressed research objectives illustrated that Polish women encounter a complex combination of inequality experiences based on the impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness. Although the Polish women’s working lives were shaped by both privilege and disadvantage, the identified experiences of disadvantage were more prevalent and far-reaching. Through the investigation of Polish women’s work experiences the study illustrated that understanding of migrant women’s work encounters of (in)equality requires an intersectional theoretical framework. The recognition of overlapping and intersecting social categories presents a fuller picture of migrant women’s working lives.
Table 5: How research objectives were met in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research objectives</th>
<th>How research objectives were met</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) To examine the impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness on Polish migrant women’s work experiences in the Scottish hospitality industry</td>
<td>The data reported in Chapter Five revealed an impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness on Polish women's work experiences in the Scottish hospitality industry in the forms of: Sexual harassment, workplace bullying, othering, unequal distribution of tasks and access to development and promotion opportunities. The discussion in section 7.2 helped to further illuminate how the examined social categories affected interviewees’ work and shaped experiences of privilege and/or disadvantage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) To understand the intersection of Polish migrant women’s privilege and disadvantage in the Scottish hospitality industry</td>
<td>The data reported in Chapter Five showed a complex picture of interviewees’ encounters of intersectional privilege and disadvantage. The discussion in section 7.3 helped to further demonstrate the intersectionality on interviewees’ experiences of inequality. For example, Chapter Seven revealed that the same examined intersecting social categories, which were a source of privilege for interviewees’ when they entered the employment, were often a source of disadvantage in research participants’ everyday working lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) To explore Polish migrant women’s reflections on experienced (in)equality at work</td>
<td>The data reported in Chapter Five illustrated how research participants reflected on experiences, which can be identified as sexual harassment, workplace bullying, othering, unequal distribution of tasks and access to development and promotion opportunities. The discussion in section 7.4 helped to identify how interviewees’ reflections on experienced privilege and/or disadvantage was related to intersectionality of inequality and how research participants reinforced or challenged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
processes causing inequality.

4) To identify the impact of contextual factors on work (in)equality experiences encountered by Polish migrant women in the Scottish hospitality industry

The data reported in Chapter Six revealed the contextual factors shaping the interviewees’ experiences of inequality at two levels: Organisational and international. The discussion in section 7.5 helped to further expose how the contextual factors shaped research participants’ experiences of privilege and/or disadvantage.

5) To advance intersectional understanding of inequality at work through the examination of Polish women’s work experiences

As illustrated in the summary of theoretical, empirical and methodological contribution discussed in section 8.3 the study of Polish women’s work experiences has advanced the intersectional understanding of inequality at work in several ways. For example, the study revealed the importance of incorporating (hetero)gender to intersectional studies of organisations.

The following subsections elaborate on the synopsis presented in Table 5 and explain in detail how each of the research objectives were met in the study.

8.2.1 Research objective one: To examine the impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness on Polish migrant women’s work experiences in the Scottish hospitality industry

As Bowleg argues (2008), intersectional studies need to first consider the separated impact of investigated social categories, in order to subsequently discuss their interconnected role. This approach, of examining social categories initially separately, was previously successfully tested in a similar doctoral research (Mooney 2014). Following this argument the first objective focused on examining how the key social categories influenced Polish women’s experiences on their own. The themes reported in Chapter Five, which were identified with the use of thematic analysis, revealed that the interviewees were subject, on the basis of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness, to experiences which can be identified as: Sexual harassment, workplace bullying, othering, unequal distribution of tasks and access to development and
promotion opportunities. With reference to the academic literature, the discussion in
Chapter Seven helped to further reveal the impact of examined social categories on
Polish women’s work experiences.

As mentioned in Table 5, the data reported in Chapter Five revealed the impact of
(hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness on Polish women’s work experiences in
various forms. However, not all of the examined social categories had an equal impact
on the Polish women’s work experiences. The effect of (hetero)gender on research
participants’ work was the most pronounced in the dataset. The role of this social
category was particularly explicit in relation to the identified during the data analysis
episodes of sexual harassment. All of the reported episodes of unwanted sexual contact
were underpinned by the cross-gender interaction and predators’ heterosexuality.
Findings of similar studies on sexual harassment in the hospitality industry (e.g. Ineson
et al. 2013, Kensbock et al. 2015) are consistent with the role of male perpetrators and
heteronormativity of unwanted behaviours experienced by the interviewed Polish
women revealed in Chapter Five. For some research participants sexual harassment has
defined, in a negative manner, the way interviewees perceived their relations with co-
workers and their workplace in general. The impact of (hetero)gender on research
participants’ working experiences was also identifiable in relation to available
promotion and development opportunities. Some of the research participants were
subject to advantageous treatment due to their managers’ sexualised or romantic interest
in them. Mooney et al. (2016) and Mooney (2016b) argue that when analysing
promotion paths in the hospitality industry it is important to consider intersections of
gender with age, ethnicity and class. However, this study’s findings further complicate
Mooney’s argument, suggesting that (hetero)gender is also an important social category
that may shape promotion opportunities in hospitality work.

With the use of thematic analysis the study also identified examples of episodes when
interviewees’ work experiences were shaped by their migration status. For example,
some interviewees experienced regular malicious treatment, which was underpinned by
the identity shared with other migrant co-workers. While previous studies revealed that
Polish people tend to exchange resources and information within their migrant group
(Fitzgerald et al. 2012, Lassalle et al. 2011), interviewees’ stories demonstrated that
shared migration status can also facilitate discriminatory behaviour between employees.
The interviewees’ migration status also shaped their working experiences due to co-workers and customers’ othering behaviour. Interviewees’ were made fun of due to their Polish accent and their migration status was often highlighted in conversations with co-workers’ and customers. Furthermore, the discussion presented in Chapter Seven suggests that the construction of interviewees as Others had tangible consequences on research participants’ work experiences. Employers are more likely to give dirty, unwanted and difficult tasks to those who are considered ‘outsiders’ (Waldinger and Lichter 2003). Research participants’ reported that, according to them, they were regularly assigned the most unwanted or challenging tasks. By othering interviewees’ co-workers and customers highlighted research participants’ migration status which, at their workplaces, was associated with distinctive ‘work ethic’. These findings contribute to the discussion of unequal distribution of work reported by Polish workers (e.g. Baxter-Reid 2016) by taking into account processes of othering of migrant employees which were present at work.

The thesis also suggested an indirect impact of whiteness on research participants’ work experiences. Research participants’ interview responses suggest a difference in how interviewees and their co-workers from visible ethnic minorities were treated. The gathered data suggest that due to the shared identity of whiteness in the workplace interviewees could escape racial bullying, which affected their visible ethnic minority co-workers. This finding is confirmed by previous research showing that visible markers which differentiate migrant workers are the strongest indicators for incidents of discrimination and racism (Stevens et al. 2012).

8.2.2 Research objective two: To understand the intersection of Polish migrant women’s privilege and disadvantage in the Scottish hospitality industry

Despite increasing attention to the intersectional relations of discrimination and privilege (Atewologun et al. 2016, Dhamoon 2010, Tatli 2011), few studies on migrant women’s experiences extend the scope of their investigation beyond narratives of multiple-disadvantage (exceptions include Cheng 2013, Erel 2016, Sang et al. 2013). Having identified the separated impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness on Polish women’s work experiences the second objective of the study
sought to explore how these key social categories shape intersectional experiences of Polish women’s privilege and/or disadvantage.

As explained in Table 5 on page 200 the study demonstrated a complex and intersectional picture of research participants’ disadvantage, privilege and the combination of the two. Intersectionality of interviewees’ disadvantage related, for example, to the identified during the analysis experiences of sexual harassment. While all of the episodes of unwanted sexual conduct were underpinned by the intersection of gender and heterosexuality in some cases they were also linked to the interviewees’ migration status. Although previous intersectional research was not considered in the context of hospitality work (hetero)gender but merely gender, it confirms that migrant women may be a group of employees particularly prone to sexual harassment (Adib and Guerrier 2003). Episodes indicating sexual harassment illustrated the interconnected impact of (hetero)gender and migration status as, according to interviewees, the perpetrators hold essentialist and sexualised opinions about Polish women. Furthermore, in some workplaces male co-workers taught each other Polish sexualised and sexist phrases. While offensive phrases said in Polish were a form of harassment for all women at the given workplace, it is argued in this study that the taunts had a stronger emotional impact on interviewees who heard them in their native language. As identified in Chapter Three, literature in organisational studies does not sufficiently take into account the interconnection between gender and heteronormativity (Pringle 2008, Wright 2015). The presented results on intersectionality of disadvantage demonstrate the importance of incorporating (hetero)gender in intersectional investigations. Furthermore, the findings present empirical insights into Polish women’s work experiences related to disadvantage based on (hetero)gender and migration status, previously unexplored in the academic literature (cf. e.g. Janta and Ladkin 2009, Janta and Ladkin 2013, Lugosi et al. 2016).

The thesis also revealed that privilege experienced by research participants was based on an intersection of social categories. According to the interviewees at their workplaces employers expressed essentialist assumptions about Polish people’s ‘work ethic’ and often targeted this specific group of workers in recruitment. While this suggests that interviewees were subject to advantageous treatment due to their migration status it also presents an intersecting impact of migration status and whiteness. By
making decisions on the basis of the ‘Polish migrants’ work ethic’ stereotype the employers not only privileged Polish workers but also excluded potential non-white employees. Previous research confirms that employers in the UK can prefer Polish employees on the basis of both the workers’ whiteness and assumptions about the Polish workers’ ability to work hard (Parutis 2011b). Furthermore, the study suggested that some of the research participants’ ability to secure employment on the basis of their appearance and (hetero)gendered privilege was interconnected with the elusive impact of whiteness. White ethnicity interacts with gender and sexuality to construct labouring bodies often preferred by employers for the customer facing positions (Adkins 1995, Dyer et al. 2010). The privileging impact of intersecting (hetero)gender and whiteness discussed in the literature can explain why some of the interviewees’ were able to find employment merely after the employers have seen them.

Finally, the study revealed that the intersecting impact of the same examined social categories was a source of both privilege and disadvantage. The popular stereotype in interviewees’ workplaces about Polish people’s work ethic presented, on the basis of interconnected migration status and whiteness (see e.g. Parutis 2011b), an advantage for research participants when they entered employment. However, employers’ and co-workers’ presumptions about Polish people’s work ethic could be the reason why, according to the research participants, they were expected to undertake the most unwanted or labour intensive tasks. Thus, research participants’ experience of privilege on the basis of their migration status and whiteness was relative. It needs to be considered in proportion to the reported disadvantageous expectations of employers’ and co-workers’ related to Polish migrants’ work performance. Thus, the study contributes to the discussion on British employers’ preference of hiring white and hardworking migrants for low paid jobs (e.g. MacKenzie and Forde 2009, Parutis 2011b), by revealing potentially intertwined experiences encountered by migrants concerning the unequal distribution of work. Similarly, the study revealed that the intersecting impact of gender and heterosexuality, which presented advantageous access to promotion and development opportunities to some of the interviewees, was also the basis of unwanted sexual conduct, which the same research participants experienced at work. This combines insights from previous investigations related to hospitality employers’ images of suitable employees (Dyer et al. 2010) and women’s experiences of sexual harassment in hospitality work (Adib and Guerrier 2003). Finally, the study
demonstrated that the privilege which interviewees’ encountered on the basis of their whiteness was mediated by the disadvantageous impact of their migration status. For example, while interviewees avoided racial bullying experienced by their visibly ethnic co-workers they experienced othering based on their migration status. This contributes to the discussion of Polish people’s other whiteness (Halej 2015) and illustrates how this intersecting social construction can affect Polish people’s work experiences.

8.2.3 Research objective three: To explore Polish migrant women’s reflections on experienced (in)equality at work

Studies on discriminating behaviour at work, such as sexual harassment, suggest that victims’ own perspective on the experienced disadvantage may contribute to maintenance of disadvantage (Adikaram 2016, Kensbock et al. 2015, Shepela and Levesque 1998). Similarly, the literature has shown that employees who receive advantageous treatment tend to be unaware of their privilege, or what further contributes to the unequal status quo (Acker 2006). In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of Polish women’s experiences of (in)equality and what could shape them, the study sought to explore research participants’ own reflections of the examined episodes.

As explained in Table 5, presented at the beginning of this section, the thesis demonstrated several insights related to how interviewees reflected on their experiences, which can be identified as privilege and/or disadvantage. Firstly, the study identified that research participants did not label episodes as sexual harassment, even though experiences reported by them can be recognised as such on the basis of previous literature (see e.g. EEC 1991). This confirms a well-discussed organisational studies theme of victims’ avoidance of referring to their experiences as sexual harassment (Adikaram 2016, Denissen 2010, Kensbock et al. 2015). Interviewees did not refer to their experiences as sexual harassment, even when the episodes of unwanted sexual conduct defined the way in which research participants perceived their relations with co-workers and their a workplace in general. Not labelling sexual harassment disempowers its victims and unwillingly subjects them to the continuation of the unwanted behaviour (Hinze 2004, Quinn 2000, Watts 2007). Research participants’ avoidance of labelling sexual harassment and trivialising in discussion episodes of
unwanted sexual conduct allows the intersecting impact of gender and heteronormativity to remain unrecognised. Interviewees’ reflections on the discussed episodes, which can be identified as sexual harassment, illustrated that research participants overlooked the opportunity to challenge intersecting gendered and sexualised norms by verbalising their experiences of disadvantage.

Secondly, the study revealed that in workplace experiences which disadvantaged interviewees were often presented as a form of humour. Research participants’ themselves related to episodes, which can be identified as workplace bullying based on gender and migration status, as ‘pranks’ and ‘jokes’. Even though the malicious treatment occurred regularly, and in some cases it posed a threat to their health and safety, interviewees’ downplayed the meaning of those incidents. However, in the discussion of unwanted sexual conduct the interviewees distanced themselves from the language used by the perpetrators when they portrayed sexual harassment as a form of ‘humour’. As suggested in the discussion in Chapter Seven ‘humour’ may have been used in interviewees’ workplaces to communicate prejudice (Evans et al. 2014), disguise sexual harassment (Mallett et al. 2016) but also determine the joker and target’s position within a social hierarchy (McCann et al. 2010). Moreover, it is argued in this study that presenting disadvantageous behaviour as a form of humour has further concealed the impact of intersecting social categories, which tends to be difficult to recognise for employees are subject to its effects (see Ludvig 2006).

Thirdly, the study showed that research participants differently reflected upon reported episodes, which can be identified as unequal distribution of work. Some interviewees’ viewed their managers’ disadvantageous expectations related to their work as a compliment of their skills, constructing a positive identity related to their work (see Dutton et al. 2010). These research participants also expressed support for the popular stereotype in their workplaces about Polish people’s work ethic and admitted conforming to the employers’ essentialist expectations. Affirmation of unequal distribution of work as a result of someone’s merit negates the idea that employers can purposely target migrant workers as a low-paid efficient workforce (see MacKenzie and Forde 2009). By accepting the meritocratic explanation of employers’ essentialist assumptions about employees, interviewees did not challenge but reinforced the process of inequality in their workplace. This process, as explained in the discussion chapter
privileged workers with a specific migration status but also identity of whiteness. Through the acceptance of meritocratic explanation for the unequal distribution of work, interviewees contributed to the maintenance of employers’ practice which, in an intersectional manner, presented advantageous employment opportunities for white migrant employees. However, the study has also shown that some interviewees, all of whom had several years of working experience in the hospitality industry, presented a more critical reflection. When describing episodes suggesting unequal distribution of work they did not repeat their manager’s meritocratic justifications but reflected on these experiences as a form of exploitation of migrant employees. By questioning the legitimisation of what they perceived as unequal treatment, they contribute to a discussion on subjectivity of operating in workplaces processes. Subjectivity, which according to Acker (2006) is underpinned by employers’ essentialist assumptions about suitable employees for specific roles.

Finally, the findings, reported in Chapter Five and discussed in Chapter Seven, revealed that research participants were unaware and unreflective of their privilege, whether based on whiteness or intersection of gender and heterosexuality. For research participants whiteness and its impact on their experiences were invisible as they were assumed norms (see Kendall 2006, Kimmel and Ferber 2009). For example, before participating in the study the interviewees considered the makeup of their workplaces diverse, even though all or almost all of their co-workers’ ethnicity can be identified as white. Furthermore, interviewees did not recognise their advantageous position in the workplace based on whiteness, even though they reported that visible ethnic minority colleagues faced racialised bullying. Those research participants attributed positive treatment at work solely to their accomplishments and merits. Similarly, the intersecting advantageous impact of gender and heterosexuality was unrecognisable for research participants who reported episodes suggesting that they had a privileged access to promotion and development opportunities due to their manager’s romantic or sexualised interest in them. Interviewees’ who were privileged on the basis of their (hetero)gender also explained their advantageous position with reference to their merits, such as work skills and work experience. These findings reflect McIntosh’s (1989, p. 11) argument that “One privilege of the privileged is not to see their privilege”. Interviewees’ explanation of own privilege, whether based on (hetero)gender or whiteness, with meritocratic arguments conceals processes shaping inequality in their organisations. As
such it reinforces rather than challenges social norms established by the domain social groups operating in their workplaces, such as white men (see Acker 2006).

8.2.4 Research objective four: To identify the impact of contextual factors on work (in)equality experiences encountered by Polish migrant women in the Scottish hospitality industry

According to the intersectionality theory, people’s experiences of inequality are not fixed but, rather, changing and dependent upon the involved social context (Choo and Ferree 2010). Thus, sensitivity is fundamental for examining intersectionality to the context in which explored inequality occurs (Anthias 2013, Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983, Brah and Phoenix 2004, Choo and Ferree 2010). Following this highlighted importance of inequality, situatedness and identified literature gap concerning the comprehensive exploration of contextual influences (see subsection 3.5.2) the study sought to identify various factors facilitating research participants’ experiences of privilege and/or disadvantage.

As summarised in Table 5 on page 200, the study identified contextual factors shaping interviewees’ work inequality experiences at two levels, organisational and international. At the organisational level three subthemes were identified a) organisations’ size and type of services, b) ineffective grievance management and c) ad hoc employee recruitment. These contextual factors relate both to the work environment (see Kensbock et al. 2015) and organisational processes which can shape employees’ experiences of inequality (see Acker 2006, Acker 2012, Healy et al. 2011).

The study revealed that interviewees’ encounters of episodes, which can be identified as privilege and/or disadvantage, were related to the organisations’ size and type of provided services. Research participants, who worked in micro, independent business were unable to recall any problematic episodes that would suggest experiences of inequality. These interviewees painted a picture of close and friendly relations with co-workers and customers. In contrast, interviewees’ work experiences from small businesses and branches of large organisations were related to episodes which can be identified as examples of privilege and/or disadvantage on the basis of separated and intersecting impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness (e.g., sexual harassment; workplace bullying). Previous studies investigating inequality in
organisations tend to consider small business as a uniform group (e.g. Dionisi and Barling 2011, Woodhams and Lupton 2006). However, findings from the current study demonstrate that investigations of inequality would benefit from recognition of differences between micro and small businesses. Furthermore, the study shows that the most regular and intensive experiences of unwanted sexual conduct reported by the interviewees’ were related to workplaces serving alcohol. Customers’ alcohol consumption increases incidence of sexual harassment in service occupations (Boyd 2002, Guerrier and Adib 2000, Yagil 2008). In such environments sexual harassment becomes a part of the work routine and is normalised by the customers and employees (Guerrier and Adib 2000). The study illustrates that intersectional research considering the impact of (hetero)gender and other social categories may have to recognise how the type of services offered can affect normalisation of inequality.

The study also identified ineffective grievance management as an organisational contextual factor influencing interviewees’ experiences of inequality. For some research participants formal complaints were not a viable means to challenge sexual harassment. Grievances to general managers did not bring any results or general managers were one of the perpetrators of the unwanted conduct. Lack of availability of sympathetic and effective figures in the workplace to complain to is one of the organisational features, which contributes to the presence of harassment (Gutek 1985). However, the study also revealed a subtheme of female managers being more active and successful in resolving reported grievances of harassment, related either to sexism or sexualisation of work. This finding corresponds with the gender difference discussed in the literature in a) perception of sexual harassment as inappropriate behaviour (Blumenthal 1998, Rotundo et al. 2001) and b) belief that sexual harassment perpetrators should be punished (Pryor et al. 1997, Sigal et al. 2005).

The third contextual factor, which facilitated interviewees’ experiences of work inequality at the organisational level, was the practice of ad hoc employee recruitment. The study’s findings in reference with the literature suggest that due to situational, rather than planned recruitment (Ogbonna 1992) some of the research participants may have been privileged due to their appearance and their employers’ expectations related to intersecting (hetero)gender and whiteness. Interviewees, who possessed an appearance favoured by their managers, were able to secure employment after the
employers had merely seen them. Employers’ definition of suitable employees, specifically in the service sector, is affected by intersecting images of appropriate gender, sexuality and ethnicity (Acker 2006, Adkins 1995). The study shows that the lack of structured selection processes provided an opening for some research participants to be privileged on the basis of their (hetero)gender and whiteness. This finding is confirmed by the discussion of preference for informal human resource management by SMEs (Barrett and Mayson 2007, Harris 2000, Harris 2002, Matlay 2002) and poor practice in these organisations in the field of equal opportunities (Woodhams et al. 2004).

The study also identified five contextual factors present at an international level which affected interviewees’ experiences of inequality. These are: a) Polish women’s language barrier, b) Polish women’s deskilling, c) Polish women’s reluctance to migrate back to Poland, d) shared workplace stereotype about Polish people’s work ethic, and e) peer pressure to conform to the stereotype about work ethic.

The first of these contextual factors was related to the participants’ language barrier revealed during the study research. As the findings have demonstrated interviewees’ language skills affected their interpersonal interactions at work and the working experience in general. However, the dataset also illustrated that some research participants attempted to compensate for their difficulties in communicating by adopting a more conscientious approach to work. The relationship between the language barrier and increased work effort made research participants more vulnerable to employers who often deliberately employed migrant workers to take advantage of their weak labour market position (see MacKenzie and Forde 2009). Furthermore, by undertaking more work and ‘compensating’ for their communication difficulties interviewees contributed to the stereotype present in their workplaces about Polish migrants’ work ethic, thus perpetuating established processes shaping inequality. As previously explained these processes can have both advantageous and disadvantageous impacts upon migrant workers and they are underpinned by the intersecting impact of migration status and, indirectly, whiteness. While Polish workers’ language barrier is a well-documented research problem (e.g. Grzymała-Moszczyńska et al. 2011, Judd 2011, Lassalle et al. 2011, White 2011) previous studies have not discussed it as a factor influencing Polish migrants’ experiences of work inequality.
Secondly, the study revealed that interviewees were deskillled due to the lack of recognition of their qualifications and their limited language skills. Interviewees’ weak position in the labour market rendered them vulnerable and susceptible to exploitation (see TUC 2008). Organisations can deliberately target marginalised groups of employees, such as Polish or Estonian migrants, to take advantage of their limited employment opportunities and willingness to work hard (MacKenzie and Forde 2009). The deskilling of research participants and resulting weak labour market position, reveal interviewees’ higher susceptibility to the reported by interviewees unequal distribution of tasks. The study suggests that the deskilling of Polish migrants (Anderson et al. 2006, Home Office 2009, Parutis 2011b, Pollard et al. 2008) should be considered as a factor shaping Polish workers’ disadvantageous division of work (see Baxter-Reid 2016, Lucas 2009).

Thirdly, the exploration of contextual factors revealed that, despite a disadvantageous position in the labour market, language barriers, and reported episodes which suggest intersectional experiences of inequality, none of the interviewed Polish women planned to return to Poland. According to Janta (2011) Polish migrants in the UK are willing to make ‘sacrifices’ such as commitment to work in low paid employment in order to improve their future living prospects. The findings in this study showed interviewees do not plan to move back to the home country predominantly due to economic reasons such as perceived higher standards of living and better employment opportunities. The reluctance to migrate back to the home country provides a contextual insight on why despite a disadvantageous position at the labour market and intersecting discriminating working experiences (such as sexual harassment) the interviewed research participants did not consider returning to Poland. The study suggests that interviewees’ determination to settle down in the UK, even at the cost of various sacrifices, rendered them more vulnerable to exploitative behaviour of employers who take advantage of migrants’ weak labour market position (see MacKenzie and Forde 2009).

Furthermore, the study identified that research participants’ experiences of inequality were facilitated by the present in their workplaces stereotype about Polish people’s work ethic. According to the interviewees their employers, co-workers and customers expressed essentialist assumptions about Polish migrants and their work performance. The literature shows that employers in the UK can have a preference for Polish people
over other social groups due to their ‘work ethic’ and identity of whiteness (Lyon and Sulcova 2009, McDowell et al. 2007, Parutis 2011b). The stereotype about Polish workers, which was reportedly popular in interviewees workplaces, can suggest that research participants were in a privileged position, on the basis of intersecting migration status and whiteness, when they were employed. According to some interviewees, their employers directly expressed the intention of employing more Polish workers due to their alleged ability to work hard. However, the study also illustrated that the stereotype about Polish migrants affected interviewees’ in a disadvantageous manner in their everyday work. Subject to the stereotype, some interviewees attempted to conform to the expectations held in their workplace regarding Polish people’s work ethic by agreeing to do more work. By doing so they reinforced employers’ idealised perception of migrant workers (see e.g. Lyon and Sulcova 2009, McDowell et al. 2007, Parutis 2011b) and created circumstances under which they were prone to unequal distribution of work. As the findings revealed the presence of the stereotype concerning work ethic in interviewees’ workplaces had historical roots. Interviewees had conversations with their customers about post-war Polish migrants and their ability to work hard. People who have memories of post-war European migrants, most of whom were Polish, recall often these individuals’ dedication and ability to work hard (Burrell 2006). Thus, the study confirms Dyer’s (2010) argument that construction of idealised workers is not only subject to employees’ and customers’ service experiences but also historical context.

Finally, the study revealed that the presence in interviewees’ workplaces of the stereotype about Polish migrants’ work ethic contributed to the experience of workplace bullying of some research participants. The data demonstrated a link between interviewees’ experiences, which can be identified as workplace bullying, and the pressure from their Polish co-workers to work harder. The behaviour of certain Polish migrants can be a liability affecting others’ chances in the labour market (Eade et al. 2007). Interviewees who did not match the expectation of the distinct work ethic were a threat to the image of Polish workers and thus a liability to their colleagues’ future employment prospects. This can explain the peer pressure to conform to the stereotype about Polish employees’ work ethic, which reveals grounds for in-group ethnic bullying and further illustrates the impact of the stereotype concerning interviewees’ experiences of inequality.
8.2.5 Research objective five: To advance intersectional understanding of inequality at work through the examination of Polish women’s work experiences

The fifth research objective was to advance intersectional understanding of inequality at work through the examination of Polish women’s work experience. As demonstrated from the discussion in Chapter Seven each of the first four objectives has contributed to this final research goal. The following section summarises how the study, with the use of the set objectives, has provided original theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions to our intersectional understanding of inequality at work.

8.3 Synthesis of the study’s contribution

This section provides a summary of theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions of the thesis to studies of intersectional inequality at work and to the wider field of management and organisational scholarship.

8.3.1 Theoretical contribution

The thesis contributes to the theoretical understanding of intersectional inequality at work in a twofold manner. Firstly, it tests the concept of (hetero)gender in an intersectional study of work experiences. Intersectional investigations of work experiences in the hospitality industry have so far avoided a discussion of the sexual or heterosexual nature of employees’ disadvantage and/or privilege (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Dyer et al. 2010, Kensbock et al. 2015). Despite the recognised presence of sexualised episodes the analyses have focused on gender and, intersecting with it, other social categories such as ethnicity (see e.g. Kensbock et al. 2015). The intersectional understanding of sexuality and other social categories is also unexplored in general organisational literature and requires greater attention from scholars (Acker 2006, Healy et al. 2011, Wright 2015). The thesis expands the exploratory scope of intersectional investigations and work by adapting to it (hetero)gender, a concept coined by Ingraham (2002) and popularised in the management literature by Pringle (2008).

The findings from the study show that gender and sexuality need to be investigated in an intersectional manner for a meaningful understanding of Polish migrant women’s
working lives. For example, the episodes reported by the interviewees’ which can be identified as sexual harassment were based on underpinning gendered and heterosexualised behaviour. By recognising that such experiences are based on (hetero)gender the study was able to reveal a fuller picture of processes perpetuating inequality in organisations. The unwanted sexual conduct not only discriminated against interviewees as women but also contributed to the normalisation of sexuality as an unspoken and assumed element of the research participants’ work experiences. Sexual harassment also perpetuated heteronormativity, especially, in the interviewees’ workplaces where there was a broad organisational tolerance of harassment and where men used it as a form of socialising. Moreover, (hetero)gender did not operate in isolation from other social categories. As explained in the findings and discussion chapters, (hetero)gender can also form experiences of inequality in intersection with migration status and whiteness. While all of the interviewees’ episodes, which can be identified as sexual harassment, were underpinned by intertwined gender and sexuality, some were also disadvantaging research participants on the basis of their migration status. Furthermore, the ability to secure employment after employers’ have merely seen them, having been discussed in reference to previous studies (Brunner and Dever 2014, Harris et al. 2011, Royster 2003), suggested a privileged impact of interconnected (hetero)gender and whiteness.

Although, the data has revealed that (hetero)gender is one of the key social categories, which can shape Polish women’s work experiences in the hospitality industry, the concept of gender was also pronounced in reported episodes such as division of staff and gendered bullying related to it. Thus, the findings of the thesis point towards a conceptualisation of Ingraham’s concept as ‘(hetero)gender’, rather than replacement of gender with ‘heterogender’ as suggested by Pringle (2008).

Discussion of the thesis’s findings in Chapter Seven has demonstrated that incorporation of (hetero)gender in an intersectional exploration helps to reveal how social categories in a separated and intersectional manner shape migrant women’s experiences of privilege and/or disadvantage. (Hetero)gender has also proved to be important in a discussion of research participants’ reflections of their own experiences of inequality and in an examination of the identified contextual factors shaping
experiences of privilege and/or disadvantage, specifically in relation to ineffective grievance management and ad hoc recruitment.

By incorporating (hetero)gender to an intersectional investigation the study contributed to organisational and management research (e.g. Conley 2003, Healy et al. 2011, Mooney and Ryan 2009), which aims to make work spaces more equitable and tolerant of diversity. The contribution presents both a more comprehensive approach for intersectional studies and a new perspective for identification and de-naturalisation of patriarchal heteronormativity which, in an informal and discriminatory manner, shapes work experiences.

The second theoretical contribution of the thesis lies in the identification of contextual factors shaping migrant women’s intersectional experiences of privilege and disadvantage at work. Contextuality of inequality experiences is one of the fundamental elements of the intersectionality theory (Anthias 2013, Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983, Brah and Phoenix 2004, Choo and Ferree 2010). As the theory explains, experience of inequality is not uniform but, rather, context-specific (see Chapter Two). Despite the importance of contextual factors in intersectional investigations the majority of studies either neglect this element of explorations (Ammons et al. 2016, Atewologun et al. 2016, Barnum and Zajicek 2008, Cruz 2015, Datta et al. 2009, Essers and Benschop 2009, Soni-Sinha and Yates 2013, Woodhams et al. 2015, Wright 2013, Wright 2014, Wright 2015) or present a partial discussion (Foweraker and Cutcher 2015, Näre 2013, Samaluk 2014, Sang 2016, Sang et al. 2013). When the context of intersectional experiences is examined it is restrained to organisational practices and does not consider wider societal influences (exception inc. Kensbock et al. 2015). The discussion presented in Chapter Seven highlights the importance of a concurrent investigation of migrant women’s intersectional experiences of inequality at work and identification of contextual factors affecting it.

Having first explored what migrant women’s encounters of privilege and/or disadvantage may be (see sections 7.2 and 7.3) the study has revealed contextual factors related to four different levels. The thesis findings suggested that, at the individual level, migrant women workers through their reflections on and responses to privilege and/or disadvantage may contribute to a maintenance or interruption of processes, which shape their experiences of inequality (see section 7.4). Then, at an organisational
level, research participants’ experiences of inequality were facilitated by factors such as
a) type of services provided and size of organisation, b) organisational practices, or c) human resource management strategies (see 7.5.1). The role of workplaces and processes operating in them helped to produce and reproduce settings in which (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness mattered. The third identifiable level of contextual factors included wider influences, which were related to the international nature of migrant women’s work experiences. The findings have shown that migrant women’s a) language skills gained in the home country, b) lack of recognition of their skills in the host country, and c) perception of economic conditions in the home country, have contributed to the inequality experienced by them (see subsection 7.5.2). Finally, the data revealed that historic events and experiences contribute to a formation of behaviours, which can perpetuate inequality at work (7.5.2). Table 6 (p. 218) depicts these insights in the form of a list of identified levels of contextual factors and related specific themes of factors shaping migrant women’s experiences of inequality at work. The themes and contextual factors that were identified in the study are not fixed. Rather, they are symbolic and overlapping. For example, in the findings the historic context shaping inequality experiences was combined with international factors (see subsection 7.5.2). Moreover, as the list is based on findings from a single study it may not be exhaustive. Multiple other themes at each of the identified levels could exist, which have not been revealed in this specific examined context. Nevertheless, the presented list may serve as a starting point for future explorations of a context in which migrant women’s experiences of privilege and disadvantage occur.

Table 6: Contextual factors affecting migrant women’s intersectional experiences of privilege and disadvantage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified levels of contextual factors</th>
<th>Themes of factors shaping migrant women’s experiences of privilege and disadvantage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual level</td>
<td>a) Reflections on the experiences of inequality; b) responses to the encountered inequality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational level</td>
<td>a) Organisation size and type of services; b) organisational practices (e.g., ineffective grievance management); c) human resource management strategies (e.g., recruitment, development and promotion opportunities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International level</td>
<td>a) Education (e.g., language barrier); b) legislative and political frameworks (e.g., lack of recognition of international skills); c) economic factors (e.g., reluctance to migrate back)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>a) History of migration; b) past and present reproduction of essentialist expectations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The insights summarised in Table 6 answer calls of organisational academics for further research on specific mechanisms that may be driving processes of migrant labour segregation (McGovern 2007, Rodriguez 2004) and closer attention to contextual factor-shaping experiences of inequality in the organisational setting (Good and Cooper 2016).

### 8.2.2 Empirical contribution

The thesis contributes to the empirical understanding of intersectional inequality at work in several ways. Firstly, the findings address the deficiency of attention to the intersectional relations of disadvantage and privilege (Atewologun et al. 2016, Dhamoon 2010, Tatli 2011). The data analysed in the thesis revealed that in the hospitality industry migrant women may experience a combination of privilege and disadvantage in relation to promotion opportunities. Previous research on gender inequality in the hospitality industry has shown that women tend to be disadvantaged in career development opportunities due to negative social attitudes towards women’s abilities (Ng and Pine 2003), irregular working hours and the subsequent conflict of paid and unpaid work (Burke et al. 2008), scarcity of female mentors (Knutson and Schmidgall 1999), informal ‘old boy network’ which privileges men (Brownell 1994), and, resulting from the perceived unequal opportunities, self-imposed barriers (Boone et al. 2013). However, findings from the thesis show that migrant women may have a privileged access to development and promotion opportunities due to their male manager’s (or business owner’s) sexualised interest in them. This favouritism of migrant women has (hetero)gendered underpinnings and can intersect with the recipient’s migration status. Migrant women favoured by their male managers can be offered promotion, which is not available to other employees; furthermore, they can receive promotion opportunities despite their lack of work experience. However, the
study also showed that the advantageous access to the development and promotion opportunities was concurrent with the research participants’ experiences of unwanted sexual harassment initiated by their managers. Since sexual harassment is often a reason for women leave the hospitality industry (Woods and Kavanaugh 1994) the findings may suggest that the advantageous access to development and promotion opportunities based on male managers sexualised interest might be outweighed in the long run by the harassing experiences connected with it.

Previous studies have showed that sexual harassment, which women experience in the hospitality industry can be based on intersecting social categories such as gender, ethnicity, age or migration status (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Kensbock et al. 2015). The thesis contributes to these insights showing that in the case of Polish migrant women sexual harassment can take an intersectional form of sexualised phrases said in the migrant women’s native language. The data shows that, in some hospitality business, as a form of bonding and socialising, men teach each other phrases marginalising and objectifying women in different languages. The harassing phrases have a particularly strong impact on female migrant employees, who hear them in their native language. The sexualised phrases said in migrant women’s native language can lead to victims’ negative perception of their relations with male staff and negative perception of their workplace as a whole. In extreme cases this intersectional form of sexual harassment can even lead to migrant women’s use of physical violence, in an attempt to stop the unwanted behaviour.

The findings have also revealed that Polish women can be subject to bullying behaviour from more experienced co-workers with a similar migration status. Literature on organisational studies provides evidence of aggression displayed by native employees and customers towards migrant workers (Estacio and Saidy-Khan 2014, Stevens et al. 2012). Previous studies, which discuss abusive treatment of migrant workers of the same nationality in the hospitality industry, are related to undocumented workers, predominantly from outside of Europe (Joppe 2012, Wright 2007). The findings from the thesis contribute to this literature revealing that in food and beverage serving businesses bullying can also occur within the same national and migrant identity groups of documented workers. Furthermore, the data show that this reported malicious behaviour can also be combined with sexist bullying deriving from gendered work
division. While numerous studies have demonstrated that in the hospitality industry bullying affects both customer-facing and backroom staff (Kitterlin et al. 2016, Mathisen et al. 2008, Pratten 2003) the relationship between the waiting and kitchen staff, which is underpinned by horizontal gendered job segregation, is under-researched in terms of gendered and intersectional workplace bullying. Data reported in Chapter Five have demonstrated that migrant women can experience bullying on the basis of their migrant and/or gender identity, where bullying conducted by male chefs poses a threat to their health and safety.

The findings also present new insights into the advantageous treatment which Polish migrant workers can encounter during recruitment, on the basis of their intersecting migration status, and whiteness. According to the interviewees their employers expressed essentialist assumptions about Polish people’s ‘work ethic’ and often targeted this specific group of workers in recruitment. However, as the significant majority of Polish migrants in the UK identify their ethnicity as white (Census 2011a), by privileging Polish migrants managers in recruitment also provided an advantageous treatment for white employees. Previous research confirms that employers in the UK can prefer Polish employees on the basis of these migrant workers’ whiteness and assumptions about Polish workers’ ability to work hard (Parutis 2011b). However, the findings from this study suggest the advantage deriving from employers’ stereotypical assumptions about Polish migrants’ work ethic can lead to an unequal distribution of work, which then shapes Polish women’s everyday experiences in a disadvantageous manner. The impact of intersecting migration status and whiteness on recruitment of Polish employees should be considered in proportion to the disadvantageous essentialist expectations of employers’ and co-workers’ reported by interviewees related to Polish migrants’ work performance.

The empirical contributions, mentioned above, illustrate the importance of adopting the intersectional understanding of inequality in an investigation of migrant women’s working lives. As argued by Bowleg (2008) in practice an intersectional study requires first a recognition of how social categories separately impact individuals’ lives. However, it is the exploration of intersecting impact of social categories that provides a fuller and deeper understanding of inequality encountered by individuals such as migrant women. Through the adaptation of intersectionality theory the study revealed a
complex picture of Polish migrant women’s experiences of disadvantage and privilege in the hospitality industry, based on the impact of (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness. The identified experiences of disadvantage were more prevalent and far-reaching. The elements of privilege, which emerged from the Polish women’s stories, were often interconnected with long term subsequent discrimination.

Focusing specifically on Polish women, the thesis contributes to the knowledge about the underexplored work experiences of the largest non-UK born group of migrant women in Scotland and the UK (ONS 2015b, Rienzo and Vargas-Silva 2013). By investigating the case of Polish migrant workers, who identify themselves as white (Census 2011a) the study provides an answer to a call for more intersectional studies concerning partly privileged employees (Tatli and Özbilgin 2011). The empirical findings also address a call for an examination of ethnic privilege and disadvantage within a specific nationality group of CEE migrant workers (Samaluk 2014). Moreover, the insights discussed above answer scholars’ calls for bringing intersectionality to the focus of organisational and work studies (Carrim and Nkomo 2016, Holvino 2010, McBride et al. 2015).

8.2.3 Methodological contribution

The thesis contributes to the methodological understanding of intersectional inequality at work in a twofold manner. Firstly, the study extended our understanding of how to investigate intersectionality with the use of a multi-method approach and two points of data collection. Drawing on the insights of other scholars (Alvesson and Deetz 2000, Cheng 2013), due to the sensitive subject of the study, the data were not collected during one interaction with each of the research participants. Instead, the fieldwork was designed to build trust between the research participants and the researcher. The first point of collecting data was designed to gather information on the context of research participants’ entry into the hospitality industry. Subsequently, sensitive questions were asked during the follow-up stage. For that purpose a combination of life-history interviews and follow-up, semi-structured interviews was employed. However, as discussed in Chapter Four and illustrated in Chapters Five and Six, both methods were helpful in gathering data on interviewees’ experiences of (in)equality. Thanks to the open nature of the first interview a strong bond was established with research
participants. This, in turn, helped to explore in more depth, during the second interview, episodes mentioned by the participants related to their encounters of privilege and/or disadvantage. A recent intersectional study by Carrim and Nkomo (2016), on South African Indian women managers, has also used life-history interviews, which were later followed up in the second round of interviews to further explore the identified themes. However, Carrim and Nkomo did not provide details about the nature of their follow-up interviews. The current study illustrates that in intersectional research, life-history interviews are well complemented by semi-structured interviews and that a combination of these methods proves to be effective in exploring migrant women’s experiences.

Secondly, the thesis contributed to the reflexive discussion of the impact of the researcher’s emic and etic positions on the research process in an intersectional exploration. As the study investigated the work experiences of a group potentially stigmatised it was of the utmost importance to design and execute data-collection in a reflexive manner. Furthermore, it was recognised that reflexivity is a methodological practice particularly important when the research topic involves intersections of social identities (Bell et al. 2003, Douglas 2002, Kamenou 2007, Pio 2005). In order to aid the reflexivity of the study a researcher’s diary was kept during the fieldwork. The discussion of the collected diary notes illustrated that researcher’s etic and emic positions lead to a mix of research-specific advantages and disadvantages (see subsection 4.8.2). A combination of own and participants’ social positions meant that the researcher was not simply an in- or out-sider, but both. This further confirms the position argued in previous studies that while the researcher’s own social identities influence the research process this occurs in a non-generalisable manner and requires reflexivity (Broom et al. 2009, Phoenix 1994).

8.4 Implications for practice

Drawing on a literature review and research findings the thesis offers a number of practical implications. First and foremost, the study shows to hospitality stakeholders that well-known notions, such as sexual harassment (Kebsbock et al. 2015) and bullying (Alexander et al. 2012) should be recognised as outcomes of intersecting social
categories. HR practitioners may need to adopt an intersectional understanding of workplace issues in order to prevent examples of inequality reported in the study.

As the study illustrates, sexual harassment remains an important problem in hospitality businesses. Polish women working in the industry are prone to unwanted sexual harassment and can be targeted by men on the basis of an interconnected (hetero)gender and migration status. Unwanted sexual conduct, which Polish women face, reflects the experiences of many other women and includes unwanted sexual offers, unwanted touching or making sexual comments about a person's body (Ineson et al. 2013, Poulston 2008). However, it also takes the form of sexist and sexualised phrases, which are taught among male staff in various languages. Even though these taunts may not carry any meaning for managers it is crucial that employers pay attention to them and ensure they are not in any way discriminatory. As the data reported in Chapter Five has illustrated, sexist and sexualised phrases said in Polish can have a negative impact on Polish women’s perception of relations with colleagues and their evaluation of the workplace as a whole. In extreme cases this intensive intersectional sexual harassment can even lead to physical violence between employees.

Furthermore, the study’s findings draw hospitality practitioners’ attention to how sexual harassment is not only marginalising women but also contributes to an establishment of heteronormativity. By creating a work culture which normalises sexualisation of women’s work hospitality employees form a work environment where heterosexuality becomes an unspoken, default norm. In recent years socio-cultural and demographic changes have increased the visibility ratio of sexual minorities in workplaces (Lubensky et al. 2004). One of the challenges for hospitality employers is to manage sexual minority employees fairly in work environments, which are predominantly heterosexual (Ineson et al. 2013). For that reason it is necessary for hospitality managers to recognise the manner in which sexual harassment not only disadvantages women but can also create a hostile work environment for sexual minority employees.

Hospitality managers should also be alert to bullying behaviour, which Polish women may experience on the basis of their gender and/or migration status. Although some scholars have argued that bullying in the kitchens of hospitality businesses can be a form of establishing social cohesion (Alexander et al. 2012), the thesis shows that male chefs’ bullying behaviour of female waiting staff can cause substantial health and safety
risks. Furthermore, Polish women can be the target of malicious behaviour conducted by their more experienced compatriots. Hospitality practitioners should be aware that Polish employees can bully less experienced Polish colleagues through coercive supervision which, due to gendered division of roles, can be executed by Polish male chefs.

Furthermore, the study brings the less known concept of othering to the attention of hospitality practitioners. Discussed by academics in the context of the hospitality industry only in a few publications (exceptions incl. Kensbock et al. 2013, Mkono 2011, Pechlaner et al. 2012) othering may be a part of Polish migrant women’s daily routine. Polish women may experience othering from co-workers and customers in the form of jokes about their migration status and its markers, such as accent, questions about their migration plans or dubious compliments. As a result Polish women can feel excluded from the dominant group and perceive themselves as less entitled in the workplace. Scottish hospitality stakeholders need to recognise that Polish women’s experiences of inequality that were revealed in the study, such as harassment, bullying and othering are examples of conditions which lead employees to a change of job or even industry (Ineson et al. 2013, Woods and Kavanaugh 1994) and can, consequently, contribute to high staff turnover and lower profitability (AlBattat and Som 2013, Ram 2015).

The study’s findings also highlight that treating Polish women in an advantageous manner in a recruitment stage, on the basis of a popular stereotype about Polish migrants’ ‘work ethic’, can be an indirect form of privileging white people. By following the popular opinion about Polish migrants’ work skills (Parutis 2011b, Scott 2013) employers may be discriminating against other candidates on the basis of ethnicity. The study’s findings support a necessity to challenge privileged treatment (see e.g. Acker 2006), which employees, such as Polish women, may receive in recruitment on the basis of separated or intersectional effects of their (hetero)gender, migration status and whiteness. At the same time, the study reveals to hospitality practitioners that Polish women can be discriminated against by Polish migrant managers and supervisors. Driven by their previous experiences with Polish co-workers’ expectations to be treated favourably, some Polish supervisors and managers may treat compatriots unfairly and deliberately avoid employing them. As hospitality businesses are in constant search of employees due to high turnover (People 1st 2015) it may be
important for them to recognise the bias in recruitment practices which can lead to employment or discrimination against Polish women on the basis of their social identities rather than credentials.

Managers in hospitality businesses responsible for Human Resources should carefully consider the hidden cost of inequality, as reported by research participants. Effective HRM is crucial in hospitality organisations, in which the chief output is service. Employees form interactions with customers, represent the organisation and become part of the provided product (Kusluvan et al. 2010). While some of the interviewed Polish women worked in an environment characterised by positive interpersonal relations with staff and customers others reported experiences which can be identified as sexual harassment or bullying. Regular aggression and sexual harassment can lead to negative HR performance indicators such as reduced staff morale and motivation, increased absenteeism and high turnover (Ram 2015). HR practitioners in hospitality industry need to look for new and better ways to engage with their workers to find out discriminatory practices at work which are often trivialised by employees or recognised but not reported. Employees should be encouraged, not prevented from, formally reporting any kind of discrimination to business owners or appropriate legal authorities. The implications of the research findings for HRM practitioners in hospitality businesses are clear. In order to take advantage of the available pool of potential employees and retain them HRM practitioners in the industry need to focus on recognition of work inequality which groups such as Polish migrant women face on a daily basis.

Finally, the study provides in-depth knowledge for policy makers of how the wider international factors related to migrant work may position Polish women in the hospitality industry in a potentially vulnerable position. The findings suggest that common among Polish employees experiences of language barrier (Datta and Brickell 2009, Janta 2011, Janta and Ladkin 2013, Lugosi et al. 2016, Parutis 2011b), deskilling (Anderson et al. 2006, Home Office 2009, Parutis 2011b, Pollard et al. 2008), and reluctance to migrate back to the home country (Kaczmarczyk 2013), can facilitate Polish employees’ susceptibility to discriminating behaviour, such as disadvantageous distribution of work. Due to their perceived weak position in the labour market and in the workplace Polish employees may be willing to work hard and reinforce the
stereotype about their ‘work ethic’. However, in the long run this may contribute to experiences of disadvantageous distribution of tasks and feelings of being treated unfairly which, as the literature suggests, can also lead to high turnover among hospitality employees (Nadiri and Tanova 2010). Insights presented in the study can be used by local policy-makers to engage with hospitality practitioners and create policies that target discriminatory and privileging processes affecting groups of workers such as Polish women. Attracting more workers remains an important concern for Scottish government (see de Lima and Wright 2009, SNP 2016). This study contributes to Scottish policy makers’ efforts to better understand migrants and their integration (see e.g. Migration Matters Scotland 2015) by presenting qualitative findings on work experiences of Polish migrant women.

8.5 Research limitations

The study provides a number of insights regarding Polish women’s work experiences and intersectional inequality at work. Nevertheless, like any research project, the thesis also has its limitations. Four weaknesses of the study have been identified, all related to methodological constraints.

Firstly, due to the limited sample size the study’s findings cannot be generalised to the wider population of Polish women working in the hospitality industry in Scotland. The study focused on the subject which is unexplored. Thus, following the example of previous similar studies (e.g. Cheng 2013, Samaluk 2014) qualitative methods were used to provide flexibility for more in-depth investigation of the explored experiences of intersectional inequality. The thesis’s aim and objectives imposed a priority on the depth of the study rather than scope. In the field of qualitative investigations of intersectionality the study reflects the fieldwork size of similar, previous PhD theses (see subsection 4.5.2).

The second limitation is related to the impact of the researcher’s own social identities on the study. The literature suggests that gender has a strong impact on the interaction between the interviewer and interviewees (Kane and Macaulay 1993). Sharing the research participants’ identities and experiences helps to establish non-hierarchical relations with the research participants (Finch 1984, Oakley 1981). Thus, the study’s
cross-gender nature could be seen as a methodological limitation. The fact that the researcher is a man may have affected the extent to which female research participants’ provided honest responses, specifically related to their experiences of disadvantage caused by men. For that purpose the study’s fieldwork was designed to gain interviewees’ trust before asking sensitive questions. Furthermore, the researcher’s diary was used to register and report details about the data collection. Notes from the diary suggest that non-hierarchical relations were successfully established with research participants. In building relations with the interviewees the shared Polish migrant identity was particularly helpful. Being an insider of this group aided the process of recruiting the interviewees and created a link of mutual understanding during data collection. As presented in the reflexive discussion in section 4.8 the researcher’s own social identities have presented a mix of methodological advantages and disadvantages. Any relations between a researcher and research participants would be affected by the impact of specific emic and etic positions. The impact of these positions in the current study have been identified and discussed, allowing future research on Polish women’s experiences to compare insights with recognition of methodological differences.

The third limitation of the study is related to the uneven focus on certain research participants’ stories. As research participants’ length of work experience in the hospitality industry ranged from two months to seven years some of the interviewees were more informative than others. Due to migrant workers’ high turnover in the hospitality industry (Devine et al. 2007, Janta 2011, Matthews and Ruhs 2007a) and high mobility of Polish migrants (Burrell 2010) it was imperative to give voice to employees who had only a few months of working experience. However, it also meant that some employees had more experience to report than others.

The final limitation of the study is that it required a translation of data from Polish to English. According to various studies the majority of Polish migrants in the UK have difficulties with the English language (Datta and Brickell 2009, Janta 2011, Janta and Ladkin 2013, Lugosi et al. 2016, Parutis 2011b). As the aim of the study was to deepen the understanding of migrant women’s work encounters of (in)equality it was crucial to avoid the language barrier and gather data in the research participants’ native language. Conducting interviews in English could limit the findings to the English vocabulary that the research participants were familiar with. Choosing to recruit only Polish women
who would be comfortable with conducting an interview in English could exclude stories of women whose work experience was affected by their language skills. For these reasons it was decided to conduct interviews in Polish, which is also the researcher’s native language, and to later translate the findings. However, translation is also an interpretive act, which requires careful considerations (Temple and Young 2004). In order to counteract this limitation the study followed suggestions for cross-English qualitative research (Van Nes et al. 2010), outlined in the methodological chapter translation-related decisions, and sought consultation from bi-lingual speakers.

8.6 Future research directions

The study opens up prospects for future research. The thesis findings provide an in-depth qualitative exploration of Polish women’s experiences of privilege and/or disadvantage in the Scottish hospitality industry. However, further investigations may be necessary to examine the scope of Polish women’s experiences in Scotland and across the UK. Quantitative measurement of the themes discussed in the thesis could indicate the extent to which the presented research results can be generalised.

The second prospect for future research is related to the timing of the current study. The data were collected before the referendum of the United Kingdom’s membership of the European Union, held in June 2016. Thus, the Polish women’s experiences of inequality do not illustrate the potential impact of the most recent events associated with the ‘Brexit’ referendum and the subsequent political negotiations. As journalists’ reports suggest on the week of the referendum (BBC 2016b), and throughout the months following the vote (Independent 2017), there has been a steep increase in the number of hate crimes recorded by police forces. These incidents were racially- and religiously-motivated and in many cases the victims were Polish migrants (The Guardian 2016). In the light of the increased wave of hate crime future research should examine whether there is an impact from the ‘Brexit’ referendum on Polish women’s experiences of inequality at work. This can be achieved, for example, by drawing a comparison with the findings from the current study.

Moreover, a longitudinal study could illustrate how Polish migrant women’s social identities influence their careers in the hospitality industry. Following examples of
hospitality career investigations in Australia and New Zealand (Mooney 2016b, Mooney and Ryan 2009, Mooney et al. 2014, Mooney et al. 2016) future studies could examine how various social vectors shape occupational paths of migrant women in Scotland. In a long-term study emphasis could be placed on other, social identities such as age or physical and mental ability that were less pronounced in this thesis.

Finally, the study can be replicated in a different research context. As Polish migrant women’s experiences of work remain under-explored additional qualitative explorations are needed to shed light on their stories in other parts of the UK, such as Wales or Northern Ireland. Moreover, future studies could focus on other industries popular among Polish migrant workers, such as food processing, which have not yet considered the impact of social identities such as (hetero)gender on Polish migrant working experiences (cf. Lugosi et al. 2016, Scott 2013).

8.7 Closing remarks

Many of the questions explored in the thesis are based not only on the academic rationale and identified research gaps but also deep personal interest. As a Polish migrant in the UK who had the chance to work in the hospitality industry I have often wondered, in what manner my work was shaped by the fact that I am a foreigner. I have also seen and heard how horrifically my female Polish friends were treated at work.

Although, the impact of gender or ethnicity on work experiences in the hospitality industry are well known the specific intersectional configuration of disadvantage that Polish women face has not been recognised. The thesis allowed me to give a voice to Polish women who work in the hospitality industry and shed light on areas of work, which are often deliberately or unconsciously swept under the rug by managers. However, the study was also an opportunity to bring to the discussion of hospitality experiences the inter-connected nature of discrimination and privilege. Polish women’s experiences have shown not only a significant amount of disadvantage but also partial elements of favourable treatment related to heteronormativity and whiteness established in their workplaces. Intersectionality theory has proven to be useful in exploring these blatant and elusive forms of inequality. However, more critical research adapting
different theoretical and methodological approaches is needed to fully present a picture of complex phenomena such as disadvantage and privilege experienced at work.
Appendix I: Participant information sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title: Understanding Polish women's work experiences in Scotland.

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Thank you for considering taking part in my PhD research, which aims to understand Polish women's work experiences in Scotland. This sheet provides information as to the purpose of the study, the data collection methods and how the data will be used. Participation in the study is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time, without providing explanation.

Background
Although, Polish women constitute almost half of the Polish community in the UK, little is known about their work experiences in Scotland. I would like to understand your work experiences in the hospitality industry, where the majority of Polish people find employment. This is an opportunity for you to share your work stories, which will then be used to develop our understanding of Polish employees’ migration.

Data collection methods
There are two phases to this study: 1) a life-history interview where we discuss the history of your road into the Scottish hospitality industry (between 1 and 2 hours), and 2) a follow-up interview, where we meet again and discuss in more detail your work experiences (approximately 1 hour). Your responses will be fully anonymised and used to inform my PhD research and other resulting publications.

Confidentiality of your records
Data collected in this study will be kept confidential. Information from life-history interviews and follow-up interviews will be securely stored in the form of audio recordings and document transcripts on the researcher’s password-protected personal computer. The researcher and his supervisors will be the only persons who will have access to the collected data, although excerpts of transcripts may be used in the future for publication. Any gathered information, which could lead to participant identification, will be excluded from the study.
Ethics
This study has received full ethical approval from the Heriot-Watt University. The research involves discussion of personal experiences and feelings. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. If at any stage you feel that you wish to take a break from the study you are free to do so.
Appendix II: Consent form

CONSENT FORM: Understanding Polish women's work experiences in Scotland.

I agree to participate in the study, which aims to collect information about my work experience in the Scottish hospitality industry. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project and had an opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. I agree that my interviews may be digitally recorded and data collected will be stored in the form of audio recordings and document transcripts on Rafal Sitko’s password-protected personal computer. I understand that my responses will be made anonymous to protect my identity and may be used in resulting publications. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I agree to take part in the study.

___________________  ________________  ________________
Name of participant  Date  Signature

Name of researcher  Date  Signature
Appendix III: Semi-structured interview schedule


Thank you for taking part in the interview. The aim of today’s meeting is to discuss in more depth your work experiences in the hospitality industry. At the end of the interview I will ask you a couple of background questions, for example about your age or educational qualifications. Throughout our interview I will use a data recorder and take notes to record our conversation. No individual names will be revealed. Any names mentioned in the interview will be kept strictly confidential only to my knowledge.

1. What is your current job role?
2. What episodes that you experienced at work do you consider important?
   
   **Probe:** Why did this episode come to mind?
   
   **Probe:** What happened?
   
   **Probe:** How did you respond?
   
   **Probe:** How did you feel?
   
   **Probe:** What did you do/what did this prompt you to do?
   
   **Probe:** Why do you think you responded in this way?
   
   **Probe:** What was the outcome of this episode? For you/others?
   
   **Probe:** On reflection, do you wish you had responded differently? Why and how?

3. What episodes at work provoked your strong response?
4. Do you have to play any role while you are with the customers?
   
   **Probe:** Do you have to play an ‘emotional role’ while you are at work?

5. What is the significance of appearance in your job?
   
   **Probe:** What is the dress code?

6. Have you experienced sexist language at work?
   
   **Probe:** How did you respond?
   
   **Probe:** How did you feel?
   
   **Probe:** What did you do/what did this prompt you to do?
   
   **Probe:** Why do you think you responded in this way?

7. Have you experienced any incidents or problems with customers?
   
   **Probe:** How did you respond?
   
   **Probe:** How did you feel?
   
   **Probe:** What did you do/what did this prompt you to do?
Probe: Why do you think you responded in this way?

8. Have you experienced any incidents or problems with your colleagues or superiors?
   
   **Probe:** How did you respond?
   **Probe:** How did you feel?
   **Probe:** What did you do/what did this prompt you to do?
   **Probe:** Why do you think you responded in this way?

9. Do you have a strategy for dealing with difficult incidents?
   
   **Probe:** Do you have a strategy for dealing demanding customers?

10. Had there been any incidents in which you might have felt uncomfortable at work?
    
    **Probe:** Within the service encounter?
    **Probe:** In contact with your manager?
    **Probe:** How did you respond?
    **Probe:** How did you feel?
    **Probe:** What did you do/ what did this prompt you to do?
    **Probe:** Why do you think you responded in this way?

11. Do you find support amongst other workers?
    
    **Probe:** Do you find support amongst managers?

12. Do you have any care responsibilities?
    
    **Probe:** If yes, how that affects your work responsibilities?
    **Probe:** If yes, does it affect your career prospects?

13. Is there anything about your work experiences which you would like to add?

**Background questions:**

1. What are your educational qualifications?
2. Do you consider yourself as having a disability?
   
   **Probe:** If yes, what is it?
   **Probe:** How, if at all, does it matter in your work?

3. How old are you?
4. For how long have you been working in your current work?
5. On average, how many hours do you work per week?
6. What is your current job role?
7. What was your previous job role?
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