Un-silencing the silenced:

Using Black Migrant Women's experiences of racism to propose a critical anti-racist pedagogy for Irish Adult Education.

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Dedicated to Yeshua Hamashiach, my reason.

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Abstract

This is a study of how an intersection of race, gender, migration status and nation impact the everyday lives of Black women in Ireland. Using a critical qualitative frame and relying on Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Black Feminist Thought (BFT) epistemologies, the research is based on 20 culturally responsive conversations, held with eight Black migrant women over a period of two years. I also include autobiographical reflections and inputs from my own experience as I too identify as a Black migrant woman.

The objectives of this research are: to position Black women as agents of knowledge by giving them the opportunity to tell their own story in order to disrupt dominant and majoritarian stories about Black migrant women; to contribute to Black Irish Feminist Thought and to develop a racially sensitive pedagogy for use in Irish adult education.

The women's stories offer an insight into lives, daily inundated with micro and macro racial assaults. The thesis also highlights how Black women experience a pervasive and insidious kind of everyday racism in Ireland, which brings with it a range of psychological and physical trauma. The women report the widespread prevalence of negative stereotypes inputted on Black women and how attempting to debunk these stereotypes, sometimes re-enforces them, leaving the women psychologically drained, or excluding them from active participation in society. The inquiry shows that Black women are constantly devalued and looked upon as 'less-than'. Educational spaces are not left out of racism as the inquiry highlights how racism permeates schools, churches and even the homes of these women. Drawing on aspects of various critical pedagogies, I use the experiences shared by the women, as a reflective fulcrum to propose a racially appropriate and culturally responsive pedagogy that can be applied in Adult and Further Education in Ireland. In addition to core critical pedagogic tenets, I specifically advocate for pedagogy that will use non-dominant cultures as a vehicle for learning, build community across social identities and teach from a standoint of reparation and love. In keeping with my own Nigerian way of knowing and being, but also modelling some of the epistemological and pedagogical positions that I recommend and advocate for, I present some of the findings in the form of parables and stories which I have included in different parts of the thesis.

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Abbreviations

BFT – Black Feminist Thought

BME – Blacks and Minoritised Ethnic

BOP – Body Out of Place

CP – Critical Pedagogy

CRM – Civil Rights Movement

CRT – Critical Race Theory

ETB – Education and Training Board

FET – Further Education and Training

GP – General Practitioner

HEA – Higher Education Authority

HSE – Health Service Executive

IELTS- International English Language Testing System

QQI – Quality and Qualifications Ireland

RCSI – Royal College of Surgeons Ireland

A Window – a note to the reader

Win·dow
/ˈwindō/

noun

an opening in the wall or roof of a building or vehicle that is fitted with glass or other transparent material in a frame to admit light or air and allow people to see out.

This thesis is (like) a window in many regards:

Windows allow people within a space to see out, and others who are outside, to look in – I am, through this thesis, inviting my readers, (especially white readers), to look in and truly see some parts of the world, inhabited by Black women. If a teacher will be effective in teaching the Black woman, a crucial first step will be to know her, to understand her world and to get a sense of how society looks through her eyes.

Windows allow for ventilation – By this research, I hope to give all nine women participating in the study, the space to exhale freely, after speaking about issues that have burdened and grieved us for years.

Windows are functional but are also decorative – I begin the thesis with a parable and intersperse the rest of the (academic) work with stories, reflections, vignettes and anecdotes. All of these different narrative forms, convey theoretical considerations about racism and education, but in a non-traditional way. Some of the stories were written and born out of our collective pain. Others were written with humour and had me giggling to myself as I typed. I am proposing that these stories, like windows, serve both functional (pedagogic) and decorative (literary) purposes. Often (but not always) in this work, I include a literary bridge that links one narrative form to the other. I do not do this in the first few pages. I start with a parable, as a sort of prologue and without any explanations or notes on it., I continue with a (more academically conventional) chapter one. It is possible that you may find the beginning of this work, especially the parable and the transition to a different narrative style shortly afterwards, stark, raw and disorientating and you may feel unsure of how to engage with the rest of the work as a result. What I would say is, please, sit with these feelings but continue to read through. It will all make

sense as you progress and everything will come together – the personal and the political (Ahmed, 2017, p. xx).

Without windows, a home would be dark – It is my hope that this thesis will bring light. Light that can enhance and improve how adult education is practiced in Ireland.

Every home needs windows.

The Three Wounds: A Parable

Once upon a time in a faraway Kingdom called Issele-Uku, there lived a maiden called Adanne. Adanne lived with her parents in a house overlooking the sea. She was the charm of the kingdom. She was beautiful - Her afro hair was thick, dark, lengthy and luscious. Her teeth were white and sparkling. In fact she was an *eze-oka*. E*ze-oka* was the native term of endearment for women who had a gap between their two front teeth.

Her dark skin glistened and shone like a mirror. This earned her another nickname '*Ugegbe nwanyi'* meaning 'Mirror woman'.

Adanne was very attractive and greatly sought after by the men of Issele-Uku Kingdom. She was not just beautiful, but also very kind and compassionate. She always had kind words for people and could relate seemingly effortlessly with people at different levels. Even babies cooed with excitement when she passed by them. The older women would shout out blessings to her as she passed – 'Adanne' they would say, '*Chukwu Gozie gi*!' 'God bless you', they would scream with smiles and waves as she walked gaily to her destination.

The Admission

One day, Adanne returned from school and met her *Nne* sitting in front of the house, starring into the distance with a sheet of paper in her hand. Adanne walked slowly in and greeted her mum in their native dialect.

'*Ogbuefi nne'* she greeted. 'Is all well? Why are you outside? Why are you looking so sad? Has death visited anyone in the family?'

Her mother looked at her and smiled. 'You are full of questions my child' she said, 'go inside, change your clothes and come, sit with me.'

Adanne went in hurriedly to change her clothes, her mind reeling in a thousand directions.

What had happened?

What did *Nne* want to discuss with her?

Had someone died? Why did *Nne* look so sad? What was the sheet of paper she was clutching in her hand?

Adanne finally managed to get into her house clothes and rushed out to sit on the bench with *Nne*. *Nne* was still clutching the sheet of paper Adanne had seen with her when she got in from school earlier. *Nne* tapped the edge of the bench, motioning for Adanne to sit with her.

'Ada' she said. 'Mmmmm?' Adanne responded with a slight frown that signalled more of worry than of annoyance at the suspense.

'You have been given admission to study at the University in Umolo Kingdom.'

There was first silence. As though Adanne needed to let the news sink in. Then came the scream. '*Chukwu Daalu*!' Adanne shrieked!

'Thank God! '*Nne*, why are you looking sad? This is great news! Think about what this means for me. For us as a family.'

Adanne had jumped up and was pacing the floor, animatedly waving her hands as she began to reel out the possibilities which her going to Umolo Kingdom would open up for the entire family.

'*Nne*, first it would be an opportunity for me to find work in order to send money back to you and *Nna*. I will also work hard academically, graduate and become an Umolo certified Lawyer. The first from our clan! *Nne*, this is a good thing. Why are you looking so sad? Are you not happy for me' she said, looking shocked at *Nne's* sober look.

'*Nwa m oma*, my good child' she said, 'I am glad for you. I was just thinking about how much I would miss you when you go to far away Umolo Kingdom. You are all your dad and I have and I am wondering how I will cope without you. You know, coming in to Umolo Kingdom is not easy. I need to apply for permission from their King and to do this, I must pay a lot of money. The only money we have is that which we have been saving for your education. So, once you go, I won't see you until you have made enough money to come back to see me and your dad.'

Adanne looked at her mum. *Nne* who was always so strong and whom she had never seen crying in all her 21 years on earth, had tears in her eyes. Adanne hugged her.

'Nne *ebezina*. Don't cry. I will go to Umolo Kingdom. I will study. I will work hard and I will return to see you and *nna*. I will do so well that people of Umolo Kingdom will want to come back to see my home. Who knows? I may be the one who would open trade

lines between us and they,' Adanne said with a chuckle. 'I will make you proud *nne. Ebezina I nu?* Don't cry.'

Wound 1: I don't like you so I will harm you.

In three weeks, Adanne was road bound to Umolo Kingdom. There were tears at the car park from both Adanne and *Nne* but as the big transport bus drove out of the terminal, Adanne looked back and saw *Nna* wipe a tear off his face. Even *Nna* who had been so strong had caved in and cried. Adanne cried for a while in the bus, wiped her tears and then muttered under her breath- '*Chukwu Okike,* God of Creation, You created all things. You created Issele-Uku. You also created Umolo. I am your child and I go to a Kingdom no one in my family has ever visited. Please protect me. My heart towards the Kingdom is clean and pure. Let that count for something. Help me to succeed that I may bring pride and blessings to my people. Amen.'

The journey took eight hours. Adanne was still asleep when she heard the voice of the driver over a concealed speaker, announce that they had arrived Umolo Kingdom. Adanne got down from the bus and began to look around. Umolo Kingdom looked just like she had seen on the television and in the magazines. The sky looked bluer than in Issele-Uku, the trees looked greener and even the people looked different. Their hair was different. Their clothes were different. The Kingdom looked like a scene straight out of a movie. Adanne was staring in awe at what would be her new home for the next 3 years when she bumped into another traveller who had just arrived from a different destination.

'I'm so sorry she said. I… ' He didn't allow her finish her sentence.

'I'm sorry too' he said. 'I'm sorry you are here. Go back to where you are coming from' and he rolled his eyes and walked away.

Adanne wasn't sure she had understood what he said. 'The way the people of Umolo speak is different from the way we speak in Issele-Uku' she told herself. 'I probably didn't hear right.'

Adanne retrieved her suitcase from the designated area and proceeded into the town. Aside from a few odd looks and glances she saw people give her, Umolo Kingdom was a dream come true. She had asked directions from a kind woman and was headed to her paid accommodation when she felt the first sharp pain at her back.

Adanne turned around and was standing face to face with a tall fair Umolo man. He was holding a strange object - the object that he must have used to hurt her a few seconds earlier. Now standing directly across her, he raised the object over his head and hit her with it across her face. The pain was blinding. Adanne screamed for help. The man looked at her with disgust and walked casually away. There were people standing around. Most saw what happened but turned their faces away as if they had not just witnessed the assault. Adanne was in shock but also in too much pain, to properly process what had happened to her, so she hailed the first available taxi she could find and asked to be taken to the nearest hospital.

At the hospital, she met Dr. Ikenna at the reception. Dr. Ikenna was her neighbour in Issele-Uku. He had left Issele-Uku about 6 years ago and rumour had it that he now worked as a doctor in a big hospital in Umolo Kingdom.

Ikenna was cleaning the floor.

'Dr. Ikenna!' Adanne screamed excitedly!

'So good to see someone from home.'

Ikenna seemed embarrassed to see Adanne. 'Ikenna.' Adanne continued, not noticing his embarrassment. 'It has been so long. How are you? Is this your hospital…'

'Shhhh keep your voice down.' Ikenna quipped angrily. 'The people of Umolo Kingdom don't like when people speak so loudly. No. It's not my hospital. I'm not a doctor here yet. It's a long story. I'll tell you all…..'

"Nicholas" a stern voice sounded. "There is a spill down the hall, please get it cleaned immediately."

'Right away sir" Ikenna replied and walked away.

Adanne stood at the reception, confused. When did Ikenna become Nicholas? Why was Dr. Ikenna cleaning up spills? A sharp pain pierced through Adanne's head and back and reminded her of why she was in the hospital in the first place. She needed to see a doctor.

After her registration at the reception, Adanne was ushered into the doctor's office. 'Good afternoon Doctor, I just came in from Issele-Uku Kingdom and on my way to my house, a man hit me with an object at my back first and then across my face.'

"I'm sorry can you say that again?" the doctor said with a frown as he sat forward and turned his ear towards her as though to get a better understanding of what she was saying.

'I said', Adanne repeated slowly 'I- ju-st ca--me in fr-om -Issele-Uku Kingdom and on my wa-y to my ho-use, a man hit me with an object at my back and across my head."

"I'm sorry I can't quite understand what you are saying." The Doctor responded. Can you say that again or can I get you an interpreter?"

Adanne repeated her sentence again mouthing every syllable extremely slowly. The doctor eventually understood her complaint. Adanne showed the doctor the bruises. He dressed the wounds and gave her painkillers and an ointment to be applied on the bruises every morning and evening.

Wound 2: 'Cup on, I didn't mean to'

Adanne felt a bit better. The sharp pain she felt had subsided and now she was left with just a deep dull throb that was more inconveniencing than painful. She was feeling very tired at this time and still had the suitcases which she had brought in from Issele-Uku with her. For the first time since the incident she began to reflect on what had happened. She began to ask herself questions.

Why had the man hit her? And what was it with the malice and disgust on his face?

Why did no one speak up when they saw what he did to her?

Did she offend the man in some way?

Was she safe in this new land?

Was coming to Umolo a good idea in the first place?

Adanne was walking in the direction of where would become her new home. She suddenly felt afraid. The elation and joy she had felt only a few hours before, had given way to fear. She walked fast, looking over her shoulders until she got to the address that she had been given.

Stephen was standing outside the apartment complex. He had been waiting for her. 'You must be Ada-nay' he said in the strange Umolo accent. "My name is Stephen and I hope it's ok if I call you Add? It will be much easier to pronounce."

Adanne was taken aback. She had never been told her name was difficult to pronounce. 'You may call me Ada if that is easier' she replied.

'Pleased to meet you Ali-da. I have been waiting for you.'

'Not Alida' Adanne said with a surprised chuckle, 'Ada!'

'Alida, Ada-nay, Add, all sound alike. I'll just call you Add. So, welcome to Umolo, Add. What took you so long? I was told you would arrive hours before now'

Ada proceeded to tell him about her encounter with the strange man who had injured her and how she had to go to the hospital. Stephen was very apologetic.

'I am sorry you have gone through this on your first day here. It's really sad because Umolo people are known for their legendary hospitality. In fact, we are known as the Kingdom of 3000 welcomes- a name we got as a result of the way we treat foreigners from other kingdoms. By the way how did you learn to speak such good English?'

'We speak English in Issele-Uku. We have our indigenous language, which is Igbo but English is the official language of our kingdom. I thought that was common knowledge?'

'O wow!' Stephen replied. 'I had no idea! And here I was frantically thinking of how to arrange a translator to help me with you. Happy days, then.'

As Stephen was speaking, he bent over to pick up a key from underneath a foot mat in front of one of the doors and Adanne who was standing close to him, waiting to be let into her new room, felt a sudden sharp pain on her leg. The same object that the strange man had used to hit her earlier had unintentionally slid out of Stephen's pocket and bruised her right leg. '*Chi m o*!' She screamed in Igbo! 'Not again! What is this that you all carry around? I'm hurt AGAIN!' Adanne cried!

'Jaysus! I'm so sorry. I didn't intend to hurt you.' Stephen said, looking mortified and very concerned. Adanne was clutching her leg. The pain was sharp and throbbing.

'What have I got myself into? Two wounds in a day? *Ukwu m eeeh*! My leg!" she screamed.

'I'm sorry Add". 'Ada' she corrected him with mild irritation through her pain.

'Whatever. Ey-day. Add. Same thing. I'm really sorry. I didn't intend to hurt you. Would you like to sit down and maybe look after your leg? It looks really sore"

'I don't know what I want right now!' Adanne cried. 'I just need this nagging pain to stop. Am I cursed? How can I get injured twice in one day by this same object? What is the stupid object called and why do you people carry it around?'

'Cup on Ey-day…'

'Ada! My name is Ada'.

'Look, Ey-day calm down. I have apologized. Are you not being a bit over sensitive here? I didn't intend to hurt you. I was really being friendly and trying to help you get the key to your apartment. I'm not a bad person. I just didn't know that it would hurt you.'

'What is that object anyway?' Ada asked. Stephen visibly turned red and looked embarrassed and muttered something under his breath. 'Look, I am sorry Ey-day. Please mind yourself and call me if you think I can do anything to help.' Stephen then scuttled away.

At this time, the first set of wounds and the new bruise were throbbing and Adanne was beginning to feel feverish. 'I must see the doctor again' she thought. Adanne secured her suitcase in the apartment, locked up her room and hailed a taxi to take her back to the hospital. She looked out for Ikenna in the reception but didn't catch any glimpse of him. Before long, she was in the doctor's consulting room again.

'We meet again. Did you forget anything in the hospital?'

'No. Doctor' Adanne responded. 'Believe it or not Doctor, I got injured again!'

The doctor frowned slightly. 'You really must be more careful. This is a new Kingdom for you, different from yours. You must learn how things work here. You can't keep coming in here with the same complaints. Our services are stretched and we cannot keep using tax payer's money to fund the carelessness of people who do not want to learn the protocols of our great kingdom." Adanne was confused. 'Doctor, I am the victim here! I was injured!' she said, tears in her eyes and with her voice trembling.

'O, please! Stop playing the victim card. If I get a penny every time people from Issele-Uku play the victim card, I would be rich! Let me take a look at that leg.'

'Not too serious.' He concluded. 'Just stay on the analgesics I gave you earlier, you will be fine.'

'Thank you Doctor.' Adanne walked out of the doctor's office. Her heart was heavy. For the first time she thought of her *Nne* and *Nna* back at home and she missed them. As she stepped out of the hospital, Adanne burst into tears! She felt lonely, isolated and burdened.

Wound 3: I'm fighting for you.

Concerned that the money she had brought with her was fast depleting with unplanned transportation expenses to and from the hospital, Adanne thought a walk back home would do her good. She had watched the route the taxi driver took and was sure she could get back on her own and on foot. 'Besides' she thought, 'the fresh cold air will do me some good.'

Adanne walked down the busy street until she came to a large opening. It looked like a market square, with so many people walking in different directions. At one end of the square, was a man standing behind a podium, clutching a placard that had inscribed on it 'Say no to hurting foreigners with the '`#@**~~##'. A few other people stood around in solidarity. Adanne's interest was piqued. Even though the name of the strange object was not explicitly mentioned, she knew these people were fighting 'her cause'. So she walked towards the man holding the placard and introduced herself.

'Hello,' Adanne said. 'My name is Adanne. You can call me Ada if it is easier for you…. I came in from Issele-Uku earlier today. Twice in the last 5 hours, I have been injured by a strange object and so when I saw the inscription on your placard, I knew I had to speak to you. First of all, thank you for even advocating for people like me….'

'I am so sorry to hear you have gone through this' the man said sympathetically as he put down his placard and walked with her to the side of what looked like a large old post office building, right there in the city centre. 'So many people are ignorant about the hurt they do to foreigners with this object. I am different though. I make sure I treat everyone, whether foreigners or citizens of this kingdom, exactly the same. I believe in equality, justice and fairness. So many of my brother and sister citizens keep hurting foreigners with the object and it's just so disgraceful, really…. '

'What is the object called anyway? I notice people are reluctant to name it or even speak about it' Adanne interjected.

The man smiled.

'We are a people historically connected with that object, Ada. You see a long time ago, we were victims of this object, just like you are now. The people from the kingdom up north would invade our land and strike us randomly with the object. We were oppressed for very long, but we eventually managed to fight back after a while and we stopped them from coming in to our land. Years after their invasion stopped, an internal conflict started within our own kingdom. Members of our larger tribes started inflicting injury on our brothers and sisters from one of the smaller tribes, WITH THE SAME OBJECT we had been tormented with for years. We became internal oppressors. So many members of that tribe were injured and it continued for years and years….'

The man suddenly stopped his narration and looked at Adanne with concern.

'Pardon me please, after all you have gone through today, you should be sitting down. Can I get you a coffee or anything?' Adanne had been so intrigued by the story that she had forgotten about her injuries. 'Yes, you are right. I should sit down and yes, please, I would like a coffee.' He pulled out a foldable chair, unfolded it and offered it to Adanne who sat down on it with so much gratitude. He crossed over to a nearby café and got her a large cup of coffee. Adanne was touched by his concern and commitment. 'Thank you so much ….I don't even know your name.' He smiled, 'I'm Michael. I am the chair of the movement for inclusion and diversity in Umolo Kingdom and my role is to fight for the rights of foreigners who have been injured by the object.'

'Wow! I'm intrigued Michael and very pleased to meet you. You are so knowledgeable. Please continue with the story about the object.'

'I will' Michael said 'but first, drink your coffee. You have been through a lot today'. For the first time that day, Adanne felt safe. 'Thank you so much Michael. God bless you' she said with tears in her eyes. 'Can I give you a hug Ada?' Adanne chuckled. 'I sure do need one' she said as she got up to get a hug from this man who seemed to have dedicated his life to fighting for others. As she gave Michael a hug, she felt a sharp pain in her stomach. She looked down – the object had slid out of Michael's coat and pierced her stomach.

The end.

SECTION 1

Chapter One

What is this all about? - Aims, Objective, Significance, Design and Participants

Chapter Introduction

This research draws from the ideas of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Black Feminist Thought (BFT), to inquire into the experiences of nine racialised Black migrant women living in Ireland. I explore the individual and the systemic impact racism has had on these nine lives and I analyse these experiences as a fulcrum and a spring board to develop and propose a racially appropriate pedagogy for use in adult education in Ireland. Later in this chapter, I will introduce myself in more detail. For now, it suffices to mention that I too, identify as Black and have included analyses of my own experiences and my story as part of this research, making me one of the nine Black migrant women. This sort of autobiographic intervention in research is not unusual and is actually encouraged in Black Feminist and Critical Race strands of inquiries, as a means to link the personal with the political, theoretical and the cultural (Ahmed, 2017, 2023; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ellis, Adams, & Butchner, 2011; Hill- Collins, 2000; Leavy & Harris, 2019). Although not strictly autoethnographic, I also borrow from certain autoethnographic traditions which allow me include "intimate aspects" of my experiences to "become a part of the narrative and contribute to the field." (Hughes & Pennington, 2017, p. 11).

This chapter, divided into three sections, gives an overview of the entire research. In section one, I describe the autobiographical experience that shaped my interest in this study. I then go on to detail the focus, aims, objectives and the significance of the research. I conclude by providing an overview of the research design. In section two, in keeping with my epistemological positioning which seeks to centre the participants of this research, I include profiles of myself and the other eight women whose stories I collected as part of the research. As all nine of us are migrants, I also include a brief contextual description of the patterns of migration into Ireland. In section three, I provide an introduction to the theories, theorists and ideas I draw from. I also explain my use of terminology and language and I define what certain terms that I use in the thesis mean. I conclude by giving a map of the rest of the thesis, describing what the reader should expect in the chapters that follow.

'His – Story': The Genesis of the research

While studying for my second academic degree in Ireland, a Higher Diploma in Further Education, I was required to complete a teaching practice module where I was to teach for at least 100 hours in a Further Education centre. In one of my classes, I had this young student who consistently presented with challenging behaviour whenever I was teaching. Every time I got into the class, he would sing songs that contained racial slurs, pass racist comments out loudly, and was largely hostile. I wasn't sure how to handle his behaviour and my status as a student teacher left me feeling powerless. My resentment of the young man grew by the day.

I came into that class every day, pretending that all was well and pretending as though I wasn't hurt or disturbed by his behaviour. The substantive teacher who was supposed to be my 'mentor' watched all this happen but did nothing.

I tried every technique I knew to get him to settle, but nothing worked. When I could no longer handle his behaviour, I made a formal complain to the Head of the Center. She listened to me patiently, and then asked me to sit down. She made it clear that she didn't condone him being hostile to me, but she proceeded to tell me his story. She narrated to me how the young man had walked in on his father dying by suicide a few years earlier, how he had been kicked out of two foster homes and was on the verge of being kicked out of the third and how he had generally had a very difficult life.

I left the office that evening, armed with a story I had not had access to before. Knowing about the young man's life did something to me. It was some sort of re-calibration, a turning point in my life as an educator. By the time I got to the class the next day, the young man had not changed. But I had.

His story had birthed in me, not only a new perspective of things, but also compassion, understanding and love. I automatically re-arranged my priorities – the formal programme outcomes were no longer so important as I engaged with him in the classroom. I began to tweak my methods. For the first time, I began to see the person in front of me. He was no longer just a rude annoying lad, I knew his story. I had now been exposed to a previously hidden portion of his life and that propelled me to do things differently with and for him. Before long, the young man became like a brand new person in my class. His story taught me 2 things:

1. There is power in the *back stories*[1] of students in the classroom; and

2. If (adult) educators are to be effective as transformational and liberatory educators in the classroom, they might need to know some of the back stories of their students.

After this encounter with the young man, I began to think more deeply about my own experiences and engagement as a Black migrant woman. I was able to meet the young man where he was at because I was brought into his life through his story. What stories did people need to know about me and people like me, to enable them serve and help us better? How could these (invisible) stories help to transform pedagogy and practice? These were some of the unrefined and initial questions that led me into this research journey.

What the study is about

As I alluded to in the story that opens this section, one of my goals in this research, is to lift the 'veil' (Dubois, 1965, p. 257) and bring the reader/educator into the largely unseen parts of the lives of Black women in Ireland and hopefully, spark in them, a consideration to use more racially appropriate pedagogy and practices in classrooms or in their interactions with people who are Black or of minoritised ethnic origin (BME). Going back to my metaphor of a window, I am inviting people outside, to look in.

I am also through this study, giving 'voice' (Delgado, 1989, p. 2447) to a cohort that has systemically been silenced and suppressed in Ireland. I argue that the very action of listening to, collecting and recording the stories of Black migrant women, is on its own, activism against this suppression and silencing of BME women in the society (Hill-Collins, 2000, p. ix), as well as an opportunity to contribute to a distinct yet underdeveloped body of Black Irish Feminist Thought. I do not propose that there is a homogenous Black experience that educators need to know – in fact, the different textures and flavours of stories shared by the women, prove that there isn't a single Black women's narrative. What I do propose, is that Black women in their interaction with a "white supremacist-capitalist-patriarchy" (hooks, 1994, p. 26) world, do have "commonalities of perception" (Hill-Collins, 1986, p. S16) and that our peculiar experiences make us agents of (valuable) knowledge (Hill- Collins, 2000). Recording our stories consequently, will help in providing a counter-narrative that will challenge and

[1] By back stories I mean the the lived experiences of the students which are often hidden but which they bring into the classroom with them.

disrupt the dominant, mainstream majoritarian story that has contributed to the silencing and inadvertent oppression of Black women and women from other minoritised ethnic groups (Horsford, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Even though one of the aims of this research is to propose a racially appropriate pedagogy for use in adult education in Ireland, I intentionally do not narrow down my inquiry to the women's experiences in education. This is because, I align with the view that the classroom is an extension of society and the systems and structures that pervade the world outside the class, will replicate themselves inadvertently in the classroom (Freire, 1972; Ledwith, 2011). I therefore let the women tell me about their worlds and I allowed them go wherever their stories needed to take them.

Research Focus and Aims

In this research, I pose questions that focus on and probe into the experiences of these nine Black migrant women - how do the women make meaning of their experiences and encounters with racism; how have their lived experiences affected them and their interaction with society; how and in what ways could the women's experiences with racism influence pedagogic practice in adult education?

The aims of the research are as follows:

1. To position Black women as agents of knowledge by giving them the opportunity to tell their own story in order to disrupt dominant and majoritarian stories about BME Women.

2. To contribute to Black Irish Feminist Thought by developing a racially sensitive pedagogy for use in Irish adult education.

Why is this research important?

The most recent Higher Education Authority (HEA) *Race Equality Report*, puts the statistic of Black[2] teachers in Higher Education in Ireland at 1.7% (Kempny & Michael, 2022). What this means in more stark terms is that for every 100 white teachers in Higher Education in Ireland, only one is Black. Even though there is currently no publicly available data that shows the racial demography of teachers specifically in Adult and

[2] The Higher Education Authority singles out 'Black' as a distinct category for analysis in their report. I have used their own terminologies in order to maintain the integrity of their reporting. The solutions and suggestions I proffer throughout this thesis can and should be extended to all minority ethnic groups.

Further Education, it is unlikely that the case is different. All the women that participated in this research mentioned for instance, that they had never had, nor seen, a Black or minoritised ethnic teacher at any level of their education. In spite of this dearth of BME teachers in Ireland, there is a large number of BME students in Irish adult education[3].

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Black Feminist Thought (BFT), have as one of their major tenets, the idea that Blacks and people of minoritised ethnic origin, experience the world significantly differently from white people. The saturation of culture with the dominant worldview makes BME people very aware of the experiences of white people. The reverse is however not the case. The dominant group's access to "information about the subordinates", is often limited to stereotypical depictions of the "other" (Tatum, 1999, p. 105). It takes white people intentionally being brought into the lives of members of minoritised races, through storytelling and other forms of narrative interventions, to be able to see from the perspective of the minoritised group (Crenshaw, 2011; Hill-Collins, 2000). Black women's positioning in society, as visible phenotypically, yet invisible as a result of racialization, racial profiling and oppression, creates for them, a unique standpoint. This "outsider-within" marginal location gives Black women a significantly different perspective on political, social, intellectual, economic and cultural matters from that of the dominant race (Hill- Collins, 2000, p. 289).

This isn't the first study on migrant experiences I have conducted. In recent research I carried out with Sarah Meaney-Sartori (Meaney-Satori & Nwanze, 2021) where we investigated the barriers refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland face in accessing education, we found that there was a significant gap between educators and asylum seekers (majority of whom identified as BME). Specifically, educators appeared to have no knowledge of the struggles or the plight of that cohort of students and were therefore unable to effectively teach or facilitate them with the care that would have been required. Other researchers (Howard, 2016; Kendall, 2013; McClure, 2021; Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005) validate this assertion that there is a significantly large social and cultural gap between (white) teachers and BME learners. This research therefore seeks to contribute to the bridging of that gap, by highlighting the lived experiences and

[3] Until very recently, there has been little or no data collected on the ethnicity of learners in adult education in Ireland. Recently, SOLAS began collecting this information and in 2022 their research shows that the second largest group of FET students (after nationals of European countries) were students of African descent (Guerin, 2023). Later in this chapter, I also discuss how Irish immigration laws and policies are structured in such a way that BME students will be largely represented in adult education.

stories of Black women, with the hope of making teachers in Ireland, aware of the impact racism has on the lives of Black learners, and its different dimensions. Although all the participants in this study are Black, much of what is uncovered and proposed will apply to other racialised groups. This research also proposes to contribute to a racially sensitive pedagogy that can be used in classrooms in Ireland.

What I did – A snapshot of the Research Design

To ensure depth and rigour, this current study involved multiple, semi-structured, culturally responsive, research conversations[4] over an extended period of two years. I conducted a total of 20 such conversations with the eight women, some of which were done online through Zoom Communication. Aside from these conversations, the women shared their stories through other media like email, text messaging, a focus group session and through reflective journal extracts. In order to achieve triangulation and to embody authenticity, the research also had an autobiographic/autoethnographic component (Ellis, et al., 2011), as I kept and shared from my own reflective journal as an integral part of this research. For analysis, I used a constant comparative method, weaving together theory, my experiences as a Black student and educator, and the stories of the women, in order to explore and make sense of the research questions. As themes emerged from the stories shared, I used those themes to conceptualize a racially sensitive pedagogy that would be appropriate for use in Ireland. I also created two parables to capture the findings from this research in a literary format as well as to embody my *Nigerian-ness* and my Nigerian way of knowing.

I have designed and written this thesis with the intention that every chapter will spark some thinking or learning for practitioners, that could impact their pedagogy and practice. Whilst chapter eight describes the racially sensitive pedagogy that I am proposing most explicitly, every chapter will also contain a story, reflection, discussion or image, that should spark something in an educator who teaches students from any non-dominant category.

[4] I write more about these conversations in chapter four but the rationale behind the model came directly from the women who were uncomfortable with being 'interviewed' and preferred to 'tell stories'. Intergenerationally, Black women have always used alternative ways of capturing their knowledge (Hill-Collins, 1989, p. 748). Similarly, BFT postulates that, it will be counterproductive to use the same techniques to study the knowledge of the dominant as well as that of the marginalized.

SECTION 2

The Gate

I was immersed in serious contract vetting and creation in the KPMG office in the High brow area of Lagos, Nigeria when the office delivery officer walked in and handed me the envelope from the Embassy. My application to join my husband in Ireland had been granted. I was esctatic! Contrary to all the horror stories I had heard about spouses waiting for at least five years to get their 'Irish join spouse visas', I had been waiting for barely three months! I was going to miss Nigeria alright, but I was excited about starting a new life. I was going to replicate the successes I had created in Nigeria. High flying student. High Flying Professional. Working in a Multi-national firm, acquiring invaluable experience. I was going to be an asset to Ireland.

And then I arrived.

'How long are you staying ma'am?' The immigration officer asked while searching frantically for some information in my passport. I was taken aback by the question to be honest. I expected that immigration would know I was coming to stay. ' I'm coming to join my husband'. 'Right', he said. 'You have 90 days to present at the closest Garda station to get your stamp'. He put a stamp in my passport and handed my passport back to me. At the Garda station a few days later, the very tall and (obviously very busy) Garda officer, had put another stamp in my passport. A Stamp 3 it was called.

It took me another few months to realize the implication of this stamp. That stamp in my passport took on the role of a huge gate! I could not get work. In the (very) unlikely event that my CV was shortlisted for a 2nd level in a recruitment process, once I mentioned my stamp, there was silence from then on. I had to fight to go to school, even while paying exhorbitant fees. All my acheivments in Nigeria suddenly became useless. I was not even allowed to be an asset to the country I was now to call home. My identity changed really quickly. From Professional High flyer to nobody. From asset to suspect. From who I was to who the system had now made me to be. From Nigerian in Nigeria to a Non-EU resident with a Stamp 3 in Ireland.

Introductions - Meet the women and I

One of the defining features of this study is the centring of the voices of the women who participated in the research. At every stage of the research process, one of my main ethical considerations was how to present these in a way that would not only un-silence and amplify their voices but also centre their experiences and introduce their voices into the Irish adult education space. Consequently, in this section, I will introduce myself and the other women, whose voices are interwoven and threaded throughout. I do this early, in order to give context and identity to the stories, experiences and narratives that I will be sharing and also to demonstrate the value I place on our voices. But first, as all nine of us are migrants into Ireland, I will scaffold this section by describing patterns of Irish in-migration.

Irish in-migration

The period between the mid-1990s and the late 2000s, heralded an unprecedented increase in migration to Ireland from countries all over the world. This sudden influx of migrants was not unconnected to the advent of a period of rapid economic growth and prosperity that was fuelled by foreign direct investment and that is popularly referred to as the Celtic Tiger. Ireland, a country known globally as an emigrant nursery (Lentin & McVeigh, 2006), suddenly became a choice migration destination. People from countries in the European Union as well as from other continents, flocked inwards to take advantage of the blossoming economy. These migrants fell into four broad categories which Brian Fanning (2002) has categorized as:

1. Irish citizens who were emigrating from the diaspora back home.
2. Nationals of EU member state nations (The accession of 10 new member states by the EU in 2004 and the attendant easy movement of workers within EU states caused a surge in the influx of this cohort).
3. Immigrant workers from Non-EU countries who were granted work permits.
4. People seeking international protection (asylum seekers).

The first two categories arrived in Ireland with automatic rights to reside, as well as unrestricted access to education and the labour market. The case was different for the third and fourth categories and some analysts have argued that Irish immigration policies targeted at the last two categories of migrants, positions Ireland as a racist state (Lentin & McVeigh, 2006; Lentin, 2007).

Those in the third category were mainly highly skilled workers such as doctors, nurses, and IT Professionals, who were needed to populate under-staffed industries. Immigration as a means to fill labour shortages was positively encouraged by the state (Hewson, 2018, p. 576) and so, these workers were, in essence, needed. Even though they were granted work permits, these category three migrants, often paid exorbitant fees periodically for their continued stay in Ireland and had no real option of employment mobility (Department of Enterprise, 2021). There was also a demand for low skilled workers, but with the exception of a few countries like South Africa and Botswana, that had reciprocal arrangements with Ireland, non-EU migrants were precluded from getting work permits for these sorts of jobs. Category three professionals (non-EU migrants) were allowed to bring in their spouses/civil partners to the country on a special purpose visa called *Stamp 3 Join spouse visa*. Until very recently, people with Stamp 3 visas were not allowed to take up employment in Ireland and were to be fully financially dependent on their spouses. Research (Stamp 3 Association, 2018) has shown that this increased the level of domestic violence experienced by this cohort. I came into Ireland on a Stamp 3 join spouse visa and was unable to access any form of employment. Employers did not want 'the burden' of applying for working permits for people like myself, who were legally resident but not allowed into the Irish labour market without special permissions. If I wanted to do any kind of work, it had to be voluntary or undocumented work. Such were the stringent conditions of the Stamp 3 residence permit[5].

[5] In March 2019, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, and the Minister for Justice and Equality, in response to the pressure mounted by groups such as the Stamp 3 Association, announced that the spouses and partners of Critical Skills Employment Permit holders and Researchers on Hosting Agreements, will be able to access the Irish labour market without the need to obtain an employment permit (Stamp 3 Association, 2018).

The Buggy Pushers

"Where are you from?" the patient asked the Black Doctor.

"Navan" she replied. The patient frowned.

"No. I mean where are you originally from?"

The Doctor smiled. There was no need to agitate this patient further, she thought.

" I am from Nigeria", the doctor replied.

"Oh! I see! Those people who push their babies in buggies all around the place." she retorted with a sarcastic chuckle.

The next set of migrants, category four migrants - people seeking asylum even before entering the state, were labelled by the state as problematic. In the early 2000s, the government highlighted immigration and asylum as 'serious problems' that needed to be dealt with decisively and urgently (Garner, 2004 p. 438). Government policies have always been designed to limit the numbers of people coming into the country seeking asylum. The landmark 2004 citizenship referendum which led to the amendment of the citizenship by birth practice, previously in force in Ireland, was organised because of migrants who the state accused of flocking into the country and putting pressure on the maternity services. These migrants belonged mostly to the third and fourth category as discussed above and were mainly of Black or minoritised ethnic heritage. This narrative pushed out through the print media, that the Irish maternity system was being pressured and undermined by BME women, immediately gained traction and caused an increase in violent and racist attacks on black women (Shandy & Power, 2008). It did not matter that the masters of the nation's leading hospitals came out later to debunk the assertion of non-national women pressuring the system (Reid, 2004). The idea had already permeated the social structures of Ireland and gradually, the bodies of BME women became a site of racialisation, ideological oppression and exclusion. "Focusing on their reproductive capacity, asylum-seeking women were sexualised and crudely caricatured by the manufacturing of the figure of the 'maternity tourist', or 'maternity citizen'" (Hewson, 2018, p. 582). The picture of the BME woman as an asylum seeker or as present to defraud the state, became hegemonic and seen as "natural, normal, and inevitable" (Hill-Collins, 2000, p. 5). This sort of ideological conditioning is one of many dimensions of oppression that can impact the lives of people (Hill- Collins, 2000). The incident captured

in the vignette above (titled: The Buggy Pushers) shows how the ideological framing of the BME woman is pervasive and influences interactions within the society. The findings of this research also corroborate the presence of this ideology of the BME Woman.

The vote at the referendum[6] and the attendant amendment of the constitution, meant that the right to Irish citizenship for children born on the Island of Ireland was limited to only those who had Irish parents. Up until then, children who were born in Ireland automatically became Irish Citizens irrespective of the nationality of their parents. The referendum and the attendant amendment of the constitution at a time when Ireland was actively seeking labour migrants, created 'a hierarchy of migrants according to the projected economic needs of the Irish development project' (Gross, 2014, p. 9-11). There was a picture of an 'ideal labour migrant' (Hewson, 2018, p. 579) who was more or less recruited to serve the state. Asylum seekers did not fit this image. "The figure of the asylum seeker thus came to embody a unique, random element that, unlike other migrants, could not be managed by, or secured to the perceived requirements of the neoliberal milieu." (Hewson, 2018, p. 580).

This treatment of people as economic commodities is rooted in history. Europe's invasion of the indigenous civilizations, the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism were all projects that commodified human beings and are argued to be vehicles through which racism was introduced into human interactions (Andrews, 2021; Banton, 2018; Dabiri, 2021). I return to this line of discussion in chapter two where I grapple with the origin of race and the concept of racialization.

People seeking asylum, flee their countries to seek protection as a result of persecution they face because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular group and *The International Protection Act* (2015) protects certain rights for these applicants. Ireland has a curious history with asylum seekers. In the late 1950s, Ireland took in asylum seekers from Hungary who were fleeing the communist suppression in Budapest. Even though this acceptance of refugees was lauded by many, research shows that the Hungarian refugees were 'quarantined' and housed in centres with abysmal living conditions (Maguire, 2004 cited in Meaney-Satori & Nwanze, 2021). Today, the conditions under which asylum seekers are kept in Ireland, are still a source of contention and agitation by human rights activist groups. The reception system for asylum seekers,

[6] Irish people voted for an amendment of the constitution by an overwhelming 79.2% majority.

or Direct Provision (DP), is a network of for-profit, hotel styled centres, which are usually situated away from major towns. After significant criticisms from many commentators, the government Joint Committee on Justice and Equality acknowledged, in a report published in 2019, that the system of Direct Provision accommodation was 'not fit for purpose' and joined the many calls for fundamental reforms (Tithe An Oireachtas, 2019). Even though applicants are legally expected to have their applications decided within one year, most asylum seekers stay in Direct Provision centres for many years, while waiting for a decision on their applications. Once their applications are assessed and decided favourably, asylum seekers are granted Refugee status. The current Irish Government has pledged to end Direct Provision in 2024. As at the time of writing this and in response to the war in Ukraine, Ireland has received almost 50,000 Ukrainians fleeing the conflict (CSO, 2022). The obvious difference and discrepancies in the treatment of Ukrainian refugees from others who have sought asylum in Ireland prior to the war in Ukraine, has been spotlighted as evidence of racial discrimination (Kennedy & O'Sullivan, 2022).

Eventually, if they met certain criteria and often after many years, people from the third and fourth category can become naturalized Irish citizens. An occurrence which on paper, gives them the same rights and privileges as people born in Ireland. Research has however shown that this is not the case. Naturalized migrants, especially Blacks and people from other minoritised ethnic categories are often unable to access employment commensurate to their level of education (Joseph, 2020). Consequently, a large number of Black and non-white migrants with post-graduate qualifications, are represented disproportionately in the Care industry as Care assistants (Akinborewa, et al., 2020); again, an understaffed industry where people are 'needed'. Ebun Joseph (2020, p. 85) describes this situation as problematic and an exercise in 'down-skilling' rather than 'up-skilling', so people are better able to access low-paid jobs which they are often overqualified for. All nine women in this research, fall into either categories three or four.

I will now turn first, to an introduction of myself, and then, the other eight women.

Lilian

The Story behind the name Lilian

I was born as Ngozi (Un-goh-zi) Lilian Nwanze. Ngozi translates to mean 'Blessing' in the English Language. Everyone knew me as Ngozi until I was about 21. At 21, I became Lilian. Don't get me wrong. Lilian was always on my birth certificate as my first name, but my native *Igbo* Nigerian name, given to me by my sister who was 5 years old at the time I was born, was the name everyone knew me by. It was the name I called myself. It is the name my old friends and family still call me. At the final interview for my first job after I left Law School, I remember sitting in front of the principal of the law firm. He was a very tall imposing figure. I was just about 21, barely out of law school. He looked at me and said, 'I like you. I think you will be a good fit for our firm.' He looked down at my CV in his hands and said 'Which of these names do you go by?' 'Ngozi' I replied. He looked up for a few seconds as though deep in thought and said, 'Let's use Lilian. Lilian will be easier for our white clients'. He stretched out his hand for a handshake and said 'welcome to the firm, Lilian!' And that was how I became Lilian. Even the name I go by, has racial, patriarchal and oppressive undertones. It never even crossed my mind at the time to question this. I was just delighted to be able to secure a good job in a country that was (and still is) battling an unemployment pandemic. Plus deferring to white people was not unusual in Nigeria. We were socialized from an early age to always lean towards making life simpler for them, anyway.

My migration journey

So, now, my name is Lilian Ngozi Nwanze and I am a Black Nigerian-Irish woman. I came to reside in Ireland on June 3, 2012. I was prior to that time, fully resident in Nigeria. I did not come to Ireland necessarily because I wanted a better life. I was doing quite well in Nigeria actually. I came to Ireland because I got married and my husband worked in Ireland. When people refer to me as an economic migrant, I feel uncomfortable. Money was the last thing on my mind when I chose to migrate. I was leaving independence and financial comfort and coming to a system that made me totally financially dependent on my husband. So, the term 'economic' or 'labour' migrant doesn't really capture my circumstances. Anyway, if there is one thing I can say with hindsight that coming to Ireland presented to me, it was a stripping – I was stripped of everything I had built up as my identity. I was coming with a track record of academic excellence, achievement in

the corporate world and a confidence rooted in the fact that I could replicate my successes anywhere in the world. Within a few years of residing in Ireland, I was stripped of all these things that I thought represented who I was. It was a slow, humiliating and isolating process, that got me to a point where I couldn't go any lower.

I got married to my husband in February 2012 and immediately applied for a 'Join spouse' residency visa through the commercial visa consultants in charge of Irish visas in Nigeria. I resigned my job in KPMG Nigeria (a prestigious global accounting and audit firm), and I was excited at the prospects of starting all over again, as well as starting a family. I arrived in Ireland on a valid residency visa and even though I got pregnant within a month of arriving, I began applying for jobs immediately. I was a legal resident from the very first day I stepped foot into the country and as long as my husband, a Doctor, was assured of a renewal of his work permit, I was assured a renewal of my residency stamp (stamp 3). My stay in Ireland was tied to his, from the start.

It had never crossed my mind that I would remain unemployed for long. I was sure that with my experience, I would be at least short listed for an interview. First month, nothing. Second month, nothing. Third month, not a word. There was even no acknowledgement of any of the applications I had made. Research validates my experience. In a research experiment carried out, McGinnity (2008) made up fictitious CVs, some with African sounding names and others with European and Asian names, but all with similar qualifications, and sent them out to recruiters. CVs with 'Irish' names were twice as likely to be called for interviews than other foreign names. Women in this research as well as other research projects have also shared stories of their 'job-seeker' experiences and how changing their names to more Irish sounding names, gained them access to interviews (Akinborewa, et al., 2020).

University Education as refuge

I had prior to this time, applied for a master's degree programme in what I had heard was Ireland's most prestigious university. Just before the effect of not getting called for interviews began to affect me, I got admission into the University to study for a Masters in International and European Business Law. I was elated. I finally had something to look forward to - University became a refuge to me. I had been cocooned in the house, doing nothing. I couldn't get a job, I had no friends, and my husband worked all day and came back in the evening, tired. The silence in my life was loud! I deferred my admission until

I gave birth to my baby. I then commenced my first Academic Programme in Ireland in September 2013. My experience in that academic programme forms part of the motivation for this research. In a reflective writing exercise I undertook after I graduated from the master's degree program, I reflected on my experience on the course and I share excerpts of that reflection below:

> I had just come into the country. I cannot say I had settled. It had been one full year and I was still far from adjusting to food, the weather, accents, life in general. I was still culture shocked. I had no friends. I felt trapped because I was coming from a very active professional life and suddenly everything had stopped. No job. No friends. No networks. I was starting again. And as flippant as I make this sound now, it was a big deal. Had I not had faith in God, I would probably have caved in. So, you can imagine my joy when it was time to resume at a prestigious university in Ireland. I was elated. I knew the exposure, the broadening, the sense of fulfilment which engaging in academics brought, so I was excited. I started the course. The teachers were fantastic. They knew their onions. Course content was good enough. But I was invisible. No one spoke to me. I spoke to no one. Honestly, I was afraid to speak to anyone. Even though I was doing a Masters in 'International and European Law', International was obviously interpreted to mean America and Britain. There was no mention or reference to Africa or anything relatively familiar. I was always the last to be chosen by my peers to belong in a group. And even when I was, I was never chosen to speak. I never shared anything in the classroom even when I knew that I had things to say that could buttress what the teacher was explaining. I just came to class and went home. I was invisible.

I still remember the feelings, both of thrill and loneliness, that I felt doing that course. Thrill because I was able to use my thinking faculties in an intellectual environment again. Loneliness because it was obvious I did not belong. I had paid 16,000 Euro for that course and no one would have noticed if I didn't attend classes for half of the academic year. I was afraid to interact. I didn't even know what was (or wasn't) culturally acceptable. Remember that I had been socialised from Nigeria to defer to white people and make them comfortable? So I found myself hiding away in a shell and not getting in the way of anyone. I came for an education and I was going to get just that. No extras. The teachers 'co-operated' with me. They too never tried to reach out or interact. They did what they had to do and left the class. It was almost as if they were afraid to try to engage me. I was like a taboo or at least that was how I felt. I graduated with a first class and a distinction in that course, but I formed no relationships with anyone. As I write today, I have no alumnus who I am in touch with, from that academic programme.

The impact of not being called for interviews worsened after I graduated. I had spent €16,000, made a first class and still couldn't get a job! The system began to take a toll on

me. No one would even call me for volunteer jobs – an experience that many other Black migrant people have had to endure upon arrival in Ireland (Akinborewa, Fitzsimons, & Obasi, 2020; Mcginnity & Nelson, 2008; Michael, 2015). I began to doubt myself and whatever competence I thought I had. I had begun at this time to get into networks with other black people – mostly Christians, or wives of doctors. Most Black doctors I met had wives who were doctors as well. So, they really could not relate with my unemployment woes. Doctors were wanted, no, doctors were needed, so there was never a dearth of employment for them (their experiences within employment were an entirely different matter). The other black people from church, mostly women, were employed as care assistants (or were not employed at all) and could not for a minute, understand why I was trying to get into any other industry. "These are the jobs they have for us *Dudu*[7]*",* they would always say to me – implying that if people were not doctors or nurses, then they were banished to be health care assistants. The thought of going into health care, a field I didn't feel equipped or wired for, worsened my feelings of helplessness.

2018 was a pivotal year in my sojourn in Ireland. I stumbled upon an advert for a course to train Further Education teachers. I applied and got in. My experience on that course, changed the trajectory of my life. For the first time in the 6 years I had been in the country, I felt visible and included. From the first day I stepped into the class, I was drawn into a discussion. Notice my phrase – *drawn in*. I wanted to hide. I was not allowed to hide. In the first few days, when groups were formed, myself and the other African were again left to ourselves, but within a week of attending, that *miraculously* changed. People actually spoke to me. Teachers knew my name. I was able to tell them things about my life because they wanted to know. They knew when I became an Irish citizen and the class actually took a break to celebrate me! I existed in the minds of these guys. We shared biographic stories in the class. People were learning about where I came from and I was learning things about Ireland that I hadn't in the 6 years I had been in the country. We were doing heavy course work. There was a lot of learning going on yet, it was like a community. Everyone respected me. We were able to have tough discussions about race, class and gender and while we argued, we made up afterwards. Once, we were having a discussion about race in one of our sessions. A white male had flippantly mentioned that he didn't think racism existed. That the disadvantage people of colour faced, existed more in their

[7] Dudu is the Yoruba word for Black. Nigerians in Ireland, many of whom are from a Yoruba cultural heritage, would refer to themselves in informal conversation as Dudu (Blacks).

minds than anywhere else. The class was quiet. No one responded. Suddenly, all the years of applying for jobs without even an acknowledgement from the employers, flashed through my mind. All the years of knocking frantically on doors that I was qualified to go through, but remained tightly shut because I was black, flashed through my mind, and I responded. I responded more emotively than I would have liked, and by the end of the class I felt drained. I felt low. I felt tired. As I got home that evening, I remember receiving a call. It was a call from the facilitator of the class. She had called to check up on me. She understood the toll the conversation had on me and she called. I didn't share how drained I was with anyone but she knew and she ensured she made contact with me. I mattered. Our class had become our family, and I had a place in that family.

I found the difference in facilitation styles between the two academic programmes I had undertaken in Ireland, to be very stark but also intriguing. I know that my race had a role to play in my experience with the first university (Fitzsimons and Nwanze, 2021). If I was white, I probably would not have been left alone or ignored or overlooked when people were choosing members for their groups. Even the prospects for progression after I graduated would have been different. I would have been included. But I was not. The issue of racial inclusion has now become a big and trending topic in education in Ireland. In 2021 alone, I participated in about 10 panels, discussing inclusive education. There were many more, advertised and run on twitter, zoom and other social media platforms. While in this research I will accede that what we refer to as inclusive education is important, I will argue that for the system to be conducive for BME women, we will need to go beyond the rhetoric of inclusion and deal with deeper, less visible structural issues regarding race in education.

Church and Day to Day life

Irish face, please?

It was the annual conference of one of the biggest non-Catholic denominations and we had prepared with so much excitement. Every church had a quota of volunteer staff and our branch was given charge of the 'meet and greet'. We had printed really cool t-shirts and were admonished to look hippy and cool, as we were supposed to attract the younger generation. (A few weeks before this, a lady in the choir was admonished for inappropriate dressing- She had worn a maxi length skirt sewn with African fabric, but I digress.)

The woman in charge had allocated us our positions and a Black woman was put at the front desk to welcome people in. A few minutes before the doors were to be opened to the public, the lead pastor walked in to inspect and check on how his team was doing. He bounded in, gave us hugs, then took the volunteer team lead to the side of the stage. I happened to be standing with my back to them a few inches away. He leaned towards her and whispered 'can we have an ermmm… Irish face at the welcome desk like an Irish, Irish face? You know, just to make the attendees more ermmmm… comfortable?'

'O Sure, I'll ask xyz to replace her' the team lead responded without batting an eye lid.

My heart sank!

I am a person of faith, a Christian. What this means is that I not only believe in Jesus, but also acknowledge Him as owner of my life. My faith has been by far, my greatest support system, as well as a coping mechanism for most of the things that I have encountered in life. For Christians, meeting with fellow Christians in a church facility at least once every week, is a spiritual exercise that is encouraged by the bible. Most of the women I spoke to in this research were also either people of faith or people who engaged in some form of spiritual exercise or belief. I have been a member of two Christian churches in the period I have been in Ireland. The first was a predominantly Black church and while we continued to pray and hope for white members, they never came. The second was a church run and led by predominantly white people. While there was a lot of love and comradeship in the second church, there seemed to be a glass ceiling for Blacks. No matter how active and involved a Black person was, they could not attain to certain

positions in the church. There was no in-your face kind of discrimination yet, the system even in the church, excluded blacks. Blacks were good enough to work in the various departments in the church but not to head them for instance. The presence of racism even in the church, taught me straight away that there was no sacred place - the problems in the society replicate themselves in all the systems and structures of the society. As long as there was racism in the society, there was racism in the schools, in the churches, in the police force, in the courts, everywhere! My secret sacred place was also tainted by this menace!

In the vignette above, I describe one of the many micro-aggressions I experienced in predominantly white Christian settings. To be clear, most Christian churches speak out against racism (Church and Society Commission, 2020) and condemn it as being unchristian as they rightly should. But Black people in predominantly white churches usually have a different lived experience.

Today

I am currently an assistant lecturer with the Department of Adult and Community Education. A lot of the recommendations I proffer in this research arose from reflections from my practice as an adult educator.

The Eight Women

Nomthandazo

Nomthandazo is 20 years old and identifies as South-African Irish. Her mother, a single mum, is a migrant from South Africa. Nomthandazo was born in Ireland and has only visited South Africa three times in her life - all three trips were after she turned 16. She identifies strongly with her African roots. She went to school in both a DEIS[8] primary and secondary school in Ireland, and does not think she speaks English with a South-African accent. She lives with her mother, her elder brother and her younger sister in a council- apartment in what she describes as a predominantly white neighborhood in one of the towns in North West of Dublin. Nomthandazo is studying International Hospitality Management in one of the Universities in Dublin and is in her final year. She

[8] DEIS is an acronym for Delivery of Equal Opportunities in School. The DEIS program was introduced in 2016 to provide supports to schools with a high proportion of students from socioeconomically disadvantage backgrounds who may be at risk of academic failure. (Government of Ireland, 2020; Pollak, 2019).

gained admission to study this course, through the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) scheme[9], a scheme set up to improve access to Higher Education for people from disadvantaged backgrounds She also works part time as a receptionist in one of the hotels in the Dublin area, but has now put in her notice of resignation. Nomthandazo identifies as a Christian and attends a local church. She recently started a business where she manufactures and sells lip glosses. Nomthandazo is full of life, witty and passionate about her views. In the course of the research, Nomthandazo continued coming back to me with things she had remembered about her experiences with racism. We laughed a lot; laughter that continued even while I listened to the transcripts, one year later. We also had times of palpable pain, where we both stayed silent, moved by the weight of what was shared.

*Nomthandazo has now graduated from University with a Second Class Upper. She invited me for her graduation party and sent a message to me saying 'Thank you Aunty for believing in me!'

Naomi

Naomi is 21 years old and a recent graduate of Law from one of the Universities in Dublin. Even though Naomi was born in Ireland to a migrant mum, she was taken back to Nigeria as a baby to return to Ireland when she was five years old. She continues to visit Nigeria periodically and describes herself as African-Irish. She says this description of her ethnicity is in this order, because every time she says she is Irish, she is interrogated as to where she is 'really' from. Naomi graduated with a Second Class Honours Law degree, and now works for an accounting/audit firm in Dublin. Naomi lives in a town outside of Dublin with her parents, who migrated from Nigeria over 20 years ago. While she was in college, she worked part time in one of the large retail outlets in Dublin. She also did a one year internship at a prominent financial services firm in the United Kingdom, before her final year of University. Naomi brought a surprisingly high level of depth and analysis to our research conversations. Witty, eloquent and very descriptive, her contributions to this research were invaluable. She is an Evangelical Christian and has attended a few predominantly white churches in Dublin and in the area where she lives.

[9] The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) scheme, is an access scheme for students below 23 years of age whose social or social background are not represented in Higher Education (https://accesscollege.ie/hear/what-is-hear/).

Mbasiti

Mbasiti first came to Ireland in 2001, where she gave birth to her son. She returned to Nigeria until 2014 when she migrated to Ireland. Because she had an Irish born son, she was able to take up residence legally in Ireland. Mbasiti comes from a Nigerian middle class background, and was educated up till master's degree level in Nigeria. She worked as an executive in one of the prestigious oil and gas firms in Nigeria, before she relocated to Ireland. She is widely travelled and has visited many countries. Upon her arrival in Ireland, Mbasiti enrolled and completed QQI courses and qualified as a health care executive. She also completed a higher diploma in one of the universities in the country. She currently works in a care residential home in the country as a health care executive. Mbasiti is very involved in her community and participates actively in youth and community work. She is catholic and also very much involved in her parish activities. Mbasiti lives outside of Dublin with her daughter and son who are both University undergraduates. She is very vocal about her convictions, and was very generous with her time and suggestions, whenever we had research conversations.

Eleanor

Eleanor is a forty something year old woman who came into Ireland from a country in East Africa in the year 1999. She resigned from her managerial position in Africa to come over to Ireland to join her husband who was a naturalized Irish citizen. When she arrived in Ireland, she discovered that her previous experience was not recognized in the labour market, so she had to take up jobs that were not commensurate to the level she had attained in Africa. She currently lives in Dublin and is a Community Educator in one of the ETB centres in the country. Before she began teaching, she had to complete 2 degrees in a University in Ireland – a bachelor's degree and a higher diploma. Eleanor's sense of humour and her ability to make her points succinctly, made our research conversations very lively and enlightening. She is married to her husband and together, they live in an apartment in Dublin with their 3 children, all of whom were born in Ireland.

Christiana

Christiana is 25 years old. She came into the country when she was 8 years old, with her father and brother. They came to join their mother who had come into Ireland to seek asylum. Christiana her mum and her brother lived for many years in a direct provision center, waiting for the granting of their asylum application. After about 3 years, the Irish

Government issued them a deportation order. Christiana's mother, not willing to be sent back to the country she was fleeing, took her two children who were 11 and 9 at the time, and fled the direct provision center. Unable to get accommodation, Christiana and her brother were separated and sent off to 'friends' while their mother went off to do menial jobs to make ends meet. From the horrors of direct provision, Christiana moved to the horrors of being treated badly in a home full of strangers. She was separated from her brother and her mum. She attended secondary school but could not concentrate. She describes her life as being 'unsettled' and 'stuck'. Because she is an undocumented migrant, she has been unable to access education to the level that she desires. As at the time of our meeting, Christiana was in the process of completing a QQI Level 6 module in applied social studies, in a Further Education Centre outside of Dublin. Christiana is a Christian, and even in narrating her most difficult moments, with a smile, she says of her life in Ireland. 'I will say it has been good'. My first interview with Christiana was in a quiet café on a December night somewhere close to her house. She chose the venue. Christmas carols played in the background and even if she was nervous at first, she soon relaxed and got into the flow of the conversation.

* Christiana has now been granted amnesty by the Irish government and has received a valid residence stamp.

Nkoyo

Nkoyo is a 33 year old Nigerian medical doctor. She trained in Romania, migrated to the United States of America to do her mandatory post-graduation *housemanship* training, and then relocated to Ireland where she now resides. She is currently a GP Trainee in one of the cities in the West of Ireland. Nkoyo has one sister and two brothers, all of whom reside outside of Ireland. In the 6 years she has been in Ireland, she has returned to Nigeria just once for a visit. Nkoyo is a Christian and a member of an evangelical Christian church in Ireland. She just completed a Higher Diploma in Geriatric Medicine. Prior to commencing the GP Trainee scheme, Nkoyo was mandated to write and pass IELTs exam. She wrote the exam a total of seven times (each time, paying exorbitant exam and tuition fees), before she eventually passed it and was able to commence the GP Trainee scheme. Before she commenced the scheme, she worked as a locum registrar for the Health Service Executive (HSE).

Cheta

Cheta is a 23 year old medical doctor who trained in the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland (RCSI). She came in from Nigeria 6 years ago, enrolled in a foundation college in Dublin, passed her entry exams and proceeded to RCSI. She graduated from RCSI and is now working as a General Medicine trainee in a hospital in Kilkenny. Cheta is the last child of her parents and the only member of her family who resides in Ireland. She attends a predominantly Nigerian church in Dublin. Cheta frequently visits Nigeria but has grown to see Ireland as home. She has a very quiet and respectful disposition, but also has an amazing sense of humour. Cheta was very reflective and generous with her experiences. She was able to articulate things I had thought of, but had not been able to give words to.

Nia

Nia is a 35 year old American woman. She relocated from the United Kingdom with her partner who is white. She works in an education organisation and was the only Black person in her organisation until very recently when another Black person was recruited. Nia is a natural-health enthusiast as well as a blogger. She has a large family back in the United States of America and hopes to visit home soon. Nia lives in Dublin with her partner. With Nia, many of our conversations delved deep into family life and things 'seemingly' outside the scope of the research. We developed a deep bond and have continued to be in touch. Nia's passion and compassion for Black people is palpable. Even though Nia identifies as black, she acknowledges that her skin is very light and has written about 'Light skin' privilege on her blogs. She has been a victim of severe internet bullying and at one time had to go off the internet totally, to preserve her mental health and to shield her from the toxic comments that were being sent to her.

SECTION 3

Theoretical Leanings

The nature of my inquiry has led me in the direction of certain theories and ideas that serve as a framework for the research. Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist Thought are two of these theories that I use as a lens to understand, interpret and present the experiences shared by the women.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) has its roots in the United States of America where in the early 1970s, a group of legal scholars, expressed concerns that the gains to racial justice which the Civil Rights Movement (CRM)[10] had obtained, were being stalled and even lost. These scholars, then converged to brainstorm and create a framework that could tackle the newer and subtler forms of racism that were gaining ground in the USA. In addition to the racism in the political terrain, these lawyers were also faced with an employment system that refused to hire Black legal academics into predominantly white universities (like Harvard University) so, it was at this "unique confluence of temporal, institutional, and political factors" (Crenshaw, 2011, p. 1258) that CRT was born. Thinkers, theorists and activists like Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Richard Delgado, Kimberle Crenshaw and Mari Matsuda, were some of the initial proponents of the theory who organized the first CRT conference in a convent outside Madison, Wisconsin in 1989.

The initial critical race theorists vocally critiqued the liberal philosophies of the CRM and their methods of trying to achieve justice using the dominant conceptions of race and social equality (Tate, 1997; Crenshaw, 2011). In spite of this critique, CRT is both a continuation, as well as an effort to build on the activism of the CRM (Closson, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Critical Race Theory borrowed three major ideas from the CRM that has shaped the movement – these ideas make CRT a theoretical fit for this research. They are: a concern for redressing historical wrongs, a notion that legal and

[10] The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s is best remembered for the actions of people like Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks (known as the mother of the Civil Rights Movement), and others who fought for racial equality in post-slavery America using various techniques – boycotts, sit ins, protests and cases filed in court against the state. The leaders of the CRM had different ideologies even though the goal was the same – some, like Martin Luther King advocated for peaceful protests, while people like Malcom X, advocated that violence could be necessary in the attainment of the goal. These differences in ideologies caused some fundamental rifts within the movement. The CRM was however successful in getting the courts to outlaw racial segregation in the landmark case of Brown v Board of Education and also for a Civil Rights Law to be passed.

social theories have practical consequences on the lives of Black people and an understanding of community and group empowerment (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, pp. 31-32). The proponents of the theory sought to deconstruct the supposedly 'neutral' mainstream legal ideology that ignored racial oppression and clamoured rather, for a racial terrain that centered race and racism and its impact on Black people. Even though CRT is closely related to Critical Legal Studies, a failure to ground legal analysis in lived experience, and a failure to analyse the hegemonic role of racism in society are two major points of departure from Critical Legal Studies (Crenshaw, 1988). Critical Race Theory is in fact, "an attempt by its proponents, "to integrate their experiential knowledge into moral and situational analysis" (Tate, 1997, p. 210).

Even though CRT started out as a legal project, it has continued to splinter and expand to accommodate other disciplines outside of law as well as new concepts, marginalized identities (other than Blacks) and geographical and racial terrains other than the USA. In 1995 for instance, Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate introduced CRT as a framework to examine the role of race and racism in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT has also been used to analyse medical research (for example Roberson, 2022), research in the field of geography (Price, 2010), sociology (e.g. Sanchez & Romero, 2010), and various other non-law related fields. CRT has also been adapted and used as an interpretative framework across various other countries including the United Kingdom (Coxshall, 2020;) and Ireland (Kitching, 2015; Joseph, 2020).

There is not a single strict list of ideas which Critical Race Theorists adhere to, even though scholars have come up with "mutually reinforcing tenets" or themes that have consistently been applied in CRT scholarship (Cabrera, 2018, p. 211). I will highlight briefly some of the CRT ideas or tenets that I draw from for this research.

The first major idea I rely on is the tenet which says that racism is not a random, individualized, unusual, aberrant or isolated act (Ladson-Billings, 2013), but is normal interwoven into the fabric of society, and is the usual way that people of minoritised ethnic origins experience the world. The implication of this is that racism is difficult to combat, as only the blatant forms of extreme racism are acknowledged and dealt with by the society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The proposed objectives of this research are hinged on this tenet and the stories from the research, show the pervasiveness of racism in our lives here in Ireland.

The interest convergence tenet is another CRT idea I draw from. This tenet postulates that a consequence of the global *white-over-other* racial order is that the interests of Blacks and people of colour will only advance when such interests converge with the interests of the dominant group (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). This interest convergence tenet explains a reality, but also offers a strategy for improving the lives of minority groups (Closson, 2010). For instance, in my capacity as a Black student and educator, I have often been invited on panels, committees and research groups in order to tick the box of having a black person on board, or many times in order to comply with diversity trends, and not necessarily because anyone cared about what I had to say. However, because I was on these panels, my voice was heard somehow and my representation could give hope to another Black person. Both our interests had converged albeit disproportionately.

The Unique Voice of colour and storytelling tenet is the tenet from CRT that has the greatest impact on this research. This tenet states that experiential knowledge of racialised people puts them in a unique voice position and bestows on them, competence to speak about race and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Storytelling in CRT is both a foundational tenet and a methodological tool (Horsford, 2010) and by it, scholars and researchers "can capture, construct, and reveal marginalized experiences, while challenging mainstream narratives that may be readily accepted as objective truths" (Horsford, 2010, pp. 294,295). Derrick Bell, one of the first theorists that promoted storytelling in CRT, used allegory to examine and analyse legal discourse. Appraising the use of narratives in law, Winter (1989) described stories as tools that communicate hitherto incomprehensible communications in a more accessible form. I was struck at the power of storytelling when I worked as part of a research team, inquiring into the barriers asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland face in accessing higher education. I was recruited because I identified as being a migrant. I was not a refugee, but it was assumed that I could relate to the issues that refugees would have. At least my recruiters thought so. I thought so too. After all, I had many friends and acquaintances who had been through the Direct Provision system. As we began the research conversations[11], I was immediately thrown into an emotive space where the respondents told stories about what they had gone through. They spoke of *'prison-like'* Direct Provision hostels, the lengths they had gone to access education or just stay sane, and the experiences they had to undergo every day. The more they spoke, the more aware I became of my privilege: I

[11] The research can be accessed at https://collegeconnect.ie/community-needs-analysis-with-refugees/

had never had to stay in a room with strangers. I was never 'stuck' in Ireland. There was always the option of going back home anytime I wanted to. I was never faced with being hungry in a classroom and hiding when my classmates were going for lunch so as not to explain that the Euro 19.50 I receive every week would not be enough for me to pay my transport fare to school and have lunch. I was never faced with choosing between education and missing my breakfast and dinner in a hostile hostel. Not only was I never faced with these things, I never gave them any thought. I had mixed with refugees in class, in church, and other different settings, yet I was blinded to the things that they were bringing with them into those spaces. This realization made me uncomfortable, embarrassed, almost repulsed at myself for being so selfish and blinded to the stark reality of others. In the midst of all these negative feelings, the realization also made me aware of how easy it was for a dominant group to be blinded to the reality of an othered group. If this space was not opened for them to tell their stories, I would never have had an opportunity to get a glimpse of the things that they had experienced and continue to experience. Stories are a powerful means of changing dominant mindsets, a powerful tool to use to build community and a means of self-preservation for racialised groups (Delgado, 1989) and I use stories in this research for all these reasons. A major critique of CRT is one that centres on this story-telling tenet. Gloria-Ladson Billings (2006) and Dixson & Rousseau (2018), have written on the dangers of the 'uncritical' use of storytelling within CRT research. Researchers are urged to not use story-telling as a tool to 'rant' but to use it as a means to highlight and illustrate relevant social justice issues as they relate to race. Highlighting her concerns with how researchers were engaging with the story-telling tenet of CRT, Gloria Ladson-Billings explained that

> The point of storytelling is not to vent or rant or be an exhibitionist regarding one's own struggle. Unfortunately, far too many would-be critical race theorists in education use the narrative or counter-story in just that way. There is little or no principled argument to be made.… The story does not advance larger concerns or help us understand how law or policy is operating. (Ladson-Billings, 2013, p. 42)

In this research, through critical analyses, I "look beyond the story to develop and inform our understanding of how race and racism operate…" (Dixson & Rousseau, 2018, p.124).

Another CRT tenet is the Commitment to Social Justice Tenet. Critical Race Theory goes beyond seeking to understand the racial terrain but also involves taking actions that work towards eliminating racial oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). This activist tenet shapes this research in more than one way because the aims of this research are activist

in nature. I also lean on this tenet in my analysis of the stories that I have collected and I have from my analysis, proffered suggestions and recommendations on practical and pedagogical changes that can be made in Irish classrooms. It is this function of CRT that has made researchers refer to it as Praxis – a theory that includes an action dimension (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

Whiteness as property, differential racialization and the social construction of race, are three vital tenets of CRT that I explore in detail in chapter two. These tenets propose that race is socially constructed and should not be essentialised. They also propose that race is not determined by any objective parameter or genetic reality, but is something that society "invents, manipulates or retires" when convenient (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 9). Society after creating this social construct called race, then endows the members of the race with "pseudo-permanent" characteristics. The consequence of this is something called differential racialisation, where different groups are racialised differently at different points in time. The racialised global world order is therefore constructed in such a way that those racialised as whites, benefit materially from the social order and that whiteness has become "tantamount to property that is protected and gives the owner the right to exclude" (McDowell & Jeris, 2004, p. 83)

Black Feminist Thought

Black Feminist thought (BFT) is a collection of ideas and thoughts that reflect the Black woman's endeavour to come to terms with, understand, explain, analyse and portray their unique lived experience within intersecting oppressions of race, class and sex (Collins, 1989), (and I will argue in the case of Ireland, nation and other matrixes). These ideas can be expressed orally or through media such as poetry, art and such other expressions. According to Patricia Hill Collins, one of the foremost contributors to contemporary BFT, for anything to qualify as BFT, it must be produced by Black women (Hill-Collins, 1986). It could be recorded by women who are not black, but its production must be by a Black woman, and the reasoning behind this is simple. It is known that the history and material conditions of people shape their experiences. Because of this, the effect of colonialism, patriarchy and capitalism, gives Black women a unique standpoint that qualifies them to define their lives and reject the generalizations that have been imposed on them by white women (Carby, 1997; Aziz, 1997; Collins, 1989; Hill-Collins, 1986). This stance does not in anyway suggest a homogeneity of Black women's experience. Black Feminist Thought acknowledges the diversity amongst Black women, but argues

that this diversity (with differences in race, class, religion, age, sexual orientation, etc) will result in different expressions of these common themes. (Aziz, 1997). There has always been a largely undocumented, or in some cases, misrepresented (Carby, 1997, p. 111) move of Black women all over the world, articulating their experiences with different oppressions but like CRT, many thinkers associated with Black Feminist Thought (BFT), originated from the United States of America.

There is a lot of cross over between CRT and BFT. Both have activist dimensions, and both argue for the centring of the lived experience of marginalized people. There are seven core themes of BFT that I rely on in this research, many of which I will discuss in greater detail in chapter two and throughout the thesis. The first theme which is a direct parallel to CRT's unique voice of colour tenet is the Experience vs. Consciousness theme which describes how Black women's experiences and their consciousness are interconnected and how that connection gives them a unique view point.

The second BFT theme I rely on is the Self-definition and Self valuation theme (Hill-Collins, 1986). Self-definition is the process of challenging the "political knowledge-validation process" that has given rise to the externally defined stereotypical images of Black women. Irrespective of the content of Black women's self-definition, Hill-Collins (1986) notes that the very act of insisting on an internal self-definition, "validates Black women's power as human subjects" (p.S17). Self-valuation on the other hand, deals with the content of the self-definitions, which is the process of replacing the externally defined stereotypical images with authentic autochthonous Black female images.

Another theme is that a BFT standpoint will mandatorily acknowledge the heterogenous perspectives that accompany the experiences of Black women (Guy-Sheftall, 1995).

A fourth characteristic of BFT that influences my epistemology concerns dialogic practices and the contributions of Black women intellectuals. BFT centres the need for Black women intellectuals from diverse backgrounds, to investigate all dimensions of the Black woman's standpoint, by asking the right questions. Very importantly, BFT credits two sources of knowledge, taken-for-granted knowledge drawn from everyday actions and experiences on the one hand, and specialized knowledge produced by experts on the other hand. BFT is produced when everyday actions and experiences are inculcated in theoretical work. Therefore, it is not only the knowledge and writings of traditional academics and intellectuals that are acknowledged and celebrated. Hill-Collins (2000) cites the examples of Blues music sung by Black women, as a site for articulating Black

standpoints. In Ireland, the poetry and spoken word recitations of Feli-Speaks, a Black woman and the poetry of Nia, a participant in this research (See The Breathless on page 120) , are some of many forms that stand out as a non-traditional way of capturing BFT.

The fifth feature of BFT, another crossover from the differential racialization tenet of CRT, is the significance it places on dynamic social conditions. As conditions change, power dynamics and the expressions of oppression change as well. BFT must be dynamic and adept in understanding the changes, no matter how subtle, if it will be effective in tackling oppression.

The final feature of BFT that I rely on, which is also similar to CRT, is its commitment to coalition work, to address social injustice. BFT considers the struggle of Black women to be part of a broader system of oppression and continues to emphasize the need for solidarity with all who are oppressed. (Combahee River Collective, 1978, p. 210).

What I mean when I use certain terms – Definitions and Descriptions

In this thesis, I use certain terms that may carry a different meaning from normal everyday usage and so I will attempt to unpack some of these terms now. I explain most of these terms in more detail in other sections of the thesis, but a preliminary brief definition and description of terms, may provide helpful context to my reader.

Black, white and minoritised ethnic – After countless reflective debates and discussions with colleagues and research participants, I have settled for the use of the words Black (with initial capitals) to refer to people of "acknowledged African descent" (Tatum, 1999, p. 15), white, to refer to people of European ancestry, and minoritised ethnic (The Law Society, 2023), to refer to all other non-white categories. I borrow and use the term 'minoritised ethnic' rather than 'ethnic minority' as it places an emphasis on the social process that racialisation is. It also reflects the point that ethnic groups that are minorities in the Global west are majorities in the larger global population (The Law Society, 2023). I refrain as much as possible from the use of the terms 'people of colour' or 'non-white' as the first seems to infer that white is not a colour and the second describes people in terms of whiteness and so can reinforce the hierarchy we seek to dismantle. I will use these terms (people of colour and non-white) in this thesis, only to protect the integrity of cited sources and where they are used in direct quotations. In parts of the thesis, I differentiate between Black and other minoritised ethnic categories, not as

a means to dichotomize or create a binary but in order to maintain the integrity of the research findings as all nine women who are the focus of this research are Black and are of acknowledged African descent. Every suggestion, argument and proposition I have made in this thesis can and should be applied to all minoritised groups. I also use the acronym BME when I am writing about both Blacks and people from minoritised ethnic groups. I must highlight the challenge of achieving language that captures all non-dominant groups in one term. In this thesis, I discuss the Travelling Community in Ireland, who although phenotypically are white and are of European origin, are also a minoritised (and racialised) category. When I refer to such white but minoritised communities in isolation, I refer to them explicitly and do not use any of the other terms described.

Racism–I use the term racism in a very definite historical and social context, to refer to a product of "racial domination projects" (Bonilla - Silva, 2015, p. 1359) – (slavery, colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism especially) that perpetuated and entrenched in the world, a system of white-over 'other' supremacy, dominance and oppression. This system has endured for over four centuries, entrenched itself in society globally and continues to affect the lives of Blacks and other minoritised groups all over the world. In spite of its underlying systemic and structural nature which I emphasize throughout this thesis, racism manifests in myriad ways and is felt by people differently (this is true even for people from the same racial group). I therefore use the term to encapsulate the various dimensions of experiences people encounter – microaggressions, macroaggressions, interpersonal, institutional, colourblind, overt, covert and structural racisms. I discuss racism(s) in more detail in chapter two.

Stories – I use the term, stories, to refer to vignettes I have included in this thesis. These stories include narratives from the women who participated in this research, materials from my reflective journals, parables, and other accounts used in the work, to present particular viewpoints or to counter majoritarian narratives. I infuse these stories into the main body of the work, and they are not random. Rather, they are specifically chosen to capture the themes of this research in a literary, indigenous, non-traditional and accessible manner. I am of Nigerian descent and storytelling is an integral part of Nigerian life, through which values, instructions, history and traditional concepts are often conveyed. Including storytelling in this thesis is an intentional intervention, not only to include my Nigerian voice in a conversation about Education in an Ireland that is now home to many

Black migrant women, but also to write 'against the grain' of a predominantly white academy (Leavy & Harris, 2019, p. 2090).

Pedagogy - The term pedagogy has an interesting history that derives from traditions in ancient Greece and translates literally to mean a man having teaching oversight of a (male) child (Shah & Tribhuvan, 2021). Even though the use of the term has continued to metamorphose and move away from its initial gendered and patriarchal undertones, there are at least two distinct ways that the word pedagogy is conceptualised and different definitions of the term have been positioned somewhere on a spectrum between these two conceptual positions. One school of thought defines or views pedagogy as a technicist concept. With this school of thought, teachers are "specialized technicians … who manage and implement curricula programs" (Giroux, 1985, p. 36). For thinkers who position themselves at this end of the conceptual spectrum, pedagogy is a value-free and mechanistic science that deals with the mastery and effective delivery of subject knowledge. At the other end of the spectrum is a school of thought that conceptualizes pedagogy in a (more) socio-cultural dimension and views pedagogy as the essential relationship between teachers, learners and the learning environment which includes the institutional, cultural, political and historical settings (Murphy, 2008). There are of course varying implications and tensions that can occur if a person positions themselves rigidly in any of these camps. For the technicists for instance, the role of the teacher will be to deliver or impart 'objective' knowledge to supposedly ignorant learners irrespective of the socio-political conditions that exist in the learning environment. Good teaching will be a universal concept and teaching would usually be seen to be a means to pass across a pre-determined unchanging body of knowledge. I write about the disadvantages of holding this view of pedagogy in chapter three. For the purposes of this research however, I lean more towards the socio-cultural dimension of pedagogy and draw from Paolo Freire (1972), Patricia Murphy (2008) and Gloria Ladson billings (1995) to define pedagogy as both an art and a discourse that connects teaching and learning with the culture, the structures, the mechanisms and the power play that exists within the environment of learning. In this thesis, pedagogy will presuppose an interconnectedness between theory, practice, liberation, reflection and a commitment to social justice (Murphy, 2008). I explore this form of pedagogy more in Chapter Three.

Sisters – I use the term occasionally to refer to the women that participated in this research. This term does not refer to a biological relationship but refers to a bond that we share as a result of the commonality of the oppression that we face. I am minded and conscious of the reluctance by some Black feminists (see for instance, hooks, 2013, p. 45; Lourde, 2018), to promote a concept of 'sisterhood' that paints a picture of unity across all women but obscures the otherwise dehumanising and oppressive relationships that exists between white women and Black women. I use this term in spite of this reluctance, for one major reason - the women who participated in this research (who are all Black) continued to refer to the strength they drew from their sisterhood, community and bonding with myself as researcher and other Black women. Black Feminism is also rooted in love and sisterhood, by Black women, for Black women. For instance, The Combahee Women's Collective Statement reads that all Black Feminist work must "evolve from a healthy love for ourselves, **our sisters,** and our community which allows us to continue our struggle and work" (Combahee River Collective, 1978, p. 212).

Chapter Summary/ Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into eight chapters and an epilogue. In this first chapter, I describe an incident in my practice that led me in the direction of this research. I also highlight what I believe is the significance this research will have in Irish academia. In keeping with critical race and black feminist traditions, I introduce myself and the other participants in the research in this chapter. Finally, I highlight some of the theories I drew from, and the major tenets of these theories that informed my writing.

In Chapter Two, I trace the origin of the concept of race over various historical eras and show that race is a social construct that was intentionally created to maintain a white-over-colour hierarchy in society. I explore how slavery and colonialism were racial projects that served to justify the oppression of Blacks and indigenous people for economic gain. I then explore the concept of racialisation, which is the process by which people are made into groups, and discuss how different groups are racialised differently at different times. I also describe how culture can be used as a unit of racialisation and how groups that are phenotypically white can also be racialised (For example, the Irish Traveller Community). I introduce the concept of white supremacy and highlight the different kinds of racisms people experience. The thrust of the argument in this chapter is; that racism is the normal way Blacks and people of minority ethnic origin experience the world and that this world order is intentionally kept in place by systems and structures,

which if not interrupted, will continue to perpetuate the inequality we see in society. In this chapter also, I introduce the concept of intersectionality and I explore how the different social identities of Black women can intersect to position them at a unique angle of oppression.

In Chapter Three, I bring the discussion into the realm of education and attempt, through literature, to respond to the question – 'Can education do anything to interrupt the racist and unjust functioning of the society?'. In responding to this question, I draw a distinction between the conventional education that is found in most of today's classrooms, and education that can contribute to interrupting the racial injustice in society. I highlight different elements of various critical pedagogies in a bid to create a framework that I will draw from in chapter eight and in the epilogue of this thesis. I also introduce literature on Black radical education as an alternative model for education.

In Chapter Four, I justify my epistemological and ontological leanings. I describe how I conducted the research and explain how, influenced by African conversational/story telling culture, I settled for a conversational approach to gathering the stories of the women. I explain the ethical considerations I had in this research as well.

In Chapters Five, Six and Seven, I present the women's stories under seven broad themes and twelve sub-themes. The seven themes reflect both structural and interpersonal variations of racial experiences.

In Chapter Eight, I bring all the stories together using a critical race lens and leaning on the findings, I propose a racially-appropriate pedagogy for use in Irish adult education classrooms.

At the end of chapter eight, and in the form of an epilogue, I present an anti-racist manifesto for use in adult education in Ireland which I propose as a practical guide to applying the pedagogy discussed in chapter eight. I draw on my experience as both an adult educator and a student to proffer practical teaching solutions as well as resources that can contribute to achieving an inclusive anti-racist classroom environment.

Chapter Two

Race, Racialisation, Racism(s), and Intersectionality.

Chapter Introduction

In this chapter, I review the literature on the concepts of race, racism, racialisation and intersectionality. I begin with a historical tracing of the idea of race, where I attempt to show that the concept of race is socially constructed. I then turn to a discussion around racialisation, a concept that focuses on how races are formed in society. In section two, I describe racism and the different categories of racism that racialised people encounter. I conclude with a brief discussion about intersectionality, an analytical concept conceived by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) as well as a brief analysis of the different dimensions that intersecting identities of race, gender and nation, open the Black migrant woman up to in Ireland.

Race, Racialisation and Racisms

Race

Me: What would you say race is?

Naomi: The colour of my skin…Definitely…the colour of my skin. That singular feature that is noticed once I walk into a space which determines many times how I am treated…

The way race is conceptualised, informs not only how it is measured but also the solutions proffered to combat racial inequality (Lewis, et al., 2019). Even though the idea of race has existed for centuries, its significance and meaning has changed from one socio-historical period to another. 'Race' has however remained obstinately, a part of human civilisation, permeating all forms of social relations (Omi & Winant, 2015).

Sociologists have attempted to conceptualise and define race from different angles. Some have problematised the concept, arguing that it is unreal, mythical, a product of false consciousness and a social contraption (Carr and Haynes, 2015; Garner, 2004, 2009; Montagu, 1997). Others have categorized and conceptualized race as an objective and fixed biological category, rooted in biological differences that range from phenotypical to genetic (Dutton, 2020; Sarich & F.Miele, 2004). Both claims are largely contested and there has been overwhelming evidence presented to debunk the claim that race is rooted in biological reality (Alexander & Knowles, 2005). There is also overwhelming empirical evidence to show that race has a real imapct on the lived experiences of (BME) people

(Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Joseph, 2018; Michael, 2015) and so cannot be dismissed as being 'unreal'. The various analytical and definitional arguments have created an analytical impasse – "race does/does not exist and we should/should not use the concept." (St. Louis, 2005, p. 30). I argue, that to deepen our understanding of race and to attain to analytical efficiency, we must attempt to blur the lines between the strict objective/illusion dichotomy and rather, conceptualize race as a syncretic category, that is formed and re-formed at particular political and socio-historical junctures (Omi & Winant, 2015; St. Louis, 2005). We must then, rather than seek for rigid, conclusive definitonal precision, look to the history and the function of race to enable adequate and efficient theorising of the concept (Andrews, 2021; Lenit, 2015; Lewis, Hagerman, & Forman, 2019; St. Louis, 2005). I also argue that any discussion on 'race' should take into consideration the distinction between the everyday use of the word (for instance the way Naomi defined race in the interview extract at the start of this chapter) and the more theoretical meaning (Banton, 2018) as well as use them side by side in analysis. It was Thomas and Thomas (1928) who afterall said "If men (sic) define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (p. 571-572).

The history (or genealogy) of race

Tracing the origin of race and racial thinking is vital, as analyses of racial matters suffer analytical fatality if had in unreflecting presentism (Banton, 2015). In this section, I will highlight certain points in history where a conflation of scientific, religious, political and economic factors, marked the beginning and the turning points in the conceptualization of race. My attempt to map the formulation of the concept cannot be accurately chronological as ideologies diffused easily from one era to the other and residue of some usage from as far back as the eighteenth century is still with us today (See for instance Dutton's work written as recently as 2020, advocating for the biological fixed and objective nature of race (Dutton, 2020).

The modern concept of race did not exist prior to the arrival of Europe in the Americas. Until then, the categorisation of people was largely along religious lines. The human race was seen as the product of the arbitrary action of the creator, God (Banton, 2018). All humans were believed to be descendants of Adam and race was used to signify lineage or family descent. The discovery of the 'new world' presented Europe with an unprecedented opportunity for the appropriation of wealth, for oppression and for domination. Even though termed the 'New world', the United States, the land Columbus

was claimed to have discovered for instance, was a civilisation already inhabited by over 70 million people (Thornton, 1987) who looked and acted differently from the Europeans. The representation and explanation of the meaning of the existence of these people became an important matter – "one that would affect not only the outcome of conquest, but the future of empire and thus the development of the modern world" (Omi & Winant, 2015 p. 113). European expansion to these lands was the foundation of the development and domination of what is today known as the 'Western world'. The European invaders murdered most of the indigenous people and enslaved the rest, using them to work in inhumane conditions on plantations and for their sole profit (Andrews, 2021). Questions pertaining to the humanity of the indigenous population and the extent to which they could be oppressed and exploited, arose and were 'dispatched' by recourse to religion. The narrative given by the Europeans was that the indigenous people were the lost tribe of Israel, and enslavement and brutal treatment were 'penance' that they needed in order to return to God! Physical difference but more so, religion, was used to justify the exploitation of the indigenous people (Garner, 2017). This gave rise to a world-view that distinguished Europeans as good christians, children of God and full humans from *others* (Garner, 2017; Omi & Winant, 2015). Whatever explanation that was needed would have been given as nothing would have made the Europeans walk away from the largesse that they had walked into and had effectively colonised (Omi & Winant, 2015). It is largely believed that this entry into, genocide, exploitation, enslavement and other forms of coerced labour meted out on the indigenous people by Europeans, "initiated modern racial awareness" and was the "inauguration of racialisation on a world-wide scale" (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 114).

If the European imperial project in the Americas introduced the blue print of racial inequality, transatlantic slavery solidified that framework. When indigenous people were not murdered, they were enslaved and used for production in plantations. With the growth of Sugar and Tobacco plantations in the Carribeans and North America in the early 17th century, the demand for (slave) labour increased largely. At this time, slaves as well as indentured servants, most of whom were white (mostly Irish) were employed (or forced) to work on these plantations. Indentured servants were men and women who in exchange for a right of passage and an opportunity to get a parcel of land in the future, contracted themselves to work for their masters for a fixed term of years (usually 3 to 7 years) after which they could gain their 'freedom' and even acquire property rights. Slaves on the other hand, were owned by their masters and so could be used indefinitely, usually

for the life span of the slave. Both slavery and servitude were purely means of wealth production. There were at first, no racial biases. It was more convenient and economically viable to get slaves from Africa because the indigenious people could not withstand European diseases like chicken-pox (Rodney, 1973) and "as compared with Indian and white labour, Negro slavery was eminently superior" (Williams, 1966, p. 19-20). So, Africa was the closest place to get effective and cheap labour. As the Trans Atlantic slave trade became more popular and as African slaves and indentured servants continued to work side by side each other on the plantations, both categories, united by their oppression, planned uprisings and rebellions. One such rebellion that is significant in terms of the introduction of the ideology of supremacy of whites over others, was The Bacon Rebellion of 1676, led by Nathaniel Bacon in Virginia. It is important in the context of this narrative to understand that at this time, the economic gain that was being enjoyed by the plantation owners from the work of indigenous people, slaves and indentured servants, was unprecedented in the history of commerce in the world. "Modern capitalism could not have come into being without this grand infusion of stolen wealth: a seemingly limitless reservoir of treasure – land, labour, lives by the millions – to do with as one willed" (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 113). This coalition between Black slaves and white indentured servants, was therefore seen as a threat to the continued accumulation of wealth, and could never be allowed to reoccur. The response to this threat was the creation of a social status that made whites superior to all other people. Using a Divide and Rule strategy, the European slave masters, caused a deconstruction of the mutual interests of indentured servants and black slaves, by subtly introducing a hierarchy that was not in existence before and which ensured that such collusions and uprisings never occurred again.

Laws like the Virginia Slave Code of 1705 were then enacted which codified racial heirachy and regulated the relationships between Blacks and whites, socially circumscribing the limits to which Blacks were allowed to participate in community with white people. Whites were given superior status over Blacks (including Black freemen) and whiteness was used as a ruse; a distraction from the oppression which indentured servants were facing, working under terrible and inhumane conditions. It was a tactic for introducing a permanent divergence of interests. The Divide and Rule strategy continued

to be used centuries later, as an imperialist tactic in Africa[12] and other parts of the world. Immediately after the Bacon uprising, the colonialists phased out white indentured servitude and relied almost entirely on Black slaves. Laws were passed that modified the Common Law paternity rule which prior to that time, allowed children take on the status of their fathers. The new law allowed children take up the statuses of their mothers, and gave slave owners an even greater impetus to rape women slaves without the burden of being responsible for their offsprings (Olende, 2018). Inspite of being centuries apart, there is to me, a striking similarity between the purpose of the Irish 2004 referendum I wrote about in chapter one and these laws that changed the common law paternity rule. Both seemed promulgated to clearly define and show a demarcation between who belonged and who did not. Both were targeted at people who were not white.

During the slave trade era, Black women's bodies became a site for exploitation for commercial purposes. Children born from the abuse and the rape, automatically became slaves and were immediately ushered into the barbaric world of forced servitude. Slave ownership was not only lucrative, but also drew investors from all sectors of the British economy – the church, politicians, insurance and finance houses, as well as private individuals. The wealth generated from slave labour was central to the growth of the British economy and the industrial revolution, and facilitated the development of industry in Britain (Andrews, 2021; Dabiri, 2021). Naturally, the babaric and inhumane treatment of the slaves had to be justified. So, in the eighteenth century, religious explanations for conquests gave way to scientific ones. The period heralded a time of massive philosophical and scientific inquiry into differences in humans, animals and plants (Banton, 2018). This is the origin of race being conceived as a biological concept and racial differences as well as hierarchy were determined by 'objective' scientific research. Scientists like Swedish botanist, Carolus Linneaus began the categorisation of humans into groups. Linneaus continued to revise his work on categorisation until he came up with one that grouped humans into four and apportioned subjective characteristics to the groups. Throughout the years of revisions and re-revisions of his theory, he gave different hierarchical orders to the groups – Europeans being first sometimes, the Americans or

[12] In 1914 for instance, the British, for ease of administration, amalgamated 3 separate and distinct nations and made them into the country that is now called Nigeria. After bringing these nations together, they then applied this same Divide and Rule tactic, pitting various ethnic groups against each other, setting the stage for the hate, tribalism and unrest that still rocks the Nation years after the British claim to have left.

the Asians being first at other times. The only category that was consistently at the bottom and with negative characteristics was the 'Africanus' (The Linnean Society of London, 2020). Charles Darwin, another major proponent of this period postulated the Evolution theory in his 1871 book titled the '*Descent of Man'*. In it, he described the African as less evolved than the Caucasian. Scientists in that era like Voltaire, David Hume, John Locke, to mention but a few, all postulated theories that categorised Blacks as sub-human and inferior to whites, and argued that race was real, defined in biology and a means by which people could claim humanity or otherwise (Andrews, 2021). These arguments about the positioning of Blacks in (or outside) the human race, were an integral component of the intellectual framework of the Enlightenment period and were invoked to justify the treatment of slaves and Black people. This ideology gained traction amongst the elite, permeating education, philosophy, sciences and the arts (Garner, 2017). So, from religion to social, to politics and then to science, Europe was slowly but surely creating and re-inforcing not only their place in the hierarchy of races, but the place of the underdeveloped, less-human 'other'. This concept of racial difference became the rationale for all sorts of discriminatory policies, segregation and oppressive treatments of BME people. The Eugenics movement that led to various atrocities, and had a disproportionate impact on Black people (such as the sterilisation of over 60,000 African American women against their will)[13], is a clear example. The Holocaust in Hitler's Germany was also influenced by the postulations of this pseudo-scientific conception of race. It was not until after the horrors of World War II that there was a global concerted critique of biologistic racism.

The success of European imperialism in the Western hemisphere and the slave trade industry, laid the framework for colonialism. The places "that had been looted for human bodies became the territories that Europeans colonized" (Dabiri, 2021, p. 78). With the wealth amassed from the centuries of slave trade, Europe had the financial and political power to colonize large chunks of Asia, Africa and other parts of the world. While with slave trade, there was an exploitation of bodies, now, there was both an exploitation of bodies and lands. The sole purpose of colonialism was to exploit land and repatriate profit to the colonial masters. While it was no longer slavery in the strict sense of the word, men and women were forced to work under inhumane conditions many times, in order to

[13] The American Supreme Court case of Relf v. Weinberger (372 F. Supp. 1196 (DDC 1974)) revealed that almost 100,000 minority ethnic women were sterilized without their consent under American law and policy. See for instance, (Villarosa, 2022).

meet the demands made by the colonialists. In the colonies, there was very little infrastructural development allowed to happen. Everything in the colonial years was geared towards production for the purposes of exportation to the country of the colonialists. It didn't matter what happened to the indigenes of the land, as long as production was met. The effects of colonialism permeated all industries and sectors in the colonised nations. In education for instance, the colonialists replaced the autochtonous tradition with education that had the sole agenda to educate Africans "for subordination, exploitation, the creation of mental confusion and the development of underdevelopment" as well as to man their colonial administrations at the lower ranks and to staff private companies owned by Europeans (Rodney, 1973, p. 380-381). Again, I must highlight the similarities to my mind, between the colonial attitudes in Africa and the lived experiences of BME people in Ireland currently. While colonial school was education for subordination and for placement in lower ranks of jobs that profitied the colonial masters, BME people are *down-skilled* through (further) education, to fit into industries that Ireland needs to staff (Joseph, 2020, p. 85; Meaney-Satori & Nwanze, 2021). This down skilling is done mainly by refusal to recognize previous academic qualifications and work experince as well as a structural exclusion of BME people from 'non-care' employment spaces. (Joseph, 2020; Akinborewa, et al., 2020) Beyond economic, religious and political impositions, colonialism (in places like Nigeria) also disrupted and "sedimented racist and sexist norms into traditional sex/gender systems" (Carby, 1997, p. 122).

The reasoning (or should I say excuse) for colonial rule was similar to earlier eras, the Europeans were coming in, in their superiority, to provide civilisation and structure to the babaric people who were unable to manage themselves (Omi & Winant, 2015). This is inspite of the fact that these nations had in fact existed with superior levels of civilisation for centuries before colonialisation occurred.

The Racial Present

Today, nearly all nations that were colonised have gained their independence, yet most of these nations, especially those in Africa continue to struggle with underdevelopment in the political, economic and cultural strata (Andrews, 2021; Winant, 2006). Kehinde Andrews (2021) argues that years of exploitation, scandalous loan terms from Western Financial institutions, membership of the Commonwealth and continued exploitation through unfair trade deals, are some of the markers of the old order that continue to

perpetuate (racial) inequality in the world today. From the 16th century until today, the struggle seems to be about capital and wealth, and the concept of race still plays a "fundamental role in structuring and representing the social world." (Omi & Winant, 2015 p. 112). There has also still been no improvement of the life chances of racialised, sub-altern populations, despite a sharp rise in the deployment of inclusion, diversity, multiculturalism, and other anti-racist rhetoric. Post World War II, almost as though in a bid to move on from the horrors caused by biological racism, there has been deliberate effort to conceptualise race as being less-salient in dictating the outcomes of people (I discuss this colour-blind ideology later in this chapter). In spite of this, empirical evidence shows that society is still arranged along racial lines and race is still a major factor in the allocation of resources in society (Andrews, 2021; Banton, 2018; Dabiri, 2021; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Omi & Winant, 2015).

From the foregoing, I argue that race is a socially constructed identity signifier, that functions to stratify society and distribute resources. It is neither "an essence nor an illusion, but rather an on-going, contradictory, self-reinforcing, plastic process, subject to the macro forces of social and political struggle, and the micro effects of daily decision." (Lopez, 1994, p. 4). This fluidity of the concept of race is the reason why "analyses that place the question of "race" at their heart", should take into account "how groups not previously defined as 'races' have come to be defined in this way and assess the various factors involved in such processes." (Garner, 2009, p. 42). This process of race formation is called racialisation.

Racialisation

In a study such as this or indeed in any analysis of racial matters, the concept of racialisation is a core concept that must be highlighted (Muruji & Solomos, 2005). However, like with race, the meaning, nature and use of the term, has been contested over the years with some theorists arguing that it has become a 'glib tab' that is used without any preciseness or rigorous application (Muruji & Solomos, 2005, p. 2). Racialisation has been used as an analytical framework/theory in relation to a wide range of phenomena and for individuals, groups, institutions, spaces and social structures (Hochman, 2019). The idea behind the concept is that since race is not an objective reality, rather than study race, thinkers and analysts should study the processes by which ideas about race are formed, given meaning and acted upon (Garner, 2009; Muruji & Solomos,

2005). In this section, I will highlight and discuss seven themes under the broad concept of racialisation that are of significance to this research.

1. Beyond the Black/White Binary: Culture as unit of Racialisation

In very basic and general terms, racialisation refers to the process through which groups are ascribed racial meanings (Omi & Winant, 2015). Describing this process further, Omi and Winant (2015) explain what they refer to as a 'visual element' inherent in the process, where "human physical characteristics ("real or imagined") become the basis to justify or reinforce social differentiation" (Omi & Winant, 2015, p.111). This link of racialisation to phenotype is not uncommon especially with thinkers and theorists from the United States of America, considering the peculiar racial socio-historical patterns that exist in the country. Theorists like Steve Garner (2017), have however resisted this narrow conceptualisation of racialisation. According to Garner (2017, 2019), consistent with race, racialisation should be about bodies and culture, rather than bodies alone since, "the biologization of culture and the culturalization of bodies are mutually reinforcing processes" (Garner, 2019, p. 513). Other theorists have queried the argument to include issues other than phenotype into the definition of racialisation, as this will amount to conceptual conflation and invariably, weaken the original argument about race (Miles & Brown, 2003). I align with Garner's conceptualisation of the issue, as this better accommodates and explains the treatment of white groups that have been racialised. For instance and of particular relevance to this research, are Ireland's historic relationship with the English in the 1500s, and the continued racialisation of members of the travelling community here in Ireland. I will turn to a very brief discussion of these two projects before I continue with the rest of the discussion on racialisation more broadly.

1.1 Colonial Ireland

Ireland's relationship with the English from as early as the 1500s, has formed the subject of much discourse and analysis. Many historians query the actual nature of the relationship – one group arguing that Ireland was never a colony and the other claiming Ireland was never anything more than a colony (Kenny, 2004). What there has been no controversy about, is that irrespective of the actual nomenclature of the relationship, "the history of modern Ireland has been intimately associated with that of the British Empire" (Kenny, 2004, p. 2).

Between 1540 and 1580, in an imperialist project similar to the European exploration of the 'new world', there was massive expropriation of Irish land by The Crown. The

acquired land was then rented to English settlers and Irish chiefs (Garner, 2009). Just like what was described in the previous section where I wrote about the colonial projects, "the labour of Irish peasantry began to accumulate capital for the English landowners: they were transformed into tenant farmers and labourers tied to particular estates." (Garner, 2009, p. 44). Again, this invasion and exploitation needed to be justified. The English justified their imperial invasion of Ireland under the discourse of a civilisation deficit. Civilisation at the time was constructed along property lines – the individual land owning Protestant person was at the apex of the hierarchy. The Catholic- Gaelic seminomadic, collective property – owning Irish on the other hand, was projected through media and societal discourse to be, uncivilized, feudal, rural, savage, backward, pathologically slothful and barbaric (Curtis, 1998; Garner, 2017; Joseph, 2020). Irish culture was depicted as inferior to that of the English and the takeover of lands was purportedly for the betterment of those who could not ordinarily make productive use of their own lands. This discourse, propagated through the media, was the primary mechanism of racialisation. Followed then by "Elizabethan laws on vagrancy and Cromwellian orders" which were used "as a pre-text for kidnapping future bonded labourers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (Kitching, 2015, p. 168) The effects of this racialisation both on the dominant group and the 'other' was similar to what obtained in colonial Africa, India and Australia (Rodgers, 2007). However, while with the other colonial projects discussed earlier, there were phenotypical differences between the dominant group and the racialised, in the case of Ireland, both dominant group and the racialised, were white. Culture mainly and then religion (Catholicism being projected as the inferior religion) were used as the unit of racialisation.

1.2 Irish Travellers

Irish Travellers are a white, nomadic ethnic minority group that have been a part of Ireland for many centuries. According to the latest statistics, there are 32,949 members of the Travelling community living in Ireland currently (CSO, 2022) and research shows that they experience profound disadvantage in education, housing, health, and employment (Kavanagh & Dupont, 2021). Travellers were predominantly nomads, and a few temporarily settled in unused lands at the margins of urban areas. From as early as 1851, there have been records of discrimination and anti-traveller sentiment in Ireland which has continued until today (Joyce, 2021). A section in a 1925 Local Government Act, contained words that authorised sanitary authorities to force the removal of

Travellers from their dwelling sites (Helleiner, 2000). More of these kinds of anti-traveller laws were enacted in the 1920s and the 1930s One of the implication of laws like the 1925 Local Government Act was that Travellers were relegated to deplorable housing conditions– conditions that have endured to the present day. More recently, and during the Celtic Tiger economic bloom in the early 1990s, the capitalist ethos of profit, work and productivity permeated the country; the prices of lands began to skyrocket and landownership became individualised (Garner, 2009; Kavanagh & Dupont, 2021). Travellers (like the Catholic Gaels of 400 years prior), were constructed as trespassers, lazy, dirty, unproductive and incapable of improving land. Following this racialising discourse which is still being propagated through mainstream and social media (Kavanagh & Dupont, 2021), the Government passed laws like the Trespass Act (2002) which made it illegal for Travellers to reside in halting sites. This law has in essence, criminalised a part of their culture (nomadism) (McGuire, 2020). The Traveller and the Settled Irish are indistinguishable physically, yet " the ideological labour of racialisation works at the level of culture, tagging the bodies as pathologically inclined to particular collective behaviours" (Garner, 2009, p. 52).

Aside from culture, in Ireland, nation has also been used as a unit of racialization, so that Black people from the United States of America for instance, have been placed in higher hierarchical levels than Black people from Sub-Saharan Africa, with the latter being racialised through the vehicle of Irish migration, employment and work permit policies. In this research, for example, Nia explained the ease by which she could migrate from the USA and get employment in her sector of choice, yet women like Mbasiti and myself, came into the country, academically qualified, but precluded from accessing employment because of the country we migrated from.

2. Dialectical Process of Identification/ Power Relationship

Racialisation is "a dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to particular biological features of human beings, as a result of which individuals may be assigned to a general category of persons that reproduces itself biologically" (Miles and Brown, p. 102, 2003). Even though their definition accommodates the 'visual element' argument discussed earlier (which I argue against), they also make reference to a very important characteristic of racialisation – that it is dialectical. In creating the 'other', a dominant group inevitably and invariably defines 'self'. So, in order to create the category of the 'savage' Black negro for instance, Europeans defined themselves to be 'civilised'. To

create the 'dirty, unproductive' Traveller, the 'productive and civilized' settled Irish was created. 'Otherness' and in the context of my research, Blackness, are therefore social constructs. These categorisations after they occur, generate new forms of human association (Bonilla-Silva, 2001) with real and material status differences. After a while, these 'social constructs' become "a real category of group association and identity" (Bonilla-Silva, 2001, p. 40). Even though Blackness (and whiteness) are social constructs, the effects of racialisation on the racialised group, are real and acute and necessitate the call for studies to see race as "a bridge between subjective and lived, material reality" (Hanchard, 1994, p. 4). What all this suggests is that for racialisation to occur, there must exist a contextual power relationship (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Garner, 2012) – where one party (the dominant group), imposes fixed characteristics on a group of people (the racialised group), in order to justify oppressive treatment. It is this power relationship that forms the basis for debunking the argument that racialised groups can racialise their racialisers or can be racist towards the dominant group (Bonilla-Silva,2001; Gans, 2017).

2.1 Self-racialisation/ Reflexive-racialisation/ Self Identification and Valuation

According to Miles and Brown (2003) and Steven Garner (2017), the social positions which racialised groups are put into through the process of racialization, can become a location for self-racialisation and resistance, as well as a rallying point for solidarity (Garner, 2017, p. 63). One of the defining features of racialisation as we see from the foregoing discussion, is that it is a process that involves an exercise of power. While I agree that what is described as self-racialisation is possible (and important), I am reluctant to adopt the term for the simple reason that minoritised groups do not have the requisite power to racialise themselves in the way the dominant group does. I would rather borrow from the BFT, the terms self-identification and self-valuation (Hill Collins, 1986; 1989; 2000). According to Hill-Collins (1986, p. 517), self-identification and self-valuation involve challenging the "political knowledge validation process" that has resulted in the stereotypical images of the racialised group, and substituting them for authentic autochthonous images.

The Black Power Movement in America is an example of this form of self-identification. In post slave-trade America, the image of Blackness continued to be equated with inferiority and negativity. This image permeated the common sense of society so much that even Black people internalised the inferiority of Blackness. This internalisation

manifested as actions such as Black people straightening their hair and bleaching their skins in order to appear whiter. The Black power movement arose to re-evaluate and re-engineer a new vision of Blackness. The phrase 'Black is Beautiful' was coined in that era and people were encouraged to embrace their Blackness. The Irish have also historically engaged this process. As a means of resistance (and retaliation) to the English who had justified their imperial relationship with Ireland by stereotyping them as incapable of self-government, lazy and unintelligent, the Irish constructed a narrow religious and racially-homogenous Irish identity. The Irish Nationalist project was initiated as a project to re-engineer and launder the negative image and identity of the Irish. The Irish re-racialised themselves as White, Catholic, Celts or Gaels. This relatively new construction of the Irish identity as White, Catholic, Celt or Gael, has contributed to the racialisation of BME people (Garner, 2004), where BME people are seen as not 'belonging' to the ideological category that forms Irish identity.

The projection of racialised tropes and stereotypes on minoritised groups, and as we will see from this research, on Black women, has a huge detrimental impact on their lives. Self-identification and valuation are therefore not just "luxuries-they are necessary for Black female survival" (Hill-Collins, 1986, p. 519). In contemporary Ireland, the rise of the Black and Irish movement (Black and Irish, 2023) is an example of how Blacks and people from minoritised ethnic origin are assertively putting forward their own self-chosen images in order to counter the stereotypical images that the dominant group has created of them.

3. Material Determinism/Interest convergence

By far, one of the most pivotal characteristics of a hierarchical racialised society is the discrepancy in the material rewards available to the dominant race, as opposed to the other (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). The distribution of wealth and resources as well as poverty, "turns in part on the actions of social and legal actors who have accepted ideas of race, with the resulting material conditions becoming part of and reinforcement for the contingent meanings understood as race." (Lopez, 1994, p. 14). This difference in material rewards between the dominant group and the 'other' is one of the definitional tenets of Critical Race Theory. I argue, leaning on CRT, that from the inception of the concept of racial hierarchies (e.g. slavery and colonialism) until today, race has intrinsically been linked with the distribution and availability of property, wealth and resources and that the dominant actors in racialised societies will work to maintain their advantages and develop

structures to reproduce their "systemic advantages" (Bonilla-Silva, 2001, p. 22, 40). The consequence of the structure of a racialised society is that the interests of the minority group will only advance when such interests converge with the interests of the dominant group (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Critical Race Theory refers to this as 'interest convergence'. This concept of interest convergence explains a reality, but also offers a strategy for improving the lives of minority groups (Closson, 2010). Interest convergence is grounded in a similar Marxist theory that states that the upper class will allow the advance of the working class, only when those advances benefit the upper class (Taylor, 1998). In this research, I have used interest convergence both as an explanation for some of the experiences BME women have had, as well as an analytical strategy to proffer suggestions that could improve the experiences of Black people in adult education in Ireland.

3.1. White Supremacy

The cumulative effect of racialisation projects is a global state of affairs where white people and their interests are prioritized over the interests of other non-white groups (Walton, 2020). This arrangement of white-over-other, is referred to as white supremacy and is utilized by Critical Race Theorists in their analysis of racial matters. According to Ansley (1997), white supremacy can be used to describe a political, economic and cultural arrangement where "whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily re-enacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings" (p.592). The structures of white supremacy are maintained and kept in place through individual actions and actors. The insidiousness of white supremacy lies in its taken-for-granted, invisible, routine existence in the day to day running of the world (Gilborn, 2007; Walton, 2020). The effect of this invisibility is that racism and racial inequality become the normal everyday experience of people who are not white, while only the blatant forms of extreme racism are acknowledged and dealt with by the society. Critical race theorists in response to this, recognise and highlight that racism is not a random, individualised, unusual, aberrant or isolated act (Ladson-Billings, 2013), but is normal, and interwoven into the very fabric of society, and is the usual way that BME people experience the world. (Ansley, 1997; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Gilborn, 2007; Walton, 2020)

In a white supremacist environment, whiteness is hegemonic and so people who identify as white or people from dominant races, are often blinded to how the non-dominant group's daily interaction with society differs greatly from theirs as a result of their race. I argue that even though racism is not unusual for the Black person in Ireland, it is not often noticed or acknowledged by people in the dominant group. The experiences narrated by all nine of us Black women in this research therefore, will serve to uncover a life that may be unknown to people in the dominant group.

Critical Race Theorist, Zeus Leonardo (2004), highlights characteristics of the concept of white supremacy that can aid racial analysis. First, that it is a continuous process constantly constructed and re-constructed by whites "from all walks of life". Secondly, that it is not a relic of a historical project, like slavery, but is contemporary and ever present with no foreseeable end and thirdly, that it is not the preserve of only white supremacist groups like the Klu Klux Clan but is rather "the domain of average, tolerant people, of lovers of diversity and of believers in justice"(Leonardo, 2004, p. 143). I argue, that white supremacy rather than sheer coincidence (or the incompetence of the migrants), is responsible when migrants of African descent are overlooked during job searches compared to their white counterparts in Ireland (Joseph, 2020) or, where there is a dearth of Black people in academia (Kempny & Michael, 2022). I also argue, leaning on Critical Race Theory, that white supremacy rather than racism, better describes the system of oppression experienced by Blacks and people of minoritised ethnic origin.

In Chapter One, I wrote about the first job I got, back in Nigeria, and how my name was changed by a Black man in an act of deference to a white person I had never met. This sort of internalisation of white supremacist thinking is not unusual in people of minoritized origins. Renni Eddo Lodge (2017) captures a powerful picture of how early internalisation of white supremacy can begin in people of minoritised ethnic origin.

> When I was four, I asked my mum when I would turn white, because all the good people on TV were white, and all the villains were black and brown. I considered myself to be a good person, so I thought that I would turn white eventually. My mum still remembers the crestfallen look on my face when she told me the bad news. (p. 85)

Similarly, thinkers like bell hooks have also described how white supremacist ideology and control tendencies can permeate Black bodies. Calling for the use of 'white

supremacy' to replace the ubiquitous and often used term, 'internalised racism', she argues that

> The term "white supremacy" enables us to recognize not only that black people are socialized to embody the values and attitudes of white supremacy, but that we can exercise "white-supremacist control" over other black people. This is important, for unlike the term "uncle tom," which carried with it the recognition of complicity and internalized racism, a new terminology must accurately name the way we as black people directly exercise power over one another when we perpetuate white-supremacist beliefs.. (hooks, 1989, p. 194).

Validating hooks' contribution, in one of our conversations, Cheta described a scenario where a Black woman exercised what seemed to be white-supremacist control over her and the other black students in her class. I have reproduced some parts of our exchange below:

> *Cheta: ….surprisingly aunty Lilian, this woman who would treat us like second class students was Black.*
>
> *Me: No way!*
>
> *Cheta: Seriously! She was Black. She always wanted to side with the white people and prove that she was cordial with them while constantly showing us that we didn't measure up. She would tweak her accent to sound Irish, be very cordial and helpful to the white students, but made it a point of duty to put us down at the slightest opportunity. And she was Black!*

This manifestation of internalised oppression where Black people are hostile to members of their own race is not unusual (Hamad, 2020; Hill- Collins, 2000; Smith, 2022).

4. Differential Racialisation

Differential Racialisation is a CRT concept that draws attention to the way "the dominant society racialises different minority groups at different times, in response to shifting needs such as the labour market." (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 10). As I drove to do my grocery shopping a few days before writing this chapter, I was flagged down by a white woman distributing flyers on the main street. As my car came factory fitted with slightly tinted glasses, this woman probably didn't notice that I was Black. I took my window down, she looked at me at first in surprise and then, disdain, and she handed over a flyer inviting me to protest the 'handing out of houses' to 'foreigners' like myself when the owners of the land were homeless. In the early 1990s and 2000s, Black people were seen as chronic asylum seekers coming into the country to put pressure on the maternity

system and take advantage of a loop hole in the constitution to become Irish citizens. Now, the bourgeoning housing crisis has created a new 'far-right' narrative, where BME people are seen as taking houses meant for citizens. In this research, Eleanor and Cheta, describe how their images in the eyes of white people they were in contact with, changed, the moment they qualified as professionals who were 'needed' by the state. It was as though their 'blackness' had been toned down, reflecting the fluidity and the subjectiveness of race. Images and stereotypes of racialised groups, shift overtime and these shifts have real implications in the lived experiences of marginalised racial groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Even though racialisation has a historical basis, it is an on-going and multifaceted process, "bound up with labour markets; in particular with both internal and international migration of workers, and the ensuing imbalance of the power relations characterising modern capitalism" (Garner, 2017, p. 50).

5. Macro-Micro Process

Racialisation can occur on both large scale and small scale levels (Omi & Winant, 2015). The conquest and settlement of the Americas and the western hemisphere as well as the slave trade industry are two examples of racialisation at macro level where "profuse and profound extension of racial meaning" was injected into social interactions, globally (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 111). Everyday forms of 'making people up' are also forms of racialisation (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 111). Racial profiling, an almost daily experience for BME people in Ireland, is a form of small scale or micro racialisation.

5.1 Spatialised racialisation, Racialised spaces and the Body Out of Place (BOP) Framework

Spaces and places are gendered, raced and classed and are also sites of power (Combs, 2021). The racialisation of space, is a process empowered by white supremacy which entails "the ascription of socially constructed, historically specific, and hierarchical meanings, associated with race on spaces" (Tuttle, 2022, p. 1529). This could be done through government policies, financial institutions, real estate actors, law enforcement agents or by the constructive exclusion of BME people from the space. In racialised spaces, bodies are either 'normal' and free to navigate the space without undue consequences or are 'abnormal' and "subjected to heightened surveillance" (Combs, 2021, p. 1029). Sara Ahmed writes about places that have a 'habit' of whiteness and the expectations required of non-white people who traverse the space (Ahmed, 2006, p. 129). I argue that a lot of the employment spaces in Ireland are racialised spaces and that the

racialisation of these spaces have real social and economic implications for BME people who venture in. Blacks and people of minoritised ethnic origins can navigate racialised spaces, but they must do so with care and they must be forever vigilant as their bodies can become sites of violence as they are marked as trespassers (Combs, 2021; Tuttle, 2022).

On 30 December 2020, the police in Ireland shot and killed a 21-year-old Black man, George Nkencho, who a shop attendant had called in to report as being violent and in possession of a knife. Video footage that emerged showed George getting shot and killed as he walked towards his home, with his back to about 15 police officers. George Nkencho had been battling mental health issues and had no previous criminal convictions. In a country that had a few months earlier participated in condemning the death of George Floyd[14] via mass protests, there was deafening silence! No uproar, no indignation, nothing. Rather, there seemed to be a campaign of hate against the Nkencho family and the late George himself, with false stories about him having previous convictions, being circulated on the internet. There was also an attempt to explain away the killing of the Irish George as not having anything to do with race. It appeared that it was okay to condemn racism as long as it was happening far away. When it came close to home, there was a discomfort, a denial, a hypocritical silence. I interpret the excessive use of violence on George Nkencho as a reaction to a Body Out of Place (BOP) on the streets of Dublin. The BOP Framework is a "sociological theory of oppression through which violence (physical, mental/emotional, etc.) against certain bodies can be recognized, interpreted, and understood." (Combs, 2021, p. 1032). Combs (2021) lists eight tenets of a BOP framework, most of which are the same as the tenets of CRT. The seventh tenet is that a BOP evokes a response which could range from mild (amusement and racial slurs) to severe (death). This response is usually to maintain social order, to push back the offender or to pass across a message to others about who is allowed in the space. Racialisation of space, like the broader idea of racialisation, is not haphazard or irrational. It is "meaningful in its effects; constraining and enabling opportunities and life chances,

[14] On May 25 2020, a Black man, George Floyd, was murdered by a white police officer on the streets of Minneapolis, United States of America, after a shop attendant had reported that he had used counterfeit notes in the store. Even though this was not the first time a white police officer had killed a black man in the United States of America, the protests the murder generated were unprecedented. Protests broke out not only in various states within America but also in several countries around the world, including Ireland. In Dublin, over 5000 people came out in protest of the murder under the auspices of the Black Lives Matter Movement. (Pollak,2020).

treatment and expectations, stereotypes and assumptions, and identity formation and affirmation" (Tuttle, 2022, p. 1529).

The surveillance and extra policing of BME people in Ireland as highlighted in this (and other) research, can also be read as responses to a BOP. When I first started teaching, I was often mistaken for a cleaner or a student. I recall once being reprimanded for being on a corridor around the staff room as such areas 'were not to be accessed by people like me." Again, I argue, especially from the lens of my personal experiences that the Teaching spaces in Irish Education are racialised as white spaces and I have often been interpreted as a body out of place. Reactions to bodies out of place are not always overtly negative. bell hooks writes for instance about individual black people who are the only ones in a white setting and who have "unenlightened white folks" behave to them as though they (the white people) are the hosts and the black person, a guest. (hooks, 2003, p. 33) - an experience that resonates with me. In a research we carried out to explore the experiences of Muslim women in Irish maternity settings, a major finding was that there was an "overriding sense of a persistent 'othering' of Muslim women where they are perceived as being less-than and different to what is 'normal' in society." (Fitzsimons, et al., 2021, p. 11). The participants of the research were mostly of minoritised ethnic origin and their treatment as "other" or out of place, resulted in various negative experiences in the hospital, some potentially dangerous.

6. Specific mechanisms of Racialisation of BME people in Ireland

If racialisation refers to the ways racial meaning is ascribed to groups, then it is important to explore how these meanings are created in the first place. Under this heading, I will analyse certain socio-cultural and political occurrences in an attempt to highlight the roots and development of the racialisation of BME people in Ireland.

6.1 Irish Participation with Imperialism and the Black Baby Collections

First, I do not think a discussion on any form of racialisation will be complete without a mention of Ireland's relationship with and participation in British Imperialism. In Section 1.1 above, I spoke about how Ireland was colonised by the British and how the Irish were racialised as part of that process; yet, Ireland too played a prominent role in the imperial activities of the British in Africa and in other colonized parts of the world. A disproportionate amount of Irish soldiers and administrators formed a part of the regimen that was used in western colonization for instance (Garner, 2004; Kenny, 2004). The British imperialist project was to Ireland, both a disadvantage in terms of its own

occupation by Britian, as well as a great material advantage to some, as some Irish used the opportunity of the imperial setting to set up as traders, planters and merchants (Kenny, 2004). As discussed earlier, in order to justify these imperial activities, certain narratives and discourses were peddled and pushed into society, that formed narratives about the minoritised groups. Many of these narratives are still a part of society today, and still act as vehicles through which BME people are othered and excluded from spaces. Of particular note was the role the Irish Catholic Missionaries played in Africa in disseminating Catholicism, the English language and its culture, while demonising the indigenous traditional practices and educational systems that already existed (Rodney, 1973). Also, in a display of purposed philanthropy and aid, the Irish Catholics (and protestants), set up charity boxes for people in Ireland to donate funds to 'help' those in Africa. The 'Black Baby' boxes as they were colloquially known, for instance, were set up to raise funds for the souls of the Black babies in Africa and were put in churches and all national primary schools to raise needed funds. On these boxes, there were pictures of Black babies who looked visibly poor, malnourished, diseased and in need of help. These collections still continued annually. Something so seemingly benign however, had the effect of embedding in the deep psyche of the people, an image of who they believed Africans were, and so it became a crisis when actual Black people did not fit into this image (White, 2012). The Black Baby box charity consequently formed a "normalised means of engaging with blackness in the form of a remote neediness…"(White, 2012 p. 35). Sheridan, Landy, & Stout (2019), investigated the impact the Black Baby Collections and other such non-governmental organization adverts had on ten to twelve year old children. Their research showed that the images invoked 'neo-colonial attitudes' in the children as well as caused significant distancing between the children and ethnic minorities. The children in the research were found to understand Africans to be "hopeless, primitive, intellectually inferior others…." (p. 858). By constructing and portraying Africans as poor, undeveloped, needy and unable to help themselves, through the use of widely shared visual media as well as national and colonial discourse (in Ireland and in Africa), Africans were racialised and ideologically placed in a lower racial hierarchy that the Irish. Stereotypes such as the ones the Black Baby collections portray, are powerful determinants to date, of the attitudes of the Irish towards Blacks. Racialised people are often still perceived even within anti-racist circles, to be needy and incapable of achieving anything without the help of the logical and reasonable white person.

6.2 The 2004 Citizenship Referendum and the Irish Work Permit Regime

A critical race analysis of the happenings in the years of economic fortune immediately preceding the 2004 referendum as well as the period of the referendum itself, presents a clear picture of how racialisation can function in a space. Immigration regimes, national discourses that projected racist ideologies (even without the obvious use of racial language) and the participation of mainstream media, were significant vehicles used to create a migrant hierarchy. This served to racialise BME people (especially asylum seekers), and portray them as undesirable, a drain on the nation's resources and unworthy of Irish citizenship (Garner, 2007; Hewson, 2018; Lentin, 2007).

On 11th June 2004, the Irish Government requested the electorate to decide on whether article 9 of the constitution that gave citizenship to all children born in Ireland, irrespective of genetic links, should be amended. The tension was between accessing Irish citizenship through birth or accessing it through residency. Up until the referendum, similar to many other countries, both of these routes were viable in Ireland. The referendum was therefore only going to affect those who didn't have automatic rights of residency. This cohort was largely from Africa and other nations outside the EU. There was an overwhelming 79.2 percent electorate vote endorsing the proposed amendment. Consequently, the right to Irish citizenship was streamlined to children born from the wombs of a specific kind of woman and those born from 'other' wombs were excluded. By the referendum and the consequent amendment of the constitution, the body of the woman, now racialised as "non-national" became the deciding factor in the political classification of a child born in Ireland. Again, I wish to highlight a parallel between this and the slave trade era in the United States of America, where irrespective of the political and racial positioning of a father, the woman was the deciding factor of the child's political position - with all children of slave women also becoming slaves The ideological framing of that was thrust on the "non-national" woman also mirrors the framing of slave women who were generally classified as "'breeders' as opposed to mothers" (Davis, 2019, p. 5)

The national occurrences in the build up to the referendum, and the government's justification for the referendum, are instructive in this study. This issue of justification continues to recur through the genealogy of race and racialization, where there is always a need to put forward, a discourse to justify the ill treatment of certain groups. During the slave trade era, the justification was that Black people were less than human. In

colonial days, it was that they were not developed enough to handle their affairs. In 2004 Ireland, the justification for exclusion involved framing migrant women as bogus, fraudulent threats to the continued functioning of an overwhelmed Irish maternity system, an aberration from the cultural fabric of the state, wanting to reap where they have not sown and a threat to the integrity of the Irish immigration border system that would endanger the lives of citizens (Garner, 2007).

The narrative put forward by the government and subsequently by the media, highlighted an influx of asylum seekers who were coming into the country for the sole reason of having Irish born babies, as these babies provided the migrants with the legal right to stay in the country. If the loop hole could be blocked, the government reasoned, there would be better control of the undesirable elements who were coming into the country. Brandi (2007) carried out a Critical Discourse Analysis of the language used by the government in the period leading up to the referendum and highlighted a "strategic ideological manipulation and reframing of events" (p. 26) in order to create an "ideological square"(p. 37) around the woman racialised as non-national. The government in their report, put the amount of births by migrants in the year preceding the referendum at 60,000 births. What they didn't say, intentionally, was that this figure didn't consist of only asylum seekers, but included other labour migrants, previous Irish emigrants that were returning, as well as people migrating from other EU countries. This and other strategic pieces of misinformation, created a picture of the immigrant woman as a 'problem' to be addressed (Garner, 2007). According to Ronit Lentin (2007), "the rhetoric of 'flooding' and 'pushing the system to the brink' was used by state actors to justify the continuation of the state's intent" (p. 621). A combination of national discourse and media representations, succeeded in sexualising migrant women and constructing them as 'foreigners [who] have infiltrated society' and against whom the state is compelled to act in order to protect the 'integrity, the superiority and the purity of the race' (Foucault, 2003, p. 81).

The process of the racialisation of the migrant woman becomes even more glaring when we analyse the referendum and its attendant happenings, side by side wider societal arrangements. At a time when national discourse was focused on curbing the excess infiltration of one kind of migrant, the nation was in other spaces, engineering mass recruitment of labour migrants of a specific kind. With the rise of the Celtic tiger economy in the 1990s, a neo-liberal focus on labour and productivity permeated and dominated the Irish terrain (Hewson, 2018). The work permit system which granted work permits

to people from non-EU countries, were issued for only highly skilled jobs or jobs beneath a certain salary threshold that had been advertised and could not be filled by Irish or EU-citizens. Hewson (2018), argues that the work permit system was designed to "filter economic desirables from undesirables: privileging high skilled and wealthy migrants" (p. 576) and othering all others. The Irish state consequently created a migrant hierarchy based on projected economic and labour contributions. It is this labour market projection that necessitated the racialisation of asylum seekers as undesirable. Asylum seekers by the nature of their arrival into the state, could not be selected based on labour market needs and there was no way government could know whether the skills of those who would be seeking refuge would match the needed skills on ground. Economically, it was more viable to the state to be able to control the migrants who were coming in, and grant them access only when they could be of benefit to the neo-liberal economic arrangement of the state (Brandi, 2007; Garner, 2007; Lentin, 2007). Asylum seekers were therefore seen as a threat to the economic prosperity of Ireland. As it was in the days of the uprisings in slave plantations, anything that could threaten the economic equilibrium had to be vehemently truncated. So, in a country that needed an increased labour workforce, asylum seekers were constructed as 'undesirable, superfluous, unproductive and unwanted' – a similar construction to the Irish travelling community.

The hierarchies created by the referendum and the work permit regime still endure to this day and have real effects on the lives of many migrants.

SECTION 2

"Sure, but it isn't as bad as America, like"

It was the third cycle of teaching the undergraduate elective course. This cohort of students was initially very quiet but had begun to warm up to our group activities. On this day, we were doing a workshop on race, racism and white supremacy – a workshop I bring into every module I teach, irrespective of the subject matter. I started with a gallery walk where I printed 5 or 6 statements on A4 sized sheets of paper, and pasted them around the classroom. I then asked students to go round, read all the statements and then settle for one that resonated strongly with them. All 5 students who attended class that day, converged at one statement. I had never experienced such strong unanimity since I started doing the race gallery walk, so I was curious. As they began their group discussions, I went over to take a look at the sentence they had chosen. It read – "There is racism in Ireland but it is not as bad as in the United States of America." I smiled. Usually, this sentence is very popular amongst the undergraduates but I had never witnessed such unanimity in any of my groups. So I sat into their discussions and they came up with their reasons for choosing this sentence. Reasons like,

'Sure there is racism here, but like the American version we see on the TV is so crazy."

Or

'At least blacks don't get shot and killed like every other day' or

'In Ireland, it is our grandparent's generation that is just so set in their ways. They use disgraceful racial slurs. We are not that bad."

Usually this last answer is my cue – I step in and ask "What parameters are you using to measure what is bad or not that bad?" and the class goes quiet. "How many of you have ever had a Black teacher?" I ask.

Silence.

"How many of you have had at least one teacher from the Travelling community" I ask next?

Silence.

And then we begin our discussion on what racism really is.

Racism(s)

Often times, like with my students in the vignette above, people conceptualise racism on an interpersonal, moral or psychological level. This common sense approach, describes racism as the prejudicial actions of irrational actors towards members of a racialised group. The dangers of such an articulation of racism are many. First, theorising racism as prejudice cannot account for "the causal explanation of why whites follow the racial protocols of a society" (Bonila-Silva, 2015, p. 74). Also, conceptualising racism as being purely prejudicial, presupposes that education should eradicate racism. Inspite of copious amounts of racial education rolled out globally however, racism remains an almost permanent feauture in our world. Because the Racism as Prejudice Model pegs racism as something *mean or bad* people do, it discourages members of the dominant group from anti-racism work. Finally and more importantly, a faulty definition of racism will further perpetuate racial inequality, as the roots and real working of the concept remain concealed.

In this research, I argue that racism and racialisation are inherently linked, and that racism is simply a description of the systems and interactions that exist in a racialised space. Any description or definition of racism that will serve effective theoretical purposes, must capture the systemic workings of racialisation, the material rewards that dominant groups receive as a result of the way the society is structured, and the presence of power relations. Harrell (2000) proposes one such definition where she describes racism as:

> A system of dominance, power and privilege based on racial group designations rooted in the historical oppression of a group defined or perceived by dominant-group members as inferior, deviant. or undesirable; and occurring in circumstances where members of the dominant group create or accept their societal privilege by maintaining structures, ideologies, values, and behavior that have the intent or effect of leaving nondominant-group members relatively excluded from power, esteem, status. and/or equal access to societal resources. (p. 43)

Harrell's comprehensive definition conceptualises racism as a rational system that is perpetuated by actors in the dominant group of the society. Racism could be interpersonal or structural and could manifest overtly (like the killing of George Floyd), or covertly (like the absence of BME people in lecturing positions in Irish Education). Structural or systemic racism refers to the network of systems maintained through laws, policies, judicial and parliamentary power. It has to do with the workings of institutions and conventions that serve to reinforce and perpetuate the power of one racial group over

another (Brookfield & Hess, 2021; Harrell, 2000). Joe Fagin's definition of structural racism is stark but comprehensive – "the complex array of anti-black practices, the unjustly gained political-economic power of whites, the continuing economic and other resource inequalities along racial lines, and the white racial ideologies and attitudes created to maintain and rationalize white privilege and power" (Fagin, 2000, p. 6).

Interpersonal racism describes the category of racism that manifests through "both direct and vicarious experiences of prejudice and discrimination." (Harrell, 2000, p. 43). Microaggressions are a form of interpersonal racism. Sue (2010) theorising microaggressions, defined them as the "everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalised group membership" (p. 3). Microaggressions can intersect along identity lines, for instance a Black woman can encounter both racial and gender microaggressions. Microaggressions can be further categorized into three (Sue, 2010, p. 3-5):

Microassaults - These are usually intentional actions carried out by members of dominant groups against members of a racialised group. An example is the use of racial slurs or more drastic assaults on a member of the non-dominant group.

Microinsults - These are majorly unconscious verbal insults or environmental cues that communicate rudeness or discrimination. For instance, 'where are you really from?' when a migrant has named where they are from as a place in Ireland or 'you speak really good English'

Microinvalidations - These are unconscious verbal comments that nullify the experiential reality of racialised people. The dangerous but pervasive colour-blind racism falls under this category.

Dad isn't racist. He is just from an era where they worked really hard for their money.

I was invited to a friend's house for drinks and some finger food. It was her daughter's *debs* so we were there to celebrate with her. It turned out that her daughter, a white Irish middle class girl was going to her debs with a Black boy. We were drinking and chatting away when my friend's dad, the grandfather of the girl arrived. "Oh" he said. "I had no idea her date was black. Not that it matters, but no one mentioned."

My friend looked embarrassed. We took pictures, had lovely conversations and the debs dates went off to their ceremony. I stayed back with my friend. She saw her parents off and came back to settle in to our conversations.

"I hope you didn't mind dad's comment" she said. "Dad isn't racist at all. He worked in Algeria and Namibia many years back. He loves Africa. It's just that sometimes because he grew up in an era where he had to work very hard for his money, he feels a bit uncomfortable seeing people coming into the country and getting things they didn't work for."

"I see." I replied with a smile and I changed the topic.

Colour Blind Racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2015)

The term Colour-blind racism was coined by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2015), to describe a fairly new and pervasive racial ideology which is characterised by smooth and seemingly non-racial language, and is based on a superficial extension of the principles of liberalism[15] to racial matters "that results in "raceless" explanations for all sort of race-related affairs." (p. 1364).

There are three central elements of colour-blind racism - its frames, its styles and its racial stories. The core frame of the colour-blind ideology is 'abstract liberalism' where people from the dominant race apply the principles of liberalism in an "abstract and decontextualized" (Bonilla-Silva, 2015, p. 1364) manner and therefore appear liberal,

[15] Liberalism is the ideology that called for equality of treatment, irrespective of race, in the era where US laws enforced racial segregation (also known as the Jim Crow Era). At the time, liberalism was not only adequate as an ideology, it was the most useful rallying point for agitation against racism. After Jim Crow Laws were abolished however, and as society evolved, racism continued to perpetuate itself irrespective of the change in racial legislation and the commitment by government to uphold equality and fairness.

moral and reasonable while at the same time opposing any kind of intervention to deal with racism. For instance, in my role as an educator on my university's Higher Diploma in Further Education, when I inquire into the pedagogic practices of the trainee teachers I supervise, one of the comments I get very frequently is, 'I treat all my students the same. I do not see race'. Statements like this fall into the abstract liberalism frame because while it sounds fair and moral, it sidesteps the reality of the lived experiences of racialised people. If a teacher cannot see race, the teacher cannot see the struggles and the everyday racial inundations that the racialised student has to deal with. This stance in itself is a function of the privilege that whiteness confers and will serve to perpetuate racial inequality.

The second element of a colour-blind racism is the style or peculiar linguistic manner that accompanies the ideology. Language used to perpetuate racism is subtle and slippery. There is a general discomfort exhibited by people of the dominant racial group when matters of race and racism are introduced into conversations. There is also the use of 'semantic moves' to implicate and demonise racialised groups while at the same time, maintaining a semblance of being non-racist. The vignette above titled "Dad isn't racist", narrates a personal encounter where such a semantic move was used. On the one hand, the lady starts the sentence professing how her dad is not racist but then goes on to blame Black people for coming into the country to get things they didn't work for. The words I'm not racist (or in this case, dad is not racist), serve as a buffer and a disclaimer before a racist attack (they come in to take things they didn't work for) on people from a racialised group.

The last element of colour-blind racism is racial stories. Racial stories are collective narratives told by members of the dominant group, that attempt to rationalise the racial order as being the fault of the racialised people, using material from their own lives (Bonilla-Silva, 2015, p. 1365). While as a student, during a class discussion, I encountered a white man who insisted that the experiences I had shared about not being able to get jobs or being over-policed in shops were not as a result of race but were as a result of my (in)abilities or the security situation in the city on the day I was shopping. In his words, he too, had got turned down for jobs that he was not qualified for, so why bring race into this?

The danger of colour-blind racism lies in its ability to maintain the systemic damage that racism does in subtle, seemingly benign and politically correct linguistic devices, thereby

making it difficult to detect or to combat. The language used by the government in the build up to the 2004 Citizenship referendum discussed above, is a classic example of the working of colour-blind racism. Series of justifications were given as the rationale behind the conduct of the referendum, all done in non-racial language yet, perpetuating a racial outcome (Brandi, 2007).

Effects of Racism on Black People

Racism has an enormous impact on the health and wellbeing of racialised people. The varieties of effects range from real physical health challenges, to mental and psychological trauma. In recent research done on Black women living with lupus, it was found that higher rates of adiposity were linked to exposure to racism and racial experiences (Fields, et al., 2023). Another research highlighted how racism triggered major stressors in the lives of Black women that led to physical changes in their bodies like having their hair fall off and having panic attacks. The same research also showed a preponderance of mental health illnesses and hypertension that arose as a result of Black women's interaction with racism (Everett, et al., 2010). Another impact of racism documented in literature is a phenomenon described as 'internalised racial oppression'. This is a process whereby minority groups take in the racist attitudes of the majority group and project same at themselves or at others from the same ethnic group as them. In Black women, this double-consciousness and internalised racism can play out in various ways – it could play out in the desire to use skin-whitening products to become lighter or to straighten natural African hair to appear more like the dominant white women's hair type. (Hamad, 2020; Hill- Collins, 2000; Smith, 2022). Internalised oppression leads to low-self-esteem, self-criticism and other significant mental health challenges. bell hooks (2003), writes about how black students perform inadequately in college, not because "they are indifferent or lazy," but because of "fear of being less than perfect, of trying to reach standards that are unreachable" (p. 91). In Smith (2022), research about Black women in America showed that internalised oppression was an unavoidable consequence of living in the society. The impact of racism transcends strata, affecting even the parenting styles of Black people with Black people developing strategic parenting techniques that will help their children "develop strategies to overcome the potential negative effects of racist events on their subsequent development" (Berkel, et al., 2009, p. 176).

Intersectionality

I told the story in chapter one, of how I found that my lived experience largely differed from the experiences of other Black people who had come into Ireland seeking asylum and who had lived in direct provision centres. Both myself and those people were Black, but our experiences varied as a result of the way other aspects of our identities interconnected. Intersectionality is "a method a disposition, a heuristic and analytic tool" (Carbado, et al., 2013, p. 303) that "involves examining overlapping and intersecting social identities as they are associated with structural and systemic oppression and discrimination" (Kolivoski, 2020).

Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) introduced the concept of intersectionality into contemporary discourse through her 1989 seminal paper titled *Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics* where she wrote extensively about the intersection of race and gender and how Black women experienced life vastly differently from Black men. Her central thesis was framed in form of a question - "How does the fact that women of color are simultaneously situated within at least two groups that are subjected to broad societal subordination, bear upon problems traditionally viewed as monocausal that is, gender discrimination or race discrimination" (Crenshaw, 1993, p. 114). The idea behind intersectionality is simple - even within the same gender (or race), there are sub- divisions along lines of class, religion, immigration status, sexual orientation, nation and other identity categories, that can intersect to substantially impact the experiences of people (Crenshaw, 1988; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Membership in each of these categories has real significant impact and consequences that create different levels of oppression even within people of the same race. Even though intersectionality initially arose as a framework to address the marginalizsation of Black women within antidiscriminatory law and policy, it can and has been used in the analysis of other categories of people. Carbado (2013) for instance, has used it as a framework to interrogate and examine the intersection of whiteness, masculinity and sexual orientation (Carbado, 2013). Variations of intersectional analysis are used widely both within and outside academia, with calls being made by critics to reconsider the scope of the concept and to work towards a cohesive definition of what is becoming a large and unwieldy subject matter (Chang & Culp, 2002; Kwan, 1997).

Patricia Hill Collins highlights three broad themes or concerns that characterise work that has been done under the umbrella of intersectionality – intersectionality as a field of study, as an analytical study and as critical praxis. (Hill-Collins, 2015, p. 3). In this thesis, I use intersectionality as a lense to understand how Black women's intersecting identities of race, gender, and nation, produce distinctive social experiences for them as individuals, as well as a group. I also use intersectionality as an activist tool (Gilborn, 2015) of social justice and critical praxis, to propose what I argue is a critical and culturally responsive pedagogy for use in adult education in Ireland.

Intersectional Dimensions of Oppression of the Black Woman in Ireland

Intersectionality as a concept, is rooted in both CRT and BFT. Drawing from Patricia Hill-Collins (2000), and from literature on racialisation and CRT, I argue that the multiple intersections of identities we as Black women hold greatly impacts our experiences of, silencing, suppression and control. Rather than sit side by side, our varying intersecting identities overlap and create a mesh of interlocking and overlapping consequences that occur not because of any single one of the identities but because of the combination of all of them.

During slavery, the Black woman was oppressed economically. Her body was captured and trapped to provide profit for her master (Davis, 2019; Thompson, 2016). After her work on the plantation fields, she was abused and raped, her womb being invariably used as a slave producing machine. She was exploited sexually and physically for economic gain. In Missouri in 1885 for instance, a black slave girl called Celia was sentenced to death by a court, for the murder of a white slave master who had repeatedly raped her. The courts rejected her plea of self-defence and held that a slave had no right over their own bodies when it came to their slave masters (McLaurin, 1999). The black woman would often be brought in to take care of the home and the children of the white family, while her children were un-minded and her home un-catered to. In post-slavery USA, the economic exploitation continued with the ghettoization of Black women in low paying service industries, a situation that is popularly termed "iron pots and kettles". According to Hill – Collins (2000), women became so caught up in trying to survive and taking care of the family, that there was very little opportunity for any real intellectual work. Even though there isn't any codified, collective body of specifically Black Irish Feminist thought that I can draw from, the situation of economic exploitation does not appear to be vastly different in Ireland. A combination of a (fairly recent) national neo-liberal ethos

and racialisation based on 'nation', has created a distinct form of economic oppression for the Third-World woman.[16] In Ireland, there appears to be a ghettoization of Black women in the lower echelons of the Health Care industry and very little representation of the Black woman in traditionally intellectual jobs (Akinborewa, Fitzsimons, & Obasi, 2020; Joseph, 2020), thus making her struggle for survival, her sole focus and eliminating the time for intellectual reflection.

The withdrawal of citizenship rights from the children of Black migrant mothers in the early 2000s (discussed both in chapter one and under paragraph 6.2 in this chapter), is evidence of the political dimension of oppression in Ireland. This withdrawal of citizenship rights has not only political implications, but also financial implications for the Black migrant woman who, in order to continue to reside and care for her children, will have to sometimes pay exorbitant work permit renewal fees or undertake low paid and sometimes illegal work, as well as be excluded from social welfare of the state.

The last dimension of oppression is the ideological. Hill-Collins (2000) describes this dimension succinctly. Even though she writes particularly about the US, her description is universal and easily fits into the Irish mould:

> Ideology refers to the body of ideas reflecting the interests of a group of people. Within U.S. culture, racist and sexist ideologies permeate the social structure to such a degree that they become hegemonic, namely, seen as natural, normal, and inevitable. In this context, certain assumed qualities that are attached to Black women are used to justify oppression. From the mammies, jezebels, and breeder women of slavery to the smiling Aunt Jemimas on pancake mix boxes, ubiquitous Black prostitutes, and ever-present welfare mothers of contemporary popular culture, negative stereotypes applied to African-American women have been fundamental to Black women's oppression (p.5).

Racist environments thrive on the wings of ideologies and stereotypes. Ruby Hamad (2020) describes the Angry Black woman stereotype as "self-fulfilling prophecies that keep Brown and Black women boxed into the narrowest range of human experiences" (p.49). If an oppressed Black woman stays silent in the face of oppression, she internalises the oppression done to her. If she speaks out, she is seen as fitting into the stereotype.

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[16] I use this term to draw a distinction between the economic oppression of a migrant woman from Nigeria on the one hand and a migrant Black woman from America for instance. Because of the added dimension of 'nation', one Black woman (in this case the Nigerian migrant) endures more economic hardship than the other. Black women in Ireland from third world countries are systematically, through the use of immigration stamps and restrictions, denied access to certain jobs and ghettoized in other low paying ones.

Her 'anger' will be construed as the 'normal irrational state' of the Black woman, and her message will immediately be discredited. Aside from the pervasive Angry Black woman and Aunty Jemima stereotypes which also permeate the Irish terrain, the notion that all blacks are refugees or asylum seekers or that Black women with babies in Ireland only came to defraud the system and get citizenship rights for themselves, is pervasive and influences interactions within the society. Other stereotypes that arose in my conversations with the women but are also pervasive across various nations, are the 'mama,' 'strong Black woman', 'not-good-enough for anything intellectual' and the 'loud' stereotypes. All these stereotypes can be traced to a narrative that was spun during the slave trade era.

These three dimensions of oppression work together in an effective web, as a tool of social control, to suppress Black women's voices and thoughts and to keep the black woman in "an assigned, subordinate place" (Hill- Collins, 2000, p. 5). A woman like Christiana has been in Ireland for over 20 years, and because of her nation of origin (Nigeria) and her immigration status (fleeing deportation), she had never until very recently, done a legitimate job. At the time of writing this, she was in an abusive relationship and was afraid to seek refuge in any of the women's refuge centre, for fear that she would be reported and deported. Her gender, her race, her nation and her immigration status had worked together to constrain her in ways different from anything a white woman or even a Black woman from America would ever experience.

A Black migrant woman in Ireland would hardly attain to any position in the University for instance. First, she would have to surmount the employment permit hurdle (if she isn't a citizen yet). If she does, and she manages to bypass the racism that is rife in the labour market that precludes people with African sounding names from gaining employment (Mcginnity & Nelson, 2008), she will hardly ascend to any position of authority or leadership or power – the angry woman stereotype or the loud, potentially violent stereotype will kick in and ensure her progression on the job is stifled. An absence of others like her in the academy, will raise the potential of internalising issues in the work place, which can lead her to burn out. If she has children, she may not have the cultural capital of family (as she is an immigrant) so she must pay exorbitant and unsustainable amounts for child care. Her presence will be constantly undermined by the absence of Black people in literature and in the curriculum and the absence of robust anti-racism policies to protect her from racist students and systems. Her presence in that instance,

ends up not doing anything to interrupt the dominant and hegemonic (white) interests or worldviews – the political, economic and ideological dimensions of oppression would have worked together to make her invisible. Like Hill-Collins points out, the continuous absence of Black women in positions of power in a cyclical manner, feeds back into creating negative stereotypical images that will permeate the society and form the picture that members of the society feed on. (Hill- Collins, 2000).

Research already done and the gap this research seeks to fill

Even though there has been some significant research done to highlight the experiences people in Ireland have had with racism, there is very little research that deals exclusively with anti-Black racism and even fewer that deal with Black women's experiences in Ireland. In 2008, Dianna J. Shandy and David Power, conducted an inquiry into the pregnancy and post-natal experiences of Black African immigrant women. In that research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 51 Black women who used maternity services in Dublin. Many of the women in that research were vocal about their experiences with racism, which were considered aggravated because they were either pregnant or had babies. They were verbally and physically attacked and admonished to 'go back to their country or to stop looking for papers' (Shandy & Power, 2008, pp. 132,133). They experienced racism on buses and public transportation and were fearful for their safety. The research showed that contrary to societal common sense, many of the women came to Ireland for different reasons – some to join spouses, some to study, others on work permits. Not all were asylum seekers. Some were eager to return home after the birth of their babies. 15 years after the research, the descriptions the women gave, (Shandy & Power, 2008) match some of the descriptions the women in this research shared about their encounters with racism.

Yewande Biala, the Black Nigerian-Irish young woman that participated in the Love Island television TV series, wrote a collection of essays titled '*Reclaiming'* where she shared about her experiences with racism (Biala, 2022). Yewande's autobiographical reflections brought me into her struggles with conceptions of beauty, racial abuse, racism in schools and everyday interactions with microaggressions, that chipped away at her self-esteem and self-worth and eventually eroded her mental health. Her ethnographic recordings are important because unlike a lot of similar literature, Yewande is writing from within an Irish context. Again, her findings resonate with what some of the women in this research shared.

McClure (2021) carried out an inquiry, investigating the experiences of three migrant secondary school students in Ireland, how they navigated their identity and how they described racism. The students who were all Black but not all female, raised issues of racial slurs being used at them and teachers being obviously racist towards them. The teachers who were also interviewed in the research, used phrases like 'she gets really angry' to describe their perceptions of the Black students. My sisters in this research shared similar stereotypical projections that were put upon them by people in authority and the impact the projections had on them. Ebun Joseph (2018) examined the labour market differentials between migrants and non-migrants. While she highlighted the experiences people had with racism in the labour market, such as being passed over for promotions they were qualified for, her investigation was not restricted to Blacks alone. Murphy and Maguire (2015), conducted ethnographic research on African migrants and how they experienced integration in Ireland. While racist activity was a theme in their research, it was not the main focus of their inquiry. Another research inquired into the plurality of the Irish society and highlighted specifically how people of Nigerian heritage were singled out to be racially abused. There was however, no inquiry into the actual experiences of people with racism (Honohan & Rougier, 2015). Lucy Michael (2015) conducted research on Afrophobia in Ireland and focused on inter-personal racism targeted at Black people in Dublin and in other areas. Even though she did not focus solely on African women, she highlighted themes that addressed the attacks African women and children experienced (See p. 20 and 22). There has been a lot of other research about asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland, including one done by myself and Sartori (2020) and while this cohort includes an overwhelming amount of Black people, the experiences of Black people are not isolated for study.

There is unsurprisingly very little research in Ireland that singles out Black migrant women for study. Usually, Black women are made invisible by the intersection of their race and their gender, issues concerning them usually conflated with issues relating to Black men or issues relating to white women (Brown & Jackson, 2013, p. 20). In our case, migration status and nation, serve as extra layers that reduce the possibilities of research that shines the spotlight on us. This research contributes to an obvious gap in adult education literature, by isolating and highlighting the experiences Black migrant women have had with racism and how their identities intersect on different levels. My positioning as an educator has allowed me to analyse these experiences and use them as a back drop to

proposing a much needed racially appropriate pedagogy for use in adult education in Ireland.

A note on The Higher Education Authority Race Equality Report

In 2020, the Higher Education Authority conducted a survey of HEI staff to 'develop a picture of race equality' within Irish Higher Education (HEA, 2021). This survey attempted to capture the lived experiences of academic staff in relation to race equality.[17] The resultant report, the HEA Race Equality Report (Kempny & Michaels, 2022) is the largest and the most comprehensive policy document that deals with race in the history of Irish Higher Education. A glaring limitation of the survey is the number of respondents. Just over 3,000 staff, representing a meagre ten percent of the total amount of staff in HE responded to the survey. From the findings of the survey however, almost half of respondents agreed that race inequality existed in Irish HE. The report includes over 30 policy recommendations framed under eight thematic categories that cut across leadership of HEIs, recruitment for staff and student, training and data collection.

In September 2022 and March 2023, in furtherance of the anti-racism work that had started by the release of the report, the HEA launched the Race Equality implementation plan and the Anti-Racism Principles for Irish HEIs respectively. The implementation plan sets out practical actions that could be carried out by HEIs and other stakeholders in order to comply with the recommendations proffered in the report. The principles are commitments that individual HEIs are encouraged to sign up to in order to show their allegiance to embedding a culture of race equality in their institutions. Naturally, there is significant cross over between the report, the principles and the implementation plan. Particularly glaring to me in the principles, H is the colour blind language (Bonilla-Silva, 2015) used to craft some of the proposed commitments. Commitment 8 for instance reads – "We will continue to ensure a fair and transparent recruitment process for all staff, regardless of ethnicity" (HEA, 2022, p. 6)- as benign as this sounds, it re-iterates the colour blind racism I addressed earlier in this chapter. To use the phrase 'continue to ensure' is indicative that this is already happening. Also, the inclusion of the words 'regardless of ethnicity' also puts an abstract liberalism frame to the language (Bonilla-

[17] The report defined race equality to mean equal representation, equal experiences and equal outcomes of staff from minority ethnic groups.'

Silva, 2015, p.1364) and furthers the argument of equality over equity. The implementation plan attempts to deal with my concerns with the language yet, stops short of doing so. The plan recommends that to fulfill commitment 8, HEIs "should review how job specifications are compiled to follow good equality practice, ensuring recruitment criteria are inclusive, and reducing the number of 'desirables' in job adverts." While I am unclear as to what 'desirables' means, I will argue that there will need to be more intentional anti-racist language to be used in the issue of recruitment in HE in Ireland. There is hardly any job advertisement in Ireland today that is not written in 'inclusive language' yet, people from minoritized ethnic groups still find it difficult (sometimes impossible) to get jobs. If there will be action, we must commit to stronger more defined action and not hide under color-blind language. A number of the other recommendations tie in with my proposed pedagogy in Chapter 8 and I will highlight them in that section. Like with most policy documents, however, the language of the report, the principles and the implementation plans are generic and very broad. My skepticism lies in how individual HEIs will implement these principles. It is not unusual to have very sound and apparently well thought out policies and principles in spaces with an oxymoronic level of racism being encountered by people with the lived experience of racialization. The HEA Race Equality report and the attendant documents have the potential to transform Higher Education in Ireland but this will only be achieved at implementation level where the voices of those most affected by racism is listened to and is acted on.

Chapter Summary/ Conclusion

Races are not real. They are socially constructed categories that were created to justify the use and abuse of human bodies in order to create what is today, the common wealth of western world Even though historic, races continue to be a 'master' categorising mould that ensure an unequal distribution of resources in society. The process of creating races, racialisation, is therefore a rational project of power whereby a dominant group (whites) ascribes group characteristics to a heterogeneous body of people in order to maintain the (unequal) status quo. This power project is kept in place through the use of instruments like immigration laws and policies, national discourses but also and very importantly, ideologies that project certain negative characteristics on the non-dominant members of society. These ideologies which are propagated through various discourses, mainstream and social media, crystalise and become the common sense of society. Members of non-

dominant groups in racialised societies, consequently experience life vastly differently from members of the dominant group. The different social identities of members of non-dominant groups, can intersect to worsen the impact racialisation has on them. Black migrant women, exist at the intersection of their race, gender, nation, migration status and class and the effect of the intersectionality of these identities, positions them to experience life significantly different from others.

Chapter Three

Towards a Critical Racial Engaged Pedagogy of Love

Chapter Introduction

In this chapter, I explore, what role (if any) education can play in addressing the imbalance, inequity and inequality caused by racialisation, and its potential as an instrument to restoring a more just and socially equitable system in the world.

The Agenda of Education

One of the assumptions that I rely on in this research, drawing from CRT, is that racism is an integral part of the Irish socio-political landscape. Consequently, the institutions that exist in the society, including (and especially) educational institutions, shape and are shaped by the existing racist status-quo (Darder & Torres, 2003). Education has historically been used as a tool for the propagation of racist ideology. This was the case during the enlightenment era of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, where those who are now celebrated as the prominent 'thinkers' in philosophy and science (for instance Immanuel Kant), documented their racist opinions and thoughts and built their theories on these racist beliefs (Andrews, 2021). One of the hallmarks of Western colonialism also, was the hijack and replacement of indigenous ways of knowing and learning, with education that "sought to instil a sense of deference towards all that was European and capitalist" (Rodney, 1973, p. 58). Education always has an agenda and many well-intentioned teachers serve for years without even realising that they are furthering an agenda (See for instance Freire, 1970; who writes about the capitalist agenda of education).

In chapter two, we traced how the bottom line of racialisation was capital, economics and finance. The agenda of most of today's educational institutions tow this same line. Their goals are defined "through the promise of economic growth, job training and mathematical utility" (Giroux, 2011, p. 13) and classrooms function as "modes of social, political, and cultural reproduction" (Giroux, 2011, p. 13). Paulo Freire (1970, p. 45) famously described pedagogy in classrooms with capitalist agendas, using the phrase 'the banking concept of education" where the role of teachers in classrooms is reduced to deposting information into the students whose roles are to "patiently receive, memorize and repeat" (Freire, 1970, p. 45). Much of today's education in Ireland and indeed all over the world fits into this mould. bell hooks (1994) describes this kind of education as a

disembodied education where professors isolate the minds of students, ignore all else that goes on in or around their lives and focus on enacting "rituals of control that were about domination and the unjust exercise of power" (p. 9). In chapter one, I describe a period where I studied for my master's degree. Using that experience as a case in point, I recall not only the isolation I felt in the classroom, but also the disconnect from real life that the things we were taught elicited in my mind. The classroom for me in that setting, felt like a loveless, cold environment, where the happenings held meaning only within the high walls of the school. It was as though I left the rest of my life outside the door and picked it up again when the day was over. Of course, we were graded on our ability to regurgitate the information we had been filled with, in the first place (Freire, 1970). In such classrooms, we were consumers of knowledge (Giroux, 2011, p. 15) and I had no clue about any other way I could interact with knowledge, as this was the only style of education I had known all my life. The possibilities that students could participate in "transforming" (Giroux, 2011, p. 15) knowledge was certainly foreign to me. There was never any analysis of the impact the laws we studied, had on our lives. It was a *white washed* curriculum, with all study materials authored by white people. I never heard any other student share anything about their lives. We were compartmentalised, individualised and constructively pitted against one another in an unnecessary competition for high grades.

The consequence of this style of education is that the critical faculties of students and their creative abilities, are minimised or annulled. The learner is therefore unable to receive agency that can allow for any kind of questioning of their situation, and they accept their status-quo as the norm (Freire, 1970). If the agenda of education is to skill people to populate the capitalist market, which has its foundation and continued relevance in the hierarchical categorisation of people in a certain order, then the banking method of education is ideal and fit for purpose. This is because its capability "to annul a student's creative power and to stimulate their credulity" (Freire, 1970, p.46) will ensure that the system can never be transformed or changed. It is this form of education that reproduces the racist status quo, through codes that exist in educational institutions. In Ireland for instance, we see an almost total absence of Black and minoritised teaching staff, in spite of a preponderance of BME students across the country. We also see the reproduction of racism and its relationship with capitalism in education in the underrepresentation of BME students in certain courses of studies (e.g., Education, Medicine and Pharmacy) and an overrepresentation in others (e.g. Social Studies, Social Care, Health Care). Other racial codes in education include the problematisation of the

racially minoritised English speakers, who have English as their second language (yet are fluent in other languages e.g. Swahili, Yoruba or Igbo), while pedestalling traditional English speakers who can speak other languages. There is also the invisibility of BME people, culture and world views in curriculum or presentation of white middle class illustrations as the norm. All these are intentional mechanisms that ensure that the white supremacist status quo is maintained and communicated as normal. The question now is, "can schools end racial, gender and ethnic subordination?" (Lynn, 1999, p. 611).

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is the umbrella name given to the intervention or response that proposes to undertake the ethical but political function of disrupting and challenging the structures of domination and inequality in the society, and creating possibilities for social transformation, using education. (Giroux, 2004; Simmons, 2016; Freire, 1970). Believed by many to be an offshoot of the critical theory tradition, critical pedagogues view the classroom as a potential site for organising to disrupt the "exploitative, racist, classist, sexist and spiritually diminishing" (Brookfield, 2003, p. 141) capitalist status-quo. Pedagogy that aspires to the appellation 'critical', must have at its center, a goal to emancipate from the oppression occassioned by the pervasive capitalist commodity exchange system (Kanpol, 1999). Even though not usually presented as part of the literature on critical pedagogy, I must highlight how marginalised groups like the African Americans in the 19th century, in a response to oppression, developed responsive critical educational practices in order to (many times, secretly), educate their members on how they could oppose the oppressive status quo (Gordon, 1995). bell hooks writes about her high school teachers in the Black segregated school she attended, who without intentionally aligning with critical pedagogy, enacted a "revolutionary pedagogy of resistance" that nurtured them to become thinkers, intellectuals and "black folks" who used their minds. (hooks, 1994, p. 2). These forms of pedagogies of resistance to oppression also existed in places like Nigeria where women, in their indigenous and communal ways of knowing, informally educated themselves on ways to resist the oppression of patriachy that colonialism brought in its wake (Johnson, 1982, p. 138).

A Culturally Responsive, Critical, Racial, Engaged Pedagogy of Love

Critical Pedagogy is not a unified project (Giroux, 2004). It is rather a body of practice that continues to evolve and re-invent itself (Smith & McLaren, 2010, p. 332). Consequently, in this section, rather than review all the literature around all the known

critical pedagogies, I will discuss and draw from elements of different critical pedagogies that resonate with me and my reflections from the findings of this research. I will use these elements to create a framework that I will return to, in the last two chapters of this thesis. One of the criticisms of contemporary critical pedagogy is the pedestalling of social class as a marker of inequality and the relegation of racism and sexism to the background. (Ellsworth, 1989; hooks, 1994). In response to this, some critical pedagogues appear to have included more discussions on racism and the gender dimensions of inequity in their works (See for instnace, Kirylo, 2020). I also take this criticism on board and in my attempt to create a framework drawing from the various critical pedagogies, I pedestal racial inequality as one of the major structures that education should dismantle. I do not accept the argument that focusing on race, only serves to divide the working class and reduce the potency of the struggle (Hill, 2013, p. 57-58). I align with Omi and Winant (2015) and Bonilla-Silva's (2015) treatment of race as a template or mould for patterns of inequality and oppression in the society. The elements of critical pedagogy that I highlight will consequently reflect my views on education as a tool to dismantle racial inequality, but also other forms of inequality.

In envisaging what a classroom that might contribute to dismantling racial injustice and inequity will look like, my first consideration is the teacher's understanding of the way society is structured. A teacher that is blindsided to the continous workings of power in society and the invisible hierachical structuring that occurs as a result of racialisation, will be unable to contribute to a re-engineering of something they cannot see. So, a pedagogy that will be relevant in dismantling or fighting against the imbalance in the society must first begin from an assumption that society is largely unequal and mediated by power relations which are socially and historically constituted and that certain groups are privileged over others. Critical pedagogy takes on an expository role, which should seek to "expose and undo hegemonic values and taken-for-granted conceptions of truth that privilege the oppressor and perpetuate domination and social injustice" (Zembylas, 2013, p. 178). It should create an environment that first enables learners recognise, and then oppose the functioning of a (racially) unjust society (Brookfield, 2003). Gordon (1995, p.190) describes critical pedagogy as a "critique of domination" that seeks to "cast doubts on claims of technological scientific rationality and then imply that present configurations do not have to be as they are". A major assumption with this element of critical pedagogy which sets it apart from the 'banking model' described earlier, is that (both teachers and) learners are agentic and have the ability given the right conditions, to participate in

transforming oppressive society and bringing about racial justice. Critical pedagogy concerns itself with equipping both teachers and learners with the "language of critique and the rhetoric of empowerment", needed for them to become transformative agents of the inequitable structures in society (Zembylas, 2013, p. 178). hooks writes about how the segregated black schools she attended were sites for the affirmation of the self-esteem of the black students because "majority of the teachers were politically astute about the impact of racist thinking on black self-esteem and chose to counter that" (hooks, 2009, p. 69). Freire (1970, p. 22) stresses the importance of this simultaneous and relational form of pedagogy and advises that pedagogies of liberation are to be forged "with, not for, the oppressed."

Freire's assertion leads to the next element that I rely on in this research – the need for pedagogy to be contextual and situated. To my mind, what binds all the different critical pedagogies together, is the unified end goal of transforming an unequal and unjust society. There will (or should be) a plethora of ways to arrive at that goal. The routes of different educators will differ but "must necessarily reflect our differences, (and) the unique locations we inhabit" (hooks, 2009, p. 39). Critical pedagogy cannot be reduced to a number of activities that can be applied randomly to any pedagogical space, as different sites have their different and peculiar histories and socio-cultural contexts. So, even though critical pedagogues must locate their practices within a broader "set of interrelations" (Giroux, 2004, p.37), they must define these relations within particular contexts. Ira Shor describes this as a "praxis of adaptive local agency—action/reflection/action emerging for and from specific sites" (Shor, 2020, p. xi). Honor Fagan's (1991) paper titled *Local Struggles: Women in the Home and Critical Feminist Pedagogy in Ireland* for instance, documents her critical pedagogical journey as a teacher, that took as its start point the political situation in Ireland but also the lived experiences of the women she taught. In light of the subject matter of this research, the context and particular-ness of a pedagogy is essential to empowering learners. Freire (1970, p. 69) captures the importance of this contextualised nature of pedagogy when he writes that "educators … speak and are not understood because their language is not attuned to the concrete situation of the people they address."

The only way to know the concrete situation of learners is to listen to their stories. This is more so in Ireland where the teachers are predominantly white and where most white people have little or no contact with people of a different race. The next element of critical

pedagogy that this research draws from consequently, is that it takes as its start point, the lived experiences of learners. One who aspires to be a critical pedagogue must value and enhance the skill of making classrooms into spaces where people feel comfortable and confident enough to share their stories and use those stories as an entry point to understanding the power dynamics that are at play in the society. Because much of education has been structured along power lines, with the all-knowledgeable professor pouring knowledge into the *empty* student, there has been very little place for learner voice or student experience in the classroom. Consequently, students can come into classrooms of critical pedagogues, unsure of how to, and also reluctant to share from their lived experience. The role of a teacher in a classroom that will embrace a liberating pedagogy will be to reflectively create ways to include the use of personal stories as the start point of learning. Fagan (1991, p. 70) writes practically about how she encourages learners to move from generalised and abstract views of social issues in Ireland, to personalised entry points of discussions. hooks also writes about being vulnerable and using her own stories as an inroad to opening up critical discussions about personal experiences (hooks, 2003). This entire research revolves around the importance of personal voice. Personal experiences are important in liberatory pedagogy, for various reasons:

First, the concept of reality or what people deem to be real, is socially constructed, and so, including BME stories (and different varieties of stories) in the classroom as counter stories (Delgado, 1989) can work to re-engineer the racist viewpoints that inhere in society. Before even using the experiences as an inroad to further analysis, the giving of space for the stories to be heard in the first place can act as catalyst to changing long standing, taken for granted and fastidiously embedded ideologies. Allowing stories into the classroom, especially stories of people from minoritised groups, is also a direct liberatory action of un-silencing the voices of those who have been marginalised by the society. It is easy for a critical pedagogue to accept the theory of critical pedagogy and yet replicate the oppressive power politics in their classrooms. Allowing for a critical use of stories is one way to repudiate power imbalance. Two other very important functions of stories that should make them inextricable from any pedagogy that will aspire to be critical, are the roles of community-building and mental self-preservation for racialised groups (Delgado, 1989). Community building has always been crucial to the dismantling of racial oppression. From pre-slavery periods to more contemporary times, it has been coalitions; the coming together of both the oppressed and members of the dominant group, that have threatened the continuity of racial oppression. Stories have a way of

building community with others who can recognize themselves in the stories of others. Often in classes I teach on racial theory and teaching practice, as students from one marginalised group open up and share their stories, students from a totally different group are surprised to see that their struggles are similar. I have had a white male student who was serving prison time, describe his experiences in society as similar to that of some of the black people. Both groups were drawn together by each other's stories. The use of stories can truly not be over emphasised. My views of storytelling as a means of self-preservation, stems from the idea that critical pedagogies should also be pedagogies of reparation (Zembylas, 2017). The hierarchical structure of white-supremacist society has caused real injury to people of minoritised ethnic origin. One of the criticisms of contemporary critical pedagogy literature is a near total absence of the concept of reparative justice in its conceptualisation. Pedagogues like Zembylas (2013, 2017) write about critical pedagogies of love and reparation which should "attempt to address wound, injury and suffering within a frame that takes into consideration histories of violence, oppression and social injustice without falling into the trap of sentimentality" (2017, p. 23). Allowing people tell their stories and the stories of people like them can be healing and soothing (Delgado, 1989) and can be used as a practical act of reparation for the injury of continuous racial subordination.

hooks (1994) and Freire (1970), write about the important and humanising role which dialogue plays in critical pedagogy. Beyond drawing from this element, I have embodied it in the conduct of this research as I engaged with the women dialogically at every step of the process. In all the epochs of oppression I highlighted in chapter two, there has been a consistent theme of *talking-to* ,or *talking-for* and never *talking-with.* In slavery, the slaves were talked to. Slaves had no right of reply and were to do as they were told. In colonialism, the colonial masters claimed to speak-for the *less knowledgeable and less advanced* colonised people. Any version of education that will have the potential to dismantle the unjust hierarchy in society and give learners tools and the language to do so, must interrupt this one-sided speaking, and intentionally create a space where teachers and learners are in dialogue. Anything short of this dialogic intervention according to Freire (1970, p. 46), will be similar to treating the students as "objects which must be saved" which will in itself be dehumanising. Dialogic education restores the humanity that oppression has taken away, by signalling that the voice of the (oppressed) learner has significance and is of value (Freire, 1970; hooks,1994). The role of dialogue will be first, to unearth the "present, existential, concrete situation" (Freire, 1970, p. 68) of the learners

in order for the teacher to pose these situations as problems which will inspire critical thought and reflection and (potentially) end in some form of activist action. A critical pedagogue can consequently not have a pro-forma classroom template of teaching, as the start point of true education will be the situation of the learners. Mimi Orner (Orner, 1993, p. 79) has critiqued what she describes as a pedestalling of student voice in critical pedagogy when "little or no attention is given to the multiple social positions, multiple voices, conscious and unconscious pleasures, tensions, desires, and contradictions which are present in all subjects, in all historical contexts." She writes about how classroom situations are dynamic and contextual and concludes that "those who would "read" student silence simply as resistance or ideological-impairment replicate forms of vanguardism which construct students as knowable, malleable objects rather than as complex, contradictory subjects." (p. 82). Even though Orner's criticism encapsulates important points to reflect on, dialogue in the classroom does not necessarily translate to every voice speaking at every time. hooks (2009) captures this point succinctly:

> Understanding that every student has a valuable contribution to offer to a learning community means that we honor all capabilities, not solely the ability to speak. Students who excel in active listening also contribute much to the formation of community. This is also true of students who may not speak often but when they speak (sometimes only when reading required writing) the significance of what they have to say far exceeds those of other students who may always openly discuss ideas. And of course there are times when an active silence, one that includes pausing to think before one speaks, adds much to classroom dynamics. (p. 22)

One of Orner's (1993) criticisms of the treatment of student voice in critical pedagogy is that it represents an "expression of disciplinary power" with the teacher using their authority to compel the students to "publicly reveal, even confess, information about their lives and cultures" (p. 83). For critical pedagogy to be a response to inequality and power imbalance in the society, critical pedagogues and teachers must do their best to lateralise the power imbalance in the classroom. One way to do this is by themselves, bringing their own voice into the classroom. Not an authoritative voice inputting knowledge to empty receptacles, but their own public revelation, confession and information about their lives and cultures. "Professors who expect students to share confessional narratives, but who are themselves unwilling to share, are exercising power in a manner that could be coercive" (hooks, 1994, p. 21) and which will ultimately defeat the aim of a critical pedagogy. In my practice, I often share openly about my own journey with unlearning white supremacist ideology. My vulnerability gives the students the

confidence to share, knowing that they would neither be judged nor reprimanded for their struggles and their thoughts. This kind of dialectic dialogue can only happen in a space where certain virtues or attributes are in place. First, humility. Critical pedagogues must see themselves as learners alongside their students, learning other ways of knowing and being from the variety of perspectives in their classes- "How can I dialogue if I regard myself as a case apart from others – mere "its" in whom I cannot recognize other I's?" (Freire, 1970, p. 63). Another vital attribute required for dialogue in liberatory education, is faith; faith in people faith in the "essential goodness" of their humanity (hooks, 2009, p. 81) and faith in their inherent agency. People have to work together under the right conditions, to transform society (Freire, 1970). To my mind, one of the most vital ingredients of a pedagogy that will interrupt racial inequity is love. Pedagogical love is neither sentimental nor (just) emotional (Freire, 1970) but can be described as a "strongly critical, political and activist stance that involves a deep social awareness of injustice, and the core commitment to changing the lives of historically marginalised students through transformative education." (Daniels & Wang, 2012, p. 10). Without love, it is unlikely that a teacher from the dominant racial group will bother with implementing liberatory teaching methods. It is love that will encourage an "extension of oneself for the purposes of nurturing another's wellbeing." (hooks, 2003, p. 130). In a class where I facilitated student teachers on the topic of love and critical pedagogy, I had one of the students complain about not wanting to become a therapist or a baby sitter to his adult students as that was "not what he was paid for". As we carefully interrogated his statement as a class, we found that even amongst those who didn't speak out as vocally as this student did, there was a general dis-ease around dealing with emotions in the classroom, with most thinking that it was best to keep it out and keep the classroom formal. Whether emotions are openly acknowledged in the classroom or not, they are present in the classroom and have the ability to block or facilitate a student's capacity to learn. So, if a teacher will educate for freedom, there will be the place to acknowledge emotions and if need be sign - post students to places where they can access therapy or help (hooks, 2003, p. 133). The stories in this research are evidence of the burdens that racialised people bring into the classroom. Pedagogy that will deconstruct racial inequality should first, acknowledge the trauma caused by the constant and continuous oppression in society and then equip the students to resist oppression. Hotchkins (2002) carried out a research on Black male professors who utilized a pedagogy of love in dealing with anti-black racism on campus. Their responsive pedagogical practices involved "trauma acknowledgement

and trauma resistance" as a strategy to combat hegemonic conditions in the university (Hotchkins, 2022, p. 623).

Much of the education I have encountered in Ireland was loveless and lacked any real power to transform or liberate. I recall the one classroom where I was shown love and unsurprisingly, that was the classroom where I was equipped with language and agency to begin to question some of the things I had experienced but had not entirely understood. The difference between the two kinds of classrooms that I encountered, were that in one, my mind was isolated and treated as the only part of me that was to be educated (hooks, 2003), but in the other, I was treated as a whole human being with complexities, difficulties, joys, flaws and virtues and an understanding of the intersections of oppression. I write often about an experience where my class was interrupted to congratulate me when I became an Irish citizen. It was the whole of me, not just my mind, that mattered. bell hooks describes this kind of holistic and progressive education as an 'engaged critical pedagogy' that involves seeing the student (and the teacher) as a whole human being and not just a dismembered mind.

There are two broad ways in which power can be manifested in the classroom – through what the teacher presents as knowledge and how that knowledge is transmitted. For pedagogy to serve liberatory purposes, there must be a flexibility in what is being presented as knowledge. The teacher who considers knowledge to be fixed and established will end up re-enforcing white supremacist capitalist patriarchal ideologies in the classroom. A critical pedagogue must know that knowledge is socially co-constructed and must devise means to allow other kinds of knowledge into the classroom. For Blacks and people from minoritised origin in Ireland (e.g. people from the travelling community), in order to interrupt the constant and continuous devaluation of culture, there "must be a call for a recognition of cultural diversity, a rethinking of ways of knowing and a deconstruction of old epistemologies" (hooks, 1994, p. 29). Research has shown that multicultural education which builds an awareness of cultural diversity and fosters cultural competence in educators positively influences educators who teach in multi-cultural classrooms (Acquah & Commins, 2017). Reading lists that contain literature or materials designed by only white middle class men or people from only dominant groups must be interrogated as these are perpetuating the conditions that critical pedagogy seeks to overturn.

One of the things that came up in my discussions with some of the women that feature in this research, was the shame they felt as a result of a constant devaluation of their culture. I too have combatted shame for the most part of my stay in Ireland. This "inner sense of being completely diminished or insufficient as a person" (hooks, 2003, p. 95) is a powerful and systematic way that racism "colonizes the minds and imaginations of black people" (hooks, 2003, p. 95). Shame can affect a person's ability or desire to learn. Shame has caused me to stay silent in classrooms for an entire academic year, for fear of being judged unintelligent. In my university (and in other educational spaces. See for instance Beverly Tatum's *Why are all the Black Kids sitting together in the Cafeteria*), Black students are accused of self-segregating. This kind of self-segregation is often "a defense mechanism protecting them from being the victims of shaming assaults" (hooks, 2003, p. 94). The mass media continues to perpetuate a negative racial pedagogy in the society such that even black people are educated into seeing the negativity and the backwardness of culture. If a critical pedagogy will disrupt this, and be liberatory and reparative to people of minoritised origins, it will take into account the progressive and continuous devaluation of culture and make cultural (re)-valuation a central part of its pedagogy. Gloria Ladson-billings (1995) proposed a culturally sensitive pedagogy for Black students, (which I argue can and should be applied to any classroom), that rests on three propositions: "(a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (p.160)

Maintaining cultural competence through pedagogy will involve teachers, mainstreaming and normalising the different cultures in their classrooms, in order to create an atmosphere where Black and minoritised ethnic students can be themselves and not be crippled by shame. Culturally sensitive pedagogues will use culture as a "vehicle for learning" (Ladson-billings, 1995, p. 161), and legitimise other stores of knowledge and ways of knowing. Teaching in culturally sensitive classrooms must foster "dynamic, anti-deficit, relationship between home/community culture and school culture" (Ladson-billings, 1995, p. 167). These kinds of culturally responsive pedagogies have been used by teachers teaching a wide range of subject matters. (See for instance the use of culturally relevant pedagogy in a Physics Class (Southerland, 2022).

In chapter two, I wrote about one of the characteristics of colour-blind racism, being the discomfort or refusal to acknowledge or speak about matters of race and racism. This

absence of critical conversations about race and racism and racial inequality, serves to further perpetuate racial injustice. Critical race pedagogies (Lynn, 2004) in addition to the other tenets I have described above, require that race and racism be foregrounded in the classroom through discussions about how race can intersect with other social identities, irrespective of what is being taught. Critical Race pedagogy arose as a response to the criticism that critical pedagogy was inadequate in its incorporating race and racism in its theorisation (Gordon, 1995). It is proposed to be an "analysis of racial, ethnic, and gender subordination in education that relies mostly on the perceptions, experiences, and counterhegemonic practices of educators of color (Lynn, 2004, p. 165). Automatically, this sort of pedagogy problematises the absence of Black and minoritised ethnic teachers in Ireland, as our positioning from the margins allow us create particular kind of classroom practices that can enhance the goals of critical pedagogy.

The major threat to oppression in all the epochs I wrote about in chapter two, was coalition – the alliance between people, united by their varying experiences of oppression, to end injustice and inequity. Pedagogy that will dismantle the oppressive white supremacist status quo would be one that builds alliances and community across various different social identities, in the classroom and then outside the classroom. Such true community can only be formed in spaces of "radical openness" (hooks, 2003, p. 48); pluralism which is a "commitment to communicate and relate to a larger world" (hooks, 2003, p. 47), in spaces where there is an abandonment of the dominator culture of competition and a commodity-based approach to education (Kanpol, 1999, p. 29).

To my mind, the end product of all critical pedagogies should be some form of activism. According to Freire (1970) "human activity is theory and practice…it cannot be reduced to either verbalism or activism" (p. 98). There must be some sort of merger of the things spoken about in the dialogic classrooms, the reflection on the world of the students, and action to actually change the status quo. Mimi Orner (1996) demonstrates how her students, after a session of critical education participated in several social justice projects, chosen by themselves, as their praxis and contribution to changing their world.

A note on Black Radical Independent Education

Black radicalism is a movement, a theory and a body of thought that "takes the position that mainstream institutions in the West (including Educational institutions) work to oppress people of African ancestry, across the globe" (words in parentheses, mine) (Andrews, 2014, p. 5). The rationale behind the call for a black radical independent

education is that main stream education prioritises the dominant culture and devalues the non-dominant culture which Blacks (and other minorities) need to live an authentic life in their own communities. Consequently, education disadvantages the Black person as well as the Black community. Thus, because western education conditions students "into Eurocentric understanding that reproduce an iniquitous and racist society," (Andrews, 2014, p. 9) black radicalism calls for a total reconceptualisation of schooling and education, devised, controlled and geared towards the actualisation of Black communities. Black radical education therefore calls for a space separate from mainstream education, where dominant ideologies can be deconstructed and challenged and Black students can be provided with the necessary education to allow them excel in the society as well as value their culture. The overall aim of Black radicalism is to "ultimately overthrow a system of Western imperialism that globally oppresses Black populations" and to do this, Black radicalism believes that "An important starting point for this political agenda … is a Black-controlled education with a Black radical curriculum, rooted within localities that can work for the uplift of Black communities." (Andrews, 2014, p. 12). In Britain, there are supplementary Black radical schools which provide liberatory tailor-made education to Black learners. It is this form of Black radical education, that will position itself to augment mainstream education, that appeals to me as a Black migrant woman. Spaces created by Black people, for black people, are specially designed to disrupt mainstream ideologies. Recently in Ireland, an Anti-Racism institute, which has the potential of becoming one of the first of such spaces, was created. Even though critical issues are advertised to be taught, the institute's programs are not open to only Black people

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, while piecing various elements of different critical pedagogies together, I began to create a framework for a critical race pedagogy that will provide "tools to unsettle common sense assumptions, theorise matters of self and social agency, and engage the ever-changing demands and promises of a democratic polity" (Giroux, 2011, p. 3). In accommodating such pedagogy, classrooms must become dialogic spaces of trust, with teachers displaying humility, faith, hope and operating from an ethos of love. In critically pedagogic spaces, power is lateralised, and both teachers and students become learners, listening to and learning from the lived experiences of each other. Beginning from the start point of the lived experiences of the students, the teacher, using different techniques, starts to facilitate reflection on the world of the learners, equipping them with

the tools and language needed to interrupt and interrogate dominant ideologies, with the end goal of taking action to change the status-quo. I wrote briefly about an alternative arrangement of education that singles out the Black student for supplementary education.

Chapter Four

What I did, How I did it and Why I did it.

Chapter Introduction

This research adopts a critical qualitative design, to explore how nine Black women (myself included) living in Ireland experience racism, how we make meaning of our experiences and how these experiences can inform adult education practice. The purpose of the inquiry is multidimensional and includes, (but is not limited to), countering and disrupting dominant and majoritarian stories about Black women in Ireland, giving Black women the opportunity to tell their own story; and shaping practice in adult education in Ireland by allowing teachers into the unseen parts of the lives of these Black people. It also purposes to enhance the reader's understanding of the experiences Black women have more broadly, by highlighting how these women navigate everyday life in Ireland. In doing so, this research contributes to creating a racially sensitive pedagogy for use in Irish adult education. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the methodological practices that guide the research. I also explain my epistemological and ontological leanings and describe the research design used.

Research Paradigms, Epistemology and Ontology

Research paradigms are the philosophical principles, or worldviews, that guide the researcher and determine what falls within and outside the ambits of the researcher's enquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; 2005). Gaudet & Robert (2018), advocate that the first thing a researcher should do in determining their research paradigm, is to choose the best method of inquiry for their research questions, based on their epistemological and ontological positioning. Research paradigms are however a contested concept. In fact, the debates and arguments about which paradigms are more appropriate for use than others, culminated in what are sometimes called 'Paradigm wars' (Bryman, 2008, p. 13). Bryman succinctly captures the tensions that exist and narrows it down specifically to "the contrasting epistemological and ontological positions that characterise quantitative and qualitative research and their various synonyms". Rather than deal in detail with the different paradigms, which is beyond the scope of this thesis, I will explain what I mean by ontology and epistemology, list the various categorisations of research paradigms and explain where (and why) I have positioned myself as a researcher.

Ontology is the study of reality. Kivunja & Kuyini (2017), define it as "a branch of philosophy concerned with the assumptions we make in order to believe that something makes sense or is real, or the very nature or essence of the social phenomenon we are investigating (p27)." Ontology dictates what exists in the world that can be studied. On one end of the ontological spectrum are those who believe that reality (or the world) is what it is – objective and exists independent of human experience. On the other end of the ontological spectrum is the polar opposite idea that truth, reality or the world is not fixed but is a "continuous process of creation and re-creation by its participants" (Bryman, 2008, p. 13). In between these two extremes, lie various other conceptualisations of the nature of reality. In the past, with inaccurate simplicity, ontological positions where truth was deemed to be fixed, were attributed to positivist research while the subjective idea of truth was attributed to anti-positivist research. These simplistic splitting or categorisations are now generally considered not to be useful and many researchers engage in research along the spectrum where these supposed lines are transgressed.

Epistemology in research, deals with how the researcher comes to know truth or reality. It is a study of knowledge and the relationship between the researcher and the knowledge they seek to find, through their inquiry. The epistemological positioning of a researcher is largely linked to their ontological position. And, like ontology, epistemological positionings lie on a spectrum. Where a researcher takes an objective ontological stance, the epistemological posture of the researcher is typically one of 'objective detachment or value freedom in order to be able to discover how things really are (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 108). At the other end of the epistemological spectrum will be researchers who take a more interpretivist and subjective stance, and create findings from an interactive relationship between the researcher and the researched.
Below, and in the context of critical qualitative research, I will discuss my own positioning on this spectrum.

Working as a Critical Researcher

Critical Theory

Originating from the Frankfurt School, the proponents of critical theory, influenced by Marxism, proposed a research paradigm which rather than focus on universal rules of behaviour, advocated for a focus on people's material conditions and the impact this had on their social existence (Paradis, et al., 2020). The Frankfurt School was a school of social

theory and critical philosophy, made up of scholars who were associated with the Institute of Social Research at the University of Frankfurt. Founded in 1930 when Marx Hokheimer became the Director of the institute, the scholars that made up the Frankfurt School, were critical of capitalism, the inflexibility of the then social systems and the traditional positivist research methods. Instead, critical theory proposed to step away from rigid, distant and isolated research traditions and embrace a more holistic strand of research that did not ignore the historical and social contexts that people lived in. In his 1937 essay titled, *Traditional and Critical Theory*, Horkheimer highlighted other differences in the aims between critical and traditional research: Whereas traditional research sought to describe or interpret reality; critical research sought to critique and change society- the change being an initial step towards political action (Kincheleo & McLaren, 2005). This remains a central tenet of critical research. Horkheimer put forward an ethical and anti-oppression dimension of critical theory and suggested that a theory was critical to the extent that it sought emancipation and liberation from slavery for all human beings including those who knowingly or unknowingly dominate others (Horkheimer, 1982 p244 and 246).

As the 20th century progressed, the critical tradition began to change, evolve and expand, with new theorists joining the movement. The resultant effect of this expansion, is that there isn't a single or simple definition of what critical theory is (Kincheleo & McLaren, 2005). In fact, Kincheloe and McLaren (2005, p. 304) warn of the dangers of treating critical theory 'as a universal grammar of revolutionary thought, objectified and reduced to discrete formulaic pronouncements or strategies'. They rather describe critical theory as a pluralistic research form that is ever changing and evolving to accommodate new dimensions, criticisms and arguments, by theorists in the field. There are in essence now, many critical theories as well as many attempts to summarise what critical research should contain, embody or assert. Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist Thought, theories that I lean on in this study, are two of the more contemporary splinter critical theories that arose in the 20th century.

As there isn't a single comprehensive way of being a critical researcher, I will highlight the characteristics of this research that bring it within the critical tradition. First, I use this research as an instrument to critique the social, political and invariably cultural racial terrain that Black women are forced to live in, when they reside in Ireland (Soloranzo & Yosso, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Secondly, this research is both explanatory and

practical. Explanatory in the sense that I seek to explain a problem (how the women experience racism and how it affects their lives). Practical, in the sense that I not only identify the problem, but proffer real and workable suggestions for change and transformation. A third characteristic is that this research also has at its core, an emancipatory and social-justice ethos of un-silencing and giving voice to a cohort whose voices have been side-lined, marginalised and silenced (Soloranzo & Yosso, 2002; Stefancic & Delgado, 2017). Lastly, this research does not attempt to "cling to the guardrail of neutrality" (Kincheleo & McLaren, 2005, p. 305). It is "authored by a raced, gendered, classed, and politically oriented individual". I am Black and female and have experienced racism. I do not pretend to leave these identities out of my engagement with the research. I rather reflect on them and bring these identities to the fore.

Having set out the assumptions, tenets and characteristics that embed my research within the critical tradition, it becomes easy to highlight my ontological and epistemological stance. Ontologically, research grounded broadly in critical theory, views reality not as objective and measurable but as shaped by "social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender values, crystallised over time" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005 p193). What this signifies is that two people in the same geographical territory can experience life very differently as a result of their gender, race, class or other such categorisations. Research inquiry should therefore not be carried out in isolation or in search of an objective reality, but should be placed within the context of these value systems mentioned above, in order to understand the basis for the difference in experiences or the social reality of people (Mertens, 2009).

Black Feminist and Critical Race Epistemological Leanings

Epistemologically, this research is guided by both a Critical Race Epistemology as well as (and more specifically), a Black Feminist Epistemology. Both epistemological framings propose that knowledge lies within human experience and that the experience of people of colour is "legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analysing, and teaching about racial subordination" (Soloranzo & Yosso, 2002, p. 26).

Patricia Hill Collins (2000) identified four tenets of Black Feminist Epistemology, all of which serve to frame this research. The first tenet draws a distinction between knowledge and wisdom. According to Collins, while knowledge is surface level knowing, wisdom is birthed from the actual lived experiences of Black women in society. Collins (2000)

explained that, "Knowledge without wisdom is adequate for the powerful, but wisdom is essential to the survival of the subordinate" (p. 257). Collins implied in essence that knowledge is not just a neutral construct but a political one, shaped by power and privilege. Black women, by their navigating and surviving society (in Ireland), produce a distinct body of knowledge that differs considerably from that which is produced by the dominant racial group. Relying on this 'wisdom' of Black women gleaned from their lived experiences, therefore has both an "internal logic and an external validity" (Ladson-Billings, 2005, p.399). In this research, I centre the lived experiences of the Black women and pedestal these experiences as a criterion for knowledge. I inquire into how they (and not any other group) perceive racism, how they navigate the Irish racial terrain and the wisdom they produce in this navigation. It was their voice, their perspective, their wisdom.

The second tenet of Black Feminist Epistemology centres dialogue as an essential tool to validating knowledge claims. Black women since the slave trade era and even until today, have striven to establish connection, comradeship, community and understanding by joining groups, sororities, churches, associations and families. In all these expressions, Black women have been known to use dialogue as a means to not only share, but interrogate knowledge. This tradition of dialogue has its roots in traditional African society – for instance in Nigerian Igbo society, meetings like the *Izu Umu Ada* (First Daughter's meeting) and the *Izu Ikpoho Idumu* (Women married into the community meetings) are held for women to gather and dialogue on issues that border on the welfare of the women and the children of the community. In this research, leaning on my own Nigerian way of being and knowing, I utilise dialogue to uncover and validate their knowledge claims.

The third tenet of Black Feminist Epistemology deals with an ethic of care. There are three sub-tenets subsumed under this – individual uniqueness, appropriateness of emotions in dialogues and showing empathy. Individual uniqueness deals with the realisation that all Black women are unique and experience the world differently from one another. There are 'commonalities of experience' but each individual is a unique authentic independent person. The second sub-tenet regards emotions as vital to knowledge validation and in this research, I not only capture the emotions that are expressed during our dialogues, I present them in the analyses and all through this thesis. I utilise emotion as a means to analyse and validate the knowledge. In research framed by Black Feminist

Epistemologies, the dichotomy between emotionality and rationality is blurred and even obscured (Evans-Winter, 2019). The last sub-tenet of Black Feminist Epistemology, deals with the need to show empathy. According to Collins (2000), without empathy on the path of a listener, in this case, myself as the researcher, the speaker would not open up to tell a congruent and complete story. In keeping with this tenet, there were times during this research that I cried with some of the women and prayed with them after our dialogues. We created bonds that have endured to this day.

The last tenet of Black feminist epistemology, personal accountability, simply states that people should be accountable for their knowledge claims. Because knowledge is built from the lived experiences of people, in this case, myself and the other women, the assessment of knowledge invariably becomes an assessment of our individual characters, values and beliefs which require personal responsibility. With objective and more scientific euro-centric ways of knowing, knowledge is treated as an objective fact and insists on a separation of personal responsibility from knowledge. Hill-Collins (2006) poses a poignant question – "which form of knowing is more likely to lead to social justice, one that denies ethical and moral accountability or one that demands it?" (p. 4)

Research Design: Qualitative Research

Up until now, I have written about the critical aspect of this research. Critical research is however pluralistic in its methods and can align with either quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods. In this research, it was important for me to choose a design that would enable me to effectively explore, capture and value the Black woman's experience. Therefore, in keeping with the epistemologies I described above, I position myself as a critical qualitative researcher. In this section, I will briefly justify my qualitative leanings. At the core of this research was a need to understand - in dialogue - the lived experiences of eight Black women living in Ireland, with a particular emphasis on racism. There was also the social-justice and liberative intention to allow ordinarily silenced voices and stories to be heard, amplified and illuminated (Soloranzo & Yosso, 2002). To achieve these goals, I needed a research method that would afford me the flexibility and creativity to go on a journey with the women and excavate stories that I would analyse, interpret and use to propose pedagogy in adult education. These goals put the research right at home within a qualitative tradition, as the fundamental aim of every qualitative research is a desire to understand and interpret the meanings participants make of their experiences

and interactions with the world (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Merriam and Grenier (2019) highlight four self-explanatory characteristics every qualitative research should embody irrespective of approach: (a) a goal of understanding the meaning participants make of an experience, (b) the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, (c) meaning is mediated through the researcher, (d) the process is inductive, and findings are richly descriptive. All four characteristics are embodied in this research.

The voices of the women were central to the research from research design to writing up stage. Opting for a quantitative design, would have amounted to sacrificing these very voices I sought to amplify and centre, on the altar of "standardized notions of reliability, validity and generalizability" (Roberts, 2002, p. 6). This is because, quantitative research designs by nature, ignore participant's 'construction of meaning' and give the researched very little opportunity to express themselves and be heard (Byrne and Lentin, 2000). As almost all of human behaviour is mediated by context, "one can easily conclude that generalizations that are intended to be context-free will have little that is useful to say about human behaviour". (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, p. 62). Qualitative methods allowed me to immerse myself in the research and to make sense of the experiences that were shared (Tracy, 2013, p. 3).

A criticism against the kind of qualitative inquiry that forms the basis of this research, is the backlash against researching the 'self'. Positivists and quantitative research traditions typically argue that data from a researcher's lived experience is biased and that researchers "do not fulfil scholarly obligations of hypothesizing, analysing and theorizing" (Ellis, et al., 2011, p. 283). Aligning with critical theory, I argue that no research is in itself neutral. All the stories shared in this research have however gone through a rigorous and thorough process of analysis which will be discussed later in this chapter.

How I recruited participants for the research

Because of my own racial identity as a Black woman in Ireland, I did not expect to have any challenges with recruitment. Every time I spoke about my research in communal spaces like church, or informal gatherings, I received a lot of verbal support but when it was time for the research to take off, many of the women drew back and in fact, avoided me. I was puzzled at this because it was very much unexpected. I tried to find out what the problem was. I eventually caught up with a lady I knew who was obviously avoiding me and I had a chat with her about the research. She informed me that she was 'scared

of interviews.' I assured her that she did not have to participate but I wanted to understand what exactly she was afraid of. My interaction with her opened me up to the power of language. She had ascribed a 'western' meaning to the word 'interview' and felt she was going to be interrogated or drilled as to things she should know. The word probably brought back memories of meritocratic and rigid educational systems she had hoped to never encounter again. It was then I decided to not use the term 'interviews' ever again with participants. I used more afro-centric terms like 'stories' or 'chats' or less formal terms like 'conversations'. And when I did, it became easier to connect to potential participants. Other participants who were not terrified of interviews, were interested in having chats but could not find the space. Between minding their children, trying to get an education, being wives, not having any family to lean on, they just couldn't make out the time to engage. I understood. I too was having it rough, trying to find the time.

The criteria for recruitment of research participants was broad. Participants had to (a) Identify as female, (b) Identify as Black; (c) Be above 18 years and (d) Be resident in Ireland. I used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods to recruit the women. The purposive sample frame I conceptualised at the start, included women who were born in Ireland, women who migrated from Africa, women who had schooled in Ireland, medical professionals and an undocumented unemployed migrant. The reason I purposefully sought these women out was to gather "information rich' sources that could answer the research questions adequately (Patton, 2002, p. 46). Immediately I received approval from the Maynooth University Social Science Research Ethics Committee, I attended an online conference put together by a Black Community Group called Pathways International Mission where I was given a 5 minute slot to speak about my research and call for participants. Even though I received a lot of verbal support from the participants, I did not get any direct volunteers. What I got instead, was someone who sent me an email asking me to contact another person who may be interested. I followed through with the contact and got the first participant of the study. I then approached other Black women who I knew met the criteria and they in turn recommended other women who fell within the purposive frame.

As the research progressed, I increased the number of participants as a better picture began to form of the experiences the women were sharing. I began to see the need for instance, to listen to the story of at least one Black woman who neither migrated from Africa nor was born in Ireland, in order to give better perspective and context to the

analysis of the women's stories. I also purposively sought out one other medical professional to gain insight on how her professional attainment affected the meaning she made of her experiences and to compare her experiences with that of the other medical doctor participant. Even though I recruited only eight participants, I was able to go in-depth in my discussions with them. Patton (2002, p. 224) opines that "in-depth information from a small number of people can be very valuable, especially if the cases are information rich". I had research conversations with seven of the women multiple times (See Table 1). With some of the women, I had as many as four research meetings and other correspondences. Aside from one woman who I was only able to speak to only once, all other women were interviewed at least two times. The women also shared extracts from their reflective journals. This form of longitudinal engagement with participants is not unusual in qualitative research. When employed, it enables a clearer illumination of meanings, causes and consequences of time passage on the participants, as well as allows for a fluid account of participant's lived experiences (Carduff, et al., 2015; McCoy, 2017).

The research conversations and correspondences were held between March 2020 and February 2022. Most of the conversations were held online on Zoom as a result of the COVID-19 government imposed protocols that restricted non-essential meetings from happening face to face. After the first conversation with the women, I asked them to choose pseudonyms that I would use instead of their names. Four women (Nomthandazo, Eleanor, Naomi and Christiana) chose pseudonyms while the other four asked that I used their real names or chose pseudonyms for them. As the three of the four who had chosen pseudonyms chose English names, in keeping with centring our African identity, I decided to choose African names (Mbasiti, Nkoyo, Cheta and Nia) for the other four women who asked that I choose for them.

Table 1- Interaction with Participants

	Methods	Online or Face-to Face
Nomthandazo	4 semi-structured interviews, emails, journal extracts, phone calls, focus group, voice notes	Online, Face-to Face, Walking Dialogue
Naomi	2 semi-structured interviews, phone chats	Online
Mbasiti	2 semi-structured interviews	Online
Eleanor	2 semi-structured interviews, mobile phone chats, voice notes	Online
Christiana	2 semi-structured interviews, voice notes	Online, Face-to-Face
Nkoyo	1 semi-structured interview, emails	Online
Cheta	2 semi-structured interviews, 1 focus group, journal extract	Online
Nia	3 semi-structured interviews, email correspondence	Online

How I collected Data

One of the advantages of qualitative research is its embodied flexibility and multi-methodical dimensions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5). The use of multi-methods has been hailed as a strategy that "adds rigour, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to any inquiry" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; p. 6). In order to adequately fulfil my research objectives and aims, I used a number of methods, some of which I deemed unorthodox, yet culturally appropriate and effective in terms of the goal of this research. Some of the methods I eventually used were not part of the original research plan and only came up as the need arose. For instance, I had planned to use face to face, semi-structured

dialogues as my method of data collection but the government imposed COVID-19 restrictions altered face to face interview plans and I had to conduct most of the initial conversations virtually by use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Research has shown that there is very little difference in the impact and utility of using online interviewing over face to face interviewing methods (Krouwel, et al., 2019). My experience validates this, as both the online and face to face processes were rich, very emotive and valuable. With the Zoom video interviews, the video recordings were valuable as I was able to capture emotions that I may have missed in the heat of the dialogue and watch them again and again. The women also requested that I allow them send in stories and thoughts through text messaging, chats and even voice notes. These methods captured their emerging realisations of their day to day interactions with racism. This level of flexibility of methods is not unusual in qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

To collect the stories from the women, I utilised a combination of research conversations (or chats or dialogues), one focus group session (that eventually turned out to be a trialogue), empirical correspondences, and personal reflection. Together, these ensured depth and triangulation.

My conversations with the women: research conversations

The epistemological and ontological persuasions of Critical Theory, Black Feminist and Critical Race Theories, have implications on the kinds of data collection methods that can be used, which should be dialogic and dialectical (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The semi-structured research conversations were in this research, a natural choice as a method of inquiry. Semi-structured interviews have been lauded as vital avenues through which the researcher can access the lived world of the research subjects (Kvale, 2007). I had face-to-face interactions with only two of the women. One of these two women is an undocumented migrant who had no home and was 'squatting' with people. I drove down to the place where she was, picked her up and took her into a café close by where we had our conversation over drinks and snacks which I paid for. For the second woman, I had face to face interactions with her at least three times. Once in her living room, the second time in my own home and the third time we took a walk around my estate and had conversations about the subject.

For the online interviews, after a date had been agreed, I created, scheduled and sent out a zoom link to the participants in advance of the meeting. On their request, I sent out a reminder on the day of the interview. All Zoom interviews were recorded with the Zoom recording function.

The first set of interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. Even though I had an interview schedule, I did not see the need to use it as the women mostly came prepared to share their (very rich) stories and didn't need much steering. Often times I didn't need to ask anything specifically about racism, as the women shared their experiences on their own and I would listen or ask probing questions when something was not clear. Depending on how emotive the interview was, I ended some of the first set of interviews with a de-escalation activity where I asked three light-hearted questions such as 'Which do you prefer – pizza or ice cream?" or "Samsung or iPhone" or such other light quizzes. I also did not fix a follow up date on the day of the first interview but undertook to keep communication lines open, if the women wanted that.

I re-watched the Zoom recorded videos, transcribed the first set of conversations and read through the transcripts carefully, making notes and observations for follow up questions. I then scheduled a second research conversation. Follow up conversations lasted, on the average, about 1 hour and women answered follow up questions as well as provided new information. The second set of conversations were more fluid and flowed in a more organic way than the first. Again, aside from the follow up questions, I allowed the women take the lead on however they wanted to share their story.

E-mails, Phone (WhatsApp Chats) and Voice Messages: (Information Communication Technologies (ICT) and Computer Mediated Communications (CMT) Tools.

In between the first research conversation and the second, I kept in touch with the women and encouraged them to journal and write down the things they remembered in between our meetings. Two women shared relevant thoughts and reflections with me by sending multiple emails to my Maynooth Email address. Three women sent me voice messages on WhatsApp, narrating incidents that had either just happened to them or they had just remembered. One woman preferred to chat via SMS and responded to some of my questions via the same medium. This flexibility of media afforded me the opportunity to gain understanding about feelings and incidents that the women had experienced and

also allowed me to capture part of their stories that I could have missed if I had insisted on waiting for the next interview session. It was also advantageous as some participants found that they expressed themselves better through correspondence such as email, WhatsApp messaging and voice notes. Because the Zoom calls were video recorded, I was able to re-watch interviews and notice body language and mannerisms that I missed during the live interview and that had significance in the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Letherby & Zdrodowski, (1995) write about 'a distance rapport' and intimacy that should be built when ICT and Online research is used as a research method (p585). In the case of this research, I had built a rapport with most of the women even before data collection and so, ICT and CMT media of data collection only served to consolidate and strengthen that which I had already got.

One participant rang me on the telephone about four different times in a space of one year because she had either remembered a story she wanted to share or she wanted to clarify a point she had made that she had reflected on. I found the engagement with this participant in particular very rich, deep and humbling. She in turn also found the process, in her own words, "very reflective" and "eye opening" (Nomthandazo, Research participant). Most of the women commented about how therapeutic and healing, participating in the research was for them. Feminist theory is vocal about the potential for research interviews when done right, to be a site of self-discovery, healing and meaning for the participants (Hiller & DiLuzio, 2004; Taylor, 2002).

Most conversations and voice messages were recorded and transcribed. One conversation with a participant that happened while we took a walk was not recorded but I made notes immediately I got back to my house. Even though I always had a note pad during the interviews, I hardly took any notes. I concentrated more on listening and watching for body language and facial expressions that said more than words.

All recorded interviews were listened to again, transcribed verbatim and analysed.

Focus Group (or Trialogue)

Focus groups ideally consist of between six and ten people (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). At the design stage of this research, I planned to have two focus group sessions with the same set of participants who I had had in-depth interviews with. Only four of them consented to a focus group session and on the day scheduled, only two of the four women showed up. Determined not to waste an opportunity for a discussion, they both gave their

consent to proceed with a trialogue anyway. First, I gave an idea of the themes that I had generated from the analysis process (See Table 2) and both women shared their views and reflections about the themes and their own experiences of racism. I also shared my experiences and some of my reflections and there was a fluid and organic dynamic to the group discussion. The Focus Group or trialogue, lasted for about 1 hour 40 minutes. At points in the group conversation, we offered comfort and words of encouragement to anyone who seemed to need it at the time. The trialogue produced a different kind of discussion with some of us seeing things in a different way because of the insights others gave. I also presented an overview of the collective findings I had at the time and both women spoke about how comforting it was to hear that others like them were facing similar challenges. They also mentioned how some of what the other women shared had given them language to describe what they had felt but were unable to articulate or how they had interpreted similar issues in different ways. Cheta for instance, upon hearing that some of the women felt they were being fake or inauthentic when they had to adjust their accent to sound more foreign, disclosed that she had never thought of her authenticity in that sense but thought that she was changing her accent in order to do her job more effectively. She however began to question why she interpreted her thoughts in one way and not the other. There was also a lot of validation and empathy within the conversation and an obvious bond formed as a result of our shared experiences. The session was held on Zoom and was recorded both on Zoom and with an audio recorder for backup. I also transcribed the session verbatim.

Analysis and Coding

Data analysis was done synchronously with data collection. I used a constant comparative method of data analysis where analysis was done synchronously with data collection. The constant comparative method of data analysis is an immersive data analysis technique that requires the researcher to embed themselves in the data and compare new data with previously collected data in order to form a coherent, robust and substantive story based on the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). For the purpose of illustration of how I used this technique in the research, I will focus on the process during and after the very first research conversation I had as this process served as a model for how I dealt with the rest of the conversations shared with me. Immediately after the first interview, I listened to (and watched) the recording, typed out my field notes and reflections, transcribed the interview verbatim and began to make notes on the margin of

the printed interview transcript. As I immersed myself in reading the transcript, I commented on and labelled the parts of the stories that potentially answered one or both of the first two research questions. I highlighted comments and incidents that were "interesting, potentially relevant or important" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 204). For instance, I highlighted incidents like Nomthandazo's experience of being followed about in the shop. I also highlighted striking statements she made like "Because I am black, I have to go above and beyond." This form of open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 2008) for the first interview, naturally threw up over 60 labels, comments and questions in the first instance. I then went back over the labels, comparing them with each other and collapsed them into fewer, broader umbrella labels. For instance, I created a broad label that I tagged 'Working harder than whites' to which I included some of Nomthandazo's statements that I had highlighted and also incidents that she had narrated about doing more than was required in school. My notes, labels, comments and questions then informed the next set of interviews I conducted. With the next set, the process was similar, only that this time, I compared the data from the first and second interviews and drew similarities and points of departure from the data set. I continued to label, compare and highlight similarities and differences in the transcripts as I continued in the data collection process. Each time, further condensing the number of themes by grouping conceptually similar incidents together. As I also kept a reflective journal, I compared and cross-referenced the data from my journal with the interview data and consolidated on the categorisation. At the end of the data collection process, once codes from all transcripts had been merged and conceptually condensed into the different broad themes, I defined and named the themes and organised them in alignment with the tenets of CRT and BFT. This iterative constant comparative method of analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) which I employed ensured that I was deeply immersed (Braun & Clarke, 2021) in the women's stories but also offered me a way to remain flexible throughout the data collection process – allowing new data shape or re-shape the themes that were being formed. The broad themes I generated, as well as the sub-themes subsumed under them, are represented in the table below.

Table 2- Themes and Sub-Themes

	Broad Themes	Sub-Themes
1.	Because I am Black but also because I am a woman	
2.	Concern for our children	
3.	The Burden	• Isolation and loneliness • Double consciousness/ Identity Crisis • Low self-esteem/ Loss of confidence • Fear • Relationships • Burden of trying to debunk stereotypes
4.	Silencing	
5.	'It's like air, it's everywhere' Encounters of Racism in everyday life	• Out and about • On the bus • Of homes, neighbours and housing
6.	Experiences in Schools, Colleges and Work places	• Primary/Secondary School • College • Work place
7.	Final words/ Words to the whites	

A note on the Presentation of Findings

In chapters five, six, seven and eight, I present findings (first) and then a discussion around these findings. In addition to these, I create two composite parables that present aspects of the analysed findings in a different format. Parables are stories and storytelling is an ancient African traditional mode of communication, passed down from generation to generation (Tuwe, 2016; Boykin, 1994). The aim of the parables is twofold. One, to (re) present our (mine and the women's) stories in a compelling, yet easily accessible format and two, to honour an African qualitative method of expression that is often devalued and unrecognised in Eurocentric spaces. In essence, my parables are acts of resistance, and an attempt to centre African ways of knowing and being, in Academia in Ireland. Critical Race Theory highlights as one of its pivotal tenets that, in research that

seeks to centre race and the experiences of Black people, the use of story-telling is expedient to counter the dominant narrative., (Soloranzo & Yosso, 2002). Black Feminist Thought and Feminist research generally advocates for presenting results of research in creative and un-orthodox ways. (Leavy & Harris, 2019; Evans-Winter, 2019).

In between this chapter and the next, I include a poem by one of the participants (Nia). Nia, captures some of her experiences and thoughts about racism, cultural devaluation, damaging stereotypes and the murder of George Floyd. I have included this poem in order to centre Nia's voice, as well as include an alternative way to present the findings of this research.

Ethics

Research rooted in Black Feminist tradition by its very nature is value laden and assumes certain levels of ethical considerations beyond that which is required by other non-critical research paradigms. In this research, I complied first, with the robust Maynooth University Ethics Standards that prescribe best practice for researchers to follow. But beyond these standard requirements, there were other very real ethical issues that could not be pre-envisaged yet, that needed to be navigated very carefully, in particular an ethics of care (Leavy & Harris, 2019). In this section, I describe how I discharged this burden in the conduct of the research but first, I share from my reflective journal on an encounter I had with my University's research ethics committee which embodies some of the issues I raise in this research:

I was a few days to my due date of delivery. This was my third baby. A surprise baby. I was as big as a whale and I mean this literally. Even though I was due to be on maternity leave, I had to come into the University. I was eager to respond to a summons from the University's Ethics Committee. They had taken a look at my ethics application and wanted to discuss some concerns with me. I was graciously accompanied by my supervisor. I dragged myself up the stairs of the building chosen for our meeting. It was getting harder and harder to climb. I was tired of being pregnant. I also was very unsteady and seemingly clumsy. I was as large as a whale remember?

I got into the room and was greeted by 'a sea of white faces' (Ahmed, 2017). There were about five white people. They looked slightly uncomfortable. 'We didn't know you were expecting a baby' the woman who was the head of the panel said to me. She looked a bit uncomfortable. 'It is fine' I responded. 'I am due in a few days, but I am glad to be here'.

The meeting finally started properly and I was asked to give a bit of insight about the aims of my research. I explained the research as eloquently as I could at the time. And then they raised their concern – 'Ermm… don't you think this research would be a bit too triggering for the women you want to interview? Have you thought of this?'

Can you imagine! A group of white women were concerned that research by a Black woman on the impact racism had on Black women would be triggering. I wondered silently if they were being serious and then about what they really expected me to say. I honestly cannot remember what I said to them, but I must have said something that ticked the box because my application was subsequently approved.

On my way down the stairs from the 'ethics' encounter I describe above, I was surprised that my (white) supervisor noticed the discomfort from my interviewers and suggested that I include a narrative of my meeting in this thesis as a way of demonstrating the limiting perspectives that inhere as a result of white supremacy – it was them (the white people) who were triggered by my proposed research.

I often reflect on the discomfort my research topic generated amongst the committee members – how it had triggered them, and why. The discomfort that white people encounter when explicit matters of race and racism are raised has been documented in literature (and in this research) and can sometimes interrupt genuine anti-racist

intervention (Hamad, 2020). It would be helpful for Ethics Committees and other such committees to be facilitated to reflect on and interrogate their whiteness and its attendant privileges as well as the impact this can have on the research ethic process and their judgments.

Procedural Informed Consent

Marshall and Rossman (2016) explain that ethical practice in any research, must be grounded in "moral principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice" (p. 51). Out of my duty of respect to the participants, I sent the women a consent and information form that explained the aims and objectives of the research, the processes I was to use to collect their stories, their rights to withdraw from the research process at any time, the way their data would be handled and disclosure about the possibility of them feeling distress as a result of the topic for discussion. All participants signed the consent forms and returned them to me by email. After I received consent forms, and at the start of the initial interviews, I reminded participants of what the research was about and about their rights to withdraw from the process at any time. I continued to remind the participants of this, all through the research process. At every point, I mentioned to the women the need to keep a journal handy - to reflect on thoughts that came to them, and to write down things that came to their minds after our chats were over. Two of the women took up the reflective journal suggestion and the practice proved beneficial both for themselves and for myself as the researcher.

I audio recorded all interviews held face to face and used the Zoom recording function for those that were held online. All stories collected were transcribed and held and stored securely, treated confidentially and were also fully anonymised. I am confident that my interactions with the women were conducted with a high level of respect, care, solidarity and empathy.

Situational Informed Consent

Even though informed consent is vital to obtain at the start of the research, feminist research advocates for processing consent at multiple stages of the research (Ellis, Adams, & Butchner, 2011; Leavy & Harris, 2019). Consequently, I scheduled times to check in with the participants in-between interviews. I also continued to remind them of their right to withdraw or stop sharing their stories at any point in the process. Beyond the standard

informed consent requirements, there were other very real ethical issues that could not be pre-envisaged yet, that needed to be navigated very carefully. There were times during this research that I needed to dispense my duties to care in more considered circumstances than at others. There were very emotive portions of the conversations where some of the women recounted painful experiences of loss of agency or harmful discrimination they had experienced on account of their race. Yet, there was always a sense of gratitude, hope and joy that they were given an opportunity to share their stories in a dialogic space. It was like a *'hopeless yet hopeful'* conundrum. I give an example of what I am trying to describe below as I share a part of my discussion with Nomthandazo who was speaking about the burden she feels racism has put on her:

> Nomthandazo: "…But with all that burden and tiredness comes like for me anyways, low self-esteem. Because it's like for me, seeking so like so much approval from white people. And then when you don't get it, you're like, oh, that means I'm not good enough and you feel resentment…." (Nomthandazo is visibly upset and dabs a tear off her eyes with her hand).
>
> Me: "… I totally understand, Nomthandazo. And I really appreciate your courage to share so vulnerably. Do you want to take a break though? We have been discussing really heavy stuff. You do not have to continue with this. Always remember that you can stop at any time. And you don't ever have to continue if it gets too hard…."
>
> Nomthandazo: "Not a chance Aunty Lilian! Talking to you is like therapy." (She starts to laugh through the tears). "But seriously, how many times are we really listened to? Thank you aunty, for doing this. Honestly, thank you….."

Even though the process was hard, participants appreciated the dialogic nature of the process and commented on how it left them feeling better or more resolute to stand against racism or just happier that a Black person was doing research at this level. I also always checked up on the women after and in-between interviews, offering to talk with them if they needed me to or to signpost them to services that could help if they felt overwhelmed. I encountered surprising emotions myself during the data collection process. I found this flood of emotions surprising because I had been studying about racism for a while and didn't think I could be so affected. I couldn't explain the deep feelings of depression, hopelessness and despair I had to battle with. Apparently, my experience is not unusual in research on traumatic issues. Patricia Leavey (2019) writes

about how, listening to the stories of others can open old wounds in the life of the researcher and how the process of active listening can be disconcerting. I often broke down in tears, hours after the interviews, while I tried to make my notes and process the implication of the stories I had heard. In order to deal with this, I began to journal about what and how I was feeling. I acknowledged that I was an 'embodied actor' (Leavy & Harris, 2019, p. 119) and wrote about the emotions I was feeling. I share some of these reflections in different sections of the thesis. This emotional reflexivity was my own route to self-care, but also turned out to be a vital tool in understanding and analysing the research data (Carroll, 2013).

Reflexivity

In this research, I prioritised personal accountability which requires a researcher to be mindful of the context of their discoveries (Leavy & Harris, 2019). The nature of qualitative research is such that meaning is mediated by the researcher. Consequently, there is an ethical requirement to pay attention to my relationship, similarities and differences with the researched group, and how these guide the research project from start to finish (Leavy & Harris, 2019, p. 104). Throughout this research, I reflected on my positioning as a researcher. I described this positioning in chapter one. I am a Black woman. In relation to this research, I am an 'insider' (Hill- Collins, 2000). Even though there are obvious advantages to 'insider' research, for instance, a willingness by the research participants to share their stories authentically because they know you 'get' them, there can also be obvious dangers. It is possible for an insider researcher to 'colonise' and hijack the stories of their participants (Leavy & Harris, 2019). I was intentional about not allowing this to happen. I avoided such a situation by sharing individual interview transcripts at multiple stages with the participants and allowing them to make corrections. I also was intentional about copiously quoting the participants in chapters five, six and seven, and ensuring their voices were unadulterated and adequately centred.

Of the eight participants, three were considerably younger than me. Two of the three younger cohort were from Nigeria and one had a Nigerian step-father. In Nigerian culture, people considerably younger are very respectful to their elders and will not for instance address those older than them by their first names. It was therefore not unusual when Nomthandazo, Cheta and Christiana continued to refer to me as 'aunty' or 'ma', I respected their decisions to stick to their cultural values but continued to remind them of the need to share as authentically as they needed to. Naming this culture of respect and

discussing it before the interviews and at intervals, helped to de-lateralise the power dynamic that could have been created.

Limitation of the study

There were only nine participants in this research (myself included). This sample size may limit the transferability of the findings of this research. However, I must note a pivotal assertion of Black Feminist Thought which highlights that even though Black women have different experiences of racism, their shared history of colonialism, imperialism, apartheid and slavery, create a commonality of experience which can be tapped into and harnessed to create a body of Black Feminist Thought. The findings in this study therefore, are a contribution to a unique body of Irish Black Feminist Thought, even though the number of participants are few.

Chapter Summary/Conclusion

In this chapter, I described my epistemological and ontological positionings, as well as the methods I used in carrying out this research and the ethical considerations adhered to. This sets the scene for the three findings chapters that will now follow

The Breathless by Nia (Research Participant)

We can't breathe. We keep gasping for air. We can't stand. There's always your knee on our necks. We can't breathe. And that's your point. No matter your narrative We rise and We rise. Our music. Poetry. Language. Ever steeped within this world. Our Culture *is* culture. Pilfered time and again. No credit when it's Us. And that's your point. We can't breathe. So the plan you have continues. Over and over it's Us. It's Our fault. We're the menace.

Sow the seeds, paint the picture. See it's Black, they're the problem. Wont to lie. Cheat and Steal. Only token or jezebel. See him? The colour of night, that's the boogeyman, fear him, that's right. Don't get too close, ivory women! And remember, keep them down or they'll destroy us! Sow the seeds, paint the picture. Let it form across the world. Fear the Black, kill the beast. They won't breathe! That's the point.

But this time it's different. We can't breathe. It's the truth. We kept gasping for a chance. All the life was wont to leave us. But as We lay there panting, God decided on our fate. And Him stripped Us of Our bodies. We were All gone in an instant. We can't breathe. It's the truth. We can't breathe. But We don't need to. When God took away our bodies, God transformed Us into Light. Us, the Light aren't bound to bodies. Now We have nothing to fear. But every knee that held a neck has a reckoning forthcoming. Our point? THIS is the revolution and the breathless are delivering your unbecoming.

Chapter Five

Listen to Us, Please (Findings I)

Chapter Introduction

This is the first of three chapters where I present our stories. Black women have experienced a 'suppression by omission' which happens when the term 'woman' is homogenised and issues that are deemed universal to women are in reality, issues that affect white middle class women (Hill- Collins, 2000, p. 5). Here, we take back our agency to speak – agency that society has robbed us of in our day to day existence. In this chapter, we speak, not just as women, but as Black women. We speak, not from the margins, (Aziz, 1997) but from the centre.

Theme 1: Because I am Black but also because I am a woman.

I took a walk with Nomthandazo and my then 7 month old baby. As we walked back to my house, a neighbour popped her head out to say hi. She then looked at my baby and said 'O wow! She is so big now. She looks like an actual young girl not a baby'.

We smiled, exchanged pleasantries and she walked off.

Nomthandazo immediately said, 'I didn't like that'.

> 'What?' I asked puzzled?
>
> "The fact that she is calling Amaka (not real name) a young girl. They do that all the time. We are always stereotyped to be older or stronger or more mature than we really are. Amaka is a baby. Let them leave her as a baby that she is. She is not a young girl…"

I was taken aback by the sudden and really passionate outburst.

> 'Are you ok though?' I asked.

She seemed upset.

'Yes I am' she replied. 'It's just that it's exhausting. I get it everywhere – I am immediately assigned the mama of the group in school. I then feel pressured to live up to it and it is exhausting …and harmful' she said.

Under this theme, I present experiences about the impact an intersection of race and gender has on our lives. This form of intersectional gendered racism (Essed, 1991) creates difficult circumstances for Black women that can manifest as negative stereotypes

(Hamad, 2020); invisibility (Smith, et al., 2019); tokenism (McCluney & Rabelo, 2019) and racial micro-aggressions (Sue, 2010) to mention but a few.

What Nomthandazo was describing in the vignette above is known in literature as the 'adultification' of black children – a situation where black children are perceived as older and less innocent than their white counterparts (Epstein, et al., 2017). Adultification can (and has) led to child victims being treated as perpetuators and to the underreporting of sexual crime against black girls (Mohdin, 2022). On the day we took that walk, Nomthandazo expressed her frustrations about how differently black girls are perceived to white girls, even in terms of beauty. In W*hite tears/Brown scars* (2020), Ruby Hamad confirms Nomthandazo's anthropological observation when she writes about how white women's tears are always a call for people to protect them while black women are seen as aggressors or vile under similar conditions. Nomthandazo's reference to being seen as the 'mama' of the group is another stereotype that she identified and one that I have seen play out in different setting where the Black woman is perceived to be stronger and/or more inclined to carry out care functions than her white counterpart.

Both stereotypes Nomthandazo described, can be traced to ideologies developed during the slave trade era. During the slave trade, Black women and girls were objectified, commodified and sexualised in order to justify the rapes and the exploitation they were put through on the plantations (I discuss this in more detail in chapter two). From a very young age, Black girls were recruited to work on plantations. To date, Black girls and women are still seen as older, more mature or stronger than they really are. These tropes continue to feed in to how Black women are seen and inform the *mama, or strong woman or sexually mature* stereotype that Nomthandazo describes.

In one of her interviews, Nomthandazo spoke about a hierarchy of dating that was in place while she was in secondary school.

> It also makes me feel ugly as well. There was a time when nobody liked black girls like there was a time I went out cos I had male friends so I was like what's the issue with black girls why don't you like us so then they said listen there's a triangle – the top is white girls, the left corner is the black boys, right corner is the white boys, the black girls are nowhere to be found. … We didn't feel pretty enough cause we were like black girls have darker skins and white girls have lighter complexions, they have smaller noses and different kind of stuff like that so it made us, well it made me feel … ugly …

Nomthandazo's comments are very insightful. On the one hand, she relates with the common sense of beauty that existed amongst her peers in secondary school but at the

same time, she highlights her own definition of beauty, corroborating the societal common sense. Her conception of beauty is defined by lightness of skin and shape of nose. I then asked Nomthandazo whose concept of beauty she was embracing. She answered with her eye brows raised, 'You know aunty, I never thought to question it. I just accepted that lighter was more beautiful because of my experience with the guys.' bell hooks writes about the ingestion and internalisation of the intentional white supremacist images and definitions of beauty, engineered by the media and culture that occurs by way of 'imprinting incidents' (hooks, 2013, p. 13).

Still speaking about 'matters of beauty' as she called it amidst some laughter, Nomthandazo also shared interestingly about her struggle to get make up that was suitable for her complexion and skin. She complained about how she could never find the right shade of foundation.

> When I go to town and stuff to get like a foundation for my skin, there's nothing for me and people consider me fairly light skinned and there will be no shade for me so I'm just thinking what about the girls darker than me and then if you ask them do you have any darker foundation, they say no and then you have to go and buy one really expensive foundation when others can get theirs at lower prices.

The absence of her powder shade was to Nomthandazo, a code message saying " I don't belong here" because to her, if people like her belonged in Ireland, there would be products suitable for use. Our discussions on beauty and imaging led us into another discussion about the sexualisation of Black girls. She spoke about sexual stereotypes projected on black women, and the impact which it had on the way she lives her life. She lamented that while on the one hand, Black girls were labelled as ugly and not worthy to be dated, on the other hand, they were seen as sexual and promiscuous (Hill- Collins, 2000), calling to be abused.

> We black women are often seen as sexual images…so it's very scary… In this day and age where everyone wants big bum, everyone wants big breasts and for an Africa person, I won't say everyone but most people are born with big features – big nose, big lips, big bum, big boobs and stuff, it's very dangerous because there was an instance when I was younger where I was just walking and a young man slapped my bum so it's like everyday especially because I walk home I walk to the bus stop, I have to take extra precautions. Lewd and sexual remarks are thrown at me unprovoked and from the blues. I have to always make sure maybe I have a pen in my pocket. I have to make sure my phone is always charged, just in case any situation happens or …

Nomthandazo's experience is not a solitary one but can be found in other studies too. For example,. Zoe Nutakor, a mixed race student in the Durham University UK shares a

similar story. She reported how a white male student (a total stranger), grabbed her hair in a club and told her it was awesome, as 'a way to initiate a sexual encounter'. The woman in question admitted that the traumatic act took a hit on her self-esteem (Nutakor, 2022, p. 74), – an impact that Nomthandazo also spoke about.

Similar stories are also echoed in this research. Eleanor reported a similarly potentially dangerous incident that she encountered when she took her little baby out for a walk and was followed by a man with a knife. I record Eleanor's account of this scenario in chapter six under the sub-theme 'Out and about'. Eleanor was not sure if this incident was a potential sexual crime, but it left her feeling vulnerable and very unsafe.

Equally, Nomthandazo was not the only one who spoke about stereotypes and labels that black women had to carry. Mbasiti spoke about people always projecting an angry stereotype on her

> For instance, maybe you're talking and somebody tells you in an argument, I wouldn't call it an argument, I would say, in a way of trying to explain your points. And somebody tells you Please reduce your voice. Don't shout at me. You know, and you're just talking normally, like I'm talking now. …..When you're just normal, they say you're angry. So why? Because you're not smiling. I can't just sit down and be smiling. There's nothing to smile about at that particular time

Nomthandazo corroborating Mbasiti's experience explained that every time she confidently voiced her opinion in spaces where white people were, she was labelled as angry –"When I do voice my opinions they all ask me why are you so angry and that would cause me to be less confident like the next time"

This image of the angry black woman was projected even when women tried their best to be civil in their communication. Eleanor shared her experience of being assigned a class of students to invigilate an examination. As she wasn't given very clear instructions on what to do, she approached her superiors to get clarity. She was instantly misunderstood and judged to be angry and rude. She mentioned how a desire to not fit into the stereotype, stifles her ability to communicate in the workplace.

The Angry Black woman stereotype has been described by many as a self-fulfilling prophecy. "It neuters the capacity of a black woman to get emotional or frustrated about anything that happens to her. If she does, she is proving all her detractors correct." (Hamad, 2020, p. 48). At different points in our discussions, we spoke about how frustrating the angry woman stereotype was, and while women like Mbasiti were ready to "damn the consequences and speak their mind whether people thought she was angry or

not," Naomi wasn't sure "she wanted to get involved in any such drama", and stayed silent most of the time.

Describing ways in which her race and gender intersected to cause her disadvantage in the hospital where she did her training, Cheta pointed out that most of the difficult experiences she had, were not experienced in the same way by her Black male or white female colleagues. She says:

> I will come home some days and I was literally crying like in tears. I mean my Black male colleague, he couldn't understand what was going on … This is where the gender thing comes into play because I thought it was because I was a black person. But my colleague who is just as dark as I am when I go with him, they don't give him any issues. Every time I was with him, they give me access to the patients.

Cheta wasn't able to pinpoint why exactly she couldn't get through in the hospital, but she was adamant that she was treated worse than both white people and black men. In her words, 'I was at the very bottom of the ladder'.

Nomthandazo shared comments she received at parties that made her feel un-attractive. She also spoke about colleagues touching her hair and treating her as though she was an exotic finding:

> Still on unattractiveness, I went to a party and this white girl came over to me and said 'You are so pretty' and I was like 'wow, thanks' and she said, 'yeah…for a black girl' and I was like wow why do you think black girls are so ugly, like what's the reason that one has to be pretty 'for a black girl'? And then there's time where even in college, I'll have my hair a certain way or I'll have braids in and they will be looking at me as if I am an extinct specie or something. And they will be touching your hair as if you are a museum or something. So how did you do this. Did you put this in your head? And they will be touching my hair and I will be like sorry I don't want you to touch my hair and they will say yeah sure but we are just admiring it? And stuff like that…

Microinvalidations such as these that Nomthandazo describes in this extract, are known to have a cumulative harmful effect on the lives of Black people (Sue, 2010).

Another intersectional issue that some of the women highlighted during our discussion was tokenism. Tokenism occurs when Black women are showcased as examples or evidence of diversity practices in institutions. I share one instance of many of such tokenistic invitations I have received in my experience outlined below:

> 'Hey, Lilian. I have been meaning to speak to you. How are you?'

I turned around to see the Professor. 'Hi Carol. I'm well. Thank you. Is there a problem? You wanted to see me?' I asked half worried.

> Carol: 'No, not at all. There isn't any problem. I wanted to ask if you will be available to chair a panel holding on Wednesday. It is a panel on inclusion and diversity and I think you would be great – someone with your experience will be a great addition.'
>
> Me: 'O wow! Thanks for thinking of me to do this but today is Monday! The panel is on Wednesday. I wish you had told me earlier. Did someone cancel on you? How come you are just mentioning it?'
>
> Carol: 'Actually, we had someone to do it but the Dean thought it would be more….ermm. you know? Appropriate if we had one person from a different race to do it.'
>
> Lilian: 'Ah! I understand. Yes, I will do it, Carol.'
>
> Carol: 'Great. Thank you for accepting at short notice, I'll send an email with the modalities.'

We both smiled and went our separate ways.

This has happened to me many times. I have often been symbolically included on panels, committees and research groups in order to 'legitimise' their diversity claims yet left with no power whatsoever, to make decisions or change things (Hill-Collins, 2000). While I believe that tokenism actually perpetuates racial inequality, I sometimes rely on the interest convergence tenet of CRT to use those platforms to highlight racial issues that may ordinarily not have been raised.

Theme 2: Concern for our children

Under this theme I present the discussions, the thoughts and the worries, women had about their children, their younger siblings, young Black people growing up in Ireland or in some cases, their Black students. There was a palpable sense of fear and concern directed towards the next generation of Black people which elicited an extra level of motivation to engage in anti-racism activism. There was also a picture of Black mothers creating a "culture of resistance" (Hill- Collins, 2000, p. 51) by their counsel and home-talk and also giving their children strategies for survival.

Mbasiti describes the period immediately after she arrived in Ireland and enrolled her children in school as the time she discovered her children were being racially profiled. She narrated how her children came back home after school, puzzled about the questions being asked them by their classmates. Questions like, 'are you really from Africa?' or 'do you eat a lot of bananas?' or 'do you have traffic lights in Africa?'. Mbasiti's perception

was that her children's white classmates were trying to make them feel inferior. It was one micro-aggressive comment after the other when her children returned from school - 'oh you speak very well and you just came from Africa'. Her children found the constant questioning 'offensive and rude'. I inquired into her own response to their complaints. She was admitted that she was torn between taking the issue up or "playing on neutral ground" as she didn't want anything to interrupt their social development in school. She also wanted them to develop their own skills for handling the racism they were facing. In her words, "I wanted them to experience it and find the best solution themselves on how to handle it." At a stage, Mbasiti attempted to make a formal report, to which the school responded that "they were not aware but will look into it".

Even though Mbasiti got involved in the school parent teacher association, she continued to discover more and more ways by which her children were being treated unfairly and unjustly because of their race. Multiple times, the school would organise trips and not display the pictures of the Black children who went on the trip or would give undue reprimand and punishment to black students for no apparent reason. Mbasiti vocalised her discomfort to the school but admitted to me that she has now been compelled to give an extra layer of racial education to her children as a result of the racist terrain they have found themselves in. She urges them to go above and beyond and to put "110 percent" effort in everything they are doing. Her reason?

> You are not in your land. See your skin, even though you do everything right, you still have to be 110% because it's so glaring … they can't hide it (racism) anymore. ..You know that we are far away from home and you're living here now so you need 110% for you to be recognized and to be relevant,. You need to be more. You need to read more.

Mbasiti also spoke about giving a talk to her son and his friends about safety from the police and other law enforcement agents. The statistics in the United States of America show that Blacks are killed by the police at a disproportionately higher rate than any other ethnic group. Even though such incidents are rare in Ireland, the Garda shot and killed a young Nigerian-Irish man called George Nkencho in December 2020 (I write about this in chapter 2). His death raised a new wave of panic amongst parents of Black children. Mbasiti shares:

> Especially when you have sons. You tell them you are going out and they stop you. PLEASE say hello can I help you and give them whatever they ask. If they ask anything, answer them. If they disagree and they don't want to talk to you or whatever, say can you call somebody? And then call me you know? ... But yes, we talk about race to them all the time. I tell him, make sure you walk in groups.

> Because they say they find power in groups, make sure you walk in groups. Don't go alone to a place you really don't understand… we are not trying to segregate them we're not trying to exclude them. We're trying to integrate but we also want them to be conscious of their colour and to know that it's not the same story for everybody.

Mbasiti also decried the absence of Black Guidance Counsellors and expressed her concern about the impact this absence was having on the education of Black children and their choice of subjects at the leaving Certificate. She believes Black students are being guided into lower level courses and that many of their parents were not aware that this had major implications on the kinds of courses they could get admission into university to study: Mbasiti explained that many of the Black parents were too busy trying to fight their way into a labour market that was difficult to penetrate and so had very little time to scrutinise the happenings in their children's schools. She also spoke about an agenda to push Black children into a particular industry – the care industry. An issue Ebun Joseph (2020) has written about and called an exercising in de-skilling. Mbasiti explains:

> Most of the parents don't even know. The student thinks psychology is good, the teacher says go and read Health care. It's like they are pushing all the African children to study a particular thing you know. Another girl that wanted to do engineering said, well my guidance counsellor said that's more of a man's job because you may want to start having children. I said it's for your parents to know you will get married and you will have children ... So why is she trying to derail your future and they say, no but that's what they said, ...

Mbasiti, troubled about what she saw was becoming a trend, began speaking to other African parents and educating them on the implications for their children if they did lower level subjects in the Leaving Certificate Exam. She also shared how difficult it was to get off work to attend her children's school function and had to stand up to her superiors in a panel to insist on attending one of such functions.

Eleanor's concerns about her children were of a different nature. She described the difference in treatment her children faced when she was a call centre worker and after she became a teacher. She explained that in her opinion, a person's social class modified the kind of racist encounters they (and their children) experienced. Her comments were very insightful and showed how class, gender and race intersect, to colour the lived experience of Black people. Speaking about her children's experiences with racism she said

> Class definitely matters. When (daughter' name) was small and she was going to school. I was just a normal call centre worker at that time and she was literally being bullied in school and pushed, and broke her face. … The teachers, the principal were ignoring me and nobody was doing anything no matter how much I said. … But because I'm a teacher now, my son, he was bullied in school. I

> told you about the story and right now nobody is even touching him in school. Even that week because they found him either doing one thing or the other and they didn't even call me or call him for discipline…

After reflecting a little on her journey to becoming a teacher and how that had changed the nature of racism she was experiencing, she spoke about the concern she had for Black children growing up in Ireland and how she thought they could mitigate the harshness of the effect of racism they would encounter, using education

> You remember the story I told you of when I was working in (company name) and they took my job off me and gave it to a white person. Now that I have qualified as a teacher, they have actually assigned me to take students for six nights to Spain on Erasmus. Yes. I'm going to Spain. Yes, there is a difference in class. These things matter. That's why now we have become like these parents that tell their children if you don't get good education, you don't get good grades, you will be looked down on because of this country you live in, you know….

Eleanor however spoke about her concerns and worries for her children especially her last son who she described as quiet and introverted.

> He is going to start his first year in the same school in September. My big boy speaks his mind and he doesn't care. He speaks it in a good nice way. But my baby, he just looks at you. Doesn't say a word, then he goes away and finds a corner and he cries. And I've been trying for a whole year forcing him, not forcing him, explaining to him showing him examples that he needs to voice what he feels. So my fear is that he is going to be really suffering inside because I can't get him to voice out and come and be speaking with me. But I broke that barrier yesterday and I managed to get him to speak with me so when he starts…(she sighs deeply) hopefully….hopefully everything will be ok.

In Eleanor's practice as a teacher, in addition to her scheduled official work, she found herself speaking to Black students, explaining to them that extra layer of requirement they had because of the colour of their skin and encouraging them to put in their best into their education. She spoke of five Nigerian women in her class who at the start of the programme were not applying themselves until she shared her story with them:

> Then I had a talk with them. I told them 'don't mess' because for us in this country, we have to work three times harder than an Irish person. So you know, then I'm talking to you with experience with my own life experience. Then they started putting effort, so I was happy about that.

Eleanor then shares how at the end of the session, a manager who was in the same class as the Nigerian women, offered them jobs. She describes her commitment to building community in her classroom but also encouraging her Black students to apply themselves in order to break through the invisible barriers. Eleanor's role as an informal mentor to her black students is represented in Black feminist literature. Black women have been

known to use a pedagogy of 'other mothering' to motivate black students in predominantly white educational settings. Such pedagogy, even though humane and centred on love, are political and effective in their outcomes (Dixson & Dingus, 2008).

Nomthandazo and Nia, though not mothers yet, both expressed the anxiety they harboured about the experiences of the younger generation. Nia after exploring and interrogating how she was reacting to racism had this to say: "But I do personally feel like it's all connected, you know and I always think of like a young girl who's not feeling that way and how I'd not want her to feel this kind of way"

Nomthandazo spoke more than once about her concern for the safety of her younger sister. She explained that the things she had experienced had made her build a system in her life around protecting herself. She felt that this had also impacted the way she over protected her younger sister.

> So it has definitely put a system in me even with a younger sister as well. It has made me like think and be extra strict on her because I know what I face and I know what other girls face, so I don't want her to face those things as well.

Nomthandazo also described the concerns her own mum had while bringing her up, and the systems her mother built to keep them safe.

> My mum is a first generation migrant so we are away from family so it's just her bringing us up. And from her bringing us up and not having all the influence of family, you become kind of like your mum in a way that you are so closed to the world. My mum is teaching us, don't trust anyone. You know we are the only family that you have and that's how you grow up and that also makes you mature faster than you are supposed to so you are 5 years old acting like you are 25. Looking all around the street. Making sure that you are aware of your surroundings, making sure that when you are talking to someone, you're not really talking to them because you know your mum says you can't do that because you are different and all that kind of stuff and then even for a while I didn't know I had cousins until I was almost 10 years old. And went to South Africa and you also experience not being a small child because people are calling you all these names and treating you so differently.

Christiana similarly told me about the kinds of instruction she was given as a child whose family had fled a direct provision centre in order to escape deportation:

> Because I don't know, I was kind of taught not to get…be too personal with people and from experience like I have learnt that people do really say a lot of things about you and just take stories that's not even true.

Mbasiti whose son played soccer for a local team, spoke about the fact that he was always put on the bench even when he was an obviously better player than those who were

chosen to play. She spoke about how this affected his confidence but went ahead to proffer what she felt was the solution to the Irish strand of racism which she differentiated from the American strand:

> So I'll say in experiencing it I think we should that we should always put a room for dialogue should always not get angry about it we should recognize the fact that I keep saying this. It's not like America where they have been with different races for how many centuries? This is something that I don't think it's up to a century. they've seen more migrants here so it's taking them time. The influx was about 2 and a half decades ago. Most of our parents came here to study medicine and all that stuff. You know, so we should give them time. We should try and create safe spaces for all of us to be together. Especially some diversity training. And we should help them to understand us. We shouldn't be getting angry. It's not good for our health. It's not good for us at all.

Theme 3: The Burden

Nia, speaking about the continuity and the pervasiveness of the issue of racism through generations, describes the effect of racism as an 'ancestral trauma'. The other women also described experiencing various dimensions of this trauma and so I present their experiences, under six sub-themes, each describing a particular set of feelings that the women have encountered.

i. Feelings of Isolation, Loneliness and Being Unwanted

The women communicated a strong message of feeling isolated and in some cases, unwanted. Sometimes, the feelings of isolation were as a result of actual and intentional segregation by white people, but at other times, the isolation was more structural with no visible cause evident. Yet, the feelings evoked were similar. Nia reflecting on her identity as a Black American, described being an outsider in most spaces she found herself:

> I find that in the States there are many people similar to me. What I mean is there are many Black people in the states that look similar to me or that have a similar background. Here in Ireland, I find that I'm not perceived as Black at all and to be part of the Black community you are expected to be from or have a parent that has roots in a country in Africa. For mixed Black people in Ireland I find that you are expected to be Irish and Black; I am not that either. I find myself on the outside of everything

Nia continues to describe the disequilibrium she began to experience, after coming to Ireland and how she felt she was missing out on community:

> It affects me in terms of having a community you know because I don't really have that feeling ... I just have my partner and because my partner is white there are certain things that I feel like it'd be impossible for him to understand in the structure of things right now. And I think that when you have a community of people, you feel this kind of like…not every void can be filled but at least you have that outlet somewhere- you can go to someone that you can speak to…I definitely feel like I'm missing that and…

Nia also narrated the impact George Floyd's death had on her and how she felt alone, unable to speak to anyone and unable to communicate the depth of pain she was experiencing,

> For me what happened with George Floyd, the first person that said anything about it at work was me and it was when I wrote that piece of breathless and sent it to everyone because I couldn't speak to anyone except through those words that I wrote

She also narrated how relieved she was when she eventually met a black person in the professional space and the comfort it brought to her in the difficult period after Floyd's death:

> I didn't want to even speak to anyone at work because I just felt like everyone was detached from me and didn't understand and that's when I wrote that piece (The Breathless). Anyway, I went to a webinar and there was a lady who spoke, she's from Zimbabwe, I started crying on the workshop because …. I've been here at that point for three years and she was the first black person that I had seen in the professional sector. And then the workshop was basically about what happened with George Floyd. And I just started crying in front of everybody when I spoke because I felt so connected to her and you know, just like, a lot of emotions.

Nia then describes a new form of isolation she encountered when she attended a function with all Black people.

> This time, I'm surrounded by all black people, and it's great, but I still felt like because they all have roots in Africa,…I felt again, like oh gosh, I'm on the outside. And then I felt a little weird the way our brains work. Like I almost feel like I have to tell people that I'm black because they're gonna look at me that I'm not you know, white.

Nia's feelings of isolation and loneliness even amongst Black people is not uncommon amongst people with dual (or mixed) ethnicities. In one media commentary, Emer O'Neil, a Nigerian-Irish woman spoke extensively about the disequilibrium and the racism she has faced in Ireland as a result of her ethnicity (Burne, 2021).

In this study, Naomi spoke to me about how she felt isolated and alone from an early age and the impact it had on her emotionally and in her relationships.

> I know that when I was younger, when I was in primary school I always just kind of felt alone, a bit just because, like I said there weren't really other black people and I don't know I always felt like I was pretending a bit, because to blend in with them, I had to kind of be a different person. So, I never really felt like I was being myself, so I felt like I carried that with me. And it wasn't really even until the final year of secondary school to early university that I really started to actually be myself around my friends…

Cheta similarly experienced feelings of loneliness and isolation especially in her sojourn in medical school. I have chosen to reproduce, verbatim how she describes (quite vividly) some of the feelings and the difficulties she had to deal with

> …very discouraged and sad. at the beginning of my time here, I would have felt more sad because it was really just me and my electronics. But I just was missing home so much it was so… I had never been around white people without my parents. I had never felt that I was black. I had been around white people they had looked at us, but I was with my family like it was okay. I felt like they were a shield but when those things would happen. I would feel so dark skinned it would make me so sad and I would cry. I would tell my mum and she would say Cheta what are you using their answers for? What are you using their smiles for? She did not get it at all and eventually I had to adopt that mentality. Because I could not afford to let it affect my academics. It did. I would say it did because I would have been much better much earlier if I was on the wards. But I still managed and I got my degree successfully. But it was in the exam setting. Really because it's not like those situations where I go home I cry about it and I'm fine the next day and an exam I have to deliver my best performance academically and still maintain composure because you can't look sad and cry ... So you still had to remain professional while thinking of the answer to a difficult question.

Also, Nomthandazo on more than one occasion, told me of how she felt lonely and unwanted in white spaces. She cited the examples of not finding the correct shade of her foundation as well as not finding literature in her academic field that validated or represented her lived experiences as some of the triggers that caused these feelings. Naomi and Nomthandazo both spoke about the burden of being the only Black person in their classes for very long periods of time. The danger of this absence of Black people from literature and in academic roles is that it preserves the image of the Black person not being good enough for certain spaces, and only being good enough for others – images that even Black people internalise.

I have often felt lonely and unwanted in spaces – in church, in school and in the community. Feelings that make me withdraw and avoid spaces where I can meet and

interact with whites. Feelings that also make me unsure of my ability to interact in a correct manner with people of a different race from myself.

ii. Double Consciousness/ Identity Crisis – "I think being black in Ireland, you have a dual identity, you are blending in but you know you are different." (Naomi):

Closely related to the issue of isolation and feeling unwanted, is the theme of double consciousness. Almost all the women spoke about being conscious of having a double persona– one when they were themselves and one when they interacted with whites. The women admitted to taking up a different persona from their real selves, just to be accepted in white spaces.

Naomi alluded to this issue of a dual personality which, she explained, started very early on in life where she realized that her life was very different from the lives of her white counterparts in primary school. It was to her, a coping mechanism:

> I always felt like I was pretending a bit, because to blend in with them, I had to kind of be a different person. So, I never really felt like I was being myself, so I felt like I carried that with me. And it wasn't really even until the final year of secondary school to early university that I really started to actually be myself around my friends

When I asked her what made her feel she was different even from a very young age, she explained:

> Like simple things like sleep overs. Like I couldn't have sleep overs. When we talked about their showering etiquette I'm like 'that's not what happens in my house'. So, even from primary school I always had that. I always knew I was different. There was always things that I'm keeping from them you know because if they knew too much, they would be asking too many questions. You know so I always had …I think being black in Ireland, you have a dual identity, you are blending in but you know you are different.

Nomthandazo shared vulnerably and generously about having a double identity. She spoke about acting 'white' when she was with her white friends and sacrificing her true personality just to be accepted by her white colleagues. She also spoke about how exhausting this was for her and again I feel it is important to present her own words to explain this:

> Yes, 100% I do feel like I have a dual identity. I'm completely different when I am with my white friends than when I'm with my black friends. With my white friends I act more white. Way more white. Because I know that if I was to act the way I did with my black friends, they would not accept me and they will not even

> want us to be friends. Because they will not understand me. Like even sometimes, I try and bring up race a little bit. But they even get so defensive with that. So then I just know that okay, I just need to be a white version of myself and basically act like them. Their language, even their body; language as well. is completely different. And it's so tiring, so so tiring. That's why I don't even like to.. I don't even hang out with them for long because I can't… it's hard to sustain because that's not who I actually am. Like my black friends. They accept me for who I am, but I know that my white friends will not accept me for who I am. And they will think of me as the usual stereotypes. I'm too much or moody or aggressive and stuff like that. And it's kind of unfair, because to even have to go through that when I know for a fact they don't have to do that at all.

Even as Nomthandazo shared her thoughts with me on having a dual identity, she began to reflect on her rationale for feeling the way she did. Her thoughts were very insightful. She felt she was caught between being a loner and adapting to white standards. She thought it was easier to create a different identity or persona that she could present to her white friends.

> But that's just something that I had to do. And some people may say like, and I'm even thinking to myself now like, Oh, you shouldn't really care what they think. But it's kind of hard when you're in college with majority white people and only two black people there even at work. So like all of my surroundings are basically with white people. Because that's where I go; college, work or my house. So it's kind of hard for us, I'll just be a loner, and I don't want that as well. So it's like I have to kind of sacrifice my, my true self just to be accepted in a way that's also weird. But yeah, just to be accepted

Eleanor too spoke about an inability to be her true self around white people. She spoke about having to re-word her jokes, be mindful of her tone and not being able to interact authentically:

> You know I think I mentioned to you that I can't go and sit with someone and be myself and joke you know, because they don't even hear that you are joking. They just look at you like this foreign person who is speaking another language that is not English even though it is English. …I'm careful in how I use my sentences. My words, my tone, my voice.

And Cheta shared a bit of her journey from switching her personality in order to fit in, to a more authentic version of herself. A journey she said she had to make because of the burden of being someone she was not. She described how she had to stop saying things that were at the core of her faith, just to be accepted but how she had started taking back some of her personality

> But I definitely do make a conscious effort to make the things that are core to my personality persist. Like when I first started working, I will be reluctant to say, like when I would get a hard cannula for example, or bloods that nobody else could get. I'll say Thank God, thank God and then I will be like, oh, …, I was so

> reluctant to show what I believe, but I've come to learn that I cannot lose myself completely because of the job. Because they would rarely say things like that. Do you know what I mean? I don't know what everybody believes. But I'm very vocal with it just in little things. Like they'll say see you tomorrow and I'll say oh, by God's grace bye.

She spoke also about how she changed the way she wore her hair in order to be able to blend but also how she had started gradually intentionally reclaiming her personality

> I used to only do black braids. And I first started because I didn't want them to say Oh, what's with crazy hair color, but I like colours. I won't do pink hair to work but a little orange on my black braids is ok. Okay, so I do try to keep the things that I think make me who I am. In my life I'm visible to others just so they understand that this black person who has coloured hair or is from Nigeria wasn't born here but can still be professional, can still know when it's appropriate to say certain things. So I think it's important that we do that because they need to learn that we don't have to fit into the box. They also have to learn to fit into ours.

Beyond her hair and her faith, Cheta narrated how she had to change her name in order to enable white people address her more easily even though her original name carried great significance and importance to her. She admitted to compromising her authenticity in order just to fit in. She reflected on why she found the need to change things about her personality in the first place and why she now has decided to be herself:

> Why did I do that? I actually find it a bit less burdensome because before I was trying too hard to fit into whatever box I thought in my head they want me to fit into but I've just come to realize that I'm just going to do what I need to. They will see my professionalism, they will see whatever and they will take from it what they will, but I'm not going to change the way that I do certain things like my hair or what I see or think like bringing my own food to work that kind of, I'm just gonna do me

A number of the women spoke specifically about accents. About tweaking their accents to sound more Irish so that they could either be accepted, respected or listened to. Christiana spoke about her issue with accents and how she sometimes felt burdened trying to speak a different way:

> I think sometimes I change the way I really am a little bit. Sometimes it is in the way I talk, like my accent, so that they can understand you more. I find it exhausting sometimes and sometimes it is frustrating trying to get a point across, trying to say something in a way they will understand. Sometimes I feel fake in a way. I kind of see my friends and other black people do it too. We speak differently within ourselves, and a different way when we are with white people.I think this plays into our double identity.

Nomthandazo also spoke about her struggle with her accent. She felt in her opinion that every time she spoke normally, there was a perception that she could not speak English

or would not understand the level of discourse that was going on. She also spoke about being exhausted by the effort it took to sound a different way, depending on who she was with:

> So I do elevate my voice a lot in front of my white friends. I do. Also, like I was saying like I always I also speak like them as well. My work voice because I talk with white people at work, is so different to the voice I use with my family, or my black friends. Because I'm trying so hard for them to understand me to get me even though that's not even who I am. But that was just an example of what would happen if I was like that to my white friends. And that's how people treat me when I talk like my normal self. They think that I don't understand English. That I don't speak English. Which is very, very weird. But yeah. And it's very, very exhausting. very exhausting. That's why I like to stay in my house. Because you can only pretend for so long before you just can't pretend anymore.

I wanted to be sure I understood how Nomthandazo changed the way she spoke so I asked her for clarity. In her response she acted out some of the ways she tweaked her accent and voice and continued to express her frustrations at why she had to do this:

> ...But yeah, so I'll put my my voice really high. Also, even the way our conversations are. things that I will not really talk about with my black friends who I'm comfortable with and who are probably my true friends or anything.. …. Like, even the way I'm talking the way like I'm engaged with them is so so so so so different. And then the other thing that's annoying is that they can't hear us and the thing is we actually speak clear English, but they can hear their fellow Irish people and they literally speaking gibberish literal gibberish, that you can't even understand, but they will understand them. And it's so frustrating because it's like you can understand how they speak and literally no one else can understand them. But you can't understand us and we're actually speaking clear English and it's so frustrating and selfish.

Cheta spoke about tweaking her accent but attributed the change to a time saving exercise on her part. If she could speak in a way that would allow people hear her more easily, she thought it was the right thing to do. She also spoke about how she changed her name because people were unable to pronounce it despite how hard she tried to teach them.

> And my accent definitely changed but I don't think that was because of them as such, it is just with time. Like I've been here for a few years. I picked up a few words. But I don't think I changed my accent because I want them to accept me so much. I just don't want to have to repeat myself a million times all that sorry? Sorry? Sorry? . I can't be bothered especially with the fast paced work I do I do. I just tried to say things in a way I know you hear and understand. even with my name. my name is so important to me. Like I believe that when whenever they call your name, I'm reminded of the meaning so I don't like it when they call me the wrong thing. It's a pet peeve and I don't want to be that person that takes everything personal so I started going by another name. They still also get that one wrong.

I have also often felt the frustration of not being heard or not being taken seriously because of my accent. I have also further faced the tension of not wanting to tweak the way I speak, yet wanting to be accepted and this has caused me surprising distress at certain points in my life. It has also led to constructive silencing for me - I don't bother to speak at all.

iii. Low Self Esteem/Loss of confidence

A number of the women spoke about dealing with low self-esteem or loss of confidence as a result of their experiences of racism. Mbasiti reminiscing on a time when a black person was passed over for a job she was more qualified for than the white person who eventually got it, identified loss of confidence as one of the effects of the racism she encountered.

> You've been working for three years you've gone around everything done all the courses and everything. You're applying for a position with someone who has worked for six months- less than a year. The person just graduated. You've had about 15 years' experience. You've done your master's program about three years ago. You've been working in the field for about three years. And that person is given the managerial role over you. We keep wondering what's the criteria please. Nobody's talking to you. Then in that case, I sit down and I say I really don't blame this person. I blame my leaders in my country. If everything was right there, I don't think I'll be here. I wouldn't be here. …You see, the culture is making you lose your confidence in who you are. In what you have done. In what you can do!

Mbasiti continues to explain how racism on the job leads to an erosion of the mental health of many migrant people in her work place.

> I'm angry at some, I laugh at some and I lose my confidence. I guess you lose confidence in yourself. You keep wondering am I not so good at this thing? Keep wondering. Definitely this is the corridor to poor mental health of the migrant people. It really affects them. It really, really affects them. It's kind of dehumanizing because I've had the opportunity to discuss this in some circles and I say okay, let's reverse places and they keep wondering why should I go to Africa and they tell me to do another degree or to do a year to confirm whether my degree was okay. Why? I say but that's what you are doing here. So what why should they ask me to? Why should why should they why ?

Nomthandazo spoke about feelings of low self-esteem. Feelings I can certainly relate to. She says:

> But with all that burden and tiredness comes like for me anyways, low self-esteem. Because it's like, for me, seeking so much approval from white people. And then when you don't get it, you're like, oh, that means I'm not good enough and you feel resentment

iv. Fear

Wake up, George!

'Kunie!' She screamed in her native dialect! 'Wake up George and get them! Get those who did this to you! *Kunie!!!!!!'*

I sat transfixed to my screen as I watched George Nkencho's mother scream at her son's coffin in what I thought was rage, mixed with despair, FEAR and a deep inexplicable sorrow. It has been two years and the image is still fixed in my memory. The image of a broken Black woman. In my mind, all I could think was 'this could have been me. Easily.'

One of the effects of racism the women highlighted was fear. The women described a fear that had impacted their normal everyday interactions. Nomthandazo for instance shared that:

> My places are college, school, church and home and that's basically it and the only place where I feel safe is my home because that's where each and everyone of us is the same colour and there's no…everywhere that I've been in outside of my home there's been minor like racial…I don't know what to call it but those types of things there

She continued:

> I'm scared because you just don't know what people are thinking like if they can just come to you and call you a nigger unprovoked what's stopping them from coming and punching you unprovoked. So it has also made me scared as well even black women as well because we are often seen as very like sexual images so it's very scary.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, Nomthandazo explained that she now had to move about with things to protect herself as a result of the fear that she encountered. Nia, reflecting on the incident described in chapter six where she was followed by white teenage boys and spat at menacingly, explained how she has begun to feel fear

> I feel tired and sometimes hopeless. And also to be honest with you, the older I'm getting I'm starting to feel scared. Like what happened in town the other day when we went to the doctor? That's scary. I mean I was lucky that I walked into that restaurant. I was lucky that my partner was actually there and that I could text him. You know, I felt safe when he came out. But it's scary and sometimes when I'm walking and I come across a group of white males specifically because I wouldn't necessarily say a group of white girls but I feel almost like please don't attack. And I think that's the worst feeling because if I feel that way as an adult imagine a young girl living here…

> I feel a little bit like…weird Things going on in my head like is he going to kill me, is he going to think I'm causing ruckus. I'm a full blown woman but I still have these things that track back to…like because I'm not white, am I going to be seen as a disturbance?

I have found that I entertain more fear than usual in recent times especially with the rise of the far-right anti-immigration protests of 2023. I have restricted my going out to only major events.

v. Relationships

Two of the women described the impact racism had on their pre-existing relationships, one with her spouse and the other with her partner. Eleanor shared about how she joined her husband in Ireland and met someone entirely different from who she had known. It took her some time to realise that he had become withdrawn, angry, silenced and depressed as a result of his encounters with racism, especially on his job.

> So when I first came, I found that my husband is completely changed. You know, he used to be a very jovial person with a very good sense of humour and playful and this but then later on, he changed. He became closed and he doesn't joke anymore like the way he used to. And he had completely changed. Then I started looking - what's going on why is he different now. I found out that he is like this because this racism has completely affected him and he is not able because whatever he does, he feels is wrong . He's wrong. There isn't anything he does right. Then he goes to work. He's given all the bad jobs. When he comes home, he's extremely exhausted, angry, frustrated, he's never come home happy, is always angry.

Nia's concerns were a bit different. She often felt that her white partner could not understand a lot of what she was going through which made her feel more isolated in Ireland.

> Just like you I don't have all the answers but just like what we are talking about is so nuanced sometimes I just…I get tired…you know how in your story you were tired? I feel like sometimes even when I'm not having a conversation. Just reading stuff about it. You know like even when that Meghan Markle stuff happened. You know? You get tired and having a white partner now he is great. You have to meet him. He is the loveliest person in the world, he is so kind, treats me very well and loves me to bits but there are things he will never understand and like I don't blame white people. I don't think it is their fault but similar to what…..said, the way things are were built before any of us got here and yes there is white supremacy but the way to dismantle it is the people who belong to it, even if just by extension of them being white, they have to dismantle it. They have to work to dismantle it first and then all the rest of us…

> …I just have my partner and because my partner's white there are certain things I feel like it would be impossible for him to understand in the structure of things right now.

I can relate with both Eleanor and Nia. I too have a very close white friend who doesn't 'get it'. She is always quick to point out how an action could not be racist as it had happened to her too. This has put a strain on my relationship with her and I find myself not wanting to be in her company a lot of the time.

vi. Burden of trying to debunk stereotypes

Attempting to debunk the pervasive stereotypes projected on Black women put an additional layer of burden on the women. Nomthandazo explained that even though she was discouraged about the lack of representation in her field of study, she was determined to do all she could to break the glass ceiling in order for other Blacks to enter. She acknowledged that this stance put her under pressure:

> It also like occurred to me that, even if I want to continue to aim to be at that top level. It'd be twice as hard as it would be for a white person because first of all, you can already tell that they're really hesitant for a black person to be in that role. so I need to make sure that there's no possible reason for them not to consider me in that position, you know, so that was that's also added pressure for me that I felt pressured to be and that could also discourage me.

Nomthandazo continued to describe how she did more than she should at work and how she still doesn't get acknowledged for it and how that drove her to despair often times:

> On my shift I actually do more than other people. And I still don't get recognized for it. Also in like in my college as well. I put pressure on myself to do the best even though sometimes it doesn't work out. But I still put that pressure and just to be seen and but it's kind of tiring and draining when like the outcome doesn't happen. So then it's just getting driven for like my own personal experience. I'm just like okay then what's the point like, no matter what I do, I'm never going to be seen. So there's no point of being like trying so I'm right there right now...

In another conversation, Nomthandazo insisted that in order to debunk the negative perceptions, "black children have to go above and beyond, to prove ourselves like if we are doing the same work, we would have to do more in order to stand out"

Nkoyo also spoke about the pressure she faced at work while trying to prove herself

> You know, you push yourself beyond…but maybe it's a good way of building yourself too. But just finding yourself wrapped around the fact that you are trying to prove that you are not meant to be stereotyped like this hurts. So which is not what life should be. You should be free and you know, do things the right thing. So, yes. I am angry…

Eleanor similarly spoke about how she had to take on another person's part of the work as she knew that if anything went wrong, the blame would have landed on her table as a black person. Speaking on why she took up the extra work, she said " I am protecting myself because I could see the red lights. Anything goes wrong I'm the black person and it will be me who has delayed the exam"

Theme 4: Silence (ing)

There was an obvious thread about deliberate but also constructive silencing that emanated from the women's stories. Nomthandazo for instance discussed her not speaking out against racist actions directed towards her, as nothing was ever done about it. She said

> Most people report but there is no point reporting because nothing is going to get done, You report once and you see that it doesn't get done so there is no point reporting again…that's why many people take matters in their own hands and end up fighting and causing disruptions

I have also reported racist encounters that were never addressed or addressed unsatisfactorily. Sarah Ahmed's words in in her book titled *Complaint,* resonate powerfully with what we experience in this regard

> When a complaint is filed away or binned or buried, those who complain can end up feeling filed away or binned or buried. We need to remember that a complaint is a record of what happens to a person, as well as of what happens in institutions. Complaints are personal as well as institutional. (Ahmed, 2021, p. 53)

Mbasiti expressed her frustrations towards her black colleagues at work who never spoke out against racist or discriminatory behaviour and in effect, censored themselves because 'they didn't want any trouble'. She explained that "most of them get embarrassed, most of them say look I just want to work I just want to make my money. I don't want these people's trouble" Naomi also spoke about staying silent in order not to cause 'drama'

> One thing with Ireland is that their racism appears low-key. You, you kind of feel it but you are like was that really racism or am I overreacting? I think you tell yourself you are overreacting because you don't want to, you know, cause any drama

Naomi was not alone in the feeling of not knowing whether something was racism or not. Most of us shared instances of times when we couldn't put a finger on how to articulate what we knew was racism and so could not even report it. The issue of equating reporting racism with causing drama or being a trouble maker isn't novel. Sara Ahmed (2021, p. 197) writes about this. Black women are already positioned as Bodies out of

place in Ireland. Thus, reporting racism translates to rocking the boat, causing trouble, being made visible and placed under surveillance – something most Black people do not have the space, time nor energy for.

Cheta shared how she generally stayed silent except when things related directly to her patients whom she felt professionally responsible for. Aside from such circumstances, she remained silent.

> …especially when it doesn't affect me or my patients directly. If it does, then I have a bit more responsibility to say something as your interviewee said rightly, I just don't want any trouble at all wanting to be that person who is always argumentative. Always have something to say. Especially when that would be my personality anyway, even with black people, I just mind my business. I can't be bothered that I don't like stress. So maybe it's a combination of things but as they said, just to avoid trouble.

A number of the women also spoke about being labelled as aggressive every time they tried to speak out about issues that they considered racist. This stereotypical labelling was construed as constructive silencing and succeeded in making them reluctant to speak when next something else happened.

Four Extracts from my reflective journal

1. George Floyd

I have refused to watch the video of the murder of George Floyd. I have refused because I know it will haunt me for a long time. Am I being selfish? Just wanting to be in my cocoon, safe and detached from the madness and the hate in the world? Maybe. Is my cocoon really safe? Has this whole Covid 19 madness not shown us that the world is really a village? Can I really think I am safe living in Ireland as a black woman? Is it not funny that even though I am now a citizen, I still feel as though I am a mere resident? Is any black person safe, anywhere? I can only imagine how the blacks in America feel. I'm miles and miles away and I feel helpless, hopeless, weak, sad, angry, frustrated and afraid! How are my brothers (and sisters) in America feeling? What crime have we committed by being black? What is it about our skin that provokes such disdain and hate? What about us whips up the resentment that we see everyday? Resentment that pushes a person till he kills another? When will this scourge end? When?

How about the video from Cooper. Talk about a person who understood the privileges attached to her colour. She KNEW she could use her colour as a leverage to get injustice against a black person. She knew that all she had to do was call the police and say she was being threatened. She knew that she was at an advantage. But you know the sad part? So did he! He too knew that being black made him less likely to be believed. He knew that that phone call could have ended his life. He knew that making that video may have been the only thing that could exonerate him in life or in death. This incident made me feel angry. Angry at the unfairness. Angry at the injustice. Angry that the white privilege that was hitherto subtle and unnoticed is now glaring and being wielded as a weapon!

Let's come back to Ireland. Thank God, the guards are not gun-wielding. Thank God! But my GP's secretary may as well be, with the looks she gives and her attempt at correcting my grammar at every opportunity she gets. Do I speak of the systems? Or the fact that no matter how well educated I am, I cannot clinch a job? Which direction do I take my feeling of helplessness and hopelessness? Church? Where blacks can't be

put in certain positions? School? Where no one wants you in their group because you are black? Kids schools? Where? Where can I hide from the scourge of blackness?

Ps. This entry was made before the death of George Nkencho

2. The Election

Yemi Adenuga has just been elected as a Councillor. She is the First Black female councillor in these parts. I'm online reading comments on an online website. The comments are horrible. I feel sick. I am afraid. The hate. The bile. The spite. I am not Yemi but I carry the full weight of what is being said about her with me everywhere.

I am afraid.

I am unsure.

I am ashamed.

I carry this to the classroom. I carry this everywhere.

Even when people give compliments, I do not believe them.

I remember those comments.

3.Ugly

Staring at the Zoom screen during the meeting, I suddenly felt very ugly. I wanted to shut down my camera just not to pollute the beauty. The sea of white faces. What has informed my definition of beauty? These are the wars that go on inside of me. The wars that no one on that Zoom call could see.

4.Invisible

Coming across that word again with the research on refugees, I remember how I felt in a University in Ireland. I felt invisible. No one knew me. No one even said hi. No one. Not even the teacher. I didn't exist. I had no information. My teachers were inaccessible. Well, most of them were. It was a nightmare.

I felt unworthy. Unwanted. Unloved.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I highlighted the invisible burdens that we as Black women carry around with us. I shared parts of our conversations about the psychological burden that racism puts on racialised people. From fear, to the burden of 'faking' an image, to loneliness and isolation, I thread together stories from all nine of us, that show how irrespective of our social classes, backgrounds and family conditions, the damage racism does is felt similarly in all our lives. In this chapter, I also presented findings that showed the impact which gendered racism has on us – a form of oppression that occurs at the intersection of our race and gender. The uncomfortable stories about the fears we feel for our children as well as the stories the children bring back to us of their own interactions with racism, were also presented in this chapter. At the end of the chapter, I included four extracts from my reflective journal that exposed some of my attempts to grapple with racism or with the impact an internalised white supremacist world view has on me. The impact of racism is real, multifaceted and multidimensional.

Chapter Six

Listen to Us, Please (Findings II)

Listen.

I had just had my third child (and hopefully my last, considering that my second son was supposed to be my last…). The baby was out after a very short but intense labour. My husband was ecstatic. The nurses looked happy enough and were tidying up the labour room. I, on the other hand, didn't feel well. 'I don't feel very well' I said to the nurse. 'Of course you don't' she said, refusing to look up from what she was doing 'you just had a baby' she quipped and continued with whatever she was doing. 'I have had 2 babies in this hospital before now' I said, 'but I honestly feel different.' 'I feel as though something isn't right with my body. As though something is wrong'. She looked at me and said, 'you need to rest a bit. Your body has gone through a lot'. And she stepped out of the room. I looked at my husband. 'Something is wrong D, I feel unwell.' 'Can you describe how you feel' he asked? 'No, but I feel very unwell.' He called the nurse and mentioned it to her. She looked mildly irritated. Ok, go and have a bath, you will feel better she said. 'These people are not listening to me' I thought. Stories of women dying immediately after child birth flashed through my mind. I felt very unwell, but I couldn't get through to the doctors or the nurses. They could hear me, but they were not listening. I decided then that I would do what she asked – I would go for the shower. As I stood to walk to the bath, a massive amount of blood immediately burst forth from underneath me. I saw the eyes of the nurse widen. She set off the emergency button and before a few minutes, other nurses and a doctor were in the room. I was plugged to all sorts of monitors. My blood pressure was rising by the minute. I had all sorts of intrusive interventions from the medics, trying to stop the bleeding as well as spiking pressure. I was shivering vigorously and I kept muttering under my breath, if you had only listened to me … if you had only listened. It turned out that I was bleeding uncontrollably and my blood pressure was going up at an alarming rate. It wasn't picked up because I was lying down. It was a potentially dangerous almost fatal situation that could have been avoided if I was listened to.

Chapter Introduction

In this chapter, under one theme (with three sub-themes), I present our experiences that point to the pervasiveness of the racism we experience. The flavour of our stories show how there is no sacred place when it comes to racism. We are constantly inundated at every turn with one manifestation or the other of racism. Our experiences validate CRT's assertion that racism is the normal way Blacks and people from minoritised ethnic origins experience the world (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Theme 5: "It's like air. It's everywhere" (Nomthandazo) - Encounters of Racism in everyday life

When I asked the broad question –have you experienced racism in Ireland? It was usually answered with a laugh and a response along the lines of "where do I start from?" Eleanor for instance gave out a deep belly laugh and said to me "Lilian, we will be here all day if I start telling you my stories." This was the usual flavour of response I got to this question. The women would then describe how everywhere they turned, there seemed to be some form of racism or the other rearing its head. We described experiences we had in the vicinity of our homes, as we took walks, while we were on the bus or as we went shopping. Some participants spoke about their experiences when opening their bank accounts and I share my own story about trying to access housing. The thread that ran across all the stories was an interruption of our everyday lives, by acts of racism – some violent, others only potentially so.

I will present our stories under three sub-themes:

1. Out and about
2. On the Bus/Train
3. Homes, Housing and Neighbourhoods

Out and About

I was driving to the University to attend my Higher Diploma in Further Education Class. My husband and I had just got a new car as my 4 year old had managed to insert a coin into the CD player of the old car that damaged vital parts of the engine. I was driving out of Trim when I encountered a Garda check point. I had been driving within the specified speed limit (thank God). I didn't think there was anything to be worried about. I drove up to the Garda who signalled to me to stop. I stopped and brought down my window

to say hello. He looked at my windscreen, inspected my insurance, NCT and Motor Tax discs, looked at my tyres, all 4 of them. At this stage, I began to feel a bit nervous. Was something out of place? He came around to my side of the car, looked into the car and asked – 'who owns this car? You?' I frowned and said 'yes'. 'You may go'. I drove off wondering why three times out of four, Garda asked me whether I owned my car.

My story of contested car ownership isn't isolated. The An Garda Siochana has been accused by the Irish Human Rights Equality Commission of racial profiling of people from minoritised origins, during stop and search operations (Phelan, 2022). Racial profiling is just one of the many ways that Black people experience racism as they go about their endeavours. Some of the women spoke about being verbally abused as they walked to shops or took leisure walks. They also narrated more dangerous and threatening encounters they had. One striking thread that seems to run through the stories is how we appeared to have normalised this sort of (verbal) abuse. To illustrate, Nomthandazo who was born and has lived all her life in Ireland, was verbally abused in her 'predominantly white' neighbourhood in an urban area, North West of Dublin. She has lived with people shouting racial slurs at her since she was a child and has now developed some thick skin to unprovoked verbal abuse. She says

> From a young age, I have always been called racial slurs. They would shout 'go back to your country' or they would call me the 'n' word. Especially in the estate where we live. It's a very…predominantly white area. So from young, we were called those things…it was always like an uncomfortable thing to the point that when I was older, it just became like a normal thing. Before, it will shock you or you will be asking yourself 'why will they say that?' but now it's almost like basically they are saying hello to you. It's just a normal thing… stuff like 'nigger' or 'black monkey' or you know there was a time someone shot a gorilla and its name was Harambe so they would call us 'Harambe'.

Even though Nomthandazo continued to emphasise how she had normalised being verbally abused, her body language told a different story. I could see the tears well up in her eyes and I could hear her voice quiver as she spoke and it was just the start of my first interview with her. As I gently probed further about these sorts of everyday experiences, she gave me a concrete example that had happened just a week or two before our interview. She explained how her family decided to take a walk to a supermarket in order to get out of the house after being indoors for so long as a result of the COVID-19 mandated lock down and how they were verbally attacked by teenagers. She says

> …it can happen on the streets, or in school, anywhere like for example just about a week or 2 weeks ago, me and my mum and my sister were walking to LIDL to

> get fresh air cos of like COVID and all of that kind of stuff so anyways we were walking and a group of boys. I'll probably say they were like 13…13 or 12 they said 'O you niggers!' Out of nowhere. No one was disturbing them…and that's just how it happens...

Nomthandazo also highlighted how she felt that such verbal attacks were sometimes aimed at provoking a reaction from her. She continues her narration:

> They just walk around. They just call you names…or there were times when I was probably in 3rd year. I will walk home with someone who was in the same school and also in the same estate and they would just say you nigger just so they would see if I would get angry or try to get something out of me…just in random places like walking or I don't know chilling with them.

Christiana also shared her experiences with being verbally racially attacked. Christiana initially insisted that she had not experienced any form of racism in Ireland. But when I asked her whether she had ever been called a racial slur, she did not miss a beat in her response. "Of course, several times" she replies then recalls two incidents – one, an incident from her childhood and another more recent one - "When I was young and playing outside with other children, a neighbour just called me and my friend nigger…while walking on the street on my way to the bus recently a group of boys just yelled out nigger!..." When I probed as to whether she didn't consider such verbal abuse to be racism, her response showed me that such unprovoked abuse had happened so many times that she didn't count it to be anything worth speaking about. It appeared that, like Nomthandazo, Christiana had also normalised being called racial slurs as she went about her activities. She was not going to speak about racial slurs if I had not asked specifically.

Eleanor after narrating her initial experiences with racism when she first got into Ireland, explained that her husband who had been in Ireland before her, tried to persuade her to get used to the experience of everyday racism. Unlike Nomthandazo and Christiana however, Eleanor admitted that she did not think she could ever get used to the constant verbal attacks and intimidation. Eleanor had just arrived from Africa and was trying to gain entry to her husband's apartment when someone menacingly told her to go back to her country – she had literally spent just about an hour in the country! I relate this incident in more detail under the sub-theme of housing and homes. When Eleanor reported the incident which she still didn't fully understand back to her husband, he explained that it was probably a racist act and advised that for her to survive in Ireland, she would need to get used to such things. She narrates:

> It was scary because I didn't understand it. But my husband already experienced a lot of it. So, he, he understood, and he told me that's normal. You'll get used to it. But I don't think I'll get used to it. I have to just …no. I don't think so. I will never be used to it.

Some of the women reported experiencing attacks that went beyond mere verbal attacks or just being called racial slurs. Eleanor described a dangerous situation she experienced after she had been in Ireland for about a year and while taking a walk in a busy park and in broad daylight. She had just had a baby and was advised by the doctors to take walks every day. She explains:

> Now on my way out, this man came to me and started following me and then in his pocket, he had a knife (she motions to show me how she saw the knife) … but the police was not very far. So, I just picked up my pace and I walked straight to the Guards and one of them came out and followed him, so I never saw him on my way home and I never saw him again. After that. But just very, very, very scary….

Nomthandazo also shares about how on her way back from school when she was younger, a man walked up to her and slapped her on the 'bum'. She was of course terrified.

Both Eleanor's encounter and Nomthandazo's story of this assault give a flavour of some of the intersectional dimensions of some of the women's experiences – where their gender and racial identities conflated to make them more susceptible to abuse. In keeping with the women's experiences, a recent INAR report showed a preponderance of and an uncomfortable increase in racial (and in one case, sexual) violence against Blacks and members of minority ethnic groups (Michaels, Omidi, & Reynolds, 2022).

Beyond racial slurs and menacing threats on the streets, Eleanor spoke about negative stereotypes and narrated an incident where she walked up to a white man somewhere in Dublin to ask where the parking pay station for a particular street was. The man immediately assumed that she was approaching him to beg for money. She shares this story at the start of our conversation when I ask her to describe how she has experienced racism in Ireland:

> …that is a really broad question, Lilian (she laughs) …like in what context. It's so huge, like if I think about my previous employment, or is it when I go out in the street, like the other day I was just asking someone do we pay for parking here? And he thought that I was begging him for money …this was just me asking him to know where I had to pay for parking…

I also recall sitting, waiting to be called in by the speech therapist I had brought my son to see. I came early because the local family centre had very limited parking. I needed to

get myself a space. Anyway, here I was, seated, waiting to be called and hoping my 3 year old son wouldn't put up one of his loud, stellar displays. A white woman bursts in. She was late for her appointment. She had found a parking space but didn't seem to have coins for parking. I heard her ask the girl at the reception for some change. She was frazzled, as it was the time for her appointment. So I checked in my bag, found a 1 euro coin and rushed to her. 'Here', I said; 'You can have this to pay for parking so you don't miss the appointment.'. She turned to me with a look of both horror and disdain and said 'no. I don't need your money' and walked away to another person. I then over heard her ask the person for some change for parking. I walked quietly back to my son and tried to process what had just happened. These sort of interpersonal encounters that are obviously sponsored by distrust or negative stereotypes occur often and can have a psychological impact on Black people.

Encounters in shops also formed an issue of discussion for some of the women. I have been followed around in shops as though I was suspected to be a criminal. I remember particularly an incident in a popular retail shop somewhere in Dublin. I had my mother over and had taken her out shopping. While she was still browsing through the shop, I had picked out what I wanted to buy and was standing on the long queue waiting for my turn to pay. All five people (who were white by the way) in front of me happened to pay for their shopping by cash. They tendered their money; their money was accepted and they left. When it was my turn, I tendered my money, and my money was checked first by a pen and then put up against a light before it was accepted. I felt the treatment was strange but I wanted to be sure that it was not my mind so when it was mum's turn to pay, I went back on that line, watched the cashier take money from others who paid by cash. When it got to my mum's turn, her money was also pen-checked.

Nomthandazo narrates a somewhat similar incident that happened when she went to a shop with her mum and her sister. She narrates that while she and her mum walked around checking the products they wanted to buy, the security man kept on following them around as though they were under surveillance. Down at the other end of the shop were 3 white lads who were shop lifting and who the security man missed because he was over-policing them.

Another theme to emerge from the women's stories was the experience of witnessing others being racially abused. There is a different flavour of emotional pain that hits when someone who has been abused watches someone else being racially abused. I have often

suffered emotionally just by watching others on television or in the comment section of online news or anywhere else being racially abused. Nia tells me about a time when she witnessed an Asian man walking with a young child being verbally abused and how the situation escalated quickly into one where she was intimidated and followed menacingly until she ran into a shop for safety.

Witnessing the scene with the Asian man and his child bothered Nia considerably. She explains how the whole scenario triggered her, how she decided to act and the potential danger she found herself in

> So I just give the lads a dirty look. Looking at these guys like just so that they know that this is not okay, what they're doing. The guys then turned to me. And I'm just like, I'm so shocked because I used to go to work there every day and that never happened. So anyway, the guy walks away with his child. I'm still walking on my path. And now they're not necessarily following me because they were going that way at first, but I'm walking and I'm walking a little bit faster just because I'm like….. one of the guys comes and walks literally right next to me in stride with me. And then spits, but like, you know, making it threatening, you know, kind of like he didn't spit on me. He didn't touch me. Or anything like that, but it felt very threatening. And it was a sunny day. So I had my Ray Bans in my hand just kind of walking. Naive now that I'm thinking about it. And they start saying that they're going to rob me of the sunglasses … and I get a little bit like this could be potentially really dangerous.

Nia eventually ran into a shop for safety and narrate her ordeal to the person at the till who acknowledged that he too had witnessed a rise in attacks on people from minoritised ethnic origins. Even though Nia started out as acting on a seeming injustice she had perceived, she very quickly realised that she was also in harm's way. This volatility of the society when it comes to Black people is an issue that arose in many of our discussions and one that I discuss again later in this thesis.

Nomthandazo also speaks about her experiences seeing others being treated differently because of their race.

> There's loads of instances when they would catch people stealing…stealing is bad yeah but I prefer if they would use the same standards for everybody…they will see white people stealing and they would steal big chunks and they will know because they steal all the time …and if they get caught they would get a warning but I remember when a black person stole, they called the police on him…

For me, it is almost as though every time I step out of the house, I am either being treated badly or I am watching people who look like me get treated badly. The consequence this has had on me is intentional self-isolation where I hide out of fear in my home or in community with people who are like me.

Nkoyo, shared a very interesting story about a time she moved to a town to start a new job and tried to open a bank account in one of the banks in the area where she had moved to. Upon presenting her identification document, a Nigerian passport, the bank refused to open an account for her. She got into an argument with the staff at the bank and in the course of the argument, mentioned that she was a doctor. Immediately they discovered she was a doctor, they accepted to open the account for her. Nkoyo believes that it was a negative stereotype that had metamorphosed into a policy to not allow Blacks from certain countries open accounts. Nkoyo tried to get an explanation from them as to why she was initially refused something as basic as opening an account. She was unable to get any reasonable response:

> Like what changed? You know, like I said, You need to let me understand this. … you said you couldn't open an account for me because it has to be a current account. And now you want to do it. Like what changed? You know, was it the fact that I said I was a doctor? So she was like, Oh, I'm sorry and I said you don't treat people that way. That is very unfair. very racist. She said, don't take it that personal. Don't take it personal. I said but it's obvious. Not until I said I was a doctor, you were not going to attend to me. You couldn't give me any reason why and you still don't have any reason why. So things like that.

In one of our conversations, Christiana mentioned offhandedly in response to something I said that she had been unable to open a bank account in Ireland as the bank officials refused to open an account for her without giving her any reason. What struck me about this part of our conversation was how *matter of factly* Christiana made this comment and how she seemed to have accepted this as normal. She immediately went back to re-iterating that she hadn't experienced 'much' racism in Ireland.

On the Bus

My husband and I had an appointment with the Nigerian embassy to renew our passports. We decided to use the bus to Dublin rather than drive. We were at the bus stop waiting for the bus to get full. We sat quietly, both engrossed in our own things. He was listening to music on his phone and I was reading. At one of the stops, a young man of about 15 got on the bus. He had his phone to his ears and was communicating with a care giver. He was apparently not out by himself a lot of the time and those on the other end of the call wanted to make sure he was safe. They had obviously planned a particular method of communication with him and as he passed by each row of bus seats, he would say 'safe' to the people at the other end of the call. He continued to do this until he got to our own row at the back, I could see his body stiffen and his eye widen and he started to say

repeatedly into the phone 'not safe' 'not safe'. His care givers on the other end of the phone then navigated him back to the bus driver who took the phone off him, listened to the people at the other end of the call, then got up and brought the young man to sit somewhere else. The young man had shown that he had attributed blackness with danger and maybe crime?

Encounters with racism on public transportation are not new in Ireland. Lucy Michael's (2015 and 2022) reports, highlight instances of racism which Black people encounter while using public transportation in Ireland. In October 2020, the Immigrant Council of Ireland and Transport for Ireland, in response to public outcry against racism, commenced an anti-racism campaign to be displayed onboard public transportation all over the country and on social media, vocalising the need for everyone to feel safe on public transport, irrespective of their race. (Immigrant Council of Ireland, 2020)

The women also shared their own experiences and encounters in public transportation (on the bus or in one instance, the Luas). Their experiences ranged from subtle, unfriendly and unkind glares and looks, to more obvious abuse, intimidation and unfair treatment by white people. Some women also reported experiences that left them unsure of what exactly they had experienced.

Mbasiti shared that when she first came into Ireland, she experienced white people move away from or avoid sitting by her on public transportation. She didn't quite understand why for a while. She narrates

> You get on the bus and you sit down in the bus and people will come and the bus will be full in the morning and they will be standing….ignorantly, I would say could you please come and sit here you know? And they will just look at you and remove their face and I would be wondering why don't they want to sit down? There is a space next to me. I didn't know…or sometimes I would get into the bus and there will be a space beside them, I will say o excuse me, they will just stand up and go. I would think they are coming down at the next stop but I will see them go and sit somewhere else or they are standing….it took me time to realize…

Similar to Mbasiti but with a more brazen encounter, Naomi shared her first racist bus experience where she was verbally attacked. She had taken a bus in Dublin to go view a hostel accommodation she was interested in. She explains how moving to the University from an urban area outside of Dublin opened her up to more explicit racist experiences:

> think it was in Dublin that I first experienced…like I remember I took the bus to go see my uni accommodation. And this white woman was sitting down on the

> bus and there was only one seat left and it was beside her. And I sat down and she glared at me and I was like I'm sorry ma, I'm just sitting (laughter). And then as she got up to leave, she called me a racial slur as she was leaving. And I was like for what? Just for sitting down on the bus? I'm sorry this is the only seat left on the bus

She continues sharing another experience she had on a different bus in Dublin on another day

> and then there was another incident where it was me and my friends. This time we were sitting at the back of the bus obviously there was already a white couple sitting down and as we sat down they were glaring at us and we were just like, just sitting down and the then as he got up to leave again he shouted a racial slur but obviously he got down from the bus so we didn't care but there is little stuff like that that you can't really do anything about

Naomi painted a picture of the futility she felt in situations like the one she experienced, especially as the people on the bus who witnessed the incident didn't make any comment or provide any form of intervention - "Other people saw what happened they didn't comment on it. You know you can't really do anything about it you just let it go…"

Nia had a slightly different experience from Naomi, in the sense that in her case, an onlooker actually intervened. Nia had sat in the reserved section of the bus because there were no people who looked like they needed to sit in the section and a white man had asked her to stand up for a middle aged looking white man with no apparent physical disability. Normally, Nia explained that she would have ignored it but this time she was so puzzled at the audacious unfair treatment that she confronted the man who asked her to stand. She narrated the experience with a lot of passion but also angst and frustration especially as she wasn't sure if the treatment she received was as a result of her race or not:

> I don't know if this was because of race or not…I don't know but basically I got into the luas because I used to ride it every single day. You know they have those two seats that are for…the ones that have a picture of a pregnant person or a person in a wheel chair or with a cane…and so anyway I'm on the train and that seat was available. I look around and ask does anyone want to.

Nia gestures with her hand asking if anyone wanted to sit before telling me 'they say no, I sit down' she then continues.

> At the next stop a lady gets on with a cane. I immediately jump up and let her seat there. You know we're going, we're going, 2 stops from there that lady gets off and another seat becomes available and I look around and do the same thing. Does anyone want to...

Again, Nia gestures with her hands to ask if anyone wants to sit and again she tells me 'they say no'. So she sits and begins to look at her phone. 'And then I kind of feel somebody indicating kind of when you feel someone's eyes on you?' She recalls. Continuing,

> So I look up and I see this man indicating and pointing to the sign. I don't think he said can you read? But he said something along those lines and pointed again to the sign and then said do you want to give your seat up for this lady? And Lilian to me this lady….she didn't look elderly she didn't look like she had anything that I could tell to know that I should give my seat up. So I immediately said ok and jumped up. And as I jumped up I looked because there's four seats like that you know and there was someone in each of those seats. They were all white And I wondered why he specifically asked me to get up.

After Nia stood up, she continued to reflect on why she was the one specifically chosen to stand and even though she admitted that she normally didn't speak up in such scenarios, she decided to ask the man his reason for singling her out

> Like you know I just want to ask you know there's three other people sitting in seats. And mind you Lilian one was a man who was quite young, built dude. One was a woman and one was an older man, I wouldn't say elderly but maybe 50s, late 50s and so I said I just wonder you know of all of the people sitting here why was it that you asked me to give up my seat? And he kind of just started to kick off a bit at me saying Oh I'm not going to ask that old man to get out of the seat, you should have been aware that we just passed St. James' hospital and you should have given up your seat and I was like look I ride this train every single day. I'm very aware of people that need to sit but I just don't understand why it is specifically like you specifically tapped me to ask me to get out of my seat…

Nia then explains how another passenger jumped into her confrontation with the man

> Anyway, one Irish girl did jump into the debate and she said I'm sorry he asked you to get out of your seat? And I was like yeah and she said to him – you don't know if she's pregnant you know or if she has a disability or something like that…

This was not the only time Nia experienced being asked to give up her seat in a bus or on the Luas.

> But yeah and then this other guy, same, exact same situation. He asked me to get out of my seat and said he had a disability…couldn't tell but then again there were three other people sitting in those and the only difference I could perceive was that I am a person of colour. So I was like why did that happen more than once?...

Nia also shares an experience where what she felt was racist behaviour was being projected at a group of black teenagers on the train

> There was a time where this group of black kids were on the train. They were literally just sitting there. They were being kids. I personally think all teenagers

> are annoying and loud but what I noticed is the kids were sitting there and this group of older white, white Irish I'm guessing sitting on the train kept staring at them but the kicker was that down the other way was a group of white Irish kids, and they were not getting the same kind of looks and I just was like, that's weird…

The feeling of not being sure whether one had experienced a racist incident is one that was raised at different times by the women, and one that I have experienced time and again.

Of Homes, Neighbours and Housing

Homes are usually supposed to be safe havens were people can find sanctuary, irrespective of what else goes on around them. For us Black women in Ireland, many times, the sanctity of our homes have been desecrated by racist intrusions that leave us feeling unsafe in our supposedly safe space. In this section, I present our experiences of racism in and around our homes as well as our experiences of accessing accommodation.

We had just been issued a tenant's notice to quit. I had lived in that house from the day I moved into Ireland – 7 years! As much as I would have loved to, I didn't have time to grieve the emotional disconnection I would feel from leaving all the memories I had made in that house behind. There were more pressing issues - We could not afford to buy our own house (our mortgage negotiations had fallen through) and Ireland was in the middle of a housing crisis. I got on daft.ie rental website and started searching for a house in our area to rent. I finally found one and sent an email. The landlord responded very quickly and asked for further information as well as a reference. I sent all the information he needed and sent a reference from the landlord. He responded, telling me that he was happy with our details. He then asked us to call the next day to arrange to come see the place. At 6pm the next day, my husband and I called the phone number he provided

'Hello', my husband said

'Hello' he replied, 'who is this?'

'This is Daere, Lilian's husband. You asked us to call to see the place…'

Silence on the other end.

'Hello?' My husband continued.

'I'm sorry, I no longer want to rent out the house to you.'

'Is there a problem sir?' I jumped in to ask. 'Please. Is there something else you want us to prove?'

I was desperate. We had only a few more days for our tenancy to be up and I had put all my hope on this property.

'I do not want to rent it out to you he said'. And ended the call.

It hit me that this was the first time he had heard our voices. We had negotiated via email and I had signed all correspondence as Lilian. When we spoke, our accents gave us away…

…At least, this is all I could think of as a reason for the sudden change of heart.

Eleanor told me about an incident that happened on the day she arrived Ireland. She was trying to gain entry into her apartment in Dublin. As she opened the door leading to the shared hall way of the apartment, she accidently bumped into someone who also lived in the apartment complex. She narrated

> let's say on the first day when I came to Ireland, because you know, I came from Africa we are not used to being you know, we don't know I didn't even know that there was a word like racism. I didn't even know. When I came here. I was living down in Dublin. I was opening the door, and I didn't see the person behind me and I said, oh, sorry. And he said, Yeah, me too. What are you doing in this country? And I was confused because I didn't understand what he said and that was my first experience.

A few days after the first encounter, Eleanor received hate mail in her post box, asking that she return to her country as well as threatening her life. Even though she could not be certain, she felt that it came from the same man who she mistakenly bumped into a few days before

> And I was confused and after two days, in my post box, I found threatening letters to threaten me. And I had to take it to the management to call the guards. And that was my first time … experience, and I had to point him out. because I found him at the door. Then I never experienced anything when I was living in that building anymore. Yeah, so that was my first time experience. It was scary because I didn't understand it…

The experiences the women had were not always as threatening or as dangerous as Eleanor's experience with the death threats. Eleanor herself shares another encounter she had at a different house. She had moved to a house out in the country and had a white neighbour who owned a large dog and who continued to allow the dog cross into Eleanor's garden and destroy her plants even after she had complained. Eleanor kept on

bringing the behaviour of the dog to her attention, but she insisted that "she didn't care and that she bought the dog at an expensive price and so couldn't get rid of it."

Mbasiti told me of an experience she had when she lived in an apartment complex. She was cooking a native Nigerian dish in her kitchen. She then opened the door that leads to a common hallway and a neighbour began to comment about how the food was 'stinking'.

> so I cook my native food and open my door. And this guy comes and starts spraying (air freshener) and making comments. Oh my god what's stinking here. Oh my god please open the door. Oh my god. When I open my door, I perceive their garlic and the other things they use, their spices but then that's their diet, their cuisine, you know.

On one of our research walks, Nomthandazo told me about the fear she has had to live with, in the neighbourhood where she lives. She tells me of how her mum's car was defaced and scratched by white neighbours and how those same neighbours came into their back garden through the fence and stole their dog. When I probed about if they reported, she replied

> we are tired of reporting. My neighbours are from the travelling community and it appears the guards don't want to confront them. They never do anything so we don't bother anymore

I have had my own fair share of experiences in my neighbourhood. I moved into a new house after my husband and I had successfully secured a mortgage. We were informed about a WhatsApp group for the estate which we gladly subscribed to, as we did not have any connections or links with people who could do important work around the new house like plumbers and electricians. There was a lot of information sharing on the group which was very good. Soon, we began to notice a trend. When people with foreign sounding names laid complaints or asked for help, no one would answer or offer to help. When any of the other more popular people who were mostly whites raised issues, no matter how flimsy or insignificant, they would get a barrage of answers and messages of concern. All this didn't bother me much until a neighbour, a black woman, raised an alarm on the group that she had contacted someone from the estate to do some work for her and that he was in her house at the time she was writing the message, threatening her life. She was alone with her 10 year old and was terrified and needed help. No response from the group. She sent another message – 'Please help!' to which people in the group responded – this is not the forum for this kind of thing, please. I had never met this woman but I knew from her name that she was Nigerian. I picked up my phone, called the guards and

gave them her address. I then called her to re-assure her that I had called the guards. The guards didn't show up for the next 3 or 4 hours. What struck me though was that a few months later, a white person raised an alarm concerning this same man and there was an outpour of sympathy and reprimand for the man. This incident immediately made me feel unsafe. That black woman could have been me!

One night in between our scheduled interviews, Nomthandazo called me in tears. I panicked and tried to get her to communicate what the issue was. She kept on repeating in tears, 'This is all so tiring aunty'. I eventually got her to calm down and she narrated how her mum had returned home from a walk and found that her car had been defaced by an unusual amount of phlegm. 'It was a disgusting sight auntie', she narrated. Theirs was the only car defaced and they were the only black people in that part of the estate. Her mum, took up a napkin, got a bucket of water and started cleaning her car. As she cleaned, she burst out crying. 'My mum is very strong and I have seen her cry only few times so you can imagine my panic, aunty' Nomthandazo narrated. 'I want you to include this in your research auntie. I want people to see and hear what we have to live with. I want them to know that there is no safe place. Not even our own homes. The hate is everywhere.'

Immigrant Council of Ireland corroborates our experiences and reports that the highest cohort of people who experience racism are Black Africans with 48% of racist incidents occurring in or around their homes. (Chonaill & Buczkowska, 2016). In the report, Black Africans in social housing reported racially motivated verbal attacks, physical attack to life and property, and threats. The resultant effect on the victims ranged from "sleep disturbance, anxiety, fear of leaving their home or of leaving children to play outside", to more life threatening impacts like "miscarriages". (Chonaill & Buczkowska, 2016, p. 8). The recent housing crisis in Ireland has also reportedly caused an increase in racist encounters towards minoritised immigrants. This is also as a result of the proliferation of right-winged ideology that blames the crisis on an influx of migrants – a totally unfounded and racist claim (Lacey, 2022).

Chapter Summary

This chapter showed how as Black women, our everyday lives in Ireland are coloured by racist encounters. The pervasiveness of the encounters was one issue that was continually highlighted in different ways by the women. Nomthandazo's conclusion about racism being "like air, it's everywhere", captured a lot of the sentiments that I encountered in my

conversations. The difficulty many times in pinpointing whether something we had encountered was actually racism or not, was an added layer to the complexity of invisible and structural racism. Whether in our own cars or in public transportation; in our own homes or on the streets, we encountered racism. The women described responding to this kind of racism in different ways – some by isolating themselves, others by speaking up or by just walking away from the situations. What was however common to all of us, was that the frequency of the racist encounters had taken a toll on our physical and psychological health, and while we laughed as we shared some of our stories, our hearts remained heavy at the bleakness of the whole situation.

Igwe bu Ike: A Parable

A dark girl found herself in a race. To win, she had to run many laps. As she crossed the line signifying a new lap, she sensed an invisible weight on her back. She couldn't see the weight, but she could feel it. She tried to ask if anyone noticed anything on her back but no one around understood what she was saying. Others seemed to be running with so much ease. She continued to run, determined not to let the invisible weight stop her. Lap after lap, the weight became heavier. Her pace naturally became slower.

'What is wrong with me? Why am I so slow?' she thought.

'Why can't I be like the other runners? They run with such elegance and grace.'

Just then, one of the light-skinned elegant runners stopped to grab one of the drinks positioned for runners at the side of the tracks. 'Excuse me' the dark girl said, 'please, how are you able to run so fast with the weight on your back?'.

What weight? she responded.

'The weights that come on you when you cross a lap'.

The light-skinned runner looked at her as if she was crazy.

'I'm not sure I understand what it is you are saying. Running is tough but if you are well prepared, you will make it. Perhaps you didn't train properly in advance. There are a couple of others over there at the back complaining about imaginary weights The problem is not any weight, the problem is your lack of preparation' she said with a hint of irritation and off she ran.

The dark girl continued trudging on. Now, she was more convinced that she had a problem. As more light-skinned runners whizzed past, she noticed other dark-skinned runners struggling with the same invisible weights. She managed to drag herself up to them. 'Hi.' She said. 'Are you ok?'

'No I'm not' one of the other dark runners responded. 'There must be something wrong with me. Everyone seems to be running so fast yet there are things slowing me down. I can't see the things. I don't understand the things yet they are so real, I can hardly move'. The dark-skinned runner was relieved! 'Thank God. Finally, I get someone who

understands my challenge. You are not alone. Look! I too can't move fast enough because of the weight.'

As they continued sharing their tales of difficulty, other dark-skinned runners began to stop and join them. The weights were on their back too but they were relieved that others could understand their strange invisible problem.

The strangest thing then began to happen as they stayed together to talk. The weights began to shrink. As they shrank, feeling lighter, some took off to continue the race but for those ones, the burdens suddenly became heavier again and made them even slower than they were before. It took a while of starting and struggling and starting and struggling before the dark runners realised that their strength was in their being together. So, together, they moved. Arms locked in arms. Weights reducing, speed increasing and with new realisation, they chanted *Igwe bu ike*! (In togetherness lies our strength!)

Chapter Seven

Listen to Us, Please (Findings III)

Chapter Introduction

In this chapter, I present the last set of themes I extracted from my conversations with the women – our encounters with racism in schools, colleges and at our work places. This chapter is particularly important because one of the objectives of this research is to propose an anti-racist and culturally responsive pedagogy for use in adult education in Ireland. Whilst acknowledging significant crossover in the day-to-day of our lives, I treat each aspect separately; school, college and then work, as together, we share experiences of discrimination, structural disadvantage, verbal abuse, subtle exclusion and struggles with negative stereotypes. I also include a theme that I have captioned 'Words to the White" in this chapter - I have included under that theme, words that some of the women wished that white people would hear. As was typical of the two preceding chapters, there are times when I have deliberately chosen to quote participants at length and not to potentially silence them through the act of paraphrasing.

Theme 6: Experiences in Schools, Colleges and Work Places

Experiences in Primary and Secondary School

Nomthandazo, Naomi and Christiana, who attended primary and secondary school in Ireland, shared their experiences of navigating life amidst constant racist undertones. Mbasiti and Eleanor also talked about their children's time in primary and secondary schools in Ireland. From as early as primary school, the women narrated being aware of structural disadvantage that hung over them, just because they were Black. Naomi, describing an example of a rule that affected her in a disproportionate way as a Black person in a primary school where there were only two other black pupils, says

> Even in primary school they had like rules but the rule only really affected black women. Like in primary school they said that black girls weren't allowed to have any other hair colour but black. So if you did braids you couldn't have brown, you could only have black. It's like that only affected black women because you obviously see that there is white girls with brown hair…

Still explaining the preponderance of structural disadvantage, Naomi gives another example from her secondary school, of a rule that affected black students in a disproportionate way from their white counterparts. Speaking of her secondary school, a

catholic girls-only school with about 700 students, Naomi who had only four other black students in her class year, explained:

> And then in secondary school as well they said that you can only mix with your own home room which is fine but other white people would mix with other homerooms but when they see black people doing it then they would say you can only mix with your own home room, because they would know that there would only be like one black person per homeroom. So once they see us coming together they knew for sure that we were mixing but when they saw other white people doing it they couldn't really know…it's just little stuff like that where you know it's a rule but it's like its only really affecting a certain demographic…

Nomthandazo started her narrative about the racism she experienced in secondary school by speaking about how some white teachers were insensitive to racial issues. She told me about an incident that happened in her secondary school in an English literature class, with a book that contained a racial slur (*To kill a mockingbird*). Even though Nomthandazo approached the teacher to explain that she was uncomfortable with the use of the word in the class, nothing was done to address her concerns. The teacher continued to allow people use the racial slur aloud in the class which increased the racial abuse that Nomthandazo faced:

> From that book, people were getting comfortable saying the N word to us like in our classes and stuff especially when they were reading the book, and I was just like is it because like they are obliged to say the word because it is a book?

Nomthandazo's discomfort was not an isolated reaction to the book. Parents of Black children in 2022, instituted a formal campaign against the inclusion of the book on the Junior Certificate Curriculum (Moore, 2020). Four years later, the complaints are still being investigated by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. Nomthandazo, visibly upset about the memories of that time of her life, queried the rationale behind the public reading of a book that she felt added neither moral nor literary value to the lives of students at that level.

She then narrated how an obviously more racially aware and sensitive substitute teacher was brought in to teach that same English class and refused to allow the offensive term to be read aloud in the class. She explained that it was when the new teacher came on board that she realised that it was not a policy requirement to use the racial slur.

> I used to think is it because of the book (for junior cert) that they have to say these words, until we had a substitute teacher cos our English teacher was ill or something. So our substitute teacher took us and she had to read the book until she said I don't really like this book and I will not say any of the racial slurs in this book, all throughout when she was reading it she never said the words or allowed

> anyone to say the words. So then I thought if she is not saying the words then why is the other teacher saying it and it just would just irritate me a lot because it's like why?

Nomthandazo and I spoke about the impact the stance the second teacher took on the issue had on her interaction with the class and we both agreed that the level of racial awareness of a teacher could translate to the success or otherwise of a Black student.

One thing Nomthandazo continued to reiterate was how she didn't feel listened to whenever she reported racist incidents in school. Apart from her example with the literature book, she cited other examples about being provoked in school by being called racist appellations and being ignored when she reported.

> One thing I don't like is when it is in school and nothing is being done about it. Most people report but there is no point reporting because nothing is going to get done. You report once and you see that it doesn't get done so there is no point reporting again. …that's why many people take matters in their own hands and end up fighting and causing disruptions…

This low motivation to report racist incidents described by Nomthandazo is described succinctly by Sara Ahmed in *Complaint,* when she writes that "those who complain can end up feeling filed away or binned or buried" (p. 38) every time their complaints are dismissed. Nomthandazo spoke about feeling unimportant enough to get anyone to look into the things she complained about. Other research done in Ireland has shown a reluctance of Blacks and other ethnic minorities to report crime to the authorities, as the authorities hardly respond appropriately (Michael & Reynolds, 2022; Michael, 2015).

Naomi shared with me, her reluctance to report or call out obvious racist incidents that occurred in school as she didn't want to be seen as a trouble-maker. In her words,

> there were a couple of people that would speak out but I never really… I was never the type to cause trouble. I wanted to blend in as much as possible. You know, in my head it's like, we're going to finish soon anyway it's not going to be for life.

The concept of speaking out about things and being labelled a trouble maker was a recurrent theme in our conversations and I captured some of these narratives in chapter six. Mbasiti, also in one of our conversations, highlighted how those who called out oppressive or discriminatory practices in her work place were labelled as trouble makers and 'black-listed'. Sara Ahmed (2023, p.18) captures this dilemma aptly when she writes –"If you expose a problem, you pose a problem; if you pose a problem, you become the problem.

Eleanor and Mbasiti who did not attend primary and secondary school in Ireland, had stories to share from their children's experience. Mbasiti had dropped her daughter off in school and decided to look through pictures on the notice board. She noticed that there were no pictures of black children on the board but didn't take it to heart until her daughter reported her experience of going for a school trip and being excluded from the over 50 pictures that were taken by the school. She went into the school after another of such trips to verify:

> I went into the school to see. There were 22 African students that went on that trip the only picture I saw was of a mixed raced boy. I looked at the pictures from beginning to end. I could see one particular white child in like 16 places…I said no, I need to talk to the principal…

Mbasiti explained that her daughter had a few times expressed concern about what she perceived as an unfair treatment of the black students in her school. Her daughter reported an almost constant isolation of Black students for disciplinary action. Mbasiti's daughter confronted one of the teachers about this selective over-disciplining of black boys and she was told that they were being disciplined because they were "loud". This accusation of being loud levelled against Black bodies is not an isolated event.. I have sat in meetings in my university where white students complained that their *problem* with the Black students is that "they were too loud." The message was that it was a cultural problem and that that culture of loudness did not fit into the university setting.

Eleanor whose children are in secondary school, worries about what she believes is unfair and negative treatment being meted out to her son. She took her time to share some happenings that she was made to be aware of. Even though Eleanor was very jovial during our discussions and shared so many laughs with me during our conversations, her words while speaking about the experience of her son, carried with them the deep pain she felt at the unfair treatment of her son. She explained that her son is 'hyperactive with a quick tongue' but '…Not in a bad way, … in a funny way…' She describes him as a boy who sees humour in everything but who is also very vocal about the things he believes in. She believes his personality left the teacher feeling overwhelmed most times. '…Every time he even moved his face to the left, he is removed from the class' she explains 'so practically his first year, he spent his days on the corridor.' She tries to have a talk with her son to be as calm and quiet as possible in class. Her son then narrates the extent to which he is constrained by the actions of the teacher:

> He says Mom, even if I smile I'm taken out of the room so I'm not even allowed to smile. I'm not allowed to talk. I'm not allowed to turn around to look at my friends and if my pencil falls down, I'm in trouble. Anything I do. I'm just taken out from the room.

Eleanor narrated how it was a full year of being asked to leave the class over the slightest issues. Her son settled in better in the second year, made a lot of white Irish friends but was still unfairly picked on. She narrates an incident where her son was not directly involved in an incident, yet was made to face consequences for it. He and his friends were walking back home from school for their lunch break when some of his friends mischievously took a trolley from the shopping centre. He did not touch the trolley but watched as his white Irish friends did. A teacher passed by, saw the white Irish boys playing with the trolley, and implicated him in the whole scenario. He ended up being the only one who served the detention – all the White boys were let off the hook.

> So he went to school. And the teacher said, you are grounded and he says why am I grounded and you know, he's more like, very outspoken. Very calm. He doesn't have anger. You know, he doesn't raise his voice. He just points out his points. He is that kind of person so he says why? Why am I being grounded? And she said because at lunchtime you were causing issues in the shop. … And he said that wasn't me it was my friend, and she said, well, you were there. So you are motivating him to do it. I didn't motivate him. We were just walking he said. He just turned around and did it. Even if I wasn't there, he would have done it. But then the point came was he was the one grounded, my son, but his friend was not given detention or grounded.

Eleanor noticed her usually jovial and happy son become very withdrawn and angry. He did not share the incident with her initially but when she probed, he poured out his frustrations. Eleanor was still visibly hurt by how she saw her son while she told me this story. After he explained the incident to her in detail, Eleanor decided not to go into the school. I asked Eleanor why she didn't go into the school to let them know how she felt. She said she didn't want to "get her son into any more trouble" by laying a formal complaint; again, buttressing the issue Mbasiti and Sarah Ahmed (2023) raised about people reporting racism and getting into trouble. Ahmed (2021) writes about the danger and fatalism of complaints – where people are discouraged from complaining because rather than change the status quo, the people become seen as those who "rock the boat" (p. 78). Eleanor, acknowledging that reporting hardly did any Black person any good, didn't want her son to be picked on, and so she let it slide, hoping that things would simmer down and her son would be allowed to be himself. Sadly, not too long after, there was yet another incident. Her son was walking home and a different group of white boys who weren't even in his circle of friends were causing mischief on the road he was walking

along. Despite obviously not being involved, he was given detention again. This time, he refused the punishment. Again, Eleanor refused to come into the school. She felt she needed to give her son the agency to handle it. He returned to school and insisted that he did not do any wrong. Eleanor spoke about other obviously discriminatory incidents that occurred, which left her son feeling demotivated. He no longer wanted to study or relate with people. He had become very withdrawn and even though she had resolved not to go into the school, she felt things had gotten to a head. In another incident, her son was racially attacked and his friends who were with him stepped in to defend him. The school got involved, suspended him and at that point Eleanor knew that she could no longer stay quiet. She shares the story with me in obvious anger and hurt. The incident happened at a time where she (Eleanor) had had surgery and was recuperating. Her son had asked for permission not to leave the school for lunch as it was Ramadan season and he was fasting. The teacher declined his request and insisted that he must go out with others during lunch. On that day, he wandered at lunch time with his friends

> They were walking and he said this boy had for the whole day been calling me a lot of racist words. But I didn't care. I just ignored him literally. So I think it was irritating the Irish boy because he's not getting any satisfaction from his attacks to my son. He was literally ignoring him. Okay, so he was walking and this boy passes with his bike and he started calling him you effing nigger and all these words of racism. And my son just looked at him. He said, I just looked at him. And next thing my friends who were Irish. They jumped him and started kicking his bike. So the boy went to school and started complaining that his bike was broken, he was beaten and then he gives the school (Son's name) and the other children's name. Guess who got suspended and who got the punishment? My son! He didn't do anything. He was the one being attacked!

Eleanor explains the toll this incident had on both her son, herself and their home.

> He became so angry and he came straight to his room. He was kicking everything in his room at this point And I was like what's wrong with him? why is he kicking his room? So I said we'll leave him until he calms down and then I will call him and have a chat with him. ….. And he started explaining that situation to me, and I said okay, I said let the teacher call me. Literally, I was so angry but I couldn't show him. When he left the room. The room was spinning. I couldn't take it but I didn't do anything. So you know in an Islamic way we have to do prayer in order to calm yourself when you're super angry. So I went and did the ablution and I prayed and I calmed down myself.

Eleanor proceeded to have a phone meeting with the school to raise her issues of concern as to why her son's attacker was being protected and why her son was being punished when he was the victim. The school refused to deal with the racial abuse and was fixated on punishing Eleanor's son. Eventually the school admitted that they were going to give

classes to the boy who had racially abused her son, have a chat with the other white boys who actually beat up the boy but give her son detention. Eleanor admitted that she lost her cool! She was vocal about how unacceptable she thought the treatment of her son was. She pointed out the absurdity of someone being racially abused and yet not having any form of protection from the school:

> What you guys are doing is you are motivating racism. Because what you're doing is you're telling that boy it is okay. Go ahead and do racist things to other people and we'll put it on the boy who is harmed emotionally even harming him more by doing anything instead of protecting him. You're harming him even more. I find it very ridiculous for this time and age. And your school is supposed to be a school of different races. I'm just trying to understand because nothing of this conversation makes sense to me. Can you explain to me how should I explain to my son. Teach me. you tell me how to tell him that he was abused? And instead of being protected, he was even abused some more. You tell me how to deal with that. … they started stuttering.

Half way into the conversation, the Vice Principal of the school joins the meeting and immediately starts raising her voice at Eleanor. Her demeanour is a trigger to Eleanor and naturally, Eleanor reacts, speaking to the vice principal in her "African voice" and demanding for them to "make the whole scenario make sense to her". The Vice Principal rudely walked out of the meeting and left Eleanor with the teacher.

Eleanor and I took out some time to unpack the event. Eleanor who had been very jovial until then, related this incident with a lot of pain in her voice. Her son had been racially abused, punished for the abuse and she also had been treated very disrespectfully by the Vice Principal of the school. Ruby Hamad (2020), explains that 'blacks are disbelieved when they try to shed light on their experiences of racism' and that the lack of support they receive adds to their initial trauma" (p.6,7). Eleanor's pain was raw and almost palpable as she narrated this incident. We both sat in a silence laden with sorrow and anger for a while before we could go on with the conversation.

Nomthandazo validates the experience of Eleanor's son as she too speaks about being picked on for no cogent reason. When asked if she could describe what racism looks like in the classroom, she responded saying:

> for example you have to be very careful in the classroom as well because what I do and what a white person would do I know that I will be picked out first or I'll be the one to face the consequences and it has happened to me a lot of times throughout my being in education …. You just have to be careful and even if you don't do anything as well, as a black person even when I won't do anything and let's say they are talking to me, I will be the one to get into trouble for it…"

These experiences shared by the children of the women and by some of the women themselves are not isolated occurrences. In 2021, Donald McClure published the findings of a research where he explored the experiences of three second generation migrant children from Nigeria in primary school. The experiences of the children were identical to some that were shared by the women in this research (McClure, 2021). Meadhbh Ni Dhuinn and Elaine Keane (2021) also reported findings from their research which showed how BME students were isolated for discipline even when students from the dominant ethnic origin participated in the acts in question, how teachers participated in racist bullying and how there was no encouragement offered to BME students to continue to Higher Education.

Experiences in College

All but one of the women who participated in this research had completed at least one year in an Irish Further Education College or University and they all had something to share about their experiences in educational spaces. The issues they raised ranged from outright discrimination and unfair treatment, to more subtle but pervasive structural issues that had an impact on their lives.

Cheta spoke about the attitude of the professors in her medical school towards her and other black students. She explained:

> I had attended school in Ireland so I could understand the accent a bit but it was still very challenging because these are professors. It wasn't the one on one ratio I was used to. It was a huge class of 301 students and whenever we went up to them to ask questions, they would roll their eyes and (at first) I wasn't sure if it was me or if that was just their disposition but to a certain degree it was me and my fellow Nigerian or should I say dark skinned people because you could just feel the difference in their approach with the Irish students. They would answer them and even give the extra explanation

This was not her only experience with what seemed to her like racial discrimination. Cheta narrated another incident that occurred in one of her clinical examinations that initially left her wondering if she had experienced racism or not.

> I remember one exam I had. I think it was a lady signing us in. I greeted her and I think I had spoken with an Irish accent and she said where are you from? Or Where did you come from? And I said Dublin because I thought she meant where I stay like my apartment. She said Oh really? Dublin? You need to tell your examiner that immediately before they start examining you…I just dismissed her because I was really nervous about the exam. I didn't think much on it. It was later it occurred to me that she meant that I should tell them I was Irish as opposed to Nigerian. That immediately told me that it makes a difference…

Cheta's experiences were not isolated ones. Nomthandazo also spoke about the attitude of professors and lecturers in her course of study towards Blacks as opposed to whites.

> in education, they are always babying and cuddling the white person. Any small thing they rush to tell them we have counselling we have this, we have that and that works for them because the counsellors are white and all…but for us they automatically have this thing that we are strong enough. I don't know where they got it from that we are strong but they think that we are strong enough to handle all the things we are going through.

This perception of black women as stronger, more mature, more knowledgeable or in some cases less innocent than they really are, continued to come up in my conversations with the women. Black Feminist writers and theorists (for instance, Ruby Hamad (2020 p.27)), have also written about this 'imaging' of the Black woman. The consequence of this is that Black women are disadvantaged and are overlooked for interventions that they may need.

Nomthandazo also narrated another incident she encountered when she entered a competition in her university. She was adamant about being more qualified than the other participants but was side stepped and the prize was awarded to white people instead. Part of her discomfort stemmed from the interviewer disbelieving that she could achieve a particular grade that she had actually achieved:

> During the interview they asked me …. for my grades. And He said, what's your highest grades that you got last year? I said 81% He then said are you sure? I said I'm sure said yeah, I'm very sure you can check my record. He continued asking if I was sure not believing that I could get that score. He said I would never give anybody that score. That score is too high. What subject did you do that in? And I said I don't know. I don't know… you can check my record because I'm not lying. When the list came out all the people who got it were white… every single white person like they all had Irish names 100% White including the spider man guy and he did not do not do good in his grades anyways, but he still got the position and that was obviously about race

When Nomthandazo narrated her suspicion to another colleague who knew the lecturer from the previous year, her colleague confirmed that the particular lecturer had made racist comments publicly.

Mbasiti, shared two similar stories of the perception of not being good-enough held by her white teachers. Mbasiti was enrolled in a level 3 QQI course, despite having a Master's degree (QQI Level 9 equivalent) from Nigeria. In spite of the constructive erasure of her past and her qualifications, she settled in, to complete the communications and personal skills course. She submitted an assignment one day and the lecturer in charge, suspected

her of copying the assignment from someone else. Like Nomthandazo's story, Mbasiti too was not considered good enough to submit work to a certain standard. She narrates:

> And she came to me one day and said please can you write where you got this word from? I didn't understand what she was saying. She said because this English you wrote down here is very sophisticated you know. She was asking me what is the meaning of this word. ..i cant even remember the word now. I told her "Oh! I just wrote it." and I laughed. I thought she was joking. She was asking me where did I get this word from. What is the meaning of the word and I explained it to her and that's when I knew she was serious. So she got a phone and she opened the phone and the way I said the word was what was written in the dictionary and she looked at me and said you mean you just composed this right now? I said yes. She said ok she will let the coordinator know. …it took me some time to process. Do you know it was almost a week after that incident that I realized – did they think that I could not write that word?

On that course, Mbasiti was elected as a class leader and was nominated to give a speech in a function where the head of the ETB was going to be in attendance. The teacher tried to give the speech-maker role Mbasiti had been elected to do, to a white person who declined. When the teacher could not replace Mbasiti, she then wrote out word for word everything she wanted Mbasiti to say in the speech and asked Mbasiti to go rehearse the pre-written speech, with an English Teacher. Mbasiti ended up ignoring the pre-prepared speech. She prepared her own speech and delivered it to very high standards. I have also experienced being recruited to deliver a training in a school. A week before the training was to commence, I was called up by the principal of the school and given a step by step schedule of how my training was to go. I of course did not use his schedule and ended up delivering the training I had prepared to a professional standard. There appears to be a low expectation stereotype projected on us Black women.

Naomi, in speaking about her experience in college, focused more on invisible and structural issues she experienced in her sojourn in the university. She spoke about subtle differences in treatment between the African society and other societies.

> And it was just like, little stuff like that you can't really fight it, but you know exactly what's going on. For example, there was an event that the African society had. And people from other universities came, and when the event was over, people were leaving, as they were leaving people started fighting outside. And I think someone called Campus Security I think we called campus security actually because we were like, please break up this fight.

She then explains to me how 'all of a sudden', an investigation was launched into the African Society and it was implied that the society had in some way encouraged the fighting. "… these people, they don't even attend the university in the first place!" she

tells me, expressing her continued bewilderment on the treatment of her group. She then narrates how the society was banned from doing events for like three months, because they were under investigation. She is convinced that her society was singled out explaining:

> instances can happen but there was another society -a white society that had like they did something that like the, I think it was even like in the news for a bit, where they had like this event of theirs, where they were trying to get people to kiss and stuff like that. And they weren't shut down … in our case, we called for help, we were the ones that were now under investigation and we weren't allowed to do events for like three months. So, it was little stuff like that, that you can't really fight but you know that if we were white society, we wouldn't be getting the same treatment. So, yeah, that's kind of what I remember from uni.

After this, Naomi distanced herself from the African society explaining 'because I was like, I came here for a degree, so … I don't want anything to now affect that … because from the way that they treat the African society, anybody involved, kind of gets in trouble you know…'

Confirming that her perception of unfair treatment towards Blacks was not a fluke, she cited another example to buttress her point:

> the choir society had like 20 members was getting higher funding than the African Society which had like 120 members. And it was just like little stuff like that too where you can't fight it but you really know what is going on.

In the classroom, Naomi felt that there was a perception of unseriousness projected on Black students which lingered, irrespective of their actual performance

> I think they definitely…probably see black people that way – that we are unserious…it has happened a couple of times where we would say something and they will be like o really and look down on us but later confirm it and said o yeah you were right

Some of the women shared their concerns about the lack of representation of Black people in the teaching community as well as the absence of racially appropriate resources in the curriculum. For Mbasiti, after she finished from the level 3 Communications course, she enrolled in a level 5 Health Care course. She shared a particular incident where she suggested a change in the curriculum to better reflect the changing Irish population by including African and Asian cuisine to the kind of food that was being spoken about. Her suggestion was turned down and she was accused of 'going too far':

Nomthandazo also shared her concerns about a lack of visible representation of black people in course materials as well as a reluctance to discuss issues of race and racism. She

too, shared an instance of where she attempted to bring up the subject in class but was silenced by the lecturer

> And also even in the curriculum like in learning and in education… teaching is always about a white person or white companies. There is nothing about black people or like in college, cause we talk about trends a lot and we talk about community because that's. what we are, we are a service in the hospitality industry, so they talk about LGBTQ, they talk about … what else would they talk about.. they'll talk about different things but they would never talk about the black community. They would never be educated on that in any way. And there was a time where I tried to bring it up in my assignments and it was thought as too bold of a statement or too em… cause I always talk about my experiences in that and they'll be like oh there's no proof about that or …. that's just too bold to say. but when I want to go and try backup what I'm saying there is no articles to talk about it there's no research done or publicised to like back up what I'm saying…

This accusation of 'going too far', or "being too bold" again, fits the narrative that people who call out racial issues are tagged as trouble makers.

Both Naomi and Nomthandazo are frustrated by the absence of black teachers in their schools.

> But it's kind of hard when you're in college cos the majority of people are white. It's only two black people there. Even at work, there's only two black people at work as well. So like, all of my surroundings are basically with white people. Because that's literally all where I go - college, work or my house. So it's kind of hard or I'll just be a loner and there isn't any like black people being employed like in the school, for like teaching and stuff…" (Nomthandazo).

Naomi also spoke about being in education for 13 years and never coming across a black teacher even once. She told me "I think it would have mattered if I had even one black teacher…just having someone that can maybe relate…". The women spoke about their interactions with classmates during group work while in college. Cheta made a particularly interesting comment about her interactions with the groups she was in while in Medical school

> Or maybe when we had group projects, which I absolutely hated, because then I was like… do you know how the Irish people, they will all just stick together and make those Irish jokes that I have no idea about and I will just go ha ha ha ha. When they laugh, I laugh, because… I don't just get it…

I remember my own experience with group work in one of the universities in Ireland and how awkward and exclusionary it felt when everyone avoided including me in their groups until they did not have any other choice.

The experiences the women shared about their sojourn in education were not all bad. Some shared 'good' stories about kind and understanding lecturers who were in tune with their peculiar needs as Black students. Cheta shared about the college where she attended her pre-medicine course

> I had my best experience in my first year in Ireland. I will recommend that school to anyone coming into the country especially from Africa for the first time. They were excellent teachers…I think they were used to our cohort of students…they were clearly experienced in dealing with young people, people who were not familiar with the environment…

Mbasiti similarly described her experience in the University as quite positive

> But getting to college, I saw a big difference, I saw a big difference in the way they dealt with me. I wonder if it is because I'm dealing with academics you know? Is it because of the way they are exposed in their way of thinking and research? And they have been able to. Because they are quite different, they talk to you with respect, they communicate with you, they involve you. It's quite inclusive. But on the other level it wasn't, you know

Both Mbasiti and Cheta attributed their positive experiences at the institutions, to the exposure and knowledge of the staff involved in each instance.

Experiences at Work

I had been on placement in the Further Education Youth Reach centre for about a month. We were two student teachers – myself and a colleague from my HDip Class. She was white. It took me a couple of weeks to notice that the assistant centre coordinator who was in charge of allocating us to classes would always allocate a particular student to me. This student presented with very challenging behaviour and was generally difficult to manage. At the end of the second month, it was now glaring. The lad was for me. My colleague always had the calm and quiet students. Even though I found a way to work around the challenges I had with that student, I was itching for an opportunity to mention my suspicions to the people in authority. My opportunity came. The head of the centre called me in for a chat and asked how I was finding the place. I was genuine in my response. There was lots of learning going on and I felt privileged to be in the space. I however wanted to understand the criteria for assigning student teachers to classes and particular students. She told me that there was no particular criteria that it was at the discretion of the assistant head of the centre. I smiled. She asked me what the issue was and I told her that I was wondering if my race had anything to do with a particular pattern of allocation where I constantly and continuously got a particular student even when my supervisors were coming to observe my practice. She was flustered by what she took as an allegation. O no she said! Actually, let me tell you what it is - (name of the assistant) has probably seen how compassionate and mature you are and knew you were better suited to this student than your colleague. From that day, there was a balance in the way the allocation was done. I was sure the initial allocation must have had something to do with my race. Especially as I was constantly treated like one of the students while my colleague was brought into the staff room, the inner jokes and conversations and I was left standing on the corridors. The situation was a bit awkward because my colleague and I got on quite well in and outside of class but she didn't seem to notice that I was treated differently or if she did, she never mentioned it.

All the women shared a spectrum of experiences they had had in their workplace. Some of their experiences ranged from overt verbal abuse to more subtle discrimination, perceptions and unfair treatment. Some of the women reported feeling pressured to do more work in order to be accepted on the job.

We all shared stories about the inability to access employment in areas where were trained in. Mbasiti, Eleanor, Myself and Nomthandazo were all qualified in various disciplines but were unable to get jobs in those areas either because our degrees from our home countries were not recognised or because we just couldn't break the interview barrier. For those who could access some form of employment, racism on the job became an almost normal occurrence.

Eleanor who has stayed in Ireland for over 20 years had a lot to share about her experiences at work. She told me about a time when she was in between jobs and was referred to a job by a recruitment agency. She got to the office in a law firm, found that she wasn't actually a fit for the role but received a shocking amount of verbal abuse from the owner of the law firm so much so that she had to quit.

> So she literally sent me for the wrong job. The lawyer you know the owner of the organization, he was extremely verbally abusive to me. Very verbally, like he would call me useless. And you know, all these hurtful words, and I had to walk out of the office you know, I mean, I can't take this. picked my bag and walked out.

This was not Eleanor's only experience of verbal abuse at work. In one of her roles, on a different job working for a recruitment agency in Dublin, she explained that her co-worker would always make snide comments and remarks to her.

Mbasiti similarly narrated being bullied at work on some days. Working as a health care assistant in a residential home, she spoke about the staff verbally harassing her when she sat down to have lunch or just take a rest for even a short amount of time. She also spoke about the disproportionate number of Africans facing disciplinary actions in her organisation. According to her, "They report Africans a lot and most of them don't have a voice…"

Aside from verbal bullying, a number of the women spoke about unfair and discriminatory treatment that left them uncomfortable and feeling vulnerable in the work place. This is something that has been repeatedly reported in literature (See for instance, Joseph (2020)). Eleanor spoke about a time on her job when she had worked on a project till the end and the credit was given to a white female who did literally nothing on the job.

> So I did the job and everything all the way to almost the end. Then he said that I should work with another person who is an Irish girl. And I said she doesn't need to join me because I've already finished doing the project and just in the final paperwork. You know, like doing the report. And he said no, no because she needs to help you can't do everything on your own that we need to work as a team, you know, all these stories. So I had no choice, it was forced on me. And

> at the end, it looked like I didn't do anything all the work it was her name everywhere and she was given employee of the month for that and nothing for me

Similarly, Mbasiti spoke about the discontent which Black people felt in her work place when a more qualified black person was passed over for a much less qualified white person.

> You have someone that has worked for 2 years and some months and then someone that came 4 months ago. This person who has worked for 2 years or 2 months is a social carer. She has a Masters in social care and this other person who came 4 months ago read psychology. The other person is 50 years old but this person that just came is 22. She just got out of college and she is 4 months old and you are looking for a deputy team leader. They advertised it and both of them applied. This girl had not even finished her probation period. The next 2 weeks, oh congratulations this 22 year old girl is now the team leader….

Mbasiti continuing to give instances of unfair or discriminatory treatment in her work place, shared with me about how her colleagues made unnecessary reports to management whenever she or other black people relaxed or watched TV during the night shift even when the service users were asleep. The reports were made only when Black staff were involved. Mbasiti, still speaking about subjecting blacks in the office to a different standard, described how she and her other Black colleagues are constantly accused of lying about their shifts and constantly being requested to upload evidence that they did it – something that never happens with white staff. She described how the continuous nature of the discrimination gets her angry and causes a divided and polarised work force

> You see all these things are the things that really get me angry. And when you tell the truth, they don't want to believe the truth they believe themselves. So it's us against them. It's us against them kind of situation in offices. I've witnessed it in about two offices. They tend to support their persons they don't want to appreciate the work you do…

Both Cheta and Nkoyo, doctors in different parts of Ireland, made comments about jobs being allocated to white Irish doctors first, before considering Black doctors or about being treated unfairly in the hospitals as a result of their race.

> Dublin hospitals – it is the Irish that get it because the way they do it is that the Irish get a job first, so nearly every good job is taken. It is the remaining that we get…" (Cheta)
>
> Yeah, when I worked in Dublin it happened a lot like obviously the Irish space – they treat you like you are just there to support them…" (Nkoyo)

Cheta spoke about the negative attitudes of Nurses to her when she was a trainee doctor on the wards. She spoke about the implication their attitudes had on her education:

> The Nurses were my biggest problems. I even found the doctors more accommodating because I was a medical student….We had to find our patients to access our numbers and you have to ask the nurses because they are the ones who manage the patient and they would never allow me. I will go to the nurse after the doctor has allocated a patient to me and I will see the patient is awake but the nurse will insist that the patient is asleep and not allow me. It was such a hassle…

Mbasiti spoke about a negative perception the white staff had about the Black workers in her organisation and how that affected the allocation of shifts to staff, with Black staff always ending up scheduled to do 'nights'.

> And sometimes you keep wondering that we have different shifts and you keep wondering about how all the immigrants end up in night shift and weekends. And you keep wondering why? Because they feel you are just here to make money. Okay go and do it. You know those shifts are for you. We want the simpler shifts. We want to organize ourselves the simpler way…

Another theme raised and identified by the women was the tendency to go above and beyond in their work. The women felt they needed to give more, in order to be appreciated or to just be accepted. Cheta, Nomthandazo and Nkoyo shared their reflections on this practice of doing more and how it impacted them

> "In my work as well, I do extra shifts, I do more than other people, and I still don't get recognized for it…" (Nomthandazo)
>
> "… I definitely feel that I do more than I ordinarily should, just to prove to the patient that they can trust me because I am black and they would obviously be reluctant to trust me because of their stereotypes…." (Cheta)
>
> …So, it's difficult. You have to, for example you know everyone else needs like 100%. You have to go like 120% to prove yourself which is not how we should be. You know, you push yourself beyond a good way of building yourself. But just finding yourself wrapped around that fact that you are trying to prove that you are not meant to be stereotyped which is not what life should be…(Nkoyo)

Cheta spoke about how she believed this practice of doing more than she was required to, "had negatively impacted her working life".

Mbasiti told me about how she and other blacks felt excluded in her work place. Her frustration and pain was evident in the way she spoke about the refusal of her white colleagues to even engage or to do anything with the Black staff. She spoke about how schedules of duties were altered in order to maintain monochrome groups and discourage any form of interaction with Black staff:

> And when there's a teamwork, they want to work within themselves. When there's teamwork, like you have to team yourself to go out maybe like to service users or people, they want to team themselves. Then when they put you and them together, they look for ways to exclude themselves and go and team themselves together. You see people driving all the time – 2 are immigrants or 2 are natives. You keep wondering but when we saw the schedule of duties today, it wasn't like this, it was mixed why did it become like this? Because they go change it. They don't want to mix

Sometimes the culture or practices in the workplace of the women were such that structurally excluded them. Mbasiti described the office culture of purchasing food for staff and how it impacted her differently from other white staff in the organization:

> Then you go as a Black person, you open the fridge that stuff and you're supposed to have lunch from the fridge, but there's nothing for you to eat. And management is not even looking into that, to say okay, …. They don't table it for discussion at all. … all those kind of little things go a long way to put smiles, you know to motivate your staff to make them to be happy to want to work, you know. So you see most of the immigrants and other people, they come with their lunch, so they are the ones going to the microwave to do their lunch. Why is lunch free for some people and not free for some? nobody has given it much thought.

Mbasiti also highlighted the micro-aggressions that arose for her at work such as people accusing her of being angry and shouting when she tried to put across a point, people calling her out on her facial expressions even when she was just keeping a straight face and ignoring comments in meetings. She shared her experiences especially in staff meetings, where she is either shut down or ignored when she makes a point.

> They will just say yes, yes, it's okay. They kind of shut you down quietly. So, there's a way when you're having meetings, that they don't want to recognize you. They don't want to recognize your contributions and they don't want to recognize your opinions and appeal, and it's kind of deliberate And you keep wondering why is this going on? Why is my contribution not accepted? Are they scared of my contribution, are they not happy with my contribution?. I'm so low profiled, though. I don't really have a stake here. I don't have a say here. You know, so those kinds of things. Make you withdraw. Make you don't want to put in your best, kind of demoralizes you and kind of pricks that balloon in you

Nia shared an interesting perspective of how she felt at work. Nia works in the Irish branch of a large European Union Education Organization. She said:

> I don't know if it's so much racism, but I feel very, like on the outskirts of things, specifically, in a working context. So when I'm in my professional sphere, I feel like that it's all white and you don't really see other ethnicities represented. And I feel kind of, like, conflicted about feeling that way because there's something in the back of my head that goes, Oh, you're in Ireland? Well, you're in Europe. So why would you see more? And that kind of bothers me even that I think that that little voice in my head is trying to justify the fact that I'm the only non-white

> person in this space. So, I don't know if that's racism per se. But I do personally feel like it's all connected, you know, and I always think of like, a young girl who's feeling that way and how I'd not want her to feel that kind of way. So I know it's very like, I feel like I can't be how I would be if I was not in front of these people you know, like, I feel like I have that double consciousness even more so in Ireland than back home

Both Mbasiti and Nia spoke very emotively about the impact of George Floyd's death on them and the absence of spaces at work to acknowledge their grief. I spoke to Nia shortly after a young, white female teacher was murdered in Ireland. A murder that left the country in shock. Nia spoke about the fact that spaces were created at every meeting to speak about the murder but there was no space created to discuss the implications and impact of Floyd's death on her and on the black community.

> You're saying that just kind of blew my mind. Because when the teacher you know what, what happened to her the next day? Everyone talks about it. In every meeting that we had that was talked about, and when I'm thinking about it, organizationally, for me what happened with George Floyd, the first person that said anything was me, and it was when I wrote that piece of breathless and sent it to everyone because I couldn't speak to anyone except through those words that I wrote. In thinking about it and dissecting it now. There wasn't even I'm still like, another comment. But I remember everyone who responded to the email and everyone in the organization. Yeah. You know, i was the only person at the time there's two black people in my organization now me and another who just came, but at the time, I was the only person of colour and for me to have opened that space. I think that that's very problematic.

Mbasiti also spoke passionately about the same issue. She spoke about coming into work the day after the Floyd murder and a total silence on what had happened despite having so many black staff.

> I brought it up as an issue as at that time in my office I came to the office and it was like nothing happened. And I told them do you know, we immigrants here. We're grieving. Because it's one for all, all for one. I think something happened in the office. I told them I'm grieving. I can't do that, it's not even recognized. I personally talked to my manager, We're discussing something. And I asked her Do you know about this ? She said, Yes. I say you know? I think it would be so well, I will have that sense of belonging. that sense of acceptance. If you had said Oh see what happened, how are you feeling? sorry for your loss? You know, because it's my loss. It's my colour. it's me. It's an extension of me. It means a lot. I was thinking that it's gonna be a topic or, you're gonna say sorry, I'm looking at you. This is just about the second day. I'm in the office with you cannot even seen it. It goes a long way. And this, this would have been I think this would have been prevented. Or that situation would have been handled properly, if there was some cultural or diversity training, diversity training and all….

Eleanor, a staff member in one of the Irish Further Education Colleges, described the burden she carries even after being able to access the level of employment she has. She

explained to me how she felt literally unsettled at work and had to 'walk on egg shells' in order not to get into trouble from her work colleagues who she felt were bent on getting her into trouble.

> Racism, Lillian because at work you know my colleagues, they are looking for one slight mistake to go and put me in trouble. Like I am walking on eggshells when I'm at work. And when I go to work, I make sure I choose my sentences correctly. I don't randomly go you know, like the way I will go with you to the canteen and we'll sit and we'll drink tea and talk. I can't do that at work. And I have to actually choose my words. You know, dressed up nicely and all the you know even my makeup my all this it puts me in a different position when if I don't so I don't think they realize ...

On her current job, she explained to me how she feels unsupported many times. She is given a task and is not supported or given any communications on how to carry out her duty. She explained that this created in her a feeling of "not really belonging".

Just before I wrote up this research, I had a round of meetings with some of the participants who were available and in my meeting with Nomthandazo, she asked that I record some of what she shared with me. Nomthandazo had had to quit her second job because of the intensity of the racism she had experienced in two different hotels she had worked in. She spoke about management refusing to allow her use the bathroom even when she was on her period, about being over policed and recorded. She also lamented that she was being denied promotion to graduate role, even after she had presented her certificate and evidence of graduation; she was being bullied on her job, and constantly accused of being 'too angry' or 'giving attitude' once she spoke up about anything, Nomthandazo and another Black girl were the only two Black staff in the whole institution and were the only ones who got this kind of treatment. They drew strength from each other and had to quit within days of each other with the level of racism they encountered. Other staff who didn't even have graduate qualifications, were promoted and their salaries increased. -The only two who didn't get the raise were the two Black ladies. Particularly striking in all this was Nomthandazo's description of the strength she drew from her other Black colleague:

> If she wasn't there, I would have quit a long time ago. I drew strength from her because she saw and understood what I was going through. She was going through it as well. We became so close. They even started to try to not put us in shifts together when they noticed our closeness. Even when we weren't on shifts together, we would text each other to share how to escape things. We leaned on each other so much. I couldn't have stayed that long without her.

This was the second job Nomthandazo was quitting as a result of racism and she had now at the time of our meeting decided to stay unemployed for a while, to recover from the trauma of what she experienced.

Theme 7: Final words and words to the whites

Under this theme, I present some of the remarks the women made during our conversations and comments they directed at white people:

> I wish that they will just understand the pressure that Blacks have to go through on a daily basis, and just to be even, like to be acknowledged for their actual true gifts and how talented they are. It's so difficult for us to even …it is very hard for black people to come over the surface. I don't think people really understand the pressure that we even go through. And white people also, of course, don't understand our pressure as well. And it's just really sad that we would have to go through that. (Nomthandazo)

> I don't think sometimes we realize how much pressure we put ourselves under. But it's a subconscious thing. You just want to be accepted at your workplace, or your church, or wherever, which is fair enough. Like everyone wants to feel that they're a valued member of a team and feel like they're functional, but it's just so much pressure. The way we talk, the things we say, the music you listen to sometimes, it's like, you just don't know. It's quite sad, but I think we just need to learn to move past it. We really don't need anyone's acceptance… as long as you have the right to be here. It is what it is. Anyone can take from that whatever what they will, anyone can do what they want, because it's so hard to get through life, without that pressure. Like I would just encourage every person I meet, to just do what you have to do, respectfully, professionally, correctly, the way that is, is the way you would do it. Like not to try and alter yourself for them because like who are they too? (Cheta)

> … the way to dismantle it (white supremacy) is the people who belong to it, even if just by extension of them being white, they have to dismantle it. They have to work to dismantle it first and then all the rest of us… (Nia)

> and I would just say to White people to be conscious of the things they say and their actions mostly because they like to say things like I don't see colour, I'm fair to everybody. But I actually hate that comment I don't see colour you should see colour because there is … it has an impact. You might say something to an Irish person and it means nothing but that might mean everything to a Black person. You need to be conscious of it and act accordingly. No, yeah, I just think they need to learn. As you rightly said, Nomthandazo, black people are under so much pressure. Like myself as a student. I don't have my family with me. I'm doing a really difficult degree. The last thing I want to do is go to a place where I already don't feel like I'm surrounded by my own people and then be prejudiced against because of my skin like I said, just to bear it in mind in their day to day living Just

the extra smile or just the kind word or not even necessarily kindness, but just no unnecessary unkindness would be very much appreciated. So yeah, I think just the minimum and the fact that we even have to ask for that. That in itself is a problem. (Cheta during the trialogue)

They should leave room for exploration, leave room for accepting anything. And that's part of bonding. When you accept other people's cuisine for instance, they accept yours you know, it becomes fun to people. That way, we kill so many myths about that person. You see, when there's knowledge when they are aware when there's awareness of other people's culture, the way they live the way they exist before they came here you know, we will be able to appreciate each other and give room for acceptance. (Mbasiti)

It could be Desmond Tutu dying. Like, you know, you have a South African in your class, or your class and as a teacher, you come in and you say sorry. I think we have some people from South Africa, Southern Africa, I think, or Africa, it's, you know, it's just a shame I want to sympathize with you. Please accept our condolences for the loss of Desmond Tutu. I know he is one of your heroes. You know what that means? Recognition, acceptance. if you do the cultural and diversity training, you'll be well equipped to come in confidently and talk to students like that. But if you don't do that, because we tell you accept their pain, recognize their pain. Once you recognize the pain, you click with them, and they want to work with you. And when they work with you who gets the credit - you as a teacher, as a facilitator, because you're going to get good grades from your students. So when you don't recognize their pain. You don't feel their pains then there is a big problem. There's lack of trust. You know, and I said, Trust is very important, … (Mbasiti)

Dear White people, please listen. (Lilian)

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented our stories on the flavour of racism we encountered in schools and at work. Aside from obvious discrimination, silencing, over-policing and a low expectation projected at us, one major thing that arose from our stories was a reluctance to complain about the racism we experienced because complaints were seen as things that had the potential to cause danger to the one that complained.

Chapter Eight

So, what now? (A discussion chapter)

I got out of the class, walked briskly to my car, got in and began to cry.

I was crying out of anger, embarrassment, and an overwhelming almost palpable feeling of hopelessness. Anyone who had seen me close the session with the students a few minutes earlier would have been surprised to see me like this. I had closed the session with humour and care and had made sure everyone was ok before I let them leave. I had mastered my professional mask and didn't give out even a hint of the feelings that were drowning me within.

It was a session with students training to be Further Education teachers and I was the teacher who got to speak to them about anti-racist interventions in their practice. It was my second session with them and their perspectives had been challenged a whole lot in the first session. I was non-confrontational in my style and I used a lot of stories.

One particular man, xyz, was not comfortable with the session. He had approached me outside the class after the first session to tell me to 'stop wasting my time' and that 'classes such as mine were useless as they could not change anything' but also that he 'was not a bad person'. I tried to get him to see reason but our time outside the class was short. I had to go teach another class and he had to go into his next session.

This day was now my second session with his class. The class was going relatively peacefully when this man interrupted me mid-sentence. He had his hands in his front pocket and he leaned back in his chair casually but with a hint of menace - 'there is only one person in this room interested in what you are teaching. There is no point to this. None of us goes into class looking out for race. We care for everyone.'

'You can't speak for everyone xyz' I responded.

'Yes I can' he retorted.

'We speak amongst ourselves so I know what they think. You are always thinking about race so you always see racism. We don't think about these things and so we are not interested. 'My advice, just ignore it.'

'Will you give me the same advice if I was speaking about issues that border on ability? Will you advise me to ignore my students level of ability (or otherwise)….?'

'Just stop making us have these discussions' he interrupted me again saying. 'There is only one person in this room who thinks about this.'

'Thanks for your input xyz, I said beginning to feel a bit agitated. I don't agree with your point of view but I will open it up for your colleagues to …'

'I didn't ask for you to agree with my point of view. I am just stating what I think' he said, interrupting me yet again!

I was taken aback but with a smile I said 'I didn't say you asked me to agree. I am just stating that I do not agree with your stance. I will now open up this discussion to other people so we can move on with some of the other things we need to speak about today." I turned to the class, motioning for anyone who wanted to, to speak.

Slowly people began to comment but not one person directed a comment toward xyz nor towards what he had said. The more they spoke, the sadder I became. I suddenly felt very unsafe in the space. I looked at the time. I had about 30 more minutes in the class. I didn't think I could last so long. All sorts of thoughts were going through my mind. I was worried for the students of this man, many of whom I knew were Black. I was worried for my own kids. I was concerned that no one thought our exchange had been alarming enough to warrant at least a remark. I moved the class into an interactive session using photos – an activity xyz bluntly refused to participate in. I then facilitated a benign, non-intrusive activity, and then closed the group. I struggled to hold back my tears. All I could think about were xyz's students. A cohort who didn't even have English as a first language. A cohort who had escaped conflict and were seeking sanctuary in Ireland. A cohort who would most likely feel less powerful than I did in the class that day.

His words, 'No one is interested in this stuff' kept ringing in my ears.

I felt hopeless. I felt like I had failed.

In the preceding chapters, I wrote about emotions and psychological reactions like shame, loneliness, fear and even physical pain as some of the outcomes of living in a racist society. I chose to open this chapter with this vignette that documents my encounter with a different emotion – hopelessness. Hopelessness is not an unusual emotion for people who do anti-racism work. One of the most often cited criticisms of Critical Race Theory is that it is a theory that projects hopelessness (Colorado Christian University, 2022). This view of CRT to my mind, is inaccurate but I can understand why people will view it as

hopeless - CRT exposes the depth of the damage that racial injustice has caused and the difficulty that it will take to undo the damage already done. Racial injustice predates everyone living in the world right now – it is an old menace, but it can be interrupted. It was bell hooks who said, that "when we only name the problem, when we state complaint without a constructive focus on resolution, we take away hope" (hooks, 2003, p. xiv). In this chapter, I bring hope. I propose a focus on resolution. I bring all the strands of the research together – the women's voices, the diversely themed vignettes, the parables, my reflections, the literature and the theories, in a bid to answer the research questions and to chart a constructive route forward. Before I involved the voices of other women, I remember trying to envisage the stories I would get from them. I remember having dreams and visions of high level discussions about structural inequality, and the technicality of racism and all such high sounding academic speak. This was not the case. Most told me story upon story of how society de-values them, de-humanizes them and shows them they are 'less-than'.

It was one story after the other of an almost normal assault to their dignity that they woke up to face, every day of their lives. Sitting with these stories, my first thought was that I had somehow failed. 'Surely, this isn't what I can submit as a PhD thesis?' I thought. - Emotional stories of pain, of hurt, of displacement, of a loss of self-esteem and of rejection, and then it struck me that I was doing what I had been socialised to do – I was self-sabotaging. I was doing the very thing we were accusing white people of doing - I was silencing myself and these women. I wasn't giving them a chance to tell their own story. I was already labelling their stories as emotional and not worthy of being heard. This inclination to self-sabotage and self-censor is not unusual. Beverly Tatum (1999) writes extensively about an internalisation of oppression that occurs when Black people internalise the narratives and ideologies of the dominant race and begin to see themselves as 'less-than' or not worthy of contributing to discourse. In academia, there is a similar euro-centric devaluation of Black women's experiences, done by portraying their stories as emotional, personal and unconnected with real academic work (Hill- Collins, 2000, p. 256). I had to continually remind myself of Sarah Ahmed's (2023) words in her book *The feminist killjoy* where she wrote "the personal is institutional." (p.41).

In this research, I consider three broad research questions – How have Black women in Ireland experienced racism? What impact have these experiences had on them and How can these experiences be used to influence pedagogy and practice in Irish adult education?

The aims of the research are; to position Black women as agents of knowledge by giving them the opportunity to tell their own stories in order to disrupt dominant stories about BME women; to contribute to a substantive body of Black Irish Feminist Thought and develop a racially sensitive pedagogy for use in Irish adult education; to shape practice in adult education in Ireland by allowing teachers into the unseen parts of the lives of Black people in Ireland; and to enhance the understanding of the experiences Black women have and how they nagivate everyday life in Ireland.

I draw from Critical Race Theory, Black Feminist Thought, Critical pedagogy and my own Nigerian way of being and knowing which I embody in different ways all through this thesis, and as an act of resistance (Hill- Collins, 2000, p. 98). I particularly rely on the assertion that Black women, because of the peculiarities of our lived experiences of systemic structural inequality and our positioning in the society, have developed a distinctive Black feminist consciousness that can and does bring a new perspective to things (Hill-Collins, 1989).

Summary of Main Findings

The main findings from the research suggest that Black women are inundated with myriad racist acts and encounters on a daily basis that occur in different settings including shops, public transportation, on the road and even in their homes and that these encounters have become an almost normal portion of their everyday lives. Our stories also show how these experiences straddle political, economic, and ideological lines, to create a bespoke form of oppression that arises when race, gender, nation and immigration status intersect in the lives of Black women.

Our stories corroborate the existence of a hegemony of whiteness in Irish society, the functioning of which serves to exclude Black women from various spaces that are historically attributed to whiteness (For example, academia). Evidence from the research shows how racism permeates institutions such as churches and schools. In schools, racism manifests in different ways such as individual racist actions from teachers and other students, and absence of cultural and ethnic references in curriculum. Other ways in which racism manifests include through constructive cultural devaluation, visible and obvious absence of Black teachers and guidance counsellors amongst academic staff members and other structural but less visible encounters that impact Black people disproportionately.

The impact of negative (and sometimes seemingly positive and benign) stereotypes is another theme captured in the stories. These stereotypes are perceived to both reinforce racism and alienate or exclude Black women in the society. There was overwhelming concession amongst all the women that tokenism, a situation where Black people are invited to spaces as tokenistic representatives of the Black race, occurred frequently and that this sort of action further serves to deepen the structural disadvantage that Black women experience.

The findings also signify that racism evokes certain emotions and psychological reactions, some of which affect the Black woman's mental health, confidence and their relationships with family and friends of other races.

Lastly, the findings suggest that Black women have devised different coping strategies in order to navigate life in Ireland and one of such strategies involves bonding, forming community and communicating their challenges with other Black women. Paradoxically, another coping strategy used by some women involved distancing themselves from other Black people.

In the next section, I will explore how these findings from the women can be used to resolve the three research questions and also compare the findings from the women with theory and literature from previous research done. I will merge my discussions on research questions one and two and treat the third research question separately.

How have Black women in Ireland experienced racism and what impact have these experiences had on them?

Using the findings of the research to make sense of the research questions has been for me a messy, non-linear process and my presentation of this section will evidence the messiness and the cyclical motion of my thinking. There were two distinct (yet intertwined) strands of racial experiences highlighted in the narratives – the *micro* and interpersonal on the one hand and the systemic or structural on the other hand. Both strands, I found, fed into one another with constant microinvalidations, crystalising to create structural barriers and these structural barriers in turn, sponsoring hostility from dominant group members. Our experiences were almost like a vicious cycle – the personal influencing the systemic and the systemic influencing the personal. What this translated to in actual lived experience was that between the personal and the structural, we were inundated with racism in many different forms, in every sphere of our lives. Eleanor and

Nomthandazo spoke about potentially violent physical assaults, Nia and Mbasiti, about more subtle sometimes invisible encounters that left them wondering whether what they had experienced was racism or a figment of their imaginations. Either way, the encounters described, were reported to have serious implications on our lives.

Everyday Racism, Microaggressions and Interpersonal Racism

Our stories create an image of racism permeating our every day, as well as transcending place. Like Nomthandazo said in one of our conversations – 'it's like air, it's everywhere'. Our experiences confirm how racism is the normal experience of Black people and how it is interwoven into our daily lives (Ladson-Billings, 2013). The consequence of this pervasiveness, is that racism is often unacknowledged by white people, but also "routinely created and reinforced through everyday practices" (Essed, 1991, p. 2). The invisibility of our experiences to members of the dominant group, led to feelings of frustration which in turn led to severe psychological issues as reported by some of the women. Our experiences corroborate Walton's (2020) CRT description of a white supremacist and racialised society. His observations capture the cyclic and systemic nature of our encounters, the everyday-ness of racism and the invisibility or taken-for-granted nature of our experiences to the dominant group:

> the interests of white-identified people are given precedence over the interests of other groups through political, social, economic and cultural structures and practices that have evolved over centuries and are maintained and continually recreated by these structures and through individual actors and actions (conscious and unconscious). These structures and practices are generally taken for granted and 'invisible' in the normal, day-to-day operation of western societies, particularly to White people. (2020, p. 80).

We discussed physical encounters and assaults such as verbal abuse where we were called racial slurs or other derogatory names. Some of the women (like Nomthandazo) also shared stories of sexual assaults where they were touched inappropriately or spoken to in sexually inappropriate ways. Others highlighted discrimination at work, where white people were consistently given better treatment and where they were either over-policed or passed over for promotions or salary increase. One woman spoke about being followed and threatened with a knife and all of us experienced being over-policed in shops or at garda checks. Our daily experiences of microaggressions, microinsults and microassaults, are consistent with research carried out in Ireland, that shows Black Africans being at the receiving end of significant amounts of racial assaults as they go about their daily activities (Michael, et al., 2022). These constant and continuous microaggressions created a feeling

of insecurity in the minds of the women, a condition that was heightened when onlookers didn't intervene in perceived racist behaviour. The microaggressions we encountered also led to confusion as often times we were unsure if what we had encountered was racism or not – a phenomenon that is captured in the literature on microaggression (Sue, 2001).

Constant exposure to these experiences also had an impact on relationships. One woman reported that racism lead to psychological trauma in her husband which in turn, caused a strain in her marriage. Another confirmed that her white partner was unable to relate with some of her racial stories and this caused her to keep them away from him. Others explained how the invisibility of racism to the eyes of their white friends caused a strain in their relationships with members of dominant groups. All the mothers, reported changing their parenting strategy, acceding that they put extra pressure on their children to work harder or to protect themselves from a racist society (Berkel et al, 2009).

Stereotypes

Aside from the physical and verbal encounters, we all described our encounters with stereotypes and how these stereotypes served to disadvantage us in the long run. Of particular note are the 'Angry Black woman' stereotype (Hamad, 2020; Hill- Collins, 2000), where we are accused of being angry every time we attempt to speak out against things we are disgruntled about. The effect this stereotype has, is twofold - For some like Naomi and some of the women Mbasiti spoke about in her interview, the stereotype served to silence them. Thus, Naomi would stay silent in the face of oppression so as not to feed into the mould. For others, like Nomthandazo, the angry woman stereotype served to infuriate her and in her words, cause her 'to resent' and act out towards her white colleagues – allowing the stereotype to become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Hamad, 2020). For those who spoke out, there were often consequences. For instance, Nomthandazo lost her job. For those who stayed silent, they remained subjugated still in toxic environments – another lose-lose situation. These kinds of scenarios created a heightened sense of frustration and hopelessness for the women.

The women experienced the negative effects of other stereotypes like the 'Jezebel' stereotype (Hill-Collins, 2000, p. 149) where Black women are sexualised, and their bodies objectified as sex objects. This particular one led to shocking and unprovoked sexual assaults and inappropriate comments projected at the women (Hill- Collins, 2000). Another was the 'mammy' or 'strong black woman' stereotype that ascribed undue strength to the Black woman or automatically ascribed care roles to the Black person in

a group. All of us spoke about the more autochthonous *asylum seeker and welfare seeking* stereotype that we encounter in our interactions with Irish society, which was created and disseminated through media and government discourse in the build up to the 2004 citizenship referendum (I discuss this in chapters one and two). This stereotype not only excludes us automatically from spaces but also influences members of society to interact with us with distrust and in some cases, disdain. Myself, Eleanor and Cheta gave instances of how this stereotype played out in our encounters in the society. This was in spite of the fact that we were neither asylum seekers nor recipients of welfare benefits. All we had to do to find ourselves in that category, was to be black!

These stereotypes are neither benign nor neutral. Enduring since chattel slavery days, these stereotypes are part of an intricate web of structures designed to devalue and put Black women in certain positions and exclude them from others. Black Feminist Thought highlights the use of these ideologies and stereotypes as strategies used to justify the oppression Black women encounter in the society. According to Patricia Hill Collins,

> certain assumed qualities that are attached to Black women are used to justify oppression. From the mammies, jezebels, and breeder women of slavery to the smiling Aunt Jemimas on pancake mix boxes, ubiquitous Black prostitutes, and ever-present welfare mothers of contemporary popular culture, negative stereotypes applied to African-American women have been fundamental to Black women's oppression.

At the start of chapter six, I wrote about an experience in a vignette I titled *Listen* (see page 152) where I spoke about a nurses' reluctance to listen to my complaint in the hospital and how this almost caused me my life. While I cannot be sure as to the exact reason why this nurse treated me in this way, another research that I participated in, showed similar treatment being given to minority ethnic Muslim women (Fitzsimons, et al., 2021). The pervasive stereotype that took root in the colonial era, of minority ethnic women not being knowledgeable or intellectual enough to know what their needs are, may be responsible for this treatment (Hill- Collins, 2000).

The latest HEA report (Kempny & Michael, 2022) puts the statistic of Black teaching staff in the country at just over one percent This near absence of Black women in academia, coupled with our ghettoization in the care industry , passes a message to society, that a certain sector is a no-go area for Black women, creating (as well as reinforcing) a stereotype that Black women are suited for certain kinds of work and not others.

One impact the pervasiveness of these stereotypes presents is the internalisation of the dominant racist view of society by us Black women. This played out in different ways. For instance, some of us described struggling with low self-esteem, others questioned their looks and held on to Eurocentric descriptions of beauty and therefore saw themselves as ugly. The internalisation of racist stereotypes also caused impostor syndrome in some of us who, feeding in to dominant narratives, felt that we were not good enough to be in certain spaces and positions. The internalisation of the '*not-good-enough* and *less-than* and *not-wanted* projected images caused Naomi to reduce her association with other Black people in a bid to become more accepted. Others reported faking an Irish accent to become more accepted. Shame was another effect that internalizing the pervasive racial ideology had on some of us. These emotions when sustained, cause psychological issues which could cause withdrawal from public spaces or reduced productivity or ineffective interaction with society. Overall, we reported an impact on our psychological, physical and mental health as a result of the internalised racism. The impacts of low self-esteem, physical and mental health challenges, silencing, and others reported by the women, are on all fours with research done on Black women in the United States. In one research, it was found that racism increased the incidence of adiposity in Black women (Fields, et al., 2023). In another, it was found that exposure to racism increased the incidence of mental health illness in Black women (Everett, et al., 2010). LaTasha Smith (Smith, 2022) writes extensively about how internalised oppression is the normal every day experience of the Black woman in America and that it comes with intersectional real life impacts, similar to those that the women in this research reported. Beverly Tatum sums things up succinctly

> Whether one succumbs to the devaluing pressures of the dominant culture or successfully resists them, the fact is that dealing with oppressive systems from the underside, regardless of the strategy, is physically and psychologically taxing. (Tatum, 2000, p. 5)

Some of the women, in resistance to stereotypes, attempt to use their lives to debunk them. This too came with serious psychological and health implications. Some of our stories, evidence an attempt to work harder than required at work, or stay quiet even when we have valuable contributions to make, or go above and beyond, in order to prove that Black people were not a certain way. This image was also projected on children via bespoke parenting strategies that required children to put in more effort in order to gain minimum recognition.

Employment/Labour Market

On the employment front, Cheta and Nkoyo, both medical doctors, spoke clearly about how it was known within their professional circles, that Black people could not get certain jobs in certain hospitals. Nomthandazo also shared about how she could not clinch a graduate role even after she had graduated with a second class upper degree in her field of study. Mbasiti spoke about the over representation of Black people in Care jobs, but a disproportionate absence of Black people in leadership positions within the same industry. The difficulty Black people in Ireland face in getting employment has been recorded via research. In a research report that mirrors our experiences, fictitious CVs were sent out with African sounding names and traditional Irish names. Those with Irish names were twice as likely to be called for interviews than those with African sounding names (Mcginnity & Nelson, 2008). Empirical data from other research affirm this finding of a difficulty for Black people to attain to employment outside of lower level health care jobs (Joseph, 2020; Akinborewa, Fitzsimons, & Obasi, 2020). This ghettoisation of Black women in the care industry mimics gender and sexist oppressions of the slavery and post-slavery era where Black women were relegated to domestic and care duties in the homes of white people. Post slavery, the overwhelming ideology disseminated into society, was that slaves knew nothing else other than what they had been accustomed to do for years. So, the venue changed from care work in private homes to industrialised care work, ensuring that economic exploitation of the Black woman's time remained the same (Hill-Collins, 2000). I argue that this over representation of Black women in lower level jobs in Ireland and their exclusion from other employment spaces, is consistent with the white supremacist, capitalist and neo-liberal ethos that Ireland has adopted, which creates migration hierarchies and ensures that certain industries are staffed by those on the lowest cadre of the hierarchy. Ebun Joseph (2020) has written about the racial stratification within the Irish labour market that positions Black people at the lowest strata. This structural barrier to certain employment spaces has financial implications for the Black woman. Mbasiti for instance, has been planning to complete a PhD degree but has to work many hours in her low paying care job, to be able to provide for herself and her children. She has consequently not been able to save up enough money for the PhD nor would she have any time to actually study for it. She is unable to afford child care or other resources that will make her study possible. Her story is not unique. All but one of us shared the same frustrations. We are prevented by an invisible barrier from accessing certain employment spaces and are tied down in low paying care jobs where we don't

have enough time or resources to do much else. This leads to a near absence of Black women in certain other spaces which reinforces the stereotype that Black women are not capable of certain kinds of (intellectual work). The systematic erasure of our past qualifications, where our previous degrees are not recognized (for instance, Mbasiti who had a level 9 degree from Nigeria was made to go back to do a level 4 and my law degree was not accepted in order for me to practice Law in Ireland) is another manifestation of the systemic workings of a white -supremacist society. Mbasiti worked as a Manager in one of the largest Energy and Petroleum firms in the world before her migration to Ireland but was still relegated to the care industry, ignoring her years of senior managerial experience. Eleanor also described how her experience as a General Manager in Kenya was not taken into consideration when she arrived in Ireland. Christiana has been in Ireland for over 20 years, since she was 7 years old and has never been able to access a regular job because of her migration status. She has worked for years in various "small illegal jobs" in her words, vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Our experiences corroborate CRT literature about how race is linked to the distribution and availability of wealth and resources and how racialised societies develop structures to maintain their advantage (Bonilla-Silva, 2001).

It is important for me to highlight that Nia, who is from the United States of America did not experience these barriers in accessing employment nor the erasure of her past qualifications. This shows how an intersection of nation and migration status can influence the experiences of Black women in Ireland. Nia's nation of origin served as a buffer. Also Cheta and Nkoyo, both medical doctors, did not experience a barrier in accessing employment. Again, this fits into the capitalist neo-liberal ethos in operation in Ireland which I discussed in chapter one and two, that will disrupt migration hierarchies in order to staff understaffed high paying industries. With doctors and other professionals like Pharmacists and IT personnel, the state needs them and so the barrier is removed for Black women. Their experiences after they have attained employment, is a totally different matter altogether as all the manifestations of racism then come into play in full force. All the women had something to share about their experiences with racism at work. Research shows that that Black people are discriminated against in the interview process and also when they eventually manage to penetrate the labour market (for examples see Privalko, et al., 2023). In the course of this research, two of the women had to leave their jobs as a result of severe racial discrimination.

Silencing and Privileged non-engagement

We named 'silencing' as one of the ways that we experience racism. Many different experiences were conflated under the description of silencing. For instance, Nomthandazo reported that she laid formal complaints to her teachers and the Garda on different occasions, and nothing was ever done about her complaints. Not only did this re-enforce the message of 'you don't matter or you are less-than', it also led to her not reporting other incidents she witnessed or she was involved in. Ahmed (2023), shares a similar narrative when she tells of a woman who had called out a male professor for showing a distressing and graphic clip about the rape of a woman. Her hurt was dismissed and instead there were lewd and sexually explicit jokes thrown around in the room after the clip was shown. In her book, *Complaint*, Ahmed captures the feeling of alienation and silencing some of the women in this research describe –

> The complainer knows a burial has happened. When a complaint is filed away or binned or buried, those who complain can end up feeling filed away or binned or buried. We need to remember that a complaint is a record of what happens to a person, as well as of what happens in institutions. Complaints are personal as well as institutional. (p. 54).

Mbasiti and Naomi spoke about being labelled 'trouble-makers' whenever they called out racist behaviours – labelling that caused Naomi to stay silent even when she was obviously disadvantaged by racist actions. Again, Sarah Ahmed captures this strategic silencing aptly. She writes "You complain because you are harassed; you are harassed because you complain" (Ahmed, 2023, p. 31). Mbasiti narrated how she was silenced in meetings. I experienced cultural silencing when I had to attend classes that had neither regard nor value for my own culture and made me invisible by not including anything about me or people like me in the curriculum. I interpreted the absence of Black women in the academy, in literature and in positions of authority also as a means of silencing and an evidence of structural racism. This form of silencing has the effect of reinforcing the devaluation of Black view points in academia.

I shared in one of my stories about a reluctance and sometimes an outright refusal by many white people to speak about racism publicly. This manifestation of 'privilege' also amounts to silencing as their refusal to engage forces whatever conversation that may have been initiated to stop. The questioning by my students on whether racism (still) exists in Ireland (see vignette on page 75), or the attack on the anti-racism module I teach, (see vignette on page 193) point to this privileged ignorance about the pervasiveness of

racism. When the dominant group refuses to acknowledge and dialogue about racism, they reinforce the status quo.

According to the stories shared, with the silencing we experienced, came issues of bitterness and resentment towards the dominant group. The impact the experiences had on the women also either made them very timid and or very vocal about their oppression. Timidity led to silencing which in academic settings for instance, robbed the class of the opportunity to gain the perspective of the Black student or caused the Black student to participate less and bond less with the community. For those who were vocal, they were termed trouble makers and were excluded from interactions. Two of the participants in this research called to share with me, after I had rounded up conversations with them, how they had lost their jobs because they spoke up and were classed as 'trouble makers'. Ruby Hamad (2020) writes succinctly about the effects of *speaking up*:

> There is a crucial logic to the stereotype of the Angry Black Woman….it is a trap that neuters the capacity of a brown or black woman to get emotional or frustrated about anything that happens to her. If she does, she is proving all her detractors correct. Her anger naturally invalidates whatever she is saying or is upset about, since anger is just her normal and irritational state. (p.48)

Tokenism

Tokenistic representation was another manifestation of racism the women reported experiencing In one of my vignettes (in chapter five), I shared one of many experiences where I was invited last minute to be on a panel just so the diversity box could be ticked and not really because my voice or my contribution was valued. Black feminist thought categorises this sort of pseudo representation as a pattern of suppression of Black female voices. Hill Collins (2000), bell hooks (2003) and Hazel Carby (1997) write about Black women included in spaces yet euro-centric paradigms remaining unchanged and Black women cited in works but their bodies not allowed in classrooms.

Community Bonding and Distancing

One impact that can be gleaned from our stories that wasn't negative, was the drawing of strength from community of other Black people. Cheta alluded to this when she spoke about the Black students in medical school coming together and sharing information about which examiner was racist or not and how to navigate those who were. Nomthandazo spoke about how her bond with a Nigerian girl in her place of employment was all that kept her afloat in the duration of her work where she was constantly stereotyped, picked on and discriminated against – a job that they both eventually had to

leave because of the racism they experienced. Mbasiti spoke about her motivation to gather other Black parents to speak in a collective voice when it became obvious that the Black students in her children's school were not given the same rights and privileges as other white students. This coming together to form community is both a coping mechanism and a strategy of resistance that has historically been used by Black women in different eras. Patricia Hill Collins in her seminal work on BFT wrote about a Black women's collective wisdom that came about as a result of a commonality of experiences of oppression within a framework (Hill- Collins, 2000). When women in this research share their parenting strategies and their ways of coping, they are together, forming a Black Irish Women's feminist collective, wisdom that can and will serve as pointers and solutions to similar issues, faced by other Black women.

Almost as an antithesis however, some of the women, like Naomi, reported distancing themselves from other Black people in a bid to mitigate the effects of racism. Paraphrasing her reasoning, she said, since Black people were seen as unserious and loud, she had to stay as far away from them as possible in order to give herself a chance to be seen as who she really was. There is a preponderance of literature that highlights the pervasiveness of the kind of Naomi's reaction amongst Black people. In (Smith, 2022), a research that specifically inquired into how internal oppression played out in the lives of Black women, distancing of self from members of the same racial group was one ubiquitous characteristic that signified the internalisation of racism.

How can the experiences of the women be used to influence pedagogy and practice in Adult Education ?

Under this heading, I attempt to, using our stories as a fulcrum, contribute to practice and pedagogy in adult education in Ireland. In conceptualising what my contributions to pedagogy would look like, my immediate ideas went in the direction of individualistic remedies (such as calling out racist behaviour in the classroom) especially as the stories from the women were deep and moving stories about their individual interactions with racism. It was upon deeper reflection that I realised that proffering only individualistic remedies would serve to treat a few symptoms of a bigger and more structural issue. I presented my understanding of the root of racial inequality in chapter two, where I traced the evolution of the concept of *race* from Europe's purported discovery of the Americas, to transatlantic slavery, to colonialism, until today. I explored how, at the root of all the murder, genocide and oppressive colonial (and neo-colonial) regimes, was an insatiable and desperate desire to fuel and accumulate capitalist production profit and how almost the entire world has been re-structured to fuel this capitalist ethos. So, capitalism functions by creating hierarchies and dividing the work force in order to eliminate any chance of collusion.

Homing in on the Black woman, I wrote particularly about her plight in the era of chattel slavery, where amongst other indignities, she was sexualised and her womb, commodified and used as a commercial container to birth more slaves who would perpetuate the dynasties of the slave owners – profit was the bottom line. The Black woman's fate was not much different in all the other eras. From eugenics in the 20th and 21st century, to citizenship referendums in Ireland in the 2000s, the Black woman's body has been objectified, sexualised, commodified and excluded from certain spaces. At every point in these eras, the activities of the dominant group, in a bid to retain economic domination, were so shocking and repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience, that there was need to justify the oppression that was taking place. This justification was done majorly through the continuous introduction of stereotypes and ideologies into society. Once these ideologies become embedded in society's consciousness, together with a web of other political and economic levels of oppression, they serve as insurance for the systems of oppressions to remain in place. Ideologies and stereotypes like the *bogus asylum seeker*, or the *angry black woman* or *jezebel or mama or the uncultured loud black woman or less than* were all created to justify and subjugate Black women. Once Black women can be seen

as loud or not intellectual or incapable of certain levels, they are excluded from certain kinds of jobs and are forced into other low paying jobs – again a systematic process to keep the system functioning as capitalist states needs those jobs done for their profit to be intact. The process of ideology creation is often very subtle and insidious. The resultant effect of this subtlety, is that the projected image created is imprinted in society's subconscious and becomes the taken for granted view of the world. So, it wasn't unusual for the women and I, to encounter people who denounced racism vocally and vehemently, yet who would assume that all Black women were people seeking asylum or that Black women didn't have jobs in certain spheres because they liked to be 'carers'. As Black people are also a part of the society, they are not immune from the internalisation of the societal common sense and are often influenced by them in their dealings with others – this is important because whatever contributions I proffer in interrupting the racist system will be applicable to teachers and learners from both dominant and non-dominant groups.

So, how can education interrupt this system? In chapter three, I wrote about Critical pedagogy (Darder & Torres, 2003; Giroux, 2004; Kincheleo, 2004), a concept that has at its core, a focus on societal inequalities and the creation of agency in students to be able to take action against these inequalities. Critical Race Pedagogy (Lynn, 2004) takes the cause a step further, by centring race at its intersection with other social identities in critical education. Gloria Ladson Billings (Ladson-Billings, 1995) takes both of these yet a step further, by proposing a 'Culturally-responsive' pedagogy that merges critical pedagogy, critical race pedagogy and elements of culture-centred practice, to form an appropriate pedagogy for the Black student. Black feminists in the United States of America have also developed the Black Feminist pedagogy characterised by love, politics, other mothering and the lived experiences of Black women (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). These different pedagogies, when applied, have the scope to interrupt the systems of racial inequality, in the classroom and in the society. In addition, however, I propose four vital, specific and contextual practices that can contribute to creating a liberating anti-racist and culturally responsive pedagogy that can be used in Ireland. They are:

Strand 1: Cultural Revaluing of Minority Ethnic Cultures;

Strand 2: A focus on identifying shared interest and building Cross-Identity Communities;

Strand 3: Care, Love, Solidarity and Reparative Practice; and

Strand 4: Academic Success and Critical Education.

Strand 1: A Cultural Revaluing of Minority Ethnic Cultures

In chapter two, I wrote about how racialisation functions dialectically by defining groups as *other,* by devaluing their cultures or by defining them in a less desirable way than the dominant group. This is the modus operandi of the state, not just for Black people but also for communities like the Traveller and Roma communities. These cultural narratives are then used as justification for oppressive treatment. I have written in the previous section about the pervasiveness of these stereotypes and their role in perpetuating the racist status quo. My argument is that in dismantling the structures of racial injustice, pedagogy must first make visible the injustice and absurdity of these ideologies, stereotypes and culturally devaluing narratives; and then, create a space where the cultures of minorities are *re-valued.* This process will entail intentionally embedding from conceptualisation of curriculum or even earlier in the education process, counter stories (Delgado, 1989) that challenge the dominant, stereotypical and majoritarian stories about minoritised people. The classroom of a pedagogue that subscribes to this strand, will create opportunities for experiences and ideas to be shared across identities within the classroom space. The goal of this aspect of the pedagogy will be to interrupt the pervasive and accepted stereotypes and begin to give students of different ethnic, cultural and racial groups, the opportunity to re-image and re-imagine the Black (or other) person's culture. Because negative stereotypes are also internalised by BME people, this aspect of the pedagogy will also, leaning on the cultural competency thread of Gloria Ladson Billing's culturally sensitive pedagogy, seek to re-image the Black person in the Black person's own sight and to bring them to a position where they can own and celebrate their uniqueness and their ways of knowing (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Naomi told the story about how she hid her identity because she noticed that her culture was different from those of the other students in her class. With this proposed strand, a pedagogue would create non-intrusive creative resources to mainstream the culture Naomi was hiding, consequently, educating others of a different way of being as well as building cultural pride and competence in Naomi.

Practising this strand unreflectively can have the effect of perpetuating the system we intend to interrupt in the first place. Often, educators I encounter in my practice tell me about how they facilitate cultural days once every year where they bring in food and

clothes from other cultures to introduce to the rest of the class. While the idea is laudable, pedestalling a culture as being worthy of celebration or exhibition only once every year, reinforces the perception of *less-than*. The goal of this strand is to practically pass across the message that there are several valid ways of being and that there is depth and richness in every culture. Because racialisation inherently homogenises categories of people, cultural re-valuation as a critical pedagogic project will interrupt the message of homogeneity by showcasing positive and differing aspects of the cultures of devalued groups. One of the HEA Equality anti-racism principles for Irish HEIs (Principle 3) (HEA, 2022, p. 5) connects with this strand of the pedagogy on some level. The principle states that "Anti-racism policies and initiatives must focus on long-term culture change and on fixing the system, not fixing the individual". While there is considerable cross over between this principle and the proposed strand discussed in this paragraph, the HEA principle deals uniquely with changing the culture of the HEI. The pedagogic strand I am proposing here attempts a wider remit– to change the culture in society (not just the institution), using the learning space as the start point.

In the course of attempting to re-value cultures in the classroom, it is of course important that student are facilitated to know that no one person can speak on behalf of a group. Incorporating this strand into practice need not be complex. In my practice, I have worked at cultural re-valuation by using

a. Case Studies – Carefully crafted case studies are an effective way to raise awareness of the varieties of stories, often conflated under the umbrella of 'Black' as well as interrupt negative societal common sense. Practitioners involved in anti-racism modules, have used this method and attest to the richness and the effectiveness of the discussions that arise when properly used. (see for instance (Brookfield & Hess, 2021). I often use case studies that are inspired by real lived experiences and have found them an effective way to re-engineer a different vision from the societal common sense. As an example, in a master's degree class of about 35 students which I facilitated (only 2 students were Black), I presented four different scenarios (See Appendix A) of Black people who came into Ireland through different routes. All four cases were inspired by the lived experiences of some of the women who participated in this research. The students commented at the end of the class, how they were previously not aware of some of the issues that had been highlighted in the four scenarios that I had used as an in-road for discussion. In creating the scenarios,

I was intentionally disrupting the dominant story that painted all Black people as being uneducated, dishonest people attempting to defraud the system, or all Black people fleeing Africa due to extreme hunger and poverty. As more educators normalise using these kinds of case studies and intentionally think of ways to embed interruption of stereotypes into course materials and resources, the effect will be felt, first in the classroom and eventually in the society.

b. Stories – Sharing of stories are another effective way to re-engineer the vision of Irish society as it pertains to Black people. I have written about the humanising capacity of storytelling. It is important for practitioners to carefully and critically consider how stories are used or embedded in their practice. In my practice, I have intentionally brought in people whose perspectives I have wanted the students to listen to, into the classroom as guest lecturers. I have organized mini panels and discussions in this regard. I have also been involved as a student in classrooms where 'autobiographical' writings were initiated by the teachers as class activity. These autobiographical writings later form the basis for critical discussions in small groups, comprising of people from both dominant and minority ethnic communities. I have also used parables as a teaching resource. In collaboration with the Maynooth University Access Department for instance, I created and used a parable as an in road to discussions and engagement about inclusion of Blacks and people seeking asylum in education (Appendix B). Aside from showing an alternative way of knowing and being that was African yet academic, the parable also served to raise awareness about the lived experiences of a marginalised cohort and to initiate difficult but necessary critical discussions about racism and exclusion using non-confrontational styles and materials.

c. Embed materials authored and created by Black (and other non-dominant) people in course material – Using and citing materials authored by black people is another constructive and effective method of re-imaging the Black person. How this is done is pivotal to the goal of re-imaging. When materials are included as appendages to reading lists and as 'after thoughts', they perpetuate the 'less-than' image (Kishimoto, 2018). I encourage teachers to actively source, include and cite materials authored by people outside of the non-dominant groups and include different paradigms in their materials. Doing this will not only make the course content richer and more robust

but also pass a clear message that people from non-dominant backgrounds are able to make contributions.

d. Representation at all levels of the academy – Representation matters. One of the strongest re-valuation tactics that any academic organisation serious about anti-racism can use, is that of representation. When a college can have a majority of Black students yet have no permanent Black teacher, the statement is loud and clear that Blacks are not good enough. I do not recommend the occasional tokenistic trophy appointments where one Black person is pedestalled in an institution as the trophy outlier (even though I believe such tokenistic representations are not entirely negative). I recommend intentional, targeted recruitment for all levels of educational engagement – from the leadership to the lowest level. Until it becomes normal to see Black people in all positions, we reinforce negative stereotypes of Black people not being capable of certain jobs.

Strand 2: A focus on identifying shared interest and building Cross-Identity Communities

All of us shared instances where we experienced racial injustice and bystanders from other racial groups looked the other way. Also, every time I initiate critical discussions in classroom about racism, one or more of my students is quick to remind me that 'Ireland has its own problem of classism.' To me, the cause of this nonchalant attitude towards the plight of racial minorities is a lack of understanding of how all oppressions are closely linked. If racial inequity will be interrupted, there must be a focus on facilitating the class (and society) to see shared interests that exist across various identities. When people see that all oppressions are innately from the same source and that the modus operandi of the oppressive system is to pit one group against the other, it becomes easier to get buy in, in order to interrupt the process. I do not propose unveiling shared interests as an end in itself – rather, it is on the back of shared interests that coalition can be borne. I advocate for individual responses to interrupt racism but I also strongly advocate for cross-identity coalitions to be encouraged in the fight against racial injustice.

The times in history where the racial status quo was threatened were times when there were cross-cultural and racial coalitions. The Bacon revolution I wrote about in chapter two for instance, occurred when white indentured servants and Black slaves formed a

coalition. They were united by their shared experiences of oppression. If classrooms can become a space where people across identities begin "to see more parallels between the struggles of all exploited and oppressed people across lines of race and nation" (Dabiri, 2021, p. 17), then it becomes easy to form coalitions that can de-stabilize the status quo. In a class I taught recently, as we shared a critical discussion space, a white Irish student who was serving a prison sentence, pointed out to me that he could see the parallels between the oppression and disadvantage he faced and that of a minoritised other. This realisation was borne as we began to discuss critically about societal inequality and injustice.

Creating cross-identity coalition and community isn't automatic. Teachers who would practice this strand will need to up skill on the use of critical dialogue and problem posing to uncover issues that need to be unpacked. The classroom would also have to be safe enough for students to be able to share their thoughts and ideas without being judged or condemned. bell hooks (2009) writes about the power of building community as a teacher. Describing her own practice, she writes

> Knowing all that I know now after more than thirty years in classrooms, I do not begin to teach in any setting without first laying the foundation for building community in the classroom. To do this it is essential that teacher and students take time to get to know one another. That process can begin by simply hearing each person's voice as they state their name. (p.20)

Honor Fagan (1991) describes how she built community in a women studies classroom, facilitated students into understanding the commonalities of various oppressions and allowed the women carry out activist projects that arose as a result of the solidarity built in the community.

Strand 3: Care, Love, Solidarity and Reparative Practice

Racism, whether in its structural or in its individual manifestation, leaves an emotional injury or burden on those who experience it. In chapter five, I highlight the women's narratives of the burden, emotional hurt and injury they felt as a result of the racism they had experienced in Ireland. This hurt, most times invisible and unacknowledged, is brought with the Black student into the classroom and can manifest in many different ways which could in turn affect learning and assimilation. Consequently, I propose that pedagogy that will benefit the Black student in Ireland should be reparative (Zembylas,

2017). I borrow this strand from Michalino Zembylas (2016) who describes reparative pedagogy as that which will acknowledge pain, hurt and injury within particular social and political contexts, and attempt to address this pain. Creating respectful and empathetic space for students to share their encounters and experiences with racial injustice is in itself an important component of reparative practice that not only creates awareness for dominant group members who may be blindsided to the experiences of *the other,* but also serves a therapeutic and healing effect.

This strand of care, love and reparation is not just emotional. And I use the word *just* because unlike Zembylas (2017), I argue that emotions should not be extricated from pedagogical love as emotions are natural and both students and teachers should be their authentic selves in classrooms. Love however shouldn't just be emotional but should also be political. Drawing from McLaren (2000), Freire (1994) and hooks (2000), I am proposing that this love must be connected to some form of racial justice liberating politics in order for it to be transformative. This care and love should not only comfort or placate injury, but must also kindle a fire and a desire to see justice being done (Zembylas, 2017).

Strand 4: Academic Success and Critical Education

Research in Ireland by Joseph, (2020) shows, and the experiences of the women validate this, that Black people are disadvantaged in the labour market. A narrative that seems to be gaining ground about the absence of Black women in academia for instance, is that very few of them have PhDs which is a requirement for academic jobs. I cite this as an example and an inroad into the academic success strand of the proposed pedagogy. To amount to positions of authority in society or to attain to labour market positions, most times, academic qualifications are required This strand of practice focuses on supporting and equipping the Black student to progress in their academic pursuit, by researching on and removing the barriers that hinder participation and progression in education. In chapter seven, I cited for instance Cheta's story of how accents and attitudes of her teachers served, as a barrier to seamless attainment. Under this focus, practitioners, especially white or Irish born practitioners, should be supported to understand the need to slow down the pace of their speech so that migrant students can follow new accents easily. They are also to be mindful of the use of language (e.g. Irish slangs that may mean different things in other countries), to vary academic materials and resources and

introduce materials that will be familiar to minority ethnic learners in order to facilitate learning.

Lastly, I lean on Critical (Freirean) pedagogy to propose that teachers should equip all students, whether dominant or minority ethnic, with the tools necessary to dismantle the oppression and the racism they face in the society. They are to recognise the myth of classroom neutrality and expose the political in whatever subject or module they are teaching. Teachers cannot afford to stick slavishly to learning outcomes and curriculums but must be able to transgress political lines and teach contextually, drawing materials and examples from relevant socio-political occurrences in and outside the country.

There is no such thing as a conclusive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014). The foregoing are recommendations that will interrupt the system of racial inequality in the classrooms. As more research is done and as the voices of those affected by racial injustice continue to be centred, there will be more opportunities to work and re-work pedagogy until we achieve racial justice.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I brought all the strands of the research together in order to make sense of the research questions. I concluded the chapter by proffering a form of critical pedagogy for use in Ireland that will re-value devalued minority cultures, build coalition and community in the classroom, centre love, care and reparative practice and then focus on students achieving academic success. This summary acts as the theoretical foundation for a manifesto for change which I will present.in the next section.

Epilogue

Looking Out of the Window - My manifesto for Adult Education in Ireland in a nutshell.

This thesis opened with a window that invited you, my reader to look through. I then brought you into our lives, through our stories as well as through theory with an aim to getting you to envision a different way of doing education.

In this chapter, I return to that metaphor of a window and now, I am looking out of that window in hope. My manifesto describes how adult educators can practically implement the four-strand pedagogy discussed in the preceding chapter. Even though these practical suggestions may seem like simple classroom practices, these ideas have emerged as a result of deeply thought through and held pedagogical and epistemological viewpoints and have the ability to revolutionise the experiences of both teachers and students positively, if understood and properly implemented.

My Anti-Racist manifesto

In my practice as a lecturer, I often meet (white) teachers who ask me what they can do as individuals in order to be anti-racist in their practice. In this section, I present this proposal as a contribution to adult education in Ireland. A lot of what I will include in this manifesto, are things I have learnt by reflecting on my positioning as both student and teacher in Ireland. In Appendix E, I will include materials and resources that support some of what is suggested in the manifesto.

1. **Continuously reflect on your own (racial) identity –**

Many times after coming to terms with what racism really is, some practitioners are so enraged with the seeming inequity suffered by the 'othered' that they want to roll up their sleeves and get right into anti-racist work. They usually start by focusing on the needs of their Black (or other minority ethnic) students. As well meaning as this sounds, it is not the right starting point. Rather than start externally, educators should turn that sequence on its head and start from self especially when that 'self' is white. Because much of racism is learnt (Brookfield, 2018), the anti-racist practitioner must do a deep self-search to see how their own internalised racism affects their practice. This self reflection will not be a one time event, rather it is continous because, as we have discussed, white supremacist thinking has been put forward as the dominant and normal way of seeing life, for many centuries. If you are a white practitioner reading this, you most likely have racist beliefs

as it is impossible to have lived all of your life and not have imbibed some form of white supremacist racist beliefs (Kendall, 2013; Brookfield & Hess, 2021). But those of us who are racialised, in my case as Black, we too should start out with self-reflection and investigate how much of our actions are also backed by white-supremacist thinking. A practitioner can bring these racist beliefs into consciousness through critical reflection, examination of their feelings, dialogues and discussions (Baumgartner, 2010; Kendall, 2013). A practitioner must continously interrogate and ask themselves '*am I teaching the person in front of me or the ideas that I have about the person in front of me - especially those got from the media and political discourse*?'

Usually, when this reflection is done properly, it evokes an awakening and practitioners may begin to see (peharps for the first time) how pervasive white supremacist thinking is, how much of racism goes on around them, and how their power and privilege perpetuate this. Some people experience shame, discomfort and guilt at their own complicitness, something Frances Kendall (2013, p. 119) encourages people not to dwell on, as it can impede intentional work towards eliminating racism. Deliberately bringing race and racism to the fore in your mind is a daunting proposal. But it must be done if any effective anti-racism work can be carried out.

The danger of starting anti-racism work from any other startpoint other than self is that the practitioner comes across as being hypocritical and not genuine and sooner or later, their white-supremacist actions will surface and negate their anti-racist words. Even after a practitioner has engaged in self-reflection, they may still have white supremacist behaviours. Self reflection and introspection is a journey, not a destination. But the lopsidedness of anti-racist work done without adequate self-reflection, is easily spotted especially by people who are not white. Power and privilege can be used constructively in furtherance of anti-racist work and an educator can act in such a way that minimises them when dealing with racialised students and colleagues. However it must be recognised in the first instance.

2. Reject a Colourblind ideology

Majority of the teachers I have met, tell me that they go into the class and don't see race. They adopt a colour blind ideology in a bid to be neutral and fair. I discussed colour-blindness in chapter two. Rather than aid equality, colourblindness actually perpetuates racism (Delgado and Stefanci, 2017). You cannot claim to be anti-racist and yet ignore race. You need to see race. You need to see racism. In fact, a colour-blind stance is a form

of silencing and is a pervasive form of avoidance (Flowers, 2010) that is in itself a function of white privilege. BME people, do not have the luxury of choosing when they see race and when they don't. They are rather inundated with issues pertaining to race everyday. A colour-blind stance further deepens racial inequality by discountenancing and effectively erasing the past, and ignoring inequalities of the present by assuming a meritocratic perspective that puts non-white students on a level playing field with others who have never experienced racial marginalisation or 'othering' (Hearn, 2009). The irrationality of colour-blindness becomes even more glaring when we put it side by side with the treatment of other marginalised groups. It is not likely that to improve the experience of students living with disabilities, that an organisation will take a 'disability-blind' stance. Doing so immediately forecloses any initiatives that may help in ameliorating the hardship which that cohort of people experience. I recently came across a 'Band Aid' exercise designed by an 8th grade teacher in America to teach the children in the class about fairness (Chilcoat, N.D). The teacher asked the children to pretend they had gone out for recess and had gotten hurt. Each child was to assume a particular point on their bodies had been injured and were to get a band aid for their imaginary injury. Of course, there were all sorts of injury spots - Legs, knees, hands, ankles, elbows, faces everywhere. As the kids came forward for their band aid, irrespective of where they said their injuries were, the teacher put a band aid on their wrist. Of course, in a short while there was a noisy class – why had the teacher ignored the positions of their injuries and put the band aid on the same spot? She replied, 'Because I wanted to treat you all fairly'. The children got the message – fairness does not mean treating everyone the same, but meeting people where they are at and giving everyone what they need to succeed. Adopting a colour-blind stance is putting band aid on everyone's wrist irrespective of the real location of the hurt.

3. Create community in classroom that will encourage dialogue and story exchange

I wrote about community in chapters three and eight. In most classrooms I have been in, both as a teacher or even as a student, the Black students all congregate at one side of the classroom. Or where the Black student is the only one of their race in the space, they will usually isolate and seat a few spaces away from everyone else. One way an educator can interrupt this pattern is by building community in the classroom. bell hooks (2009) writes a lot about the impact and importance of community building.

Classrooms do not become communities by chance. There must be an intentional commitment on the part of the teacher, to create a classroom where all students feel safe, respected and valued. In a vignette in chapter one, I wrote about my contrasting experiences in two different classrooms and how I was voiceless in one and a completely different person in another. The difference in those two classrooms was as a result of the methods used by the teachers. One method I have adopted in creating an atmosphere of trust in my own classrooms is by sharing my own stories before asking others to share theirs. I learnt this from bell hooks (2003) and Stephen Brookfield (2021). Modelling your own disclosure puts you the teacher in a vulnerable state but also creates a palpable sense of trust amongst the students. Another way of building community is by facilitating activities that will value the different identities in the class. One activity that I was introduced to as a student was an activity about names, where we were asked to share the story behind our names. Because of the rich tradition behind the choice of names in Nigeria, my conversation opened up a channel to discuss more about my racial and ethnic identity. The facilitators made sure that this activity was handled with care and respect. When classrooms become communities, the walls of prejudice, bias and the 'less-than' ness of the Black person begin to crumble slowly. Real bonds that transcend the classroom are formed and there is knowledge exchange that is beneficial to all students. Communities are also ripe grounds for sharing stories. I cannot overemphasise the utility of stories in anti-racist practice.

4. Be ready for difficult and emotionally charged discussions

It is not possible to be an anti-racist practitioner and not engage in discussions that will touch on race and racism. In Ireland, as I am sure it is in most parts of the world, these discussions can be tough and charged with emotions. What many practitioners I have met do, is to avoid any kind of conflict, confrontation or emotionally charged discussion. I began chapter eight with a vignette that narrated one of such charged discussions I had in my classroom. More times than not, these discussions happen and many times as an educator, you will feel that you haven't handled it well. My advice? Cut yourself some slack and move on. Having the discussion in the first place is a big win! Discomfort is usually a sign of success (Brookfield & Hess, 2021, p. 85). Stephen Brookfield and Mary Hess (2021, p.90) in their book, have a very useful resource on dealing with difficult conversations in classrooms and responding to racist comments. I recommend this resource to both white and Black teachers. Before I move to the next item in the tool kit,

I will cite Brookfield and Hess as they capture the essence of this issue of embracing difficult discussions:

> Part of becoming a White antiracist is recognizing that the work ahead will be raw, bruising, and tense, but still being ready to embrace that reality. It won't be conducted in a safe space in which people agree to disagree, everyone's experience is recognized as equally valid, and emotions are kept at a safe distance or controlled by a facilitator who 'doesn't let things get out of hand.' As we move into embracing a White antiracist identity we must enter brave rather than safe spaces, because 'authentic learning about social justice often requires the very qualities of risk, difficulty, and controversy that are defined as incompatible with safety (Brookfield and Hess, 2021, p.35)

5. Commit to some form of activism

Anti-racist practice should culminate in some form of (political) activism. Activism could (or more appropriately, should,) be both personal and on a communal basis. Personal activism involves the steps you intentionally resolve to take against racism and oppression within your personal remit. I know of a white educator who as part of her personal activism, will offer opportunities to a minority ethnic or disadvantaged person where there is a tie between two candidates – one minority and one not. Her explanation is simple – one of both candidates is more likely to possess the social and cultural capital, privilege or the connections to get through doors and one doesn't. Therefore, she (by her actions) becomes the capital for the person who doesn't have it by using her privilege to interrupt what would ordinarily have maintained the white supremacist status quo. I know of practitioners who always, irrespective of the module they are teaching, introduce critically, the subject of race, racism and inequality and attempt to create in their students a critical consciousness of the subject. Personal activism can take any form – from small to big actions. A personal determination to call out or interrupt racism, is one example. One thing that does not qualify as activism in this regard is reflection. Activism will usually be the action that proceeds after reflection has taken place. Practitioners are also encouraged to join forces with other practitioners or other activist groups to push anti-racist agendas. Larger groups can reach larger numbers and are more likely to gain the attention of leaders that have the power to legislate and bring about change to the structures of inequality.

6. Be mindful of accents and use of language

Some of the women I spoke to in this research, spoke about not being able to participate adequately in class because of the accents of the teachers. Often times, the burden is on the minority ethnic migrant to speak in a comprehensible way but teachers from the

dominant group often forget that their accents too may be a challenge for migrant students. As trivial as this sounds, I know of students who this has caused immense anxiety for. As Ireland becomes more multi-cultural, an anti-racist teacher will realise that accents can serve as a barrier to the Black migrant student. Usually, once teachers are mindful of this and can slow down their pace of speaking, a lot of the problems that arise as a result of accent can be solved. As a Black woman who speaks English with a Nigerian accent, I am minded that my accent may not be easily understood by my students. I name this fact at the beginning of the term and constantly remind my students that they can ask me to repeat anything I say. I add that their asking me to repeat myself will not offend me. I then try to speak as slowly and as clearly as I can. Another thing that can easily exclude in Ireland is the use of slangs and words that have contexts the Black student may not be familiar with. In our conversation, Cheta spoke of being in group discussions in the class where she had to pretend to understand what was being said when she in fact, didn't. I recall being in a class where someone commented that he 'would do a Joe Duffy' on me. I neither knew Joe Duffy nor understood what the expression meant. Because I had raised this issue of the use of slangs and contextual language, the student in question immediately after he said it, turned to me to ask if I understood what that meant. He proceeded to explain it to me. Once educators are mindful that people are new to some of the language used in Ireland, their antennae would pick when such words are used and they will be able to create learning moments for Black students who may not want to ask as a result of shame or a reluctance to perpetuate the image of the 'ignorant' Black person.

7. Be honest, authentic and open

Some of the teachers that have made the most impact in my life are those who were authentic and honest to say to me 'Lilian, I'm not very knowledgeable about what your needs are but please let me know how you think I can help you.' Of course many times, even I didn't know what I needed but the genuine-ness and the honesty of approach, engineered collaboration and reflection that eventually led to beneficial initiatives. Sometimes, being honest, authentic and caring is a good start to meeting a student where they are at. As racism may impact people differently, listening to students tell you how you can help them on their education journey can be very powerful in anti-racist work. I have met white people who want to help in their own way and don't think about asking the student. As well-meaning as this is, it only serves to perpetuate the domination that exists as the status quo. Allow the student tell you where they are at. Then, take it from there.

8. Recognize the burden that is carried by the Black person speaking about racism

Usually, in classrooms where teachers adopt an anti-racist stance, there will be opportunities for discussions about racism and the impact it has on people. When such instances occur, in my experience, there is an immediate expectation that the Black person in the room will speak on behalf of their race or on behalf of all marginalised people. Even I as a black person sometimes put that burden on myself in spaces where there isn't adequate representation. First of, I will advise that teachers do not feed into that narrative. The minority ethnic person must never be put on the spot to share or to educate people about racism. But when they do, it is important to recognise the emotional burden that the person who has spoken has incurred. I speak often about race and racism and I never give a hint of the turmoil that follows when I am done speaking. I have had the experience of a teacher reaching out to me after a tough discussion in class – just to check how I was doing. That made a difference. Recognise the burden that students face when they speak about these things and check up on them and be ready to signpost them to counselling services or other Black teachers who may be able to help.

9. Diversify reading lists and educational resources

Some white practitioners that I speak to, often lament their 'powerlessness' and their inability to make real impactful changes in the anti-racism struggle. This tool is a good one for such practitioners. Yes, you may not be able to change the world, but you can change what goes on in your classroom space. So, consider diversifying your reading lists. This must not be done *tokenistically* by adding a few Black authors as optional reading or as appendages to an already completed list. There must be a conscious and intentional scouting for resources created by Black people at the conceptualisation stage of the course. These materials must inform some sort of change in the content of what a teacher is delivering. How an educator delivers their content is also very important. Danowizz and Tuit (2011, p. 43) suggest that

> Even in cases where the curriculum is diverse (Banks, 1991), faculty members often use traditional modes of instruction, which serve to exclude rather than include students. Thus, faculty members must not only concern themselves with what they teach; they must also be concerned with how they teach.

Like I highlighted in Chapters three and eight, adult educators must move away from the banking system and embrace more dialogic, respectful and inclusive ways of knowledge creation in the classroom.

10. Be aware that your Black student experiences life significantly different from the way you do.

Race creates a significant difference in the lived experiences of people. Everyday activities that may be taken for granted by others may be more difficult for the Black person. Consequently, an anti-racist practitioner should reflect on this and do what they can to support their Black students. I have met educators who support their migrant students into finding placement for work experience because they knew these people lack the cultural capital to get through certain doors. In chapter six, I shared Cheta's experience about how she was frustrated on her placement as a trainee doctor, by racist actions which were preventing her from seeing the required number of patients she needed to – something that her other colleagues were not experiencing. No teacher or supervisor checked up on her, possibly because they thought that everyone was having it good and seamless.

I have included a list of resources that can be used in facilitating anti-racism discussions as an appendix to this thesis (See Appendix E).

Figure 2: Picture of a Black girl walking into school with a knapsack of burdens. I presented this image when I participated in the Maynooth University Three Minute Thesis Competition. I won the first prize (Winner of Three minute Thesis Competition Announcement Link)

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APPENDIX A: Selected Case Study Slides From Masters in Social Policy Class

Lilian came into the country from Nigeria with a stamp 3 in 2012. At the time people on Stamp 3 immigration permissions were not allowed to work. She came having completed a 1st degree in Law from a University in Nigeria. She had also practiced law for 7 years in Nigeria. On arrival in Ireland, she went straight to the Law society to inquire on how she could practice law in Ireland. She was told that her law degree wasn't recognized and that she would have to begin a process which would take her about 5 years to complete in order to practice law. Lilian then decided to enroll for a master's degree in law for which she was quoted fees of 17000Euro. She managed to pay the fees but felt isolated in class. She found integratingreally difficult. She also struggled with accents, styles of writing and other things.

Amina fled Nigeria as a result of internal ethnic crises in her country. Before fleeing her country she had acquired a masters degree in Computer Engineering and was working in one of the top engineering firms in the country. On arrival in Ireland, she was put into a Direct Provision Hostel where she and her 3 children were given a room to share with another family. Food was provided in the centre and residents were not allowed to cook. The only courses Amina was allowed to attend without enormous cost were QQI Level 3 Courses. Amina who had a masters degree in engineering found that her mental health was being affected by sitting in the hostel doing nothing all day, decided to enrol for a QQI course on Introduction to computers. She kept on visiting the university to find out if there was anyway she could be enrolled to do a course. The university insisted on an immigration stamp 4. Amina did not have this as she was an asylum seeker.

Nomthi was born in Ireland to a migrant from South Africa. She attended primary and secondary school in Ireland and has now enrolled in the University to study Hospitality Management Nomthi was recently invited to attend a conference and noticed that all the speakers and major influencers in her field of study were white. She left the conference feeling a bit low – if no black person is represented at the top, is there any need for me to even try? Nomthi is a beneficiary of the HEAR scheme.

Fatima is a naturalized Irish citizen. She is originally from Ethiopia and had completed her first degree in Ethopia before relocating to Ireland to live with her husband. Upon arriving in Ireland, no employer would give her work in her field so she enrols for a QQI level 6 qualification to do health care. She completes it, begins to work as a health care assistance but now has her sight on a nursing degree. She enrols for a nursing degree, applies for SUSI, gets it and starts the course. Half way into the first semester, she receives a letter from SUSI stating that as she had a 1st degree from Nigeria, she is no longer eligible. She is mandated to pay 7000 Euro, fees designated as EU Status fees. She appeals to her school to allow her pay the 3000 euro fee Irish citizens are eligible to pay. This appeal is declined. Fatima is forced to drop out of school.

APPENDIX B: A parable used in the Voiceless Colony Workshop.

The voiceless colony

A long time ago in a faraway Kingdom, a King organised a race for his citizens. Every citizen of the Kingdom was allowed the opportunity to participate in the race and for all those who could get to the finish line, gifts of farm lands, houses and admission to the royal academy were promised. The King had organised and set up elaborate tracks for the runners and had made plans for his officials to line the sides of the track to ensure the citizens ran in accordance with the rules. A day before the race was to commence, one of the King's advisers, sought audience with the King.

"O King may your reign be long" he said

"My King, pardon me for coming to you without you sending for me but my King I believe that what I have to say will be for the good of the Kingdom".

"Speak." the King said. "I am listening."

"My King" the servant said, "shall the people of the colony in the north of our kingdom not participate in the race my King? My King imagine what our rivals, the kings of the neighbouring nations will have to say about us if we leave the people of the northern colony out of the race? Will they not accuse us of being unjust and thus gain a point over us in the committee of Kingdoms? My King, please consider."

The King frowned, partly in acknowledgment of the truth of what his servant was saying and partly from concern as to how he was going to include the people of the northern colony in this race he had been preparing for very long. Suddenly, he had an idea!

"I've got it!" the King exclaimed.

"We will include them in the race but they will run on a different track. I will mobilise more staff to line their tracks to make sure they too run in accordance with my rules."

"May your reign be long my king and may the gods continue to bestow you with wisdom" the servant responded.

Off the servant went to make the announcement.

There was going to be a race for the residents of the northern colony!

Preparations began in earnest. The people of the northern colony had not had any opportunity until then, to participate in the activities of the kingdom and so they were delighted. It was the day of the race and everyone turned up to the start line. The people of the kingdom and the people who dwelt in the colony to the north of the kingdom. The people of the Kingdom were shocked to see the people from the colony to the north of the kingdom.

"Who are these people?" They asked.

"They neither look, speak nor behave like us? Why are they a part of the race? Where are they from? Have they come to take over our race tracks and compete for our lands, houses and spaces in the royal academy?"

There was much agitation at the start line until the King's servant arrived and announced in a loud voice that the race was about to start but that people from the colony were to race on a different track. There were sighs of relief and songs of celebration from some citizens of the Kingdom!

"At least, these strange people were not going to clog up our tracks and take away our prizes." They said with relief.

The King gave his royal speech and the royal flutist was summoned to blow the flute that signified the start of the race. *'Poooooooooooooo!'* The flute went and off the people ran with joy and determination. A few kilometers away, the people from the colony in the north also started their own race but the strangest thing began to happen. As the people from the northern colony started to run, as if in response to an unheard cue, all the runners would fall on their backs. They would get up and attempt to run again. They will again, land on their backs. This continued for a few minutes before the runners realized that there were invisible hurdles on their tracks. Even though they couldn't see the hurdles, they fell so many times that they began to guess where the hurdles were and soon, they devised means by which they could jump over the invisible hurdles.

Another strange thing happened. Every time they were able to overcome a hurdle, an invisible but heavy weight was put on them and a decibel of their voice would be removed. The race was progressing smoothly for the citizens of the kingdom. A few stumbled and fell. A few gave up along the way but those with strength and stamina ran and ran and ran, their eyes on the prize. With the runners from the colony in the north, the story was different. It was a cycle of falling, standing again, overcoming the hurdle and receiving a

weight that slowed them down and took a decibel of their voice away. The King's officials that stood by the way to ensure compliance with the rules could neither see the invisible hurdles nor the weights put on their backs each time they crossed the hurdles so they shouted out to them – "what a lazy cohort you are! The King has given you all these resources and provided tracks for you in order to include you in the business of the kingdom but here you are wasting the opportunities given you!" Those whose voices had not been totally taken away by the strange happenings on the tracks tried to explain to the officials that something was working against them on the tracks but their voices were so low that the King's officials neither listened to them nor understood them.

"Get on with your race!" they would yell at them. "You should be grateful for this opportunity!"

So run they did, slowly, with their invisible weights on their backs. Many fell along the way but a few of them got to the finish line. As they opened their mouths to celebrate their victory, they discovered that they were voiceless!

APPENDIX C: Information sheet

Information Sheet

Purpose of the Study. I am Lilian Nwanze, a doctoral student, in the Department Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University.

As part of the requirements for PhD, I am undertaking a research study` under the supervision of Dr. Camilla Fitzsimons.

The study is concerned with the experiences of Black women in Ireland.

What will the study involve? The study will involve participating in a one-to-one interview that will last for approximately 1 hour, about your experience living and studying within Further Education in Ireland.

Who has approved this study? This study has been reviewed and received ethical approval from Maynooth University Research Ethics committee. You may have a copy of this approval if you request it.

Why have you been asked to take part? You have been asked to take part in this because you are a Black woman who lives in Ireland.

Do you have to take part?

No, you are under no obligation whatsoever to take part in this research. However, we hope that you will agree to take part and give us some of your time to participate in a one-

to-one interview with the researcher. It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not you would like to take part. If you decide to do so, you will be asked to sign2019

a consent form and given a copy and this information sheet for your own records. Also, If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason and/or to withdraw your information up until such time as the research findings are anonymised in December 2020. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect your relationships with your Further Education College or institution of learning as this research is totally independent of them.

What information will be collected? Information about your background, your decision to study in Ireland, your experiences of studying and/or living in Ireland, the challenges (if any) you have faced, the support you got, and your recommendations to improve your experience as Black women attending Higher Education in Ireland. Your experiences and needs may help create an effective tool to guide Further Education Institutes and other public spaces to areas of improvement that can improve the experiences of other Black women studying or who will study in Ireland.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential? Yes, all information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept confidential. No names will be identified at any time. All hard copy information will be held in a locked cabinet at a designated space in Maynooth University, electronic information will be encrypted and also held securely on Maynooth University PC or servers and will be accessed only by Lilian Nwanze (researcher).

No information will be distributed to any other unauthorised individual or third party. If you so wish, the data that you provide can also be made available to you at your own discretion.

'It must be recognised that, in some circumstances, confidentiality of research data and records may be overridden by courts in the event of litigation or in the course of investigation by lawful authority. In such

circumstances the University will take all reasonable steps within law to ensure that confidentiality is maintained to the greatest possible extent.'

What will happen to the information which you give? All the information you provide will be kept at Maynooth University in such a way that it will not be possible to identify you. On completion of the research, the data will be retained on the MU server. After ten years, all data will be destroyed (by the PI). Manual data will be shredded confidentially and electronic data will be reformatted or overwritten by the PI in Maynooth University.

What will happen to the results? The research will be written up and presented as a summary report and will be used to add real voices to the literature. This research may lead to a more efficient approach to meet the needs of Black women studying in Ireland as well as improved pedagogical methods for teachers. A copy of the research findings will be made available to you upon request.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part? It is possible that talking about your experiences may cause some emotional distress. Again, you are entitled to withdraw from this research at any point or decline answering any question you feel uncomfortable with. Other than this, there is no possible disadvantage I can think of if you take part in this research.

What if there is a problem? At the end of the interview, I will discuss with you how you found the experience and how you are feeling. If you experience any distress following the interview you may contact your college counseling service. You may also contact Irish council for international students (ICOS) at 01 660 5233. You may also contact my supervisor Dr. Camilla Fitzsimons Camilla.fitzsimons@mu.ie if you feel the research has not been carried out as described above.

Any further queries? If you need any further information, you can contact me:

Lilian Nwanze.

If you agree to take part in the study, please complete and sign the consent form overleaf.

Thank you for taking the time to read this

APPENDIX D: Consent Form

Consent Form

I……agree to participate in Lilian Nwanze's research study titled The invisible burden: Dimensions of racialization on the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Learner in the Irish Further Education System.

Please tick each statement below:

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me verbally & in writing. I've been able to ask questions, which were answered satisfactorily.

☐

I am participating voluntarily.

☐

I give permission for my interview with Lilian Nwanze to be audio-recorded.

☐

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether that is before it starts or while I am participating.

☐

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data right up to anonymisation in December 2020.

☐

It has been explained to me how my data will be managed and that I may access it on request.

☐

I understand the limits of confidentiality as described in the information sheet

☐

I understand that my data, in an anonymous format, may be used in further research projects and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

☐

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

☐

I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

☐

I agree for my data to be used for further research projects

☐

I do not agree for my data to be used for further research projects

☐

Signed……. Date…….

Participant Name in block capitals ……...

I the undersigned have taken the time to fully explain to the above participant the nature and purpose of this study in a manner that they could understand. I have explained the risks involved as well as the possible benefits. I have invited them to ask questions on any aspect of the study that concerned them.

Signed……. Date…….

Researcher Name in block capitals ……...

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the Maynooth University Ethics Committee at research.ethics@mu.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

For your information the Data Controller for this research project is Maynooth University, Maynooth, Co. Kildare. Maynooth University Data Protection officer is Ann McKeon in Humanity house, room 17, who can be contacted at ann.mckeon@mu.ie. Maynooth University Data Privacy policies can be found at https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/data-protection.

Two copies to be made: 1 for participant, 1 for PI

APPENDIX E: Irish Resources

I have written in different sections of this thesis, the need to handle matters regarding race and racism with recourse to particular geographical territories. A lot of the literature and the resources that deal with racism are imported from America. I have found these resources very useful and have relied on a lot of them to create this tool kit and to better my practice. Under this head however, I will like to highlight resources that have been created by Black people in Ireland. I recommend these resources to practitioners for their use as well as to add to their reading lists and class discussions. This list is not exhaustive and I encourage resource exchange between teachers.

Videos:

1. How to talk about Race and Racism (Nwanze and Psyhk, 2021) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8WMxTtmE2BE&t=8s – In this video, two migrant educators, one Black and one white speak about race and racism in the classroom. This video can be used as a resource for teacher education and has been used to develop training content.

2. Creating Our Future: The Experiences of Ireland's Black Community (2022) - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_PZXVWUzS4M&t=3207s – in this video Emer O'Neil interviews 3 Black people on their experiences in Ireland. The three perspectives are not the same and it is interesting to hear how each person navigates life in Ireland.

3. Un-silencing Black Voices - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMNvmCDceb8 – This is a very emotive resource where Black children and young people share their experiences with racism in school.

4. Black Lives Matter: Experiences of Racism in Ireland https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gfE7_Z27h5c – This video was filmed in the Galway international Arts Festival with 3 young Black Irish women sharing their experiences after the murder of George Floyd.

5. Deconstructed - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9GLR6XNNog&t=13s – Deconstruted is a 3.5 minute artistic video about how people lose their identity through the direct provision system performed by the Black Nigerian Irish poet, Felispeaks.

Books

1. Emma Dabiri (2021) -What white people can do next

2. Yewande Biala (2022) -Reclaiming: Essays on finding yourself one piece at a time
3. Emma Dabiri (2019) - Don't Touch My Hair, 2019)
4. Emer O'Neill (2021) – The Same but Different

Articles/Blogs/Reports

1. Lilian Nwanze (2022) The role of teachers in creating critically inclusive classrooms. European Journal of ULLL *Contemporary Issues in University Lifelong Learning*. European Journal of University Lifelong Learning (EJULL), 6(1), 2022. **https://doi.org/10.53807/0601y5z8**
   © eucen 2022. ISSN 2789-4029.
2. Sarah Meaney-Satori and Lilian Nwanze (2021) A community needs analysis with Refugees and People seeking asylum: Exploring Barriers and Access to Higher Education in Ireland. Refugee-CNA-Summary-Report-Nov-21.pdf (collegeconnect.ie)
3. Camilla Fitzsimons, Basma Hassan, Lilian Nwanze and Philomena Obasi (2021) Researching the experiences of Muslim women in Irish Maternity Settings – A Mother is born too.
4. Camilla Fitzsimons and Lilian Nwanze (2021), Let's Talk about structural racism and exclusion in Adult Education, EPALE Austria and Erasmus + https://epale.ec.europa.eu/system
5. Camilla Fitzsimons and Lilian Nwanze (2021) How do we create anti-racist Adult learning environments, Adult Learner Journal
6. Camilla Fitzsimons and Lilian Nwanze, Can Critical Education Address Racial Discrimination in Irish Maternity Settings, (2021), Adult Learner Journal

Websites

1. We are here HEAR website - http://weareherehear.ie/training/ This website contains resources and guides to use them for training.
2. Black and Irish website - https://www.blackandirish.com/ The official website of Black and Irish, an organization that celebrates the Black-Irish identity.

3. Irish Network Against Racism - https://inar.ie/ - A national network of civil-society organizations that seek to highlight incidents and the impact of racism in Ireland
4. A video on colonialism- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQV8qCkFV9E – video on colonialism