Racial microaggressions and beyond: the voice and song of the caged bird. An exploration of the lived reality of racism in the lives of Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students during their school-going years in Ireland (1990s-2000s)

Melanie Q. Groening McKenna

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION

DECLARATION

I have read and understood the Departmental policy on plagiarism.

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education.

Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text, and a list of references is given.

Signature: *Melanie G McKenna*

Melanie Q. Groening-McKenna

Date: 1 May 2025

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AI   Artificial Intelligence

BIPOC   Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour

BLM   Black Lives Matter Movement

CDC   Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(CoRT)   Complex Racial Trauma

CRT   Critical Race Theory

CSO   Central Statistics Office

DEIS   Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools

ESRI   Economic and Social Research Institute.

GRT   Gypsy, Roma and Traveller

IDA   Industrial Development Authority

IHREC   Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

INAR   Irish Network Against Racism

MENA   Middle Eastern and North African

MRP   Microaggression Research Programme

NQT   Newly Qualified Teacher

POC   People of Colour

PWI   Predominately White Institution

TA   Teaching Assistant

WHO   World Health Organisation

ACKOWLEDGEMENTS

'I come as one but stand as ten thousand'- (Angelou, 1990, p. 33).

As I reflect on reaching this academic pinnacle, Maya Angelou's quote above resounds loudly in my spirit. My name, Melanie-Groening McKenna, is written on the cover of this body of work, which I have often referred to as my labour of love. I have laughed, cried, sweated, and 'bled' over this work, giving my utmost to this project. On the declaration page of the thesis document, I have signed that this is my own work, which it is, in an academic sense, yet is not in so many other ways. Many others, 'ten thousand,' have sown into and nurtured the 'me' that has achieved this PhD milestone so that it is not only my accomplishment but also that of the village that raised me. There is an African proverb that says, 'It takes a village to raise a child.' I am greatly indebted to this village; it is the' ten thousand' to whom I owe thanks.

First and foremost, I give thanks and honour to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in whom I live and move and have my being, who can do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine. Never in a million years did I imagine that this girl from the townships of Eswatini would one day pursue a doctorate.

I am thankful to my dad and my beloved mum, who breathed her last a few months before I started the PhD programme (RIP), for all the love and countless sacrifices made along the way. I am eternally grateful. To my husband, Joe, who insisted that I could and should 'go for it,' and has been the wind beneath my wings, enabling me to rise and soar in the direction of what I never imagined possible, thank you for all the support, tangible and intangible. Táim buíoch. To my precious Chloe, mo bhláth, thank you for your patience and understanding, and all the many ways you made do when I could not be fully present due to my commitment to this project.

I stand, too, on the shoulders of all my teachers, in and outside of the third-level academic sphere. Special thanks to my English Teacher, Elizabeth Godwin, who looked beyond my skin colour to dismantle the narrative that I was Black and therefore not intelligent, or not as intelligent, and consequently incapable of excelling academically. No one has been able to convince me otherwise since. I also want to acknowledge all my students on the PME programme with whom I have shared these research findings. With the stories as a pedagogical

In my mother tongue, Siswati, we say 'umuntu ngumuntu ngebantu,' loosely translated as: 'a person is because others are'. The phrase is synonymous with the concept of Ubuntu, which recognises that 'I am because we are', suggesting that one's existence and success are dependent on relationships and the support of others.

ABSTRACT

This study explores racism-racial microaggressions in educational contexts from the perspective of Black, Black-white[1] Mixed ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller Students. The lacuna in the literature around racialised and minoritised students' experiences of racism in post-primary contexts foregrounded this research. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with ten individuals, the study uses a multi-theory and multi-qualitative method (bricolage) approach to examine the lived experiences of these students at predominantly white educational institutions (PWIs) in Ireland.

Critical race theory (CRT) and critical counter-narrative are employed to challenge the master narrative that 'Ireland is not a place of racism' and to decentre whiteness and the dominant perspectives and realities rooted therein, which are valorised and given eminence in society. This study foregrounds and privileges the voice, experiential realities, and subjugated knowledges of racialised and minoritised individuals, which are often dismissed and trivialised in education scholarship and other domains.

Research participants share the stark reality that racism in all its forms is a very real and harrowing part of their lived experience. The ten study participants provide retrospective and introspective counter-narratives that reveal the dehumanisation, marginalisation, violent erasure, ostracisation, criminalisation, discrimination, and isolation suffered at the hands of members of the dominant group. Participants also reported deafening silences, a fragile race avoidance, and a sweeping under-the-rug approach adopted by school personnel when it came to addressing issues of race and racism.

The combined impact of explicit racism and the more subtle, insidious racial microaggressions and the associated effects was reported to be severely detrimental, with long-lasting and far-reaching pernicious repercussions. Study participants offer recommendations for transformative action that policymakers, school leadership, and the teaching body at large can adopt to advance racial equity. Using Huber and Solorzano's (2020) tree model as a basis, this investigation also illustrates the ways that ideologies inherent in white supremacy serve as roots that produce and justify racism-racial microaggressions. Ultimately, the study calls for a

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[1] In this manuscript, I capitalise "Black" when referencing racial groups, while "white" is presented in lowercase. This approach serves to decentre whiteness, challenging the default positioning of whiteness as the norm or standard.

denuding and dethroning of the deification of white supremacy and whiteness for racial justice to prevail in our classrooms, schools, and society at large. An examination and interrogation of whiteness, particularly in predominantly white settings, is a foundational prerequisite for reform at a societal level.

The Overture

/ˈəʊvətjʊə/

An overture, derived from the French word "ouverture," means opening; it is a piece of music played by an orchestra at the beginning of an opera, ballet, or musical play. It is a precursor to the main performance, setting the tone and mood for what's to come. An overture hints at ideas to come.

A tête-à-tête between Researcher (Melanie) and Supervisor.

Supervisor: Congratulations on securing the Research Ireland scholarship for your research project.

Melanie: Thank you, I'm beyond thrilled; I can't believe I got it; God must have heard my prayers. It's a huge relief not to worry about how I will pay for the PhD. Thank you for all your help and support during the application process.

Supervisor: Not at all. You're very welcome. It's a fantastic achievement. Now, you will need to think more about what form you want your thesis to take.

Melanie: I'm not sure I quite understand. What do you mean by form?

Supervisor: I mean a frame that will fit and hold your thesis. Framing is an art; choosing the right frame can enhance a piece of work, while the wrong frame can have the opposite effect.

Melanie: I'm not an artist. I'm not one of those creatives; you're losing me now. I'm just going to write my thesis; I'm not sure what frames have to do with anything.

Supervisor: Okay, I'll give you an example. Have you met Mary Walsh*[2]?

Melanie: Yes, I have. She hosted a workshop that I attended a few weeks ago.

Supervisor: Mary's thesis explored the experience of educational exclusion from the perspective of prisoners and youth. At some point during the research project, she realised that a traditional thesis format would neither hold nor do justice to the vision and mission of her research project.

Melanie: Okay…

Supervisor: After various consultations and brainstorming sessions with multiple people, the core of her research thesis ended up being a play, which was a creative presentation of research findings. She also used transcript research poetry, amongst other methods.

Melanie: Hold up, once again, I'm not really an 'arty' person. That would not be my kind of thing.

Supervisor: I understand; I only wanted to give you an example of the possibilities.

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[2] All names marked with * at their first usage in the thesis are pseudonyms

Melanie: I appreciate that very much, thank you.

Supervisor: Also, Melanie, thinking of a metaphor for your research project can be useful.

Melanie: Between frames, dramas, poetry, and metaphors, I don't know. I feel lost… I'm going to need to give it considerable thought.

Supervisor: Take the time you need to think about it and trust the process.

Melanie: Oh golly, you always say that!

Supervisor: If you need to talk about it more or want to bounce off any ideas, I'm here to help. Give me a shout anytime. Let's link up in the next few weeks.

A few weeks later

Melanie: Good morning, great to see you.

Supervisor: And you, so how are things going?

Melanie: When I left your office after our last meeting, I felt slightly lost and quite concerned about how in the world I would achieve everything that we spoke about. I said a little prayer (more than one and maybe not so little) and boom! the inspiration came. Let me share some of the ideas from my musings. One of the things we spoke about was finding a metaphor for the thesis. I'm thinking the metaphor of the caged bird and its song would be quite fitting. It's inspired by Marilyn Frye's philosophy that experiencing oppression is like being trapped in a birdcage. Frye says that oppressive structures function as cages; there are people who are caged by oppression, their motion and mobility are restricted, and their lives are ultimately shaped and reduced (Frye, 1983), people like the participants in this study. This made me think of Maya Angelou's poem 'Caged Bird' and her book 'I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings'.

Supervisor: Hmmm, that's interesting. Tell me more.

Melanie: Let me first read the poem to you:

Caged Bird (Maya Angelou)

A free bird leaps

on the back of the wind

and floats downstream

till the current ends

and dips his wing

in the orange sun rays

and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks

down his narrow cage

can seldom see through

his bars of rage

his wings are clipped and

his feet are tied

so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings

with a fearful trill

of things unknown

but longed for still

and his tune is heard

on the distant hill

for the caged bird

sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze

and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees

and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn

and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams

his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream

his wings are clipped and his feet are tied

so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings

with a fearful trill

of things unknown

but longed for still

and his tune is heard

on the distant hill

for the caged bird

sings of freedom.

(Angelou, 1994)

Melanie: I liken the Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students who contributed to this project to the caged bird, their wings clipped, feet tied, by racial oppression. Their deep longing/quest for freedom leads them to open their mouths to sing the songs of their stories. This links with the idea of storytelling/counter-narrative being an emancipatory act for those on the receiving end of oppression. The core of the thesis, then, is a compilation of the song and story of the caged birds. I see the research participants and myself as members of the same colony of birds, the racially oppressed. My role as a researcher has been to provide a roosting space of sorts, a nest of safety for participants' narratives to land. Together, research participants and I co-construct knowledge, weaving the fibre of our voices to curate freedom or resistance songs through counter-narratives, poems, and photographs.

Supervisor: You've found a very evocative and rich metaphor that holds enormous narrative power and range of expression. Well done on puzzling through this and finding such a powerful metaphor. It is exciting!

Melanie: Thank you, but that's as far as my 'creative' capabilities have carried me. I think the thesis will blend both the traditional and non-traditional. What I mean by non-traditional is arts-based, or critical arts-based, rather. It's going to be a marriage of traditions. Or maybe more like a migration between traditions. Kind of like a swallow…. You know how a swallow migrates from Europe to Africa and vice versa to experience a warm climate all year round and get the best of both worlds? I have migrated between the traditional and arts-based worlds to get the best of both. The reader can then expect an eclectic mix of conventional thesis chapters,

such as context, theoretical frameworks, and methodology, and then the more arts-based: stories (in the original voice and dialect of participants), poetry, and even photography! I draw on the evocative and sensuous power of the arts to afford readers and audiences expressive access to multiple meanings, interpretations, and voices associated with lived diversity and complexity (Bagley and Castro-Salazar, 2012). Eisner (1981) once said that in educational research…it is to the artistic to which we must turn, not as a rejection of the scientific, but because with both we can achieve binocular vision. Looking through one eye never did provide much depth of field' (p.9).

Supervisor: Brilliant. Are you planning to have a discussion/analytical chapter?

Melanie: Well, yes, an analytical chapter, but again, not quite the traditional one.

Supervisor: Okay, what are you proposing?

Melanie: I hope to harness the power of narrative and introduce a fictional character to undertake the analysis.

Supervisor: Okay…tell me more. What is your reasoning behind that?

Melanie: Well, much of the prevailing lies or what I call the master narrative that exists about racialised and minoritised communities can be traced back to colonial phantasies and pseudo-scientific claims about the supposed inferiority of bodies that are not considered white. Essentially, promoters of anti-Black racism and white supremacy 'hijacked' the authority of science to justify racial inequality. Even though race science has been thoroughly and repeatedly debunked, the ideologies birthed by scientific racism linger still and lie at the very root of contemporary racial oppression. Cue the fictional character, Amira, a female scientist of colour, whose role will be to conduct a deep-dive analysis of the experiences of subtle and covert racism revealed in participants' narratives. The characterisation of Amira as a scientist and a female is an act of resistance, however small. Amira, from her highly qualified position, will remind us, lest we forget, or in case we didn't know, that facts and science have debunked stereotypes and myths about race(ism). Have you heard the quote: "For the master's tool will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde, 2018). Well, in this case, it's sort of like actually using the tool that the 'master' used (science) to dismantle the master's house (racism). One of the things that Amira does as a scientist is demonstrate that many common assumptions about race have very little scientific backing. Amira's position as a scientist also has the political agenda of shattering the notion that people who are not white are less intelligent than their white counterparts and that the scientific field is an impenetrable fortress for females.

Supervisor: I love it! I also like how you considered the intersectionality of oppression —that is, two different domains of privilege when creating the fictional character. I can't wait to see how it all comes together.

Melanie: Me too! Overall, I think of the thesis as a compilation of vocal instruments coming together to sing freedom songs —songs of resistance against racial oppression and the dominant social order.

Supervisor: Super!

Melanie: Thank you so much for your time, for always listening, and for your valuable input and support.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction and Rationale

In the year 2020, when I wrote the introductory piece to my group's Professional Master of Education thesis that explored issues of race and ethnicity in Ireland, I recounted how the world was abuzz at the shocking and brutal murder of George Floyd, an African American man in Minnesota, United States of America. George succumbed to death at the hands of a Caucasian police officer who knelt on his neck until his breath was eventually snuffed out. George's last words were, 'I can't breathe.' His voice, that sound produced in one's larynx and uttered through the mouth as speech and song, was forever silenced. The incident led to worldwide protests against racism, the lack of police accountability, and police brutality. From Cape to Cairo, Rome to Rio, east to west, north to south, people all over the world rallied in solidarity with the (BLM) Black Lives Matter Movement (CNN, 2020).

I, however, did not tell the story of how, on Irish shores, on 30 December 2020, coincidentally, another George, George Nkencho, a 27-year-old Black male, was shot dead by Gardai on the porch of his home in Clonee, West Dublin. Whilst the shooting may or may not have been racially motivated, many Black and Black-white mixed ancestry people in Ireland maintain the view that an element of racial bias among the all-white gardai involved contributed to the killing of George (Murphy, 2021). Following the passing of their loved one, the Nkencho family was further subjected to racist abuse and threats perpetrated through social media and intimidating letters delivered to the family home (Staines, 2021).

As I write this introduction, the media frenzy surrounding these two stories has died down. The world has "moved on". The Black Lives Matter Movement has lost the global traction it had gained after the murder of George Floyd. We are coming out of the clutches of the COVID-19 pandemic that led to a dramatic loss of human life worldwide (including that of my very own mother) and presented unprecedented challenges to food systems, the world of work, and public health (WHO, 2020). The effects of which will be felt for a long time to come (Butler and Bannock, 2021). Russia, led by Vladimir Putin, has invaded Ukraine; In January 2025, just a few months ago, Israel and Palestine agreed on a deal to end a catastrophic 15-month war (BBC News, 2025); President of the United States, Donald Trump has ignited a historic trade war that has left the world reeling, throwing the world economy into chaos and the markets into freefall (Islam, 2025). The world has moved on from the BLM days. However, many racialised people have not "moved on." We cannot; we do not have the luxury of placing issues of race

and racism on the back burner. The lived experience of racism for racialised and minoritised people remains pervasive and unrelenting (Young, 2021).

There are stories, countless untold stories of this experience that do not make the national news or global headlines. In fact, most students who participated in a documentary examining racism in Ireland reported that they had never spoken about the racial abuse that they suffered because Black voices are muffled and brushed aside (Pollak, 2020). Furthermore, the stories of students of colour, researchers of colour, and communities with large populations of people of colour, those considered by the dominant culture and others to be at the bottom of society's well, are often dismissed, trivialized, or misrepresented in education research (Milner and Howard, 2013).

Moreover, research evidence points to the painful reality that in many contexts racialised people are dehumanised and pilloried (Adedoyin et al., 2019; Bai and Zhao, 2024; Bain et al., 2009; Boccato et al., 2008; Brown and Outley, 2022; Vaes and Paladino, 2010; Walker, 2022). Dehumanisation's role in injustice is painfully pervasive, as dehumanized impressions of marginalised people have facilitated discrimination as well as justified violence against them. Within school settings, dehumanisation has been identified as the predicted psychological driver of teacher discrimination (Bruneau et al., 2020). Black, Brown, and Indigenous children experience marginalisation and dehumanising practices in classrooms (Mudd et al., 2021).

Correspondingly, Essien and Woods (2021) further argue that, as a result of the fact that Black people are not always viewed or treated like human beings, Black children can be engaged in school settings in ways in which they are treated as less than or as second-class citizens. This aspect of anti-Blackness manifests as a distinctive form of racism against Black people (Essien and Woods, 2024). In the US context, dehumanisation has been found to take many forms, undergirding much of the pedagogical practice in urban schools (Taylor, 2019). Indeed, a growing number of scholars in the education research domain convincingly present the multiple ways schooling is dehumanising for Black students (Legette et al., 2022). I caution the reader against prematurely concluding that these findings may not be applicable in the Irish context or be irrelevant to students from the Irish Traveller community.

Historians, linguists, and philosophers have researched dehumanisation for nearly two centuries. From this scholarship, we learn that associations between humans and nonhuman creatures have been used to justify atrocities like slavery as well as the widespread violence

against immigrants around the world (Chalk and Jonassohn, 1990; O'Brien, 2003; Santa Ana, 2002).

Dehumanisation is considered a fundamental component of intergroup violence because it is often the most important antecedent to moral exclusion —the process by which marginalised communities are placed outside the parameters within which moral values, rules, and considerations of equity apply. Groups that are morally excluded do not count in a moral sense; therefore, anything done to a morally excluded person is deemed permissible, irrespective of how heinous the action might be (Goff et al., 2008). Among the many serious ramifications, Douglas (2024) argues that dehumanisation strips individuals of their God-given dignity.

Consequently, this study aims to:

1) Provide a platform to capture and amplify the voices and stories of Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller adults on their experience of racism as students, with a special focus on racial microaggressions during their schooling years in Ireland.

2) Promote and reclaim the broken dignity brought about by dehumanisation. Adichie (2009) emphasises the primacy of stories not only in breaking a people's dignity but also in repairing that broken dignity. The author stresses that stories are extremely powerful and have been utilised to dispossess and malign, but also to empower and humanise. Beyond empowering and humanising, I hope that sharing their stories will be a healing experience for the study participants. Narrative therapy clinicians highlight storytelling's deep healing power (Brewster and Zimmerman, 2022). This is a resource I aim for respondents to benefit from, regardless of the extent.

This study was developed from research undertaken for a thesis in Year 2 of the Professional Master of Education programme. At the end of the thesis project, due to scope limitations such as time and resource constraints, it felt as though I had only "scratched the surface" in relation to Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students' lived experiences of racism in the form of racial microaggressions. Hence, the determination to explore and delve deeper into the phenomenon through PhD research in this area.

Also, what quickly became apparent and was a significant source of frustration during the research process was the woeful inadequacy of race scholarship in Ireland relative to some countries. I constantly had to draw on the UK and U.S. contexts, which fuelled my determination to embark on this research project to advance scholarship on race and racism in the Irish context.

Considering 1) the prevalence of a 'no problems' here outlook adopted by white principals and teachers in predominantly white institutions in relation to racism as well as the tendency to individualise racist incidents as aberrational (Devine, 2005; Mellon et al., 2025 forthcoming), 2) the Irish State's track record of a reluctance to acknowledge racism (Fanning and Michael, 2018) and the evidence suggesting a pattern of denial of experiences of racism in Irish society, including by key politicians and officials (Collins, 2001; Lynch, 2012; Cox, 2024). This study employs a counter-storytelling technique grounded in Critical Race Theory to challenge the master narrative grounded in the cultural and social history of the dominant racial group (Joseph, 2020a). A comprehensive discussion of this technique appears in later chapters.

Dr Ebun Joseph, founder of the Institute of Antiracism, urges that a consensus must be reached acknowledging the existence of racism in Ireland, as many from the hegemonic group hold the erroneous belief that racism is predominantly an issue in America. Joseph posits that an examination of the experiences of those marginalised and relegated to the lowest rungs of society's ladder is required to unearth the reality that racism also permeates Irish society (The Irish Times, 2023b). Joseph (2020a) emphasises that counter-narratives are critical since they amplify perspectives of marginalised and often silenced people. The hidden transcripts or counter-narratives of subordinate groups are crucial as they confirm the experience of the 'othered' and bear witness to their lived reality amid a dominant culture that often distorts, stereotypes, and marginalises that reality (Bell, 2003).

Adichie contends that stories presented from a single perspective result in one story becoming the only story. In many social and historical settings, whites and People of Colour[3] tend not only to hear but also tell very different stories about race and racism (Bell, 2003). There is an African Proverb that states that "the true tale of the lion hunt will never be told as long as the hunter tells the story." My research endeavours, therefore, to provide an opportunity for the 'tale of the lion hunt' to be told, this time, not by the hunter but by the hunted: the marginalised and oppressed who are on the receiving end of racism.

From this standpoint, the lion is not a toothless victim but a powerful agent —a fighter, adaptable, resilient, seeking to outwit, second-guess, and survive in this jungle we call life. Furthermore, most stories reinforce the status quo. Indeed, some suggest that this is their

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[3] The researcher recognises that categories such as white and People of Colour are not monolithic or homogenous and that their relationship to racial narratives in terms of positionality and power is asymmetrical, moulded/shaped by specific historical and social contexts such as colonialism and racial capitalism.

primary purpose. The stories circulating within subaltern communities are a counterpart to the myth promoted by the 'powerful' (Polletta, 2006). This makes counter-storytelling all the more urgent and necessary. This investigation, then, is a tool that embodies resistance, healing, and agency (Brown and Outley, 2022). In this context, I will explore theories on race and racism to establish a clear position for my work.

1.1 Research Questions

Given the lacuna in the literature around racialised and minoritised students' experiences of racism in post-primary contexts, this study investigated Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students' experiences with racism, particularly racial microaggressions, primarily within the schooling environment. I used Critical Race Theory (Delgado and Stefancic, 2013) and microaggression frameworks (Sue et al., 2007; Williams et al., 2020; Johnston and Nadal, 2010) to identify counter-stories to the prevailing discourse. Whilst this study's questions addressed experiences relating to racial microaggressions, participants also divulged their experiences of explicit, overt racism, which were also included in the research findings. Throughout the thesis, I therefore use the phrase racism-racial microaggressions as one related category. The phrase widens the scope of the participant's experiences, all the while recognizing that overt racism and racial microaggressions are both extremely harmful and part of the larger system of systemic racism.

This enquiry identified how racialised Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students experienced and responded to racism -racial microaggressions. To achieve the study's aims of privileging and amplifying the voice and story of participants and empowering and humanising, the research questions addressed in this study are:

(1) What are the different ways in which Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students experience racism-racial microaggressions within the educational environment?

(2) What are the effects of racism-racial microaggressions on this cohort of students?

(3) What coping strategies do they employ to deal with racism-racial microaggressions?

(4) What recommendations can be proffered for transformation to bring about racial equity?

1.2 Expected contribution to research, policy, and practice

One of the clear mandates for both education and research is to be an actor in, or agent of, positive change (Heimans and Singh, 2020).

"Research should contribute to overturning oppressive social situations" (Teo, 2009, p. 45).

The importance of social justice research is well recognised in contemporary times, particularly the need for innovative studies that intervene in the convoluted challenges faced within twenty-first-century societies. Research that has a transformational impact working with, on, and around the political, economic, and sociocultural impediments that can conspire to hinder transformation where it is most sorely required is imperative (Carless and Douglas, 2024; Sweetman et al., 2010).

One such area in which change is pressing is race and race relations. The impacts of racism originating in a distant era in history continue to manifest in the lives of racialised communities all over the world. Racism has evolved and continues to impose consequences upon society (Hall, 2008). In the United States, for example, research findings reveal that the inequities caused by racism cost the nation almost two trillion dollars annually in lost purchasing power, reduced job opportunities, and diminished productivity; furthermore, the conscious and subconscious belief in a racial hierarchy fuels the reluctance of politicians and policymakers to acknowledge the inequities and allocate adequate resources to address them (Christopher, 2023). I draw from the U.S. context, as no such data is available for Ireland. The reality that racism and prejudice are prevalent worldwide is evidenced in news stories focused on worldwide nationalism, the refugee and immigration crisis in North America and Europe, and violent extremism (Brown, 2022).

Whilst there has been some research documenting the incidence of racism among the general adult population in Ireland (Joseph, 2018; 2019a; Lentin and McVeigh, 2002), Wilson et al. 2021-2022 contend that research on racism towards Black and ethnically minoritised children and young people in Irish schools is limited and underdeveloped. Ní Dhuinn and Keane (2023) emphasise that very little is known about this cohort's relationship with their peers and teachers. Research is often focused on primary schools (Devine 2005, 2006; Darmody et al. 2016). The existing literature tends to focus on engagement with a limited range of children's social backgrounds, with alternative children's voices, such as those from racialised and or ethnically

minoritised communities, receiving relatively limited attention (Priest et al., 2016; McGinley & Keane, 2022; Ní Dhuinn & Keane, 2023). Though research in this area is limited and underdeveloped, recent years have seen a growing awareness of racism in Irish secondary schools (UCD School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, 2022; Conneely, 2022; Moustafa et al., 2024).

In this context, my research study aims to contribute to the existing works and lessen the gap in the literature by providing research on the lived reality of racism in the school lives of Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller children/adolescents in Ireland. More comprehensive research is required to better understand and address the phenomenon and experience of racism in our schools, particularly at secondary level. This study will provide an evidence base to understand racism in schools.

Furthermore, in the American context, where there is a substantial body of race scholarship, research on monoracial students' experiences with racial microaggressions is on the increase; however, there is minimal research that focuses on multi-racial students' experiences with racial microaggressions, particularly within educational contexts (Harris, 2017; Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2020). Needless to say, the same is true within the Irish context. This research, therefore, also addresses this gap in the literature by focusing on multi-racial students' experiences with multiracial microaggressions, a type of racial microaggression.

 In addition, racism in Ireland is an under-theorized area calling for specific as opposed to generalised accounts of racism and racialisation in the Republic of Ireland (Mac An Ghaill, 2002). I believe that this research is critical not only to the education field but to society at large; racism is a much broader societal problem, and 'dialogue' in all its forms, be it verbal or written, plays a critical role in raising awareness and contributing to challenging the status quo to bring about change. Fearful and Kamenou (2010) deduce that conducting and publishing critically engaged research can challenge micro and macro-level inequalities.

Examinations of racial microaggressions are critical because research suggests that the cumulative effect of microaggressions can have deleterious impacts on identity, sense of belonging, and health/well-being (Eisen, 2020). Understanding how students experience racism, including racial microaggressions in their school lives, can provide critical insights to develop appropriate policies and practices to tackle racism. School leadership, educators, and students alike can also be challenged to think about the role that they play in either perpetuating or alleviating existing racial injustices in the school environment.

In conducting this research, I assume the role of 'Socratic gadfly,' aiming to share participants' stories to provoke readers to consider and recognise their own worldviews, see something other than their own worldview, and confront their possible biases and assumptions in their dealings with diverse general and student populations. Stories are instrumental in breaking down the walls of public indifference; they elicit sympathy from the 'powerful' and sometimes catalyse official action against societal wrongs (Polletta, 2006).

Of equal significance is that when people see themselves in the narrative, it fosters a sense of belonging, recognition, and, most importantly, validation. Representation is crucial (Blintt, 2020). Similarly, Kakembo (2025) argues that 'socio-psychologically, when one reads a book or watches a movie about people like themselves, there is a sense of satisfaction, even a bit of belonging that can arise. The same is true when abuses are suffered or when the narratives are about people like us' (p. 13).

The final contribution offered by the investigator of this study to the field of research is a proposal to develop two new theories to specifically examine the unique experience of racism within Nomadic and Irish Traveller communities. This is elaborated upon in later chapters. The subsequent chapter establishes context by providing a historical-to-contemporary account of racism in Ireland.

Chapter 2: Racism in Ireland: A Historical and Contemporary Account

If you want to understand today, you have to search yesterday (Buck, 1967).

History allows us to see patterns and make judgments (Snyder, 2017).

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I map out the history of race relations in Ireland from the pre-state era to the present day. This chapter begins with a discussion of Ireland's open economy juxtaposed against the existing social closure, this is followed by an exploration of a homogenous and racism-free Ireland, subsequently I delve into an examination of Ireland's sluggish momentum in acknowledging and addressing issues of racism, next I investigate the specificities of racism in the Republic, this is followed by an analysis of the racialisation of non-indigenous communities of Colour, I then conclude with an exploration of race and race relations in the present.

2.1 Ireland: Wide open for trade, closed to 'Others'

The Republic of Ireland, situated off the northwest of continental Europe and West of Great Britain, was listed as the world's most competitive economy in 2023. The Emerald Isle is considered an established first-class investment haven for multinational organisations that select Ireland as a business destination due to the consistent, stable, pro-business orientation, high level of education, the ability to attract and retain talent, and the flexibility of its skilled workforce (IDA, 2023; Fleming et al., 2017).

The highly globalized Irish economy is deemed one of the world's most open economies for trade and finance. In 1999, T.K Whitaker, former Governor of the Central Bank of Ireland, often referred to as the 'architect of modern Ireland', is said to have proposed policies that removed barriers that closed the country off to the world, propelling Ireland from an isolated island with old, outdated ideas for economic and social progress to an international hub (Central Bank of Ireland, 2019). Be that as it may, the openness of the Irish economy is said to lie in stark contrast to the closed nature of Irish societies and communities. Although Ireland has had an exceptionally open economy since the 1960s, it remains a relatively closed society (Loyal, 2016).

Regarding demographics, this land of a hundred thousand welcomes is home to just over five million people. As of April 2022, there were 5,149,139 people in the state, an increase of 387,274 people since the previous census in 2016. Twelve percent of the population —632,000 persons —were non-Irish citizens. In the 12 months to the end of April 2022, there were 120,700 new immigrants from different countries, the highest in fifteen years (CSO, 2022). Although diversity is not new to Ireland (Hickman, 2007; Bryan, 2009), over the last decades, Ireland has experienced rapid immigration, leading to a modern reality of an increasingly multi-ethnic state (Mac Éinrí and White, 2008; McClure, 2021).

Within this society, prophylactic borders exist that separate insiders from outsiders (MacLaughlin, 1999; Mitchell, 2011). In the late 1990s, MacLaughlin (1999) noted that the hegemonic construction of Ireland as an open, cosmopolitan, multicultural, and tourist-friendly society belied a harsh reality of capitalist production, exclusionary nationalism, and increasing xenophobia within both the state and the general population. Indeed, there is a legacy of damaging exclusions of 'outsiders' that have undermined many people's ability to participate in Irish society (Fanning, 2011; Fanning and Michael, 2018).

2.2 A homogeneous and racism free Ireland
The Republic of Ireland (Éire in Irish) has been conceptualized as a racial state (Garner, 2004), defined by Goldberg (2002) as a modern nation-state in which 'race' and 'nation' are inextricably defined. Some have posited that the Irish state has progressed from a racial state to a racist state where state biopolitics and technologies of racializing Indigenous groups and regulating immigration and asylum dictate the discursive and practical construction of undesirable 'others' (Lentin and McVeigh, 2006; Lentin, 2007).

However, for a very long time, discourses on racism in Ireland revolved around whether racism exists in Ireland as opposed to how racism exists in Ireland (McVeigh, 1992). Post-colonial nationalist ideologies and practices, for instance, constructed an ethnicity and racism-free Irish Republic (Helleiner, 1995). In the post-independence era, there was a deep and persistent drive to create an image of a politically and culturally homogenous state. This bred a culture of manufactured homogeneity that became almost incontestable. Differences around ethnicity, beliefs, etc., were subsumed and suppressed in a society in which all were deemed the same. The state agenda of political and cultural cohesion and homogenization was realised largely through education, leaving an enduring imprint of neglect and even negation of difference in educational life (Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2020).

Historically, Ireland has prided itself on its record of supporting anti-racist and anti-colonial struggles of the people in the Majority world, thereby deluding itself into thinking that theirs was a harmonious, non-racist society (MacLaughlin, 1996). The prevailing wisdom, until the late 1990s, has been that as a newly colonized nation of emigrants, the Irish lack the power to be racist (Lentin, 2001).

Over the years, in Ireland, acknowledgment of the existence of racism has been slow to develop. It was not until 1968 that the Republic of Ireland signed the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the convention was not ratified until December 2000. Similarly, in Northern Ireland, it was 1997 before a similar act existed, although the rest of the United Kingdom had had a Race Relations Act since 1976. In both cases, the delayed/overdue recognition of responsibilities came about only through the efforts of anti-racist campaigners. The prevailing political atmosphere assumed there was no case to answer, not in Ireland. While other European countries recognised the necessity of race-related laws and policies, Irish public opinion, supported by the attitudes of politicians and policymakers, held that there was no racism in Ireland, not least because, unlike in those other European countries, there were ostensibly no people of colour in Ireland. Apart from the faulty logic inherent in the view that racism is caused by the people against whom it is perpetrated, whose only crime is arrival in the host country, the conclusion is factually incorrect (Rolston, 2004).

First, it fails to take into consideration the reality of 'white-on-white' racism meted out against Caucasian people of other cultures. Contrary to popular discourse, Ireland has never been a monocultural society (Hickman, 2007) and has included groups such as the Jewish and Irish Travellers. Secondly, Black Irish people have been a part of Ireland and Irish society for much longer than is usually imagined/acknowledged. For example, the number of Black people in Ireland, slightly over 1000, from as early as the 18th century, was as large as the numbers recorded in France (Hart, 2002). Given that the French national population was quadruple that of Ireland, such notable quantities point to themes of racial erasure in historical conceptualizations of Irish identity (Mullen, 2024).

Denials of racism in Ireland are as pervasive in contemporary times. As recently as August of 2024, Taoiseach Simon Harris stated that Ireland is "not a country of hate or racism" (Cox, 2024, np). As I typed those words, I could not help but think of a quote by American revolutionary and human rights activist Malcolm X, cited in Omi and Winant (2015):

I will never say that progress is being made. If you stick a knife in my back nine inches and pull it out six inches, there's no progress. If you pull it all the way out, that's not progress. The progress is healing the wound that's below, that the blow made. And they haven't even begun to pull the knife out, much less heal the wound...They won't even admit that the knife is there (p.1).

2.3 Lagging behind: negligence in safeguarding racialised and marginalised groups

Amidst the denials of the existence of the lethal blade that is racism, many scholars and researchers map out a long history of persistent racism, both individually and institutionally, in Ireland (King-O'Riain, 2019; Fanning, 2012). Equally important, Ireland's history of 'lagging behind' when it comes to issues of racism stubbornly persists. In October 2024, The European Commission, in a letter to the Irish government, issued an infringement notice, ordering the Irish state to bring its legislation into line with an EU law on combating racism and xenophobia, stating that the Irish courts were not considering racist hatred or xenophobia as a motive by those perpetrating hate crimes, including Holocaust denial (Connelly, 2024). Another example of negligence in safeguarding racialised and marginalised groups via legislation is the State's handling of the 2004 Equality Act.

The Employment Equality Act of 1998 and the Equal Status Act of 2000, which comprise the main elements of the Irish State's legislative anti-racism framework, were amended by the Equality Act of 2004. Both pieces of equality legislation were amended to implement three EU Directives and make further and better provisions regarding equality of treatment in workplaces and elsewhere. In 2003, the Equality Authority offered 51 recommendations to the Government on how the EU directives should be transposed into the two Acts and how existing anti-discrimination laws could be improved. The Equality Authority also recommended that it be given a statutory role to establish, maintain, and enforce standards for equality action plans. However, the Government chose to ignore many of its recommendations, thus forgoing the opportunity afforded by this Act to combat discrimination effectively. The Act has led to a decrease in legal protection in some cases (Beirne and Jaichand, 2006).

Certain exemptions regarding the applicability of the Employment Equality Act to domestic workers and the permissibility of discrimination on religious grounds pertaining to access and employment by public institutions to preserve the institution's ethos remained in Irish law, even though these exemptions disproportionately affected people from ethically minoritised communities. Another grave concern at the time was the fact that the act retracted some of the progressive jurisprudence of the Equality Tribunal, including its decision that grant limitations

by third-level institutions to Irish citizens constituted discrimination on the grounds of race in direct contravention of non-regression in the EU directives and contradicting the Department of Educations and Science's stated policy that educational practices in Ireland should be underpinned by equality. State inaction, or the failure to act, does not equate to non-discrimination; on the contrary, it may constitute de facto discrimination (Beirne and Jaichand, 2006). A failure to protect marginalised groups through structures such as legislation is symptomatic of the structural and institutional racism experienced by minoritised and racialised communities (Kavanagh and Dupont, 2021).

2.4 The specificities of Irish Racism

McVeigh (1992) contends that racism is not only a feature of Irish society, but it assumes a particular form in Ireland, which is to say racism combines with other forces in very particular ways that account for the specificity of Irish racism. The author states that this specificity is best understood by examining five discrete though not always interacting processes: The diffusion of racism from Britain; the involvement of Irish people in the process of Western imperialism; the Irish diaspora; the grafting on of racism to internal forces, notably sectarianism and nationalism; and the existence of endogenous anti-Traveller racism. These processes are essential for comprehending modern-day manifestations of racism in Ireland. In the ensuing discussion, I briefly expound on each of the processes the author proffers.

2.4.1 Diffusion of racism from Britain

Firstly, McVeigh (1992) and Ohlmeyer (2023) posit that for most of Irish history, Irish people, having lived as part of the English and then the British Empire for over 700 years, have made sense of the world through a filter of British perceptions of the world; this means that racist ideas and practices as well as 'tools of empire' formulated in Britain during the high colonial period and the times thereafter diffused or were exported into Ireland. The authors argue that the colonists introduced not only their English language but also their culture. Thus, McVeigh maintains that when British popular culture is actively racist, elements of that racism are produced in Ireland.

Ireland experienced and learned from British racism not only in the high colonial period but also in contemporary times. The author further contends that there is a racist subtext to much of British culture that exerts its influence on its nearest neighbour and first colonial subject. Racism in the UK context is endemic and pervasive (Joseph-Salisbury et al., 2021; Lewis et al., 2023) and can be viewed as a continuous process from the inception of the welfare state to the modern era (Cole, 2004).

At the time of writing, almost 33 years ago, McVeigh gave an example of this racist cultural diffusion in the mimicking of racist abuse of sportspeople of colour. Sports fans in Ireland started racially abusing football and rugby players of colour only after this started taking place in stadiums in Britain. Having witnessed the abuse in televised matches in Britain, Irish fans also began throwing bananas at players of colour, booing when they had possession of the ball, and imitating monkey vocalizations throughout matches.

This practice of racial abuse directed towards sportspeople of colour remains ongoing in Ireland, only now it is directed even towards young children. In early 2023, for example, members of the Republic of Ireland's U15 boys football squad were subjected to vile, vitriolic, and horrific racial abuse across multiple platforms during and after a series of football matches held in Dublin (BBC Sport, 2023; The Irish Times, 2023a).

2.4.2 Irish involvement in imperialism and colonialism

Secondly, an understanding of contemporary Irish racism cannot be obtained without examining Ireland's place and particular forces in Ireland within British imperialism. Irish history sits in a complicated position as pertains to imperialism and colonialism; on the one hand, Ireland was subjected to a long period of colonization by England and, subsequently, Britain, and suffered varying degrees of atrocity. On the other hand, many parts of Irish society were deeply involved in the expansion of the English, later British Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with all its attendant savagery and brutalities, slave trade included (Dháibhéid et al., 2021).

One way in which Irish society contributed to the British imperialist project was through missionaries stationed in Africa and their missions abroad, which became part of Irish Catholic identity (Mac Éinri, 2006). The history of racism in Ireland, specifically prejudice towards Africa and Blackness, can be traced back to the Irish missionary movement in the twentieth century, which faithfully emphasised the inferiority and savagery of the African 'Other'. From the 1920s to the 1960s, missionary organisations used language that was both emotive and disparaging to promote their quest to convert 'pagans' on the African continent. Instead of dismantling the existing racial attitudes implicit in imperial discourse, Irish missionaries embraced and adapted them to justify the project of creating a spiritual empire by converting the so-called pagans, thus establishing Africa in the Irish imagination as an uncivilized place of abysmal darkness (Bateman, 2008).

Due to the timing of Irish involvement in Foreign Missions and the success and longevity of the missionary project, these ideas persisted well into the twentieth century and continue to structure the Irish relationship with the African continent today. The deprecatory depictions deployed for propaganda came to define the discourse and, most importantly, the attitudes and beliefs of the Irish public regarding Africa (Bateman, 2020).

Furthermore, during that time, Irish Catholicism was complicit in encouraging anti-Black racism through the 'Black Babies phenomenon' or missionary campaigns to rescue the souls of Black babies, which involved offering up a penny to save their lives. The phenomenon's name derives from the 'Black baby' charitable donation boxes, which depicted a 'poor Black baby' crying or sometimes praying. The images featured on the boxes were used to motivate Irish people, especially schoolchildren, to make monetary donations. This paternalistic understanding of Black babies as only ever suffering was a ubiquitous feature of Irish life in the 1960s and 70s (Mullen, 2020).

Irish children were also encouraged to spend half a crown to "purchase" a little Black baby and snatch 'it' from the claws of Satan. Buying Black Babies was a ubiquitous occupation. Cards were distributed in magazines and schools. Different takes on the same idea resulted in the purchase and the power to name a 'Black Baby'. Each child or adult would have a card with printed spots to be punched; the card featured a picture of an African child in the centre. For every penny collected, one of the spots on the card would be punched; when thirty pennies were collected, a baby could be adopted (Bateman, 2020). Letters from school children, sending money to purchase other Black children, were often published in magazines, such as this one from the *African Rosary* magazine in 1936

> Dear Sister,
>
> Will you please buy 4 Black babies for my class. We had not time to collect for one each, so some of us are sharing babies. These are the names: Maeve Breen, 1 baby called Angela; Betty Murray and Mary Monaghan, 1 baby named Marie Therese; Madeline Kelly, Betty McEvoy and Sophie Coffey, 1 baby called Magdalen; 1st year C, 1 baby called Mary Ursula.
>
> (Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, 1936, p. 18).

Bateman argues that the naming of these African babies carried imperial overtones; that it was an exercise of power that supplanted the parental role and implied control or ownership of these babies. To me, it was reminiscent of and conjured images of Black bodies for sale on the slave block.

This tradition of church propaganda depicting Black people as helpless, passive victims in need of salvation or rescue birthed a special anti-Black racism in Ireland. In this way, the church colluded in Western and cultural imperialism (Sheridan et al., 2017). Other Irish Catholics found a place within the British imperial project outside of Ireland, encountering and reproducing racism through imperial service in colonized geographies across the globe. The relationship of the Protestant bloc in Ireland to British Imperialism also ensured general support for and involvement in imperialism in Asia and Africa, with some cities still piteously littered even in the early 90s with vestiges of imperialist iconography degrading and exoticizing other colonised people.

It is worth mentioning that some parts of Ireland to this day have monuments celebrating and commemorating individuals such as Christopher Columbus (O'Connor, 2020), who is linked to the genocide of Native Americans, the genesis of the transatlantic slave trade, and the colonisation of the Americas (Carew, 2006). All in all, the Irish situation within the imperial system in general and the British Empire, in particular, fostered a racialisation of Irish consciousness (McVeigh, 1992).

2.4.3 The Irish Diaspora

Thirdly, other Irish people became racialised through the parallel process of the Irish diaspora. 'Repatriated' racism from the Irish diaspora dispersed in countries such as Britain itself, South Africa, the United States of America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, where relationships to Indigenous people and other immigrant groups assumed racist forms, became important in the construction of Black people in Ireland (McVeigh, 1992). Noel Ignatiev, in 'How the Irish became white,' relays accounts of complaints by 19th-century Irish immigrants, fresh off the boat in Boston, that coloured people or negroes did not know their place (Ignatiev, 1995).

2.4.4 Grafting on of racism to internal forces

 Following that, Irish racism from the diaspora grafted onto internal forces like nationalism and unionism. One small example is the account of John Mitchel, an Anti-imperialist activist who in 1853 escaped from Australia to the U.S. Mitchel's pro-slavery position was justified by Arthur Griffith, founder of Sinn Fein, the Republican and democratic socialist political party, stating that Mitchel's views on negro slavery had been deprecatingly excused as if excuse were needed for an Irish Nationalist declining to hold the negro his peer in right (McVeigh, 1992). This reveals how the racism against Indigenous people and other immigrant groups in countries where white Irish people had immigrated became important in how people in Ireland constructed Black people.

2.4.5 Endogenous Anti-Traveller racism

Lastly, Ireland has its own 'organic' endogenous racism, which cannot be treated as an undesirable 'foreign import' from British shores or anywhere else. This is anti-Traveller racism, which overlaps and intersects with newer forms of racism in Ireland (McVeigh, 1992, 1996; Irish National Co-ordinating Committee for the European Year Against Racism and O'Connell, 1997). Irish Travellers have been variously identified as 'gypsies', 'itinerants,' 'tinkers,' and 'travelling merchants.' However, they identify as Minceir in Gammon/Cant, their mother tongue, or 'Travelling People' or 'Irish Travellers' in English (McVeigh et al., 2003). Mincéirs are an ethnically minoritised group indigenous to Ireland; they numbered 32949 in the 2022 census, representing less than 1 percent of the population (CSO, 2022). They are a heterogeneous group described by some as a 'community of communities' (Brennan et al., 2024).

Irish Travellers have historically experienced racism, social exclusion, and marked educational disadvantage in Ireland, indicating evidence of pervasive structural and institutional oppression (Boyle et al., 2018; Burke, 2009; O'Hanlon, 2010; McGaughey, 2011; Watson et al., 2017). Irish Travellers have a shorter life expectancy than the general Irish population; they tend to live 8 years less than people generally do in Ireland. The life expectancy for men in Ireland is 79.7 years, and for women, 83.4 years. In contrast, life expectancy is 71.3 years for Traveller men and 75.2 years for Traveller women (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2019a).

The Traveller community also experiences a high level of mental illness sustained by poverty, poor housing, socioeconomic factors, and the prejudice and discrimination endured (Snowdon and Karlsson, 2021). The suicide rate among Travellers (11%) is six times the national average, with over 65% of Traveller suicides occurring amongst those under the age of 30. A report commissioned by three Traveller Action groups and presented to the Oireachtas (Houses of Parliament) identified racism and discrimination as the root cause of the crisis suicide rate among Travellers in Ireland (Rorke, 2023).

Anti-Traveller racism, however, is not a peculiarity of the Irish people. Ever since the seventeenth century, and especially since the nation-building nineteenth century, most philosophies of progress have systematically prioritized sedentarism over nomadism. Nomadism has been literally denigrated both inside and outside Europe, suggesting that nomadism, including transhumance seasonal migration, was an attribute of 'barbarous,' underdeveloped, and 'uncivilized' societies. As such, there was no place for nomadic lifestyles

in the civil world, least in nation-building and metropolitan Europe (Miles and Satzewich, 1990).

The ensuing racialisation of Europe's Gypsy communities throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reached new heights in the Darwinian half of the nineteenth century. The merging of Social Darwinism with bourgeois nationalist ideas about homeland, property, hygiene, and respectability then contributed to a radical renunciation of Gypsy and other Traveller cultures and lifestyles. The vilification of travelling peoples was fundamental to evolutionary theories of social development which prioritised the rights of the individual over those of the community and caused nomadic societies, including nomadic groups in North America and Africa, and Gypsies in Western Europe, to be numbered among the 'inferior races' and to borrow from Franz Fanon, the legendary Afro-Caribbean psychiatrist, philosopher and revolutionary be branded as 'the wretched of the earth' (MacLaughlin, 1999; Fanon, 1967).

By the late nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, 'tinkers' and nomadism in Ireland were largely perceived by propertied sectors of Irish society as a threat to national progress. In this increasingly property-oriented society, Travellers, like 'Gypsies' in mainland Europe, were considered inferior to the propertied classes because they literally had no territorial stake in the nation-state. 'Tinkers' were considered a 'dirty' and 'rightless' people and, therefore, did not qualify for a position within the material and moral structures of the nation-state (MacLaughlin, 1999). Indeed, Irish Travellers who did not conform to settled ways of being in the world were inferiorised and demonised as backward outsiders who worked against Irish society (Kitching, 2015a).

 Irish Travellers, like Gypsies elsewhere in Europe, were prone to lowering of the thresholds of tolerance that separated them from settled communities in the newly emerging Irish state. As the sensibilities of the settled became more refined and bourgeois, their tolerance for the stench and filth they associated with the poor, especially 'tinkers,' was similarly lowered (Corbin, 1986).

The very presence of 'tinkers' in this modernizing Ireland was a source of 'bafflement' to the settled sectors of Irish society. It intimidated their sensibilities because to them, so much in Traveller behaviour, especially their so-called 'ribald manners', their vagrancy, their supposed lack of respect for Church and literally for the law of the land, seemed to resemble more the habits of those living in the far-flung 'backward'/ 'primitive' colonial peripheries in India and colonial Africa than those of an emergent nation-state at the back door of what was considered

'civilized' Europe. Irish Travellers were stereotyped as a 'race apart' from Irish society (MacLaughlin, 1999).

This stereotyping and vilification of Irish Travellers reached new heights in the 1990s. Following a spate of murders of elderly people in the Irish countryside, murders in which there had been no evidence of Traveller involvement, a commentator in a leading national newspaper scathingly suggested that Travellers and their culture were responsible for the terror that had overtaken the lives of old people dwelling in the countryside:

> We know now the source of the terror that has overtaken the lives of old people living in the countryside. It is lying on the roadside, living in the fields, sustained, encouraged, indulged by the money of the welfare state and the sanction of the intellectuals. I mean of course the Travellers and their culture.

The writer proceeded to categorize Traveller culture as the 'culture of the sewer', describing the life of Travellers as 'ungoverned by intellect'. It was she contended:

> a life which marauds over private property and disregards public laws. It is a life of money without production, land without cost, damage without compensation, assault without arrest, theft without prosecution and murder without remorse. It is a life worse than beasts, for beasts at least are guided by some wholesome intellect. Traveller life is without the enobling intellect of man and the steadying instinct of animals (Synon, 1996, cited in McLaughlin, 1999, p.146).

In March 1999, a Mayo County councillor, John Flannery, was acquitted of inciting hatred at the Galway District Court. The councillor had described Travellers as dogs (RTE, 1999). Irish Travellers have long been associated with dirtiness, vagabondism, and crime, such that they are sometimes deemed pathologically unfit for Irish citizenship (MacLaughlin, 1999).

As elsewhere in Europe, communities in Ireland are increasingly perceived as contested terrains inhabited by 'insiders' and defended from 'outsiders,' including, not least, nomadic 'outsiders.' This sort of racism not only creates Manichean constructs of landscapes as occupied by 'safe insiders' to be fortified against 'criminal outsiders', but it also constructs Travellers as opposite to sedentary people and insists on a radical policing of the borders between safe 'insiders' and troublesome 'outsiders' (MacLaughlin, 1998). Indeed, Irish Travellers have been deemed social dropouts embroiled in a culture of crime and a 'social problem' to be 'contained' through assimilation, sedentarisation, and monitoring (Kabachnik, 2009). Similarly, Kavanagh (2022) points to an enduring legacy of assimilationist policies aimed at disrupting, undermining, and destroying Traveller cultural distinctiveness; the author

argues that these acts constitute cultural genocide, causing immeasurable intergenerational harm, suffering, and trauma.

Moreover, the terms dirty and clean, and alternately Black and white, have been used in many social contexts, the Irish one included, to define outsiders and insiders. Travellers have frequently been called Black by 'Gypsies' as well as by settled Irish, two groups who themselves were once called Black by the English. The Black or dirty person, in these instances, is one who is not entitled to full participation in the institutions that represent the vital moral structures of society, one who is denied its membership and protection. (Court, 1985, in McVeigh, 1992).

From as early as the 1830s, the idea existed that the Irish were the n [—] s of Europe (Brantlinger, 2003); however, when the 'relative whitening' of the Caucasian Irish in Ireland began during the nineteenth century, it did not extend to members of the Traveller Community (Kitching, 2015a; Bhopal, 2018). Irish national identity is racialised as white (White, 2009); Irish Travellers are conceived as 'Irish national' though not always as 'white' (McVeigh, 1996). Indeed, Connolly and Khaoury (2016) argue that whiteness is the fundamental element of Irishness, and Lentin and Moreo (2015) add that this constructed Irishness is also ethno-racially rigid. The racialisation, then, of the Irish Traveller population is not separate from the racialisation of Black people. Endogenous Irish anti-Traveller racism and other racism are reworked in relation to each other (McVeigh, 1992).

In the preceding discourse on the specificity of Irish racism, I provided a more comprehensive analysis on this endogenous form of racism, particularly because Travellers along with Roma face the highest levels of prejudice of any ethnic group in Ireland (Watson et al., 2024), which suggests that Irish racism is not simply colour-coded but also intolerant to difference (Joseph, 2018). In the ensuing discourse, I investigate the latter point more thoroughly.

2.5 Racialisation of non-indigenous communities of colour
There is a territorial and spatial meaning through which certain practices of racism acquire meaning. Nationalist practices, as are found in Ireland since the conception of the independent free state, first assume an image of a national space, succeeded by an image of the national subject as the master of this space, and finally an image of the ethnic or racial other as a mere object within this space (Kitching, 2019).

In Irish society, communities that are not white are constructed as encroachers in a space where they do not belong (Mullen, 2023). white equates to Irishness, and anything else is Other

(Garner, 2004). Mullen argues that the history of Othering the racialised is built upon an essentialist discourse of impenetrable racial differentiation. Such essentialism can reproduce potentially hostile dominant and inferior others (Ang, 2001). Irish historicism has created its own 'racial inferiors' through not only the racialisation of its Indigenous Traveller population but also via governmental technologies of asylum and immigration controls, as well as biopolitical governmental technologies regulating the lives of migrants (Lentin, 2007).

To unpack this assertion, let's travel back to the 1990s when the newly affluent Ireland became a country of net immigration. Although migration was not a new phenomenon, Lentin asserts that it was presented by the state and media as such, serving, amongst other things, to reconceptualize the nation as homogeneous. It was in 1996 that the country reached a migration turning point and has been a country of net immigration ever since. Ireland's economic boom of the early 2000s, also known as the Celtic Tiger, led to increased migration to Ireland (Darmody et al., 2014). For the first time in its history, Ireland witnessed a significant inflow of migrants, comprising both asylum seekers and workers from outside the European Union (Ruhs and Quinn, 2009).

Soon enough, widespread animosity towards these migrants became apparent. Studies conducted at the time indicated that Black immigrants, especially Nigerians, experienced more racism and discrimination than other migrants (White, 2009). Anti-Black racism and discrimination, however, were by no means a new phenomenon in Ireland. For example, children of dual heritage (the offspring of a parent of African descent and a white person) born in Ireland in previous generations were persistently rejected by families and society at large. Extensive evidence has been uncovered, exposing the abuse suffered by some of these children in Irish institutions between the 1950s and 1970s, where their supposedly 'Black' skin colour singled them out for segregation, starvation, sexual abuse, forced labour, and violence (Michael, 2015).

During this time of increased migrant flows, although there were some organized anti-immigration groups, such as the Immigration Control Platform based in Cork, in the main, unlike in other European countries, opposition to migrants was diverse and sporadic. Along with the burgeoning migrant hostility, leading newspapers such as the Irish Independent, irrespective of evidence indicating the contrary, railed against the 'flood' of asylum-seekers. Notwithstanding the small numbers involved, legislators rushed to implement controls, thereby helping to create a popular moral panic. Many readily accepted the myth that the Island was too small to take any more immigrants (Rolston, 2004). Some vociferous statements of

community opposition to the dispersal of asylum seekers to different parts of the country reflected a broader racialised discourse, which portrayed asylum seekers as 'AIDS' ridden and as criminals, which arguably mirrored the tone of a wider politically sponsored antagonism to asylum seekers within Irish public policy (Fanning, 2002a).

 By and by, racist attitudes increased, with people questioned in the North, for example, admitting to being more racist than sectarian. It was only a matter of time before racial attacks erupted. In June 2000, as a white Englishman, David Richardson, his Black wife, and their son, who was working in Dublin, walked home after an evening out they were attacked by an angry mob of white Irish men who spewed vulgarities at them, 'n [—] s' out, 'Black b [—]ds', and 'monkeys'. David was also stabbed, subsequently spending several weeks in an intensive care unit (Sweeney, 2000).

Commenting on the attack, a member of The African Refugee Network, Asylum Seeker John Tambwe, stated that racial attacks happened all the time. John relayed incidents in which his face was spat on, his letter box was urinated on, and he was called a 'n [—]' many times. His apartment was also spray-painted with obscenities (Lentin, 2001). In January 2002, the first publicly reported racially motivated murder occurred. Zhao Lin Tao, a Chinese student, was beaten to death by a group of white youths in Dublin (Rolston, 2004; Donaghy, 2002).

Issues of racism were crystallized around Irish citizenship in 2004 when a referendum was called and passed with an 80% majority, removing the constitutional provision of birthright citizenship for the children of non-citizens. Since 2004, children born in Ireland to non-Irish citizens have been ineligible for automatic citizenship and must undergo the time-consuming, often unsuccessful naturalization process (King-O'Riain, 2018; Mancini and Finlay, 2008).

The campaign leading up to the 2004 citizenship referendum drew heavily on images of pregnant Nigerian women coming to Ireland to give birth as a vehicle to obtain Irish citizenship, many of which served to racialise the issue and impress upon voters the necessity of closing the gates to the ''flood of immigrants'' taking advantage of Irish citizenship. The removal of birthright citizenship served as a racialised contraction of rights within the Irish state, and contemporary political concerns were placed squarely on understandings of race (King-O'Riain, 2019).

The irony of it all is that the state exerted neoliberal controls and reduced pathways to citizenship through residence in response to immigration while simultaneously passing anti-racism legislation (Garner, 2009). Similarly, Lentin (2001) highlights the apparent

contradiction between 'the Irish government's exclusionary and racist immigration and asylum policies and its financial support for antiracism initiatives' (paragraph 3.7). Whilst the state has adopted various policies and initiatives articulating aspirations for equality and inclusion, one needs to be mindful of Jeffers and Lillis's (2021) observation that policy aspirations often remain as rhetoric. Mitchell (2011) argues that any policies aimed at racism in all its forms, however well-intended, will ultimately fall short until nation itself and the identities it is implicated in constituting are rethought.

Furthermore, the Direct Provision regime for asylum seekers, introduced in the year 2000, has also been theorized by Lentin (2022) in terms of race and racialised state violence; the author argues that the segregation, racialisation, and coercive confinement of asylum seekers in Direct Provision constitutes racialised state violence.

2.6 Race and race relations in the present

In 2009, Ireland was found to be among the worst 5 EU countries when it comes to victims of racial discrimination and abuse; people of immigrant ethnically minoritised backgrounds reported that they avoided certain places for fear of being seriously harassed or assaulted because of their background (IHREC, 2009).

I now shift the discourse to the present, which goes beyond the timeline in which study participants share their experiences to demonstrate the enduring and persistent nature of racism. Even though the events that study participants recount happened in the recent past, racism in Ireland is by no means a thing of the past, which is why it is still important to hear the voices in participants' counter-narratives.

At present, there is little difference in treatment for those racialised as 'other' in Ireland. In a submission to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission in June 2024 highlighted an alarming and persistent rise in intolerant attitudes towards immigrants, Travellers, and Roma people throughout Ireland (Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2024).

 As pertains specifically to the Traveller and Roma Community in Ireland, as previously alluded to, research published by the Economic and Social Research Institute and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth in December 2024 showed that Travellers and Roma face the highest levels of prejudice of any ethnic group in Ireland. The research was based on a survey published by the department in mid-2023, which

reported concerning attitudes among the wider population towards members of the Traveller and Roma communities (ESRI, 2024).

These attitudes are increasingly manifesting in the public sphere through harassment, protests, arson attacks, and hate speech, on and offline (Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2024). At some point, asylum-seeker and migrant-related protests in the Republic of Ireland had become, on average, almost daily occurrences; 307 such protests were reported across the country in 2022 and a similar number in 2023 (McGee, 2024).

In July 2024, a national newspaper reported an escalation of fires and arson attacks on properties in use, planned for use, or rumoured to accommodate asylum seekers and refugees (Boland et al., 2023). Far-right factions within these protests have effectively weaponised the stresses and fears stemming from the decades-long housing and homelessness crisis affecting a significant portion of the Irish population (Hearne, 2023; Cannon and Murphy, 2024). It is worth emphasising that the very act of migration is racialised; migrants are quintessentially a racialised community, the racialisation of which entails blaming migrants for the failure and crisis of state services, from the economy to housing, from health to education. Since the 1990s spike in immigration, migrants and asylum-seekers have been blamed for the country's housing shortages, the overcrowding of schools and hospitals, and welfare fraud, all of which preceded their arrival (Lentin, 2022).

Tensions reached a climax on the evening of 23 November 2024 when a riot, which Gardai described as the most violent in the history of Dublin, erupted. The Dublin riot saw the capital descending into a violent 'urban hellscape' after a man of Algerian descent stabbed three young children and their carer (McDermott, 2023). In the hours following the incident, far-right activists took to social media and online messaging apps to invoke/spread public anger over immigration. Amidst the pandemonium of the riots, retrieved voice recordings from a social media account called 'Kill all Immigrants' uncovered a voice inciting attacks on immigrants and the Roma community:

> Let's have little groups splintering off, doing what we got to do. Seven o'clock, be in town. Everyone bally up, tool up. And any f [—] n g [—] o, foreigners, anyone, just kill them. Let's show the media that no more foreigners are allowed in this poxy country (Carroll and O'Carroll, 2023, np).

These movements, according to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (2024), should be considered in the context of persistent and overt racism and discrimination against

Travellers, Roma, and people of African descent. Findings from a study co-funded by IHREC and the Irish Research Council titled 'HateTrack: Tracking and Monitoring Racist Hate Speech Online', as well as data from iReport, a racist incident reporting system, reveal significant volumes of racially loaded discourse across both online and offline spaces in Ireland (Machowska-Kosiack and Barry, 2022).

The 2018 HateTrack reported Anti-Muslim discourses mobilizing tropes of terrorism, clash of civilizations, Muslim men as sexually deviant and misogynist, and a general unspecified antipathy. Traveller and Roma people are typically labelled as undeserving, 'uncivilized,' thugs, and criminals, and are further targeted using dehumanizing language. Black people are targeted in anti-refugee/migrant, Islamophobic discourses and attacks against second-generation Irish people. They are stereotyped as criminals, 'uncivilized,' lazy, and 'parasites' alongside the dehumanizing trope of African men as animals. The report also uncovers anti-Semitic, racist discourses. The authors contend that online and racist hate speech cannot be understood in isolation from racist structures and institutions or from media and political discourses that racialise certain groups (Siapera et al., 2018).

In another study, nearly half of the adults born in Ireland believe some cultures to be superior to others and that some races and ethnic groups are innately harder working. Furthermore, 17% of study participants believe some races and ethnic groups were born less intelligent (McGinnity et al., 2018). These research findings are not only telling but very disturbing, painting a totally different picture of an Ireland of no racism.

The truth, as evidenced by the Irish Network Against Racism's (INAR) 2022 findings, is that reports of racism in Ireland, in particular reports on discrimination, more than doubled from the previous years, and reported assaults also increased in 2022. Correspondingly, the Senior Policy Officer for the Irish Council for Civil Liberties has stated that hate crimes and hostility towards some vulnerable communities are a growing reality in Ireland (McCarthy, 2024). Lamentably, not much protection is offered to communities targeted by racism in Ireland. There are systemic gaps in the legislation surrounding protecting against racism and intolerance in Ireland (Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2024). Furthermore, minoritised communities experience worse outcomes from Garda involvement; even when a racist incident is perpetrated against them, they are more likely to be suspected of instigating the incident (Michael, 2015).

The Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) and the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) published the 'Policing and Racial Discrimination in Ireland: A Community and Rights Perspective' report in April 2004. The report details the perceptions and experiences of racial discrimination in Ireland of ethnically minoritised communities when interacting with members of the predominantly all-white An Garda Síochána force. A vast majority of contributors (80%) in the study felt that they received unfair and differential treatment from members of the white settled community. Participants reported experiences of discrimination and racial profiling, which led them to feel unsupported, unprotected, and unrepresented by Gardai. Study respondents identified prejudiced use of stop and search powers, a lack of support when filing a complaint or reporting a crime, disproportionate use of force, and excessive scrutiny as examples of differential treatment (Irish Council for Civil Liberties and Ireland Network Against Racism, 2024).

Results from previous studies support these findings. A significant and growing body of research indicates that members of the Traveller and Roma community face discrimination from An Garda Síochána and across the criminal justice system (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2019b; Kennedy, 2018). In 2022, the Limerick-based European Centre for the Study of Hate published a comprehensive report with data gathered from surveys with members of Traveller and Roma communities. Among other findings, with respect to stop and search only, Irish Travellers reported harassment, threats, degrading treatment, provocation, and deliberate conflict escalation by Gardai (Joyce et al., 2022).

Further evidence of racial profiling towards phenotypically Black people is contained in the 'Being Black in the EU' report, which included respondents' experiences of being stopped by police in 13 member states. Ireland was found to be one of only three countries in which the rates of reported 'police stops' among people of African descent had not decreased between 2016 and 2022. Black men in Ireland were twice as likely as Black women to have been stopped by Gardai within the last five years. Ireland also had the highest rate of police stops within the previous twelve months. It is worth noting that overall experiences of racial discrimination increased since 2016 in all the EU countries involved. The Agency expressed alarm at the lack of progress, given the binding anti-discrimination law in the EU since 2000 and significant policy developments since then (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2023).

2.7 Conclusion

That is the story of 'race' relations in Ireland, supported by evidence and told by an immigrant, a non-majoritarian, an 'outsider' living on the periphery of the impenetrable borders of Irish

society. A majoritarian might sing a different song altogether, presenting theories that Ireland has long stood in opposition to Europe's anti-immigration stance and has offered a thousand welcomes to the foreigners who reshaped its economy, society, and demography. Indeed, some may say that Ireland was a glorious exception when anti-immigrant sentiment swelled in Italy, Hungary, France, and other countries. Others may hypothesize that centuries of emigration and the legacy of colonialism have heightened white Irish's empathetic and sympathetic sensitivities towards those who have immigrated to Éire (Carroll and O'Carroll, 2023). Some, as members of former Taoiseach Harris' choir, will echo the chorus of a country of no racism; others still might sing off the same hymn sheet as An Garda Síochána, lauding the force as one of the 'most trusted police services in the world' (McGreevy, 2024, np).

What then of the educational sphere, which is often hailed as neutral and egalitarian (Reay, 2009)? What stories, one wonders, will racialised and minoritised students tell of their experiences within Irish society and the Irish education system specifically? Bryan (2012) conceives 'education, as a social institution which plays a crucial and very direct role in determining people's life chances, is deeply implicated in the production of institutional and everyday or 'business-as usual' forms of racism which permeate school life' (Bryan, 2012, p. 601) Similarly, O'Connor (2010) states that racism permeates the very notions that shape our educational system.

Given that one of the most elaborate and ubiquitous manifestations of state presence in modern society is education systems (O'Brien, 2009) and that educational institutions are microcosms of society that reflect and reinforce the social order (Graham and Robinson, 2004), it should come as no surprise that research points to evidence of institutional racism in the Irish education system (Kitching and Curtin, 2012). The authors posit that institutional racism is historically embedded in Irish schools and elsewhere. Macpherson (1999) defines institutional racism as follows:

> Institutional racism consists of the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviours which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. It persists because of the failure of the organisation openly and adequately to recognise and address its existence and causes by policy, example and leadership (p.28).

It is against this backdrop that this study explores Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students' experiences of racism, with a special emphasis on racial microaggressions, during their school-going years in Ireland between the 1990s and 2000s. A particular focus is placed on students' experiences in school, since schools are racialised spaces where deeply held beliefs and expectations constitute an integral part of school processes and practices (Blaisdell, 2016), and where educators and educational professionals bring to their work a series of discourses on immigration, ethnicity and identity that reflect and are shaped by the norms and values prevalent in society at large (Devine, 2005). Before delving into the study participants' experiences of racism, in order to facilitate a deep and comprehensive understanding of their narratives, in the subsequent chapter, I offer an analysis of the theories of race and racism that frame these experiences.

Chapter 3: Theories of race and racism

3.0 Introduction

The phenomenon of racism has been extensively researched from various, often conflicting disciplinary and political perspectives (Bonnett, 2000; Lentin, 2004). Given the varying and conflicting theories of race and racism, it is critical to identify and examine the theories employed in this study. A comprehensive theory of race and racism should position race and racism together into the same analytical framework since the construction of race cannot be separated from the reproduction of racism; race and racism are dialectically related concepts. This framework must further articulate the connection between racist ideologies and structures, include an intersectional analysis, and lead society towards the elimination of racial oppression (Golash-Boza, 2016).

In the ensuing discourse, I expound on one such framework, which I have adopted to examine Black, Black-White Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students' experiences of racism-racial microaggressions, namely, leading American Sociologist, Tanya Golash-Boza's sociological theory of race and racism, whose work draws on key scholars in the field. Following this, given this study's particular focus on racial microaggressions, I offer an analysis of the second theory of racism applied in this investigation, namely, microaggression theory.

3.1 Golash-Boza's sociological theory of race and racism

3.1.1 Defining Race

Notwithstanding the enormous legacy and volume of racial theory, the concept of race remains a poorly understood and inadequately explained one. In prevailing social science research, race has been conceptualised and operationalised rigidly and statically, failing to account for its shifting meaning across historical time and varied milieus. Consider, for instance, how Caucasian Irish and Jews who were not considered racially "white" earlier in U.S. history eventually became white (Karp & USC Casden Institute for the Study of the Jewish Role in American Life, 2023; Ignatiev, 1995). It should be noted, however, that there has been some criticism around the lack of precision on what was actually meant by 'whiteness' and overstating the extent to which Irish-Americans were ever non-white (Crangle, 2024).

Race is socially constructed and historically fluid; it is continuously being made and remade in everyday life. Race is in a state of continuous formation (Omi and Winant, 2015). Within the Irish context, for example, race was an ascription produced with colonialism, and the Irish were racialised as other. At a later stage, in order to maintain the integrity of the empire, the British re-racialized the Irish as white, extending to them the status of a self-governing dominion within the empire (Kearns et al., 2024).

This contradicts the view that race is a genetically rooted and permanent hierarchical system of human difference (Weigel, 2016; Wilson, 2016). Roberts (2011) explains race as a fatal invention: a very real political category and political system that groups human beings and has consequences for people's health, wealth, social status, reputation, and life opportunities. For example, the invention of the white race was shaped by practices that awarded [and continue to award] the various groups that became white, cultural, psychological, and, most importantly, practical advantages over racialised 'others' in the economic, social, and political realms (Allen, 2012).

By sorting people into races, more powerful groups specify the position of the less powerful, thereby maintaining their own power, status, and authority. Powerful groups draw a boundary between themselves and others, defining those others as racially distinct. The critical issue for race is who 'they' are and how they are fundamentally different from 'us' (Fredrickson and Foner, 2004). I explore this concept of race more thoroughly in a subsequent chapter.

3.1.2 Racism

Ruth Benedict, in her 1945 book *Race and Racism,* was one of the first scholars to use the notion of racism, defining racism as 'the dogma that one ethnic group is condemned by nature to congenital inferiority and another group is destined to congenital superiority' (Benedict 1945, cited in Bonilla-Silva 1997, p. 465). More recently, racism has been defined as both: (1) the ideology that races are groups of people whose physical differences are wedded to significant innate hierarchical cultural and social differences that can be measured and judged, and (2) the micro- and macro-level practices that subordinate/repress those races believed to be inferior (Golash-Boza, 2015).

Jung (2015) defines racism as structures of inequality and domination based on race, arguing that the structure of racism can be thought of as the reiterative expression of schemas and resources through practice. Elsewhere, Gillborn (2018) describes racism as relentless, fluid, and quick to morph depending on existing circumstances.

Individual, institutional, and structural racism

In this section, I discuss the various forms of racism. Racism can be perpetrated by individuals and groups (micro) as well as by institutions and larger systems of power (macro) (To et al., 2020), and it operates at both overt and covert levels (Pack et al., 2015). Interpersonal racism refers to behaviours of dominant racial group members that serve to diminish and harm members of other racially marginalised groups (Kornienko et al., 2022); it is worth mentioning here that race-neutral acts such as [merit-based scholarships and standardized testing in education] can have the same harmful effect (Golash-Boza, 2016).

Individual racism is an extremely powerful force that remains widespread (Matthew, 2024). I must, however, also emphasise, in tandem with many scholars, that this study rejects the view that racism is indicative of individual pathology; it is, instead, a systemic condition that is pervasively and permanently embedded in the ideology of the masses (Bell, 1992; Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995; Vaught and Castagno, 2008).

Similarly, Henkel et al. (2006) stress that racism is much more than a matter of individual scattered episodes of discrimination; it is symbolic of a widely accepted racist ideology and the power to deprive certain racial groups of the dignity, freedoms, opportunities, and rewards that are available to one's group via a socially organized set of ideas, attitudes, and practices.

Indeed, Gillborn (2018) posits that racism cannot be adequately understood by a perspective that focuses only on the separate beliefs, actions, and fears of individual social actors. Rucker et al. (2024) posit that white people, however, tend to define racism as more of a problem of individual bigots, conceptualizing racism in terms of the blatantly racist beliefs and discriminatory behaviours intentionally committed by a few 'bad apples'. Furthermore, Carter and Murphy (2015) posit that white people tend to be less likely to define racism in terms of systematicity, thereby limiting what counts as racism, which, according to the authors, possibly accounts for why white people, compared to Black people, tend to perceive less racism in society.

What makes racism remarkably resilient is that it is both systemic and shaped by individual agency (Miller et al., 2018). I turn now to the concept of systemic racism, which Feagin (2014) cited in Golash-Boza (2016) defines as 'a diverse assortment of racist practices; the unjustly gained economic and political power of whites, the continuing resource inequalities; and the white-racist ideologies, attitudes, and institutions created to preserve white advantage and power' (pg. 133).

Bonilla-Silva (2021) proffers an interesting and compelling take on systemic racism, referring to it as racialised social systems where social, political, economic, cultural, and even psychological rewards are allocated partially along racial lines, partially because the distribution of rewards in any society involves other axes of social division such as gender, class, and sexual orientation to name but a few. Bonilla-Silva further proposes that the systemic in systemic racism means that we all participate in the reproduction of the racialised order, and this reproduction is fundamentally reliant on behaviour and actions that are normative, habituated, and often unconscious.

In Ireland, as deliberated upon in a previous chapter, structural and institutional forms of racism operate through historical legacies of exclusion (e.g., anti-Traveller policies and laws, restrictive immigration laws), institutional practices in policing, housing, and health that disadvantage racialized groups as well as cultural narratives that frame racism as an individual rather than systemic issue (O Curry, 2022; Audley, 2025; Whyte, 2025) The subsequent chapters will reveal in greater detail the way racism, in all its forms is experienced by study participants in and outside the school setting.

3.1.3 Racist ideology and structure

Racialised social systems give birth to racial ideologies that have a structural foundation (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). A racial ideology is a set of principles and ideas that divide people into different racial groups and serve the interests of one group. The dominant group creates ideologies that reflect its interests. Racial ideologies are dynamic/fluid, changing over time because the needs and interests of the elite change (Golash-Boza, 2016). Marx and Engels (1970), in their book titled 'The German Ideology', proposed that 'the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas' (pg. 64). Du Bois (1920) applied this concept to race in America, arguing that the ruling ideas are those of the dominant white group. In Ireland, both historically and today, the dominant racial group is white (Mullen, 2022). I posit that it is this group's ideas that reign supreme.

An example that demonstrates the interconnectedness of racial ideology and structure is the ideology of global white supremacy. Global white supremacy is a power structure of formal and informal rule, socioeconomic privilege, and norms for the disparate distribution of material wealth and opportunities, benefits and burdens, rights and duties, which are enforced by the prevailing racial ideology (Mills, 1997). Elsewhere, Christian (2019) posits global white

supremacy as 'shaping all geographies and national racialized social systems but in different, nuanced, and indirect forms' (p.170). In the Irish context, global white supremacy has manifested in several layered and contradictory ways. Pre-independence, Ireland held a subordinate position within the global racial hierarchy. During the struggle for independence and certainly post-independence, Ireland aligned itself with whiteness (Walsh, 2021). white supremacy was internalised in the construction of the modern state. (Joseph, 2020b). Irish Travellers and other minoritised groups are to this day racialised and denied various privileges and opportunities associated with white Irishness identity, e.g., job opportunities. A predominantly white society like Ireland is enmeshed in whiteness and white supremacy (Joseph, 2022). I expand on this in a subsequent chapter.

In times past, *de jure* white supremacy prevailed [in the form of, for example, Jim Crow laws in the United States of America, the system of apartheid in South Africa, and colonial laws that restricted land ownership, voting rights, and access to education and employment for those not considered white].In contemporary times, we witness a *de facto* white supremacy characterized by the pretence that formal, juridical equality is adequate to remedy inequities created on a foundation of numerous centuries of racial privilege and illusory colour blindness that serves to entrench white privilege further (Mills, 1997).

Correspondingly, Bonilla-Silva (2014) proposes that a colour-blind ideology maintains white supremacy by obscuring the realities of racial inequality and systemic racism. In promoting the notion that ignoring racial differences is the optimal way to address racial issues, colour-blind ideology fuels the persistence of racial disparities. Some of the ways that colour blind ideology has operated and operates in Ireland are 1) through educational policies, which often avoid the explicit naming of race and focus instead on "interculturalism" or "diversity," thereby diluting the specific experiences of racialised groups (Bryan, 2010). 2) Racial inequalities in the labour market are often explained through socio-economic factors without acknowledging racial discrimination (Joseph, 2019b). 3) Public discourses of racism, which do not frame racism as a structural issue (Fanning, 2002b).

Lewis (2004) additionally notes that racial ideologies provide worldviews that make sense of racial gaps in remuneration, wealth, and health, such that white people do not see any connection between their gain and the loss of others. Furthermore, racist ideologies lead to controlling images (Collins, 2000), discourses of hegemonic whiteness, and racialised identities, which in turn lead to racist practices on the micro and macro levels. These structures and ideologies thus reproduce one another in a dialectical manner. Two important

consequences of racist ideologies today are the prevalence of racialised identities and the proliferation of racial stereotypes (Golash-Boza, 2016).

Table 1, below, illustrates the gendered stereotypes of racialised and minoritised people:

Group	Men	Women
Arabs	Terrorist Immoral billionaire Haggler	Veiled victim Exotic seductress Maiden
Native Americans	Savage Sidekick Wise elder Doomed warrior	Squaw Princess Matriarch
Latinos/Latinas	Latin lover Greaser/bandito Gangbanger Gardener Buffoon	Hot-blooded Latina Maid Abuela (Grandma) Mexican spitfire
Asians	Buddy Threatening foreigner Martial artist Corrupt businessman Smart nerd Model minority (hard-working, intelligent and successful)	Butterfly (submissive, fragile, self-sacrificing) Dragon lady (cunning and manipulative) "Geisha girl"(exotic and overly sexualised) Smart nerd Model minority (hard-working, intelligent and successful)
African Americans and Africans	Thug Athlete Rapist Sidekick Hyper sexual fiend Lazy laggard Intellectually inferior	Mammy (e.g., self-sacrificing, nurturing, loving, asexual). Bitch/Jezebel (e.g., hypersexualized, seductive and exploiter of men's weaknesses) Welfare queen Video ho Sapphire/Angry Black woman (hostile, aggressive, overbearing, illogical, ill-tempered and bitter) Intellectual inferior
Irish Travellers	Criminals Rogue Intellectually inferior Lazy loafer / Workshy Aggressive fighter	Wedding obsessed Passive Oppressed Unambitious / unmotivated Domestic-centred

Table 1. Gendered Stereotype Table. Source: Adapted from Golash-Boza (2016), extended by Melanie Groening-McKenna (2025).

It is worth pausing at this juncture to consider that stereotypical representations are by no means inconsequential; they have serious ramifications. They shape how people view one another and serve to justify rampant inequalities. A consideration of stereotypes facilitates an understanding of how ideologies articulate with structures: for example, the 'controlling image' of the Black man as a thug has led to [not only the senseless loss of life for many Black men] but has also been critical to the expansion of the criminal justice system. Racialised and gendered fear of crime has justified the development of the prison-industrial complex in the United States

(Golash-Boza, 2016). America has the highest incarceration rates in the world, a striking feature of which is the racial dimension of this mass incarceration, with Black men accounting for 40% of the prison population (Alexander, 2010).

In the UK context, the stereotyping of Black male students has contributed to the school-to-prison pipeline (Graham, 2020; Perera, 2020). Findings reveal that Black Caribbean as well as Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) children are most severely impacted by the school-to-prison pipeline, with both demographics overrepresented in school exclusions and criminal justice population data (Traveller Movement, 2022).

3.1.4 Intersectionality

Golash-Boza (2016) states that at a certain level of abstraction, a discussion about racist ideologies and structures would be incomplete without mentioning class or gender. Risman (2004) posits that 'each structure of inequality exists on its own and yet coexists with every other structure of inequality' (p. 444).

Similarly, Omi and Winant (2015) posit that race is a master category produced in tandem with other axes of oppression, such as class and gender. Golash-Boza argues that a shift away from the abstract to lived experience necessitates incorporating an intersectional lens since the racist discourses that circulate about Black women are distinct and, therefore, result in different individual and institutional acts of racism. The author gives the example of how the discourse of Black males as dangerous leads to white women crossing the road when they see a Black man walking towards them, and also leads to the tragic shooting of Black boys by police officers. The same level or kind of fear does not mark the typical white reaction to Black women. Figure 1 below shows how racist ideologies articulate with racist structures. Figure 2 visually represents Golash-Boza's sociological theory of race and racism adopted for this study.
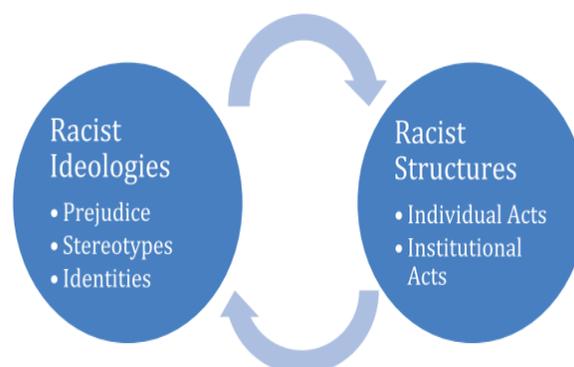
Figure 1. Racist ideologies and racist structures (Golash-Boza, 2016).
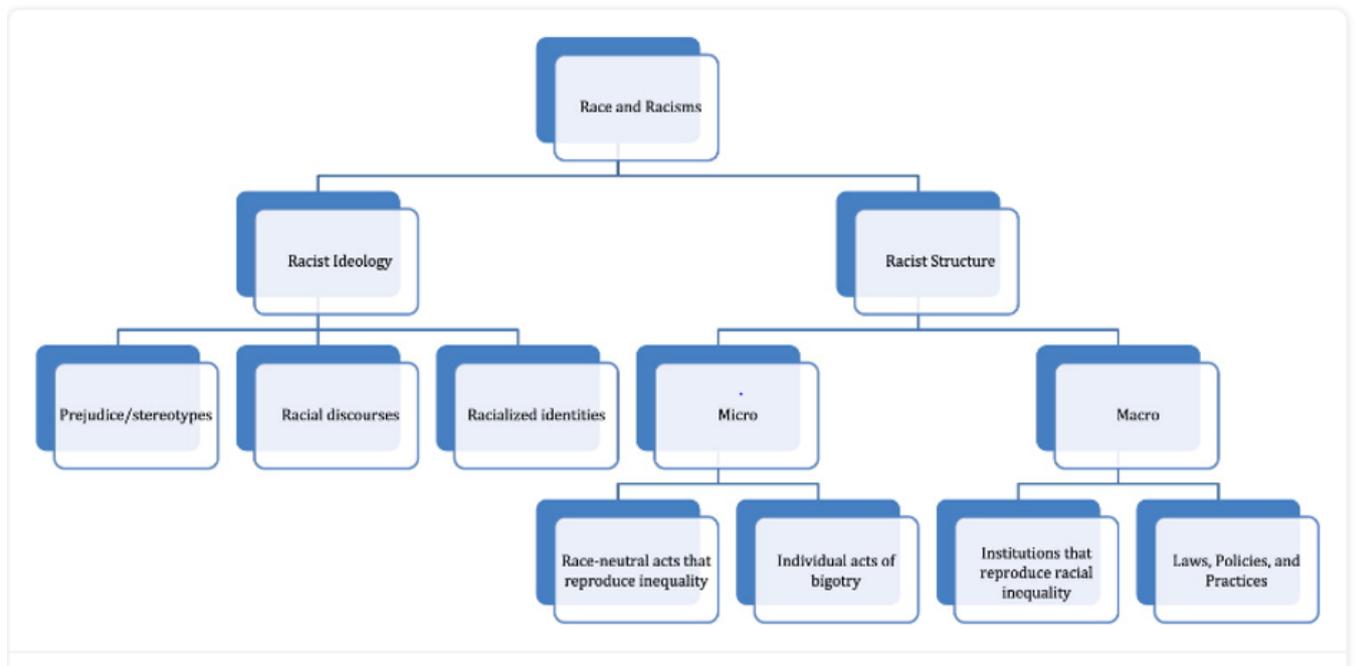
Figure 2. A visual representation of a comprehensive theory of race and racism (Golash-Boza, 2016).

3.2 Microaggression Theory

3.2.1 New racism

Within the broader theory of race and racism is the concept of microaggressions, which I now analyse. Whilst blatant and overt racism is still alive, some race scholars suggest that over the last several decades, racism has changed/morphed in nature, resulting in what has been termed modern or new racism (Sjöberg and Sarwar, 2022; Ortiz, 2021; Penner et al., 2010; Sears and Henry, 2003; Sniderman et al., 1991) which takes on more surreptitious forms (Every and Augoustinos, 2007).

A contemporary line of reasoning is that traditional, overt racism, that open flame of racial hatred, has been somewhat inhibited, and that racism now occurs progressively in more subtle, covert, and less obvious forms. These forms of racism are ascribed to changes in social norms that render it unacceptable to express racist views openly and are reinforced by laws constraining certain practices and behaviours (Noon, 2018; Pearson et al., 2009; Dovidio et al.,2009). For example, in November 2022, a white middle school teacher's employment was

immediately terminated in Texas, United States, after telling Black students that his race is superior, commenting that this is a widely held belief which many people conceal (Griffith, 2022).

This "new" form of racism is also said to be very powerful and complex to combat (Hatt-Echeverria, 2005). It has been likened to carbon monoxide, invisible but potentially lethal (Tinsley-Jones, 2003). The phenomenon of racism becoming more subtle and covert has become pervasive in the fields of psychology and education in the United States, especially (Nadal, 2008; Solorzano et al.,2000).

Numerous scholars suggest that the dynamics of racism in modern society occur in daily micro-interactions that involve derogatory actions and insults targeted at oppressed populations (Forrest-Bank, 2019). This everyday racism references the recurrent and normalised existence of racism as infused into familiar practices such as talk and behaviour. It is embedded in routine and everyday practices, can be experienced as amorphous and ambiguous (Walton et al., 2013), and is deeply entrenched in the policies and structures of our institutions (Sue, 2010a). Symbolic racism, which has been conceptualised as a combination of anti-Black affect with traditional American values such as individualism and meritocracy (Johnston et al., 2024); aversive racism, defined by Dovidio et al., (2017) as 'the racial biases of those who believe that they are not prejudiced, but whose unconscious negative feelings and beliefs nevertheless get expressed in subtle, indirect, and often rationalizable ways' (p. 270); and microaggressions form part of the landscape of subtle modern day racism.

3.2.2 Microaggressions defined

In the 1970s, Harvard University professor of psychiatry and education Chester M. Pierce, the first African American psychiatrist to join the faculty of Harvard Medical School, invented the term 'racial microaggressions' to label a particular form of subtle, everyday, modern racism, stating:

> Most offensive actions are not gross or crippling. They are subtle and stunning. The enormity of the complications they cause can be appreciated only when one considers that these subtle blows are delivered incessantly. Even though any single negotiation of offense can in justice be considered of itself to be relatively innocuous, the cumulative effect to the victim and to the victimizer is of an unimaginable magnitude. Hence the therapist is obliged to pose the idea that offensive mechanisms are usually a micro-aggression as opposed to a gross, dramatic, obvious macroaggression such as lynching (Pierce, 1970, pp. 265-266).

Over the next 37 years, microaggressions, especially as they relate to race, were referred to in a few scattered publications (Lilienfeld, 2017a). It was not until 2007 that the theory of microaggressions emerged in a seminal article published by Derald Wing Sue and colleagues in *American Psychology* (Wong et al., 2014). In the article, microaggressions are defined as: "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of colour" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271). Microaggressions theory is conceptually similar to minority stress theory, which proposes and has empirically demonstrated that individuals bearing social identities that deviate from societal norms experience daily stress associated with maintaining those identities in contexts of social stigma (Meyer, 1995).

Sue and his colleagues developed a theoretical taxonomy of racial microaggressions targeting racialised communities. There has since been a surge of qualitative, quantitative, and theoretical work undertaken that has expanded our awareness of the nature, experience, and consequences of microaggressions as experienced by multiple groups (Williams et al., 2021). The theory has expanded to include microaggressions taxonomy focusing on other groups who have historically been targets of discrimination, including women, persons with disabilities, ethnic and religious minoritised groups, and LGBT individuals (Nadal et al., 2011a).

Microaggressions are often trivialised and dismissed, ignoring a crucial aspect of their composition: their systematicity. Microaggressions are enacted upon certain groups of people relentlessly; this systematicity makes microaggression an oppressive form of harm (Rini, 2020). Furthermore, microaggressions are more than an individual experience but part of a broader systemic racism that encompasses institutional and ideological aspects. Microaggressions are systemically mediated by institutionalised racism and guided by ideologies of white supremacy that justify the superiority of a dominant group (whites) over non-dominant groups; they are everyday reflections of larger racist structures and ideological beliefs (Perez Huber and Solorzano, 2015; Skinner-Dorkenoo, 2021).

Microaggressions, then, are more than just isolated tiny harms and knocks to an individual's self-esteem or cultural missteps and racial faux pas, but a part of systemic oppression, carrying all the harms of social restraint (McClure and Rini, 2020; Williams, 2020). They are not side effects or symptoms of oppression, but essential to what fuels/sustains it. They serve as a constant reminder to the marginalised and empowered that social norms sanction/permit the subjugation of certain groups. Confronting microaggressions, therefore, cannot be viewed as a

distraction from dealing with overt oppression, since we cannot hope to overturn large, overt manifestations of oppression unless we also address their more intricate/subtle mechanisms (Rini, 2020). Indeed, Kohli et al. (2017) argue that racialised microevents warrant attention, particularly because they connect to macrostructures of racial injustice.

Philosopher Marilyn Frye, cited in Rini (2020), portrays this concept ever so beautifully; Frye likens being constrained by oppression to being ensnared in a birdcage:

> If you look very closely at just one wire in the cage, you cannot see the other wires. If your conception of what is before you is determined by this myopic focus, you could look at one wire, up and down the length of it, and be unable to see why a bird would not just fly around the wire any time it wanted to go somewhere…It is only when you step back, stop looking at the wires one by one microscopically, and take a macroscopic view of the whole cage that you can see why the bird does not go anywhere, and then you will see it in a moment…One can study the elements of oppressive structures with great care and some goodwill without seeing the structure as a whole, and hence without seeing or being able to understand that one is looking at a cage and that there are people who are caged, whose motion and mobility are restricted, whose lives are shaped and reduced (p.26).

Microaggressions constitute the smallest and finest bars in the cage of oppression; at times, they are so tiny that one cannot clearly see even the one you are staring at; nonetheless, they confine, reinforcing social hierarchies by punishing those relegated to the margins of society. They are filaments of oppressive harm; dismissing them is tantamount to looking right through the tiny bars and failing to see the structure they make up (Rini, 2020). Similarly, Sue (2010b) contends that 'microaggressions reflect the active manifestation of oppressive worldviews that create, foster, and enforce marginalization' (pg. 6).

Elsewhere, Freeman and Stewart (2018, 2019, 2021) whose work centres on microaggressions in healthcare settings, frame their understanding of microaggressions through the lens of power dynamics, positing that microaggressions are 'subtle manifestations of power that occur when those with greater power exert their power, often in subtle, unintentional ways over individuals who belong to one or more structurally marginalized groups. Microaggressions reflect and reinforce unjust power imbalances' (pg. 352).

3.2.3 Modalities/Forms of microaggressions

In their pioneering article, Sue and colleagues identified three modalities of microaggressions: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations.

3.2.3.1 Microassaults

First, Microassaults are most like 'old-fashioned racism'. They are generally associated with what is perceived by some as 'true racism' in that they are more direct, deliberate, and explicit, and the intent is to harm, humiliate, or degrade the recipient. Examples include the use of racial slurs and the display of racist symbols such as the swastika (Wilkes and Speer, 2021; Sue et al., 2007; Minikel-Lacocque, 2013).

Due to strong public condemnations, microassaults are mainly expressed under three conditions that afford the perpetrator anonymity. When perpetrators feel a degree of anonymity and are assured that their roles and actions will be concealed, they may feel less inhibited from engaging in microassaults. Second, when perpetrators feel a relative degree of safety, such as being in the presence of people with the same beliefs and attitudes or knowing they will not be held accountable for offensive words or deeds. Lastly, many who privately hold notions of white superiority display biased attitudes only when they lose control; this loss of control can occur in circumstances where they feel threatened, stressed, or emotionally charged, leading to the expression of their underlying/concealed biases. Interestingly, marginalised groups have reported that microassaults and blatant racism are, in many respects, easier to deal with (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010a).

3.2.3.2 Microinsults

Microinsults, on the other hand, differ significantly from microassaults in that they are more subtle and frequently occur outside the conscious awareness of the perpetrator. They are characterized by behaviours that communicate rudeness and insensitivity and degrade a person or group's racial heritage or identity. Microinsults are subtle snubs often disguised as compliments or positive statements. The contradictory communication begins with what appears to be a compliment but is undermined by an insulting or negative metacommunication. An example is a Black student who has performed exceptionally well in Economics being told by the teacher/professor that they are a credit to their race. The metacommunication contains an insulting message; Black people are not as intelligent as whites (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010b).

3.2.3.3 Microinvalidation

The third category, microinvalidations, is similar to microinsults in that they generally occur outside the perpetrators' conscious awareness. Microinvalidations are unintentional behaviours that dismiss, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and experiences of a marginalised person/group. An example of a microinvalidation frequently enacted upon

people of colour is colour blindness, defined as a reluctance/reticence to acknowledge or admit to seeing race or a person's colour. This orientation is predicated on the mistaken belief by many white people that not seeing colour means they are unbiased and free of racism, resulting in defensive manoeuvres not to appear racist by either pretending not to see colour or by actively avoiding discussions associated with race.

Colour-blind statements and orientations serve to deny the racial reality and experiences of racialised and minoritised groups. This denial of difference is really a denial of power and privilege, a denial that dominant group members profit from the isms of society and a denial of personal responsibility to take action (Sue et al., 2007; Sue et al., 2008a; Sue, 2010a; Sue, 2010b; Lui, 2020; Mercer et al., 2011). An example of microinvalidation in a classroom setting is when a student from a marginalised background reports an incident of discrimination and is ignored or dismissed by peers or teachers as being overly sensitive.

3.2.4 Manifestations/mechanisms of microaggressions

According to Sue et al. (2009), microaggressions (microassaults, microinsults, microinvalidations) can manifest in three ways:

Verbal- they take the form of verbal statements such as, "You speak such good English," or "So where are you really from?" which reflect a worldview that racialised/minoritised individuals are aliens/foreigners in their own country.

Non-verbal- white teachers ignoring or avoiding eye contact with racialised students, taxi drivers deliberately driving past people of colour, and airport security personnel screening passengers of colour with greater frequency and care.

Environmental microaggressions- these are generally invisible to those in the majority group but quite visible to marginalised groups; they often occur through absences rather than actions, such as a lack of representation in work or school environments.

3.2.5 Classifications of Microaggression and Scales

Sue et al.'s (2007) theoretical taxonomy of themes of the types of microaggressions that people face include the following categories: a) assumptions that a person of colour is not a true citizen; b) assumptions of lesser intelligence; c) statements that convey colour blindness or denial of the importance of race; d) assumptions of criminality or dangerousness; e)denials of individual racism; f) promotion of the myth of meritocracy; g) assumptions that one's cultural background and communication styles are pathological; h) being treated as a second class

citizen; i) having to endure environmental messages of being unwelcome or devalued. Figure 3 below illustrates the categories and relationship of racial microaggressions.
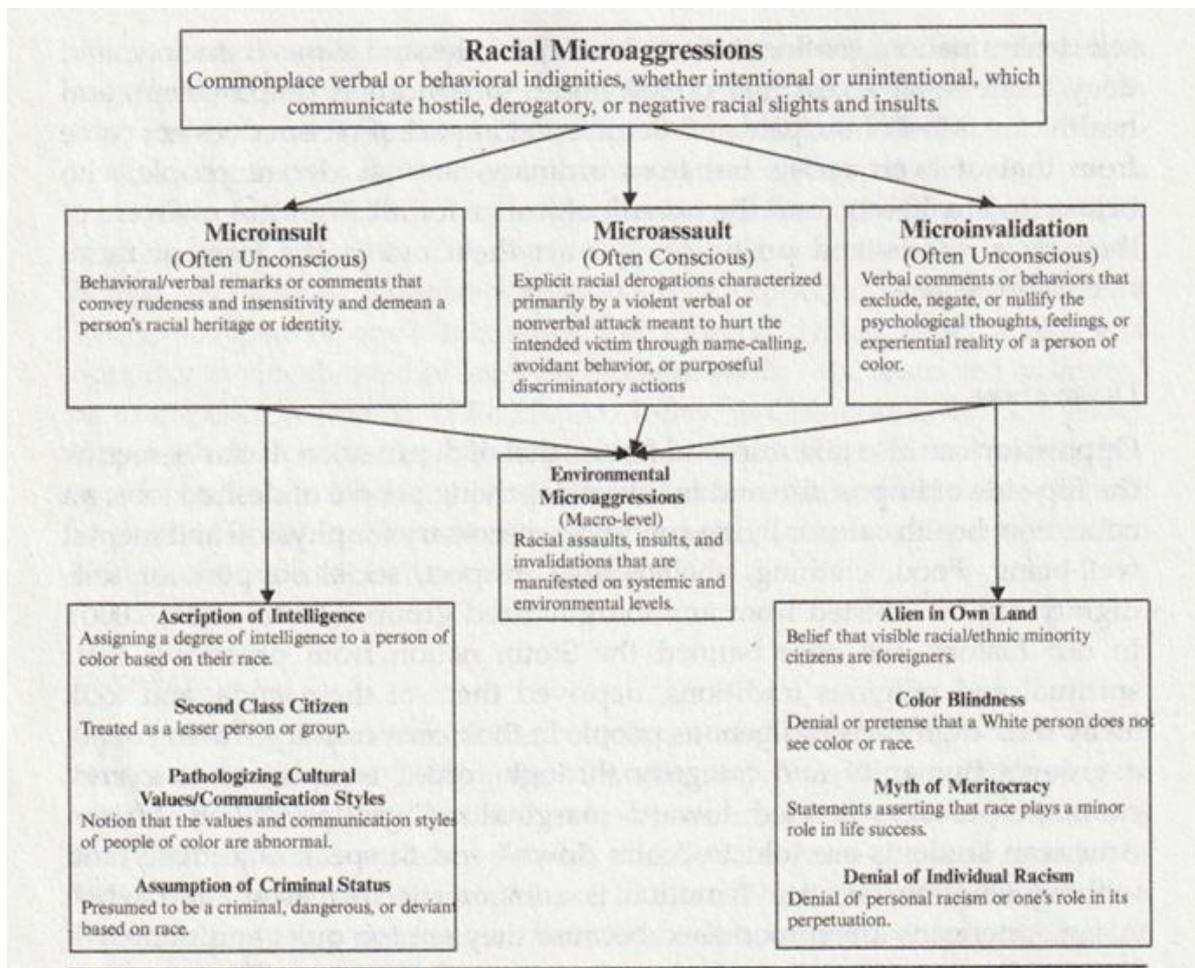
Figure 3. Categories and Relationship of Racial Microaggressions. Sue et al. (2007, p.278).

Several researchers have examined these initial categorisations and have found generally similar groupings. For example, Torres-Harding et al. (2012) developed the racial microaggressions scale (RMAS), designed to assess the themes and categories of racial microaggressions presented and discussed in the literature. The scale yielded six dimensions of racial microaggressions, namely invisibility, criminality, low-achieving/undesirable culture, sexualisation, foreigner, and environmental invalidations. An Ethnic microaggressions scale (EMA) was developed by Huynh (2012) to measure ethnic microaggressions among Latinx and Asian American youth. The scale included three subscales: emphasis on differences, denial of racial reality, and negative treatment.

Applying an intersectional framework, Lewis and Neville (2015) developed the Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale (GRMS), which measures gendered microaggressions as experienced by Black women. The scale includes four factors: assumptions of beauty and sexual objectification, being silenced, the strong Black woman stereotype, and the angry Black woman stereotype.

Similarly, Keum et al. (2018) developed the Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale for Asian American Women (GRMSAAW) to assess the interlocking forms of oppression experienced by Asian American Women based on their Asian and female identities. Four factors emerged as representing the nuanced multidimensionality of gendered racial microaggressions aimed at Asian American Women, namely, ascribed submissiveness, Asian fetishism (sexual curiosity and expectations of receptivity to advances), assumption of universal appearance, and media invalidation.

Johnston and Nadal (2010) created a taxonomy of multiracial microaggressions to conceptualize multiracial/mixed-ancestry individuals' experiences with microaggressions. Categories identified include exclusion/isolation, exoticization and objectification (being asked, "what are you?" or being told how exotic you look), assumption of monoracial or mistaken identity, denial of multiracial reality (the experience of a Black/white mixed ancestry person being accused of acting white or wanting to be white, even though that is part of their heritage) and pathologizing of identity and experiences.

Furthermore, after an extensive review of the extant literature and new research on the topic, Williams et al. (2021) developed a revised taxonomy of racial microaggressions, identifying 16 common microaggressions experienced by people who are not white. The categories are consistent with the original taxonomy proposed by Sue et al. (2007) but are expanded in several significant ways. Some of the initial categories have been revised slightly or redefined to incorporate new data and themes, including aliens in their own land, which is now represented by two categories: not a true citizen and forced racial categorization; also, environmental aggressions have been distinguished as environmental exclusion and attacks. New categories include tokenism, connecting via stereotypes, exoticization and eroticization, and avoidance and distancing. Table 2 below represents the revised taxonomy.

	Category Name	Description
1	Not a True Citizen	When a question, statement, or behavior indicates that a person of color is not a real citizen or a meaningful part of our society because they are not White.
2	Racial Categorization & Sameness	When a person is compelled to disclose their racial group to enable others to attach pathological racial stereotypes to the person; includes the assumption that all people from a particular group are alike.
3	Assumptions About Intelligence, Competence, or Status	When behavior or statements are based on assumptions about a person's intelligence, competence, education, income, social status derived from racial stereotypes.
4	False Colorblindness / Invalidating Racial or Ethnic Identity	Expressing that individual's racial or ethnic identity should not be acknowledged, which can be invalidating for people who are proud of their identity or who have suffered because of it.
5	Criminality or Dangerousness	Demonstrating belief in stereotypes that people of color are dangerous, untrustworthy, likely to commit crimes or cause bodily harm.
6	Denial of Individual Racism	When a person tries to make a case that they are not biased, often by talking about anti-racist things they have done to deflect perceived scrutiny of their own behaviors.
7	Myth of Meritocracy / Race is Irrelevant for Success	When someone makes statements about success being rooted in personal efforts and denial of existence of racism or White privilege.
8	Reverse Racism Hostility	Expressions of jealousy or hostility surrounding the notion that people of color get unfair advantages and benefits due to their race.
9	Pathologizing Minority Culture or Appearance	When people criticize others based on perceived or real cultural differences in appearance, traditions, behaviors, or preferences.
10	Second Class Citizen / Ignored & Invisible	When people of color are treated with less respect, consideration, or care than is normally expected or customary. This may include being ignored or being unseen/invisible.
11	Connecting via Stereotypes	When a person tries to communicate or connect with a person through use of stereotyped speech or behavior, to be accepted or understood. Can include racist jokes and epitaphs as terms of endearment.
12	Exoticization and Eroticization	When a person of color is treated according to sexualized stereotypes or attention to differences that are characterized as exotic in some way.
13	Avoidance and Distancing	When people of color are avoided or measures are taken to prevent physical contact or close proximity.
14	Environmental Exclusion	When someone's racial identity is minimized or made insignificant through the exclusion of decorations, literature, or depictions of people that represent their racial group.
15	Environmental Attacks	When decorations pose a known affront or insult to a person's cultural group, history, or heritage.

Table 2. Revised categories of racial microaggressions (Williams et al., 2021)

Williams and colleagues explain each category as follows:

1. Not a true citizen

This type of microaggression, initially described by Sue et al. (2007) as "alien in own land," is based on assumptions that an individual is not a ["true Irish,"] reinforcing ideas that people of colour are probably immigrants and therefore not legitimate citizens or a meaningful part of wider [Irish] society. It conveys exclusion and a lack of belonging that can make people of colour feel like outsiders.

2. Racial categorization and sameness

This category describes the microaggressions that occur when people of colour are compelled to reveal their racial identity to others, which may expose them to the expression of pathological stereotypes based on their identity. Similarly, the assumption that people of a given race are alike applies [e.g., assumed universality of the Black experience]. The threat of being exposed to harmful stereotypes and their application to the self may result in individuals disconnecting from their actual heritage or lived experience, internalising false attributes regarding one's heritage, or forcing unwanted traits or group responsibility on an individual.

Microaggressions of forced racial categorization are experienced as being squeezed into a one-size-fits-all box that ignores the complexity of an individual's identity. People of mixed ancestry, i.e., biracial or multiracial, may struggle to feel accepted and experience confusion about their identity; they may also experience social pressures to identify with a single foreclosed identity.

3. Assumptions about intelligence, competence, or status

This category includes any positive or negative ascriptions of intellectual abilities, competence, education, or social standing based on racial assumptions. An example is counter-stereotypical surprise or assumed exceptionalism (e.g., "You're not like other Black people"). Reverse assumptions are often made about people of Asian heritage; the prevailing notion is that they are intelligent, studious, and good at math and science.

4. False colour blindness/invalidating racial or ethnic identity

Colour blindness includes statements that indicate an individual does not want to acknowledge race and instead focuses on shared humanity. The category appears just as 'colour blindness' in Sue's taxonomy, but has been renamed as "false colour blindness" to highlight the various ways in which colour blindness functionally prevents honest and open dialogue about critical racial issues, such as when people of colour attempt to express something about their racial or ethnic experience but are invalidated by "colour-blind" statements.

5. Criminality or dangerousness

This microaggression occurs when an individual demonstrates the belief or acts on stereotypes that people of colour are dangerous, untrustworthy, or likely to commit a crime or cause bodily harm. It also includes concerns about being mistreated by people of colour (i.e., verbal aggression). In the U.S context, African American and Latino American men tend to be targets of these types of microaggressions. This assumption of criminality extends beyond a concern that a male of colour will act violently; there is a reciprocal belief that the criminality of men of colour is to blame in instances when they are the ones being harmed.

6. Denial of individual racism

In contrast to false colour blindness, this type of microaggression occurs when a person asserts a lack of racial bias, generally in response to perceived scrutiny of their behaviour. This assertion may be expressed through one's friendship or social connections with other people of colour or elaborating on past antiracist things that the person has done ["but I have Black friends" is a common expression]. This is described as "the contested microaggression." When

used as a response to criticism, it can be invalidating to people of colour who are trying to draw attention to a problematic behaviour. Targets of microaggressions end up expending cognitive resources by questioning and analysing the experience to ensure that an incident cannot be explained by anything other than racism. People questioning the veracity of an incident or event can be extremely frustrating because the individual has already gone through that process.

7. Myth of meritocracy/race is irrelevant for success

This microaggression occurs when the existence of systemic racism or harmful discriminatory behaviour, specifically regarding personal achievement or barriers to achievement, is denied. The myth of meritocracy and the idea that the determinants of success are undeniably rooted in personal efforts are embraced, denying that white privilege is an unearned benefit that results in very real differences in outcomes at a personal or societal level.

8. Reverse-racism hostility

This category includes expressions of jealousy or hostility surrounding the notion that people of colour accrue unfair advantages and benefits based on their race. These expressions are often accompanied by claims that whites are being treated unjustly and are suffering as a result. The idea that people of colour are undeserving of success is often embedded in this sentiment. This category is represented by white resentment and hostility toward affirmative action.

9. Pathologizing minority culture or appearance

This microaggression occurs when people of colour are disparaged or critiqued due to real or perceived cultural differences in appearance, traditions, behaviours, or preferences. Embedded in this sentiment as well is the idea that whiteness is normative and preferred; and consequently, there is something wrong or shameful about an identity that is not considered white. Microaggressions, therefore, may include statements that advance pronouncements of apparent whiteness as complimentary. Such statements, however, are usually upsetting and insulting to targets.

10. Second-class citizen/ignored and invisible

This category captures situations in which people of colour are afforded less respect, consideration, or care than is typically expected or customary. It includes both the experience of being treated as a "second-class citizen" (e.g., the preferential treatment of white individuals) as well as the experience of being ignored, unseen, or invisible.

11. Tokenism

Tokenism is defined as when a person of colour is included simply to portray an image of inclusivity, rather than in the interest of true diversity or for the qualities or talents the individual possesses. It is also manifested in the automatic homogenization of diverse groups and their members based on race and/or the expectation that an individual's views will be representative of their perceived group.

12. Connecting via stereotypes

This category covers those instances where white people try to communicate or connect using stereotyped speech or behaviour, thinking this will help them to be accepted or understood. Racist jokes or even racial epithets used to attempt to fit in or as terms of endearment may be included in this category.

13. Exoticization and eroticization

This category is not represented in Sue et al.'s (2007) original taxonomy. This microaggression occurs when a person is treated according to sexualised stereotypes or when perceived differences are characterized as exotic in some way or another. This includes experiences involving Black people's hair, such as being asked pointed questions about it or having it touched.

14. Avoidance and distancing

This microaggression occurs when members of the dominant group avoid or take measures to prevent physical contact or close proximity with racialised communities. This includes excluding targeted groups or individuals through physical distancing. It can also include avoiding close relationships and difficult discussions about race.

15. Environmental exclusion

Sue et al. (2007) previously defined microaggressions that are more apparent at the systemic and environmental levels as 'environmental microaggressions'. In this revised taxonomy, environmental exclusion is defined as a microaggression that occurs when an individual's racial identity is minimised or rendered insignificant by excluding depictions, art, or literature representing their racial group. It also intends to capture situations in which entire categories of people are absent from the environment.

16. Environmental attacks

This category aims to describe situations in which decorations or depictions pose a known affront or insult to a person's cultural group, history, or heritage. For example, buildings named after slave owners or Columbus Day in the U.S.

3.2.6 Critique and defence of the criticism aimed at microaggressions theory

Notwithstanding its wide acceptance, the concept of microaggressions has been heavily criticized and debated, with one author going so far as to say that the idea of microaggressions is "pure nonsense" and that subtle discrimination does not exist (Thomas, 2008). Indeed, most of the criticisms that have been launched against the Microaggressions Research Programme (MRP) call into question the very reality or plausibility of microaggressions and are skeptical over the nature and degree of harm brought about by these 'under-the-radar acts' (Williams, 2020).

As a result, they call for a moratorium on all microaggression research until there is more convincing evidence that they are real and deserving of a research programme (Haidt, 2017; Lilienfeld, 2017a). The critics have also called for a halt in education and activism aimed at ameliorating the microaggression phenomenon (Lilienfeld, 2017a; Lukianoff and Haidt, 2015). Popular culture critiques also claim that microaggressions perpetuate a victimhood culture, suggesting that a focus on microaggressions unnecessarily casts individuals as victims of racism in a world where racism is on the decline (Eisen, 2020).

In further advancing the critique of microaggressions, Lilienfeld (2017b) contends that the microaggressions research programme is scientifically problematic because its core presuppositions have not been adequately scrutinized. St. Pierre (2006), however, warns against this 'science as usual' approach, reminding us that science, after all, has been used to support genocide and other barbarous brutalities, as well as racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and ageism.

Responding to the claim that the MRP has marked scientific limitations, Sue (2017) contends that reliance on a psychological science framework toward microaggressions imparts only one side of the story. Sue narrates an old African proverb, which I would like to relay: The story is told of a schoolteacher who posed the following question to her students: "There are four Black birds perched on the branch of a tree. You take a sling and shoot one of them; how many birds are left?" A white student promptly raises his hand and confidently replies, "That's a no-brainer, Miss; four take away one is three." An equally enthusiastic Nigerian immigrant boy

states with equal certainty that the answer is zero. The teacher chuckles at the Nigerian lad and tells him the answer is incorrect; she gently scoffs at him, stating that he has much more learning to do.

Sue goes on to emphasise a significant point: had the teacher taken the time to pursue the Nigerian pupil's "incorrect" answer, she might have heard the following: "If you shoot one bird, the other birds fly away, leaving none on the branch." From a Western perspective, the Maths problem represents a hypothetical situation requiring a literal task/answer. From the Nigerian student's perspective, however, his answer is based on lived experience, a known relationship between birds, and an understanding of how the real world works. Viewed from both angles/perspectives, both answers can be deemed correct; however, in many settings, the Western perspective prevails, resulting in cultural oppression (the imposition of one reality over another). The Nigerian boy feels invalidated, inadequate, and alienated from the curriculum and the teacher. This, Sue states, is the invisible world of experiential microaggressions. Microaggressions are about experiential, as opposed to measurable reality, and about listening to the voices of those in our society who are most oppressed, silenced, and ignored. Those voices tell stories of grievous hurts, humiliation, lost opportunities, the pressing need for change, and the microaggressions endured as they, the marginalised, struggle against an unwelcoming, invalidating, and even hostile society (Sue, 2013, 2017).

Racialised and minoritised people often have their lived racial realities about bias and discrimination met with disbelief by our society. They are frequently told that they are oversensitive, paranoid, and misreading the actions of others. They are asked whether they are mind-reading or perhaps distorting the truth, and where their evidence is. In other words, they are out of touch with reality (Sue, 2017; McClure and Rini, 2020).

According to Friedlaender (2021), this constitutes a form of testimonial injustice and paves the way to further epistemic gaslighting. At times, to explain microaggressions experienced by racialised and minoritised people, the perceptions and racial realities of the 'othered' are invalidated by members of the dominant group, shifting the focus onto alternative hypotheses such as speculating on the good intentions of perpetrators and targets' misperceptions (Harris, 2008). The experiential realities of those in power are imposed upon less powerful groups by denying their perceptions and life experiences (Sue, 2010a; Sue, 2010b). Interestingly, some have found that the least empowered groups have the most accurate assessment of reality (Hanna et al., 2000; Keltner and Robinson, 1996; Sue, 2003).

Conversely, scholars such as Freeman and Stewart (2021a), who do not object to the concept or phenomenon itself and are committed to gaining a better understanding of it and advocating for ways to reduce the phenomenon and resultant harms offer what I believe to be a valuable critique of the dominant understanding of microaggressions as introduced by Sue and his colleagues which is referred to as the act-based based account of microaggressions. The authors argue instead for an alternative, ameliorative account of microaggressions — a harm-based account that explicitly focuses on the recipients of microaggressions and the harms they experience.

Freeman and Stewart (2021b) criticize the acts-based account of microaggressions on the grounds that it (a) centre the microaggressor and their actions, thereby pushing the recipient of microaggressions and the harms they experience to a secondary position; (b) offers imprecise categories on the basis of which to understand and distinguish certain microaggressions from more explicit, clear aggressions and other forms of overt violence.

Freeman and Stewart posit that Sue's theoretical starting point undermines the ability of microaggression research to give a more robust voice to everyday experiences of oppressive slights endured by individuals who are members of marginalised groups. The authors argue that in anti-oppression research, those impacted by injustices should guide the analysis and remain the primary subject of concern and analysis throughout.

These claims are guided by a commitment to feminist standpoint theory, particularly the thesis of epistemic advantage, which suggests that the standpoints of historically marginalised groups can be epistemologically privileged (Cooper Stoll and Thoune, 2020). Wylie (2012) asserts that:

> those who are subject to structures of domination that systematically marginalize and oppress them may, in fact, be epistemologically privileged in some crucial respects. They may know different things or know some things better than those who are comparatively privileged (socially, politically), by virtue of what they typically experience and how they understand their experience (p.47).

Correspondingly, Rini (2020) argues that oppressed groups are undeniably savants of their own experiences; therefore, the key question in microaggression is about the experience of the target.

Next, I consider the critique of imprecise categories for distinguishing certain microaggressions from macroaggressions. Freeman and Stewart (2021) argue that many

instances that lie far beyond the realm of any conceptual boundaries for microaggression, including hate speech, slurs, sexual harassment, and sexual assault, have been included within the category of microassaults. They instead propose three categories: epistemic microaggressions (harm to the target in their capacity as a knower), emotional microaggressions (those resulting in emotional harm), and marginalization-based self-identity microaggressions (resulting in a variety of existential and identity-based harms).

Similarly, Rini (2020) and Williams et al. (2021) propose that the microassaults category should be entirely removed from Sue's taxonomy, restricting microaggression to invalidations and insults. I am inclined to agree with this critique and offer no argument in its defence; thus, I utilise William et al. (2021)'s revised category of racial microaggressions (which excludes the microassaults category) to analyse research participants' narratives.

Notwithstanding the varying outcomes among the classification of microaggressions, of greater import is the reality that regardless of form, microaggression research reveals three themes: microaggressions are a stressor on the recipient, interpersonal microaggressions are more strongly correlated with negative effects to the recipient; and racialised/minorised communities are more negatively affected by microaggressions than their white counterparts (Clark et al., 2015; Johnston-Goodstar and VeLure, 2017; Lui and Quezeda, 2019).

3.2.7 The detrimental effects of microaggressions

At a commencement ceremony at the University of Michigan, former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg informed the audience that a 'microaggression is exactly that: micro' (O'Connor, 2016, np). The prefix micro in the term microaggressions is interpreted by many to mean small, tiny, or insignificant, leading some to question why we make such a big deal out of micro-harms when big/greater harms exist. In some English words, the micro does imply diminished size; for example, a microorganism is a tiny creature; from this word, one might expect that a microaggression is just a tiny little harmless aggression. However, the prefix in micro need not refer to size. It can also refer to the scale of granularity, meaning it can refer to a part of a system rather than the whole of the system (Rini, 2020).

Similarly, Wells (2013) stresses that the prefix 'micro' does not relate to the quality or impact of microaggressive offences.

Despite the perceived minimal harm associated with microaggressions, overwhelming evidence exists that points to the reality that microaggressions have significant consequences for marginalised groups (Nadal, 2011; Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010a; Sue, 2010b; Kim, 2017;

Torres et al., 2010). Indeed, Sue (2013) maintains that microaggressions present greater harm to oppressed people than overt acts of racial hatred and bigotry because their hidden and sometimes unintentional nature enables them to bud and flourish, thereby contaminating/infecting interracial interactions, institutional procedures and practices as well as social policies.

The cumulative and incessant nature of microaggressions has been found to: a) contribute to hostile and invalidating campus and work environments (Dovidio et al., 2009; Rowe,1990; Solorzano et al., 2000); b) devalue certain social group identities (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008); c) negatively impact work productivity and educational learning (Salvatore and Shelton, 2007; Sue 2010b); d) perpetuate stereotype threat, which is the risk of conforming to stereotypes about ones social group (Cadinu et al., 2005; Steele et al., 2002); e) create physical health issues (Brondolo et al., 2003; Clark et al., 1999; Din-Dzietham et al., 2004; Brody et al., 2018) and indeed, the accumulated effects of racial microaggression have been found to contribute to physiological complications such as diminished mortality (Bostwick et al., 2021); f) compromise mental health/wellbeing by creating emotional turmoil, low self-esteem, and psychological energy depletion (Sue, 2010a).

Microaggressions have been found to create disparities in health care, education, and employment because they are based upon a racially biased worldview of white supremacy that is manifested in hiring, retention, and promotion decisions in places of employment, which reduces the quality of education received by racialised students and that may result in lower quality health care for particular groups (Sue, 2010b, Sue, 2008b).

Racialised and marginalised communities are subjected to chronic, continuing, and daily microaggressive stressors. Sue (2010b) proposes four identifiable pathways (substantiating each pathway with empirical research) through which microaggressive stress can be manifested:

1. Biological and physical effects: Stress has been associated with increased susceptibility to illness and may affect the course of a disease. When stresses combine, they correlate with increased illnesses and severity (Seiler et al., 2020; McEwen, 2012; Sapolsky, 2004).

2. Emotional effects: racism in all its forms, directed towards a socially devalued group, has been shown to affect their emotional well-being, psychological adjustment, and mental health (Buser, 2009; Moradi et al., 2009; Utsey and Hook, 2007). Anxiety,

feelings of alienation, subjective well-being, and exhaustion may be associated with the experience of group-specific microaggressions (Harrell, 2000; Ponterotto et al., 2006).

3. Behavioural effects: microaggressions can signal a hostile or invalidating climate that threatens the physical and emotional safety of the devalued group, assails self-esteem, and imposes forced compliance upon them. This results in hypervigilance/skepticism (suspicion towards the dominant group), fatigue, hopelessness, and strength through adversity, which is related to the development of functional survival skills used to negotiate hostile and demeaning microaggressions directed to the individual or the group (Sue 2010b).

4. Cognitive effects: The effects of microaggressions can be classified under three processes: attempting to make meaning of an incident, disrupted cognitive processing, and stereotype threat (a psychological phenomenon where individuals feel at risk of conforming to stereotypes about their social group). When a microaggressive incident occurs, considerable energy is expended toward attempting to make sense of the situation.

   To illustrate this, I recall an incident from one of my college classes. There were approximately 7-10 students in my class, of whom I was the only student of colour. Throughout the session, the facilitator seemed to engage with everyone in the classroom except me, making no eye contact. I was left wrestling with so many questions. Was this a microaggression? Did what happened really happen? How should I respond? If I do, what will the consequences be? According to Sue, the second thing that occurs is that this self-questioning causes cognitive disruption so that the target cannot focus directly on the tasks at hand; at school, a student may be less likely to solve problems. The third step is that stereotype threat may activate in the target's mind, leading to lower performance.

The cognitive effects of microaggressions warrant further exploration here as they reveal a crucial and complex aspect of microaggressions: their ambiguity (Crocker et al., 1991; Wang et al., 2011; Tao, 2017). Since many microaggressions are likely to be delivered unintentionally and the perpetrator is unaware of their real motives, they are often laden with double meaning and/or ambiguity. When a teacher or professor rarely calls on students of colour to answer questions, the quandary is whether this is a random act or whether the teacher is operating from an unconscious assumption that minoritised people are less likely to have intelligent comments or answers (Sue, 2010b).

The term attributional ambiguity was coined by Crocker et al. (1991) to describe such situations where members of socially devalued/marginalised groups have trouble determining whether interactions, both positive and negative, have occurred due to their minoritised status or for other unrelated reasons (Brower et al., 2017). This ambiguity is said to be a harm in and of itself, leaving targets at risk of doubting themselves even when their suspicions are reasonable. It can also lead to further harm when the self-doubt makes it difficult to push back against the endless doubts of others, as there's always an innocent explanation available, and someone is usually present to demand that a marginalised person rule it out (Rini, 2020).

The types of stress induced through microaggressions arise from their invisibility, ambiguity as well as the catch-22 of responding: 'damned if you do or damned if you don't', if targets respond to microaggressions they may be accused of being paranoid, on the other hand not to respond means suffering in silence or denying one's racial reality (Sue, 2004; Sue et al., 2009). The confusing and disorienting nature of microaggressions can lead to psychological turmoil in that recipients/targets constantly question the intention and message of perpetrators, catalysing energy-depleting attempts to determine whether incidents were racially motivated or not (Sue et al., 2008b).

3.2.8 Further exploration of the detrimental effects of microaggressions on students

In the Irish context, there is a dearth of research documenting experiences of racial microaggressions and the resultant harm. Microaggressions have been found to be detrimental to both young people and adults (Keels et al., 2017), and the context of racialised students in academic settings is especially salient; school campuses have long been recognised as sites that magnify racial tensions that exist in the broader society (Williams, 2019); as such, young people are frequently exposed to microaggressions, 'each microaggression is a toxic raindrop over time on its victim's [targets] well-being falling corrosively into learning environments' (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015, p. 157).

In conjunction with the studies mentioned earlier, several quantitative analyses have reported a link between experiencing racial microaggressions and negative mental and physical health outcomes in students. Studies demonstrate a significant relationship between microaggressions and psychological distress among this cohort of the population (Robinson-Perez et al., 2019).

Within a sample of 152 Asian American college students, higher frequencies of daily racial microaggressions were associated with more self-reported negative affect and more somatic symptoms (Ong et al., 2013). Torres-Harding et al. (2020) found that high-achieving African

American students enrolled in doctoral programmes were subject to microaggressions, and the exposure to these racial microaggressions resulted in greater stress and depression symptoms one year later. O'Keefe et al. (2015) discovered that racial microaggressions lead to suicidal ideation by way of depression symptoms.

Findings also suggest that elevated levels of discrimination increase risk for mood and substance-use disorders among college students; for example, the odds of regular marijuana use were found to increase with each additional experience of microaggression (Clark et al., 2015; Pro et al., 2018). Additionally, racial microaggressions were found to increase the likelihood of delinquency (De Coster & Thompson, 2017) and lead to decreased academic success and advancement (Ackerman-Barger et al., 2020; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013; Lee and Hobson, 2019).

In recent times, some educational settings have acknowledged the pervasiveness of trauma in students' lives and advocated for trauma-informed approaches (Pheiffer et al., 2024; Opoku, 2025; Kroshus-Havril et al., 2025; Watson et al., 2024; Fye et al., 2024; Thomas et al., 2019). Some teacher education programmes even teach preservice candidates about the pervasiveness of trauma and how to create healing and supportive learning conditions that support students. Goldin et al. (2021), however, argue for recognition within this work of the ways that racism serves as a source of trauma for countless numbers of racialised students. Indeed, contemporary scholars have conceptualized racism, including racial microaggressions, as a form of trauma (Zapolski et al., 2023).

3.2.9 Racial trauma framework

Similarly, Jernigan and Daniel (2011); and Saleem et al. (2020) posit that experiences related to racial trauma at different stages of life for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) individuals can include microaggressions, inappropriate behaviours involving physical and verbal attacks, violence, death threats, being savagely beaten and left for dead by aggressors, as well as witnessing racist murders.

 A fundamental feature of racial trauma is its ubiquity and omnipresence across the lifespan of racialised people (Comas-Diaz et al.,2019; Francois et al., 2024). Cenat (2023) curated a complex racial trauma (CoRT) framework to portray how racial trauma can be understood only through the complexities associated with (1) the repetitive, constant, inevitable, and cumulative exposure to race-based stress, every day and major racial discrimination, and microaggressions in racist systems, and (2) the significant repercussions on the lives of targets.

Figure 4 below represents the (CoRT) theoretical framework and its related complexities; according to Cenat, the framework applies to countries where BIPOC constitute a minority. It is also applicable to countries in which BIPOC individuals are a majority but face the predominance of a white minority that establishes a racist economic and social system that ostracizes them.

It is worth clarifying that at the core of the diagram, the framework demonstrates that racism is repetitive, cumulative, inevitable, and constant; the outer quadrants highlight racial trauma and impacts, i.e., mental health impacts, physical health impacts, and social and economic impacts. From a cursory glance at the diagram, one may mistakenly conclude that the bottom left quadrant states that the listed effects/impacts are inevitable when it is in fact stating that it is internalised racism is inevitable.
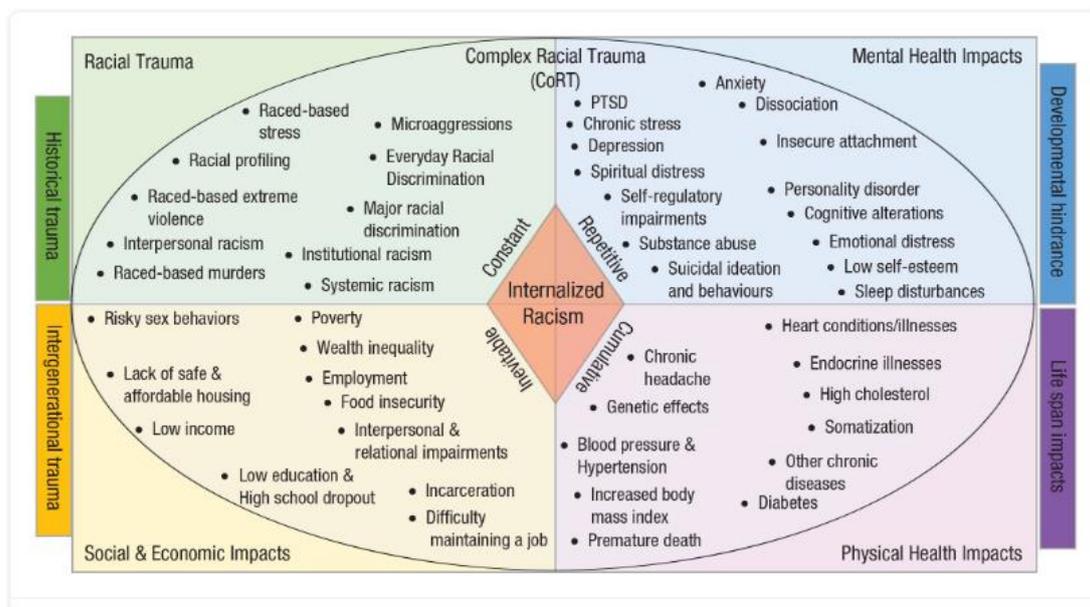
Figure 4. Complex Racial Trauma (CoRT) Framework (Cénat, 2023).

It is clear from the preceding discussion that marginalised groups in society suffer biologically, emotionally, cognitively, and behaviourally as a result of microaggressions (Sue, 2010b). Overall, the seriousness of the consequences of daily microaggressions has become increasingly evident. Hence, there is a clear need to better name these subtle insults and thus begin to mitigate their harm (Williams et al., 2021). An important point to consider is that whilst microaggressions on their own have significant and dangerous ramifications on targets, they are rarely experienced in isolation (Carter, 2007). Unfortunately, most ethno-racial minoritised people will have experienced racism beginning from a young age, continuing

consistently throughout their life span, at micro- and macro-levels, and involving new and repeated forms of racism (Cenat, 2023; Ebubedike, 2024).

3.3 Conclusion

To summarise, in this chapter I have outlined the two theories of racism that undergird this research study's exploration of racism and racial microaggressions experienced by Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller adults during their school years — namely, Golash-Boza's sociological theory of race and racism and microaggression theory. Golash-Boza's theory of race and racism integrates race and racism, illuminates the connections between racist ideologies and structures, considers intersectionality, and aims to eliminate racial oppression, thereby providing a comprehensive framework for exploring the concepts of race and racism.

The analysis on microaggressions, which are the more subtle and covert form of racism, exposes their systematicity, interconnectedness to broader structures of racism, as well as the severely detrimental impact of this seemingly innocuous/benign phenomenon on marginalised and racialised communities. The insights from this analysis lay the foundation for the subsequent chapter, in which I expound on the broader theoretical framework applied in this enquiry: Critical Race Theory (CRT).

The researcher recognizes that the theories presented in this section originate in the United States of America; therefore, their applicability to the Irish context necessitated careful and critical consideration. The relevance of these theories to the Irish racial and socio-historical context (expounded on in Chapter 2), albeit within a significantly different context from the U.S., lies in their capacity to provide definitions for race and racism and illuminate how racism operates at an individual, institutional, and structural level (systemically). These theories, when critically adapted, provide a robust analytical lens for examining how racism is experienced and reproduced in Irish society.

Chapter 4: Theoretical framework

4.0 Introduction

In this section, I turn to an examination of the broader theoretical framework adopted for this study. In the ensuing discussion, I offer a brief outline of the origins of CRT, its positioning in the enquiry domain and its entry and expansion in the field of education research; I then discuss the central tenants of CRT, followed by a deliberation of the criticisms leveraged against CRT and offer a defence, I then outline its relevance and application to education followed by an exploration of gaps that I have identified in the framework and theories proposed to bridge those gaps. My choice of theoretical framework is not arbitrary but reflects important personal beliefs and understandings about the nature of knowledge, how it exists in relation to the observer, the roles to be adopted, and the tools to be employed in my work (Grant and Osanloo, 2014), which are outlined initially in the research design chapter.

4.1 CRT origins and position in the enquiry domain, entry and expansion in the field of education research

CRT is anchored in the enquiry worldview of critical perspective. Alongside CRT, Critical worldviews include other theories such as critical pedagogy (e.g., Freire, 2000; Giroux, 1986), queer theory (e.g., Butler, 1993; Pennell, 2021), critical theory (Bohman, 2021) and feminist theory (e.g., Anyon, 1984), Critical Race Feminism (Wing, 1999; Evans-Winters and Esposito, 2010) amongst others. In addition, CRT is situated among social justice frameworks and approaches, meaning CRT's central tenets specifically account for social justice praxis (Cabrera, 2018; Nicolai et al., 2024).

The impetus of CRT arose from critical legal scholars' realisation that the civil rights movement of the 1960s had lost traction and that most of the gains for racial equality achieved by the movement had plateaued (Delgado and Stefancic, 1993, 1997, 2000; Matsuda,1993) as well as the need for people of colour to shift discourses of race and racism from the experiential to the ideological realm (Bailey, 2016). CRT was introduced in the 1970s as a progressive movement within the legal scholarly community; the following scholars are recognised as pioneers and leading figures of the theory (Bell 1976,1980; Freeman, 1978; Delgado and Stefanic,1994; Crenshaw, 1988,1989; Lawrence, 1987; Matsuda 1993, 2018; Williams, 1991). CRT was used to critique the United States' legal system's role in preserving white supremacy (Delgado, 1984) and has since been applied to numerous fields of study, including public health (Ford

and Airhihenbuwa, 2010), educational psychology (White et al., 2019), and psychology more broadly (Crossing et al., 2022). In the mid-1990s, CRT was adopted within educational research to address deeply ingrained racist structures in the American educational pipeline (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995). It now enjoys global reach, particularly in the field of education, where it is now recognised as one of the most important approaches worldwide for scholars researching and opposing racial inequity (Closson, 2010; Gillborn et al., 2018). CRT's broad aim is to critique, deconstruct, and transform/reform the relationship concerning race, racism, and power (Jones, 2014).

CRT accounts for the role race and racism play in the life experiences of people of colour and challenges [multiple] forms of oppression (Perez Huber and Solòrzano, 2015). It focuses on the legal, economic, and social conditions that create and maintain white supremacy and the subjugation of racially oppressed communities (Anyon et al., 2023). Brown (2003) defines Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a paradigm for gaining insights into the contemporary racial predicament, exposing how racial stratification is more powerful and enduring than it may appear. For example, in the U.S context, research reveals the stark reality that a disproportionate amount of people from Black and Latinx communities were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with data from the CDC indicating that Black and Latinx individuals were twice as likely as their white counterparts to die from COVID (Gaynor and Wilson, 2020; Cokley et al., 2022; McClain, 2021).

Viewed in isolation, these statistics might be ascribed to genetic or biological factors. However, a critical race theory lens questions how historical racism, which is manifested in contemporary society in essentially everything, from access to clean air to treatment by medical professionals, might influence these statistics, leading to a more nuanced and rounded explanation (Lang, 2020). Mbembe (2003) asserts that racialised bodies are systemically devalued or marked for death; the disproportionate COVID deaths of Black and Latinx individuals viewed through a CRT lens are not incidental but reflect the operation of a necropolitical power wherein state and institutional structures determine whose life is valuable and whose is rendered expendable.

Critical race theory contains an activist dimension in that it seeks not only to understand our social situation but also to change it, attempting to ascertain how society is organised along racial lines and hierarchies and how to transform it for the better (Delgado et al., 2017). Thus, CRT is driven by social justice and characterized by fervent activism to eradicate racism as

part of a broader aim to bring an end to subordination based on gender, class, sexual orientation, language, and national origin (Garcia et al., 2018).

4.2 Central Tenets of CRT

4.2.1 Race as a social construct

In CRT, one of the tenets is that race is not biologically real but is socially constructed; the belief is that society chooses to see race and utilises differences in appearance to define a race (Mawdsley et al., 2024). 'The idea that race is a social construction identifies race as a plastic concept based on categories invented by society, rather than science' (Daftary, 2020, p. 443).

As an expanding and widely recognised critical-emancipationist programme, CRT has not only remained true to its original mandate of treating the social construction of race as central to the way that people of colour are ordered and constrained, but it has also begun to move beyond the Black-white binary and racial essentialism to consider the racialised experience of other oppressed communities such as Asians, Indians, Latino/as, gays and women of colour. As such, in recent years, it has rapidly branched into several programme areas such as Latino/a critical studies, critical queer studies, critical race feminism, and critical white studies [4](Treviño et al., 2008).

An important recent development has been the combination of aspects of Critical Race Theory and Disability Studies to form a new theoretical framework that incorporates a two-pronged approach to the analysis of race and ability known as Dis/ability Critical Race Studies, or DisCrit (Annamma et al., 2013). More pertinent to this study is the development of MultiCrit, which centres the experiences of multiracial individuals in education and broader society.

Research confirms that multiracial individuals experience a unique form of racial microaggression, multiracial microaggressions, based on being more than one race (Johnston and Nadal, 2010; Nadal et al., 2011b). Be that as it may, researchers either continue to lump multiracial students' experiences in with monoracial students' experiences or negate multiracial students altogether (Jackson, 2010). Stemming from these critiques and concerns, MultiCrit was theorised. MultiCrit is guided by several CRT tenets but focuses on the

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[4] A common criticism of critical white studies, is that the focus on whiteness strengthens the social construction of race and reinforces whiteness as the norm and status quo (Heckler and Nishi, 2024).

complexities of multiraciality, including colourism, mono racism, the history of anti-miscegenation, and a monoracial-only paradigm of race (Harris, 2016).

As the name implies, race is a prominent feature in CRT. This centrality of race in Critical Race Theory is not to be overlooked: a CRT perspective maintains that race matters and therefore nullifies the option of walking away from, denying or silencing the understanding that race is always present in every social configuration of our lives (Pettan & Titon, 2019). The convergence of burgeoning white supremacy, the stark global racial inequalities brought to the fore by the COVID-19 pandemic, and calls by the Black Lives Matter Movement to end anti-Blackness and systemic racism all underscore the importance of race in every aspect of society (Nkomo, 2021).

4.2.2 The Ordinariness/ normality of racism

Indeed, the second core tenet of CRT, aligning with microaggression theory, is that racism is pervasive and ordinary in that it permeates all aspects of society in ways that go unnoticed. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) posit that 'racism is ordinary, not aberrational-normal science, the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color' (pg.8). This permanence and centrality of racism is one of the most referenced tenets (Castillo and Strunk, 2025).

More recently, researchers have highlighted ways that social relations are so deeply infused with racism that artificial intelligence models and other algorithms reproduce racist ideas and outcomes (Adib-Moghaddam, 2023; Adams, 2021; Noble, 2018). Facial recognition software identifies people of colour as felons at alarming rates; also, despite supposed safeguards being in place, large language models and other generative AI applications generate biased ideas and images (Bacchini and Lorusso, 2019; Stevens and Keyes, 2021; Nkonde, 2020).

Moreover, Ladson Billings (1998) states that of more significance than the omnipresence of race is the notion that white people reach the conclusion that their whiteness is meaningful. It is the meaning and value imputed to whiteness that makes CRT an important intellectual and social vehicle to deconstruct oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruct human agency, and construct equitable and socially just power relations. It is important not to misunderstand the intentions of CRT. The argument is not that every white person is always racist, CRT rather is concerned with the covert, unintentional and micro aggressive forms of racism as well as its more crude, overt forms as embedded within structures of inequality. Correspondingly, the idea of 'white supremacy' by no means suggests that all white people either belong to far-right

groups or have a secret desire to do so. Instead, it calls attention to the ideology of whiteness and refers to a socio-political system that unvaryingly advantages white people whilst making this seem natural (Gholami, 2021).

Whilst these may appear to be obvious points to make, it is nonetheless crucial to emphasis because this is how many of the uninformed CRT dissenters perceive CRT, one of the misconceptions around CRT is that it labels all white people as inherently racist. Indeed, many Americans embrace untruths about CRT. For example, a national opinion survey conducted by Reuters in partnership with IPSOS, a leading independent market research company managed by research professionals, found that 57% of adults involved in the survey were not familiar with CRT, a majority of those who indicated that they were familiar with the term answered follow-up questions that showed they hold a variety of misconceptions about CRT which had been circulating among conservative media outlets. 22% of those who claimed to be knowledgeable about CRT also thought it was taught in most public high schools. It is not. 33% believe that CRT says that white people are inherently bad or nefarious or that discriminating against white people is the one and only way to achieve equality (Borter, 2021).

Additionally, aligning with the tenet that race is a social rather than biological construct, Lipsitz (2023) argues that CRT posits that whiteness is a socially performed, historically constructed, and legally administered systemic structural advantage perpetuated by deeply ingrained practices and powerful institutions rather than by individual people alone. whiteness, the author argues, is not the same as white people; while all white people benefit from the racial contract of white domination and supremacy, not all have been, or desire to be, complicit signatories to it. CRT assumes that people do not choose their parents or the pigment of their skin. Instead, it encourages people to make better choices about their politics and their principles.

4.2.3 Differential racialisation
The third CRT tenet is the notion of differential racialisation, the process by which groups of people are perceived, treated, and contextualized along racial lines in varying ways at different times, based on what best serves the needs and interests of whiteness (Basile and Thomas, 2022).

4.2.4 Interest convergence
The fourth tenet addresses interest convergence, which stipulates that racial justice is achieved only when the interests of white and Black individuals align (Pierson-Brown, 2022). I do not offer a deeper analysis of the tenets of differential racialisation and interest convergence, not

because they are less important than the other tenets, but because they do not feature prominently in this study.

4.2.5 Intersectionality

The fifth tenet embraces the concept of intersectionality, which is the idea that societal oppression is conceived in the context of overlapping and multiple identities such as race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, age, and religion (Leach and Crichlow, 2020).

The term was coined in the 1980s by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a prominent Black female American civil rights advocate and CRT scholar. Crenshaw introduced intersectionality in her analysis of how the court denied arguments of discrimination that Black women experienced as raced and gendered subjects. The courts often turned to the experiences of white women or Black men as standards, leaving intersectional discriminatory experiences unacknowledged and unrecognised, thereby reproducing the injury of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989, 2021). Crenshaw states that intersectionality was always about structures and how structures collared identities in ways that created different forms of discrimination. CRT now extends to consider other axes of subjugation beyond race and gender.

4.2.6 Rejection of objectivity and neutrality

The sixth tenet is the rejection of objectivity and neutrality. In the research methodologies domain, much of the traditional work is born from a positivist or postpositivist paradigm (Strunk and Mwavita, 2024). This work positions itself as seeking objective and universal truth, which requires that measures, analyses, and researchers be objective, neutral, and unbiased. CRT rejects this notion and the idea of an impartial or neutral observer.

Strunk and Mwavita further posit that as researchers, we are biased and non-neutral in our perspective, which has been naturally influenced by a lifetime of experiences and particular ways we have interacted with socialisation, norms, organisations, institutions, and society. Those interactions are also shaped by social position and identity. Therefore, according to the authors, CRT, among other theoretical perspectives, has been described as a standpoint framework, which means it proposes that the world appears differently from different social positions, and various social, historical, political, and material contexts may lead to very different realities.

Similarly, McDowell and Jeris (2004) propose that CRT aligns with the argument that theories are never neutral or objective but echo the theorist's social position, worldview, and interests.

Furthermore, CRT challenges traditional claims of meritocracy, colour and gender blindness, race, and gender neutrality, and equal opportunity (Dixson et al., 2014).

4.2.7 Voice of colour thesis

Finally, CRT acknowledges the value of 'the Black voice' that is very often overlooked in mainstream theory, policy, and practice (Hylton, 2010). Matsuda (1995) contends that those who have experienced discrimination speak with a special voice that needs to be heard. The essence of voice, then, is the recognition that the personal and community experiences of racially marginalised people are crucial founts of knowledge. As such, CRT scholars argue that the frame should be shifted, or we should look to the bottom and begin to value the experiential knowledge of people of colour. This forms the basis of the theme of 'voice' that runs throughout CRT (Dixson and Rousseau, 2005; Matsuda, 1995). Calmore (1995a) describes CRT as:

> tending toward a very personal expression that allows our experiences and lessons, learned as People of Color, to convey the knowledge we possess in a way that is empowering to us, and, it is hoped, ultimately empowering to those on whose behalf we act (p. 321).

In intoning this 'voice of colour,' critical race scholars employ writing in the form of narrative, or storytelling as a rhetorical tool to not only convey the personal racialised experiences of the marginalised but also to counter the metanarratives: the images, preconceptions, and myths that the dominant culture of hegemonic whiteness has promulgated to maintain racial inequality (Trevino et al., 2008).

Furthermore, Dixson and Rousseau (2005) assert that Critical Race Theory scholars utilise personal narratives and stories as valid forms of evidence, thereby challenging a numerical approach to documenting inequity that leans towards certifying discrimination from a quantitative rather than a qualitative perspective. Indeed, critical race theorists view the experiential knowledge of people of colour as 'a strength and draw explicitly on the lived experiences of people of color by including such methods as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, cuentos, testimonios, chronicles, and narratives' (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002, p.26). This framework, therefore, complements my research aim of amplifying the voice of Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students and employing stories to do so.

4.2.8 Central Tenets of MultiCrit Theory

I now discuss two tenets of MultiCrit theory, distinct from the traditional CRT tenets: 1) The social construction of a monoracial paradigm of race. As previously discussed, CRT acknowledges the social construction of race (Delgado and Stefanic, 2012). MultiCrit expands on this CRT tenet and analyses the socio-historical construction of race in strict monoracial categories. Most societies, like the United States, rely on a familiar set of racial categories such as Asian, white, and Black. These categories constitute the paradigm through which race is viewed (Leong, 2010). This results in a dearth of vocabulary and knowledge, inhibiting/impeding an understanding of race outside of a monoracial-only paradigm (Harris, 2016).

2) Monoracism: MultiCrit acknowledges multiracial people's experiences of monoracism, which, like racism, is pervasive throughout the educational system and society at large and impacts the lived experiences of multiracial individuals (Harris, 2016). Monoracism entrenches and normalizes a monoracial-only paradigm of race in society, resulting in structural inequalities and oppression for individuals of mixed ancestry/heritage (Johnston and Nadal, 2010).

Historically, the politics of race as biology produced a rigid binary, the monoracial paradigm of race, where racial categories, Black and white, are firmly bounded and mutually exclusive, serving to uphold white purity and justify anti-Blackness (Jones and Rogers, 2023). While multiracial individuals, whose racial backgrounds and identities may reflect more than one socially defined racial group, have existed for centuries, broad structural and academic recognition of multiracial status as distinct has only existed for a few decades in the United States (Rockquemore et al., 2009). On Irish shores, it was only in 2018 that a new category 'mixed' was added as a standalone category in the Irish census (European Commission, 2021).

Monoracism is so little-known outside of multiracial scholarship, so much so that Microsoft Word does not recognise it. This squiggly red line appearing on the term in the Microsoft Word application highlights the obscurity of monoracism, underscoring the importance of spreading awareness about it (Waring, 2025). Monoracism is a product of, and an instrument utilised to preserve a monoracial-only framing of race, which results in the invisibility and exclusion of multiraciality from society and education (Guillermo-Wann and Johnston, 2012).

Lastly, monoracism is a form of racism that may be horizontally perpetuated by communities of colour, vertically perpetuated by white communities, and may also be internalized and

maintained by multiracial individuals (Harris, 2016). The exploration of MultiCrit tenets brings us to the close of the analysis of CRT's overall central tenets.

4.3 Critique and Defence of CRT

Despite its usefulness and efficacy, CRT has been subject to intense debate and criticism. In the early days of its inception, its opponents called it part of the lunatic fringe of the academy, a justification and intellectual foundation for Black separateness, as well as the most embarrassing trend in American publishing (Chang, 2011). Young et al. (2023) state that 'CRT has been thrust into the public's eye and mischaracterized as a vehicle for oppression, indoctrination, and anti-democratic teaching. Numerous organizations and politicians have used this justification to introduce legislation attacking or restricting progressive curricula, civics education, ethnic studies courses, and CRT in higher education' (p.2). Crenshaw (2021) posits that CRT is increasingly being mispresented by the Right in an organised, widespread campaign to suppress racial justice and gender equity as well as undermine multiracial democracy.

President of the United States of America, Donald Trump, has responded to CRT by demonizing it, characterizing it as a hateful, divisive ideology. In the fall of 2020, President Trump issued a memo instructing federal agencies to cease funding any staff training activities that drew attention to white privilege and Critical Race Theory (CRT) (BBC News, 2020), arguing that teaching CRT was tantamount to psychological abuse (Brewster, 2021). President Trump also established the President's Advisory 1776 Commission to promote a 'patriotic' education counter to CRT (Trump, 2020). However, in January 2021, President Joe Biden revoked Trump's September 2020 executive order, which aimed to ban the teaching of concepts such as Critical Race Theory (Waxman, 2023).

In our neighbouring United Kingdom, in 2020, Women and Equalities Minister Kemi Badenoch presented a speech in the House of Commons, emulating the backlash against CRT in the United States. Further attacks on CRT and decolonising the curriculum ensued, with the Minister insisting that schools teaching CRT were breaking the law (Lander, 2022).

Interestingly, in Ireland, the silence around CRT was/is almost deafening and, in my opinion, speaks volumes about how discourses on racism are problematically lacking in the Irish context. Meanwhile, the war against CRT in America continued to rage. In a 2022 rally, Trump urged supporters to 'lay down their lives' and fight against CRT, framing it as a matter of

national survival (Coleman, 2022). During the past presidential election (2024), the Republican Party pledged to defund schools that engaged with concepts like CRT (Kisida et al., 2025).

By January 2025, within a week of his being sworn into his second term of office, President Trump made good on that promise, signing an executive order to remove federal funding from K-12 schools that teach CRT (Williams, 2025). Miller et al. (2023) argue that this Anti-CRT movement in the United States is a new face on an old practice, which is the racist utilisation of public education to preserve white supremacy.

Further criticism from antagonists such as Gale and Thomas (2018) centres around the idea of CRT as a foreign interloper, questioning its Atlantic crossings and applicability in national settings outside of the US. However, Gillborn (2008) has determinedly argued that there is no reason why CRT's underlying assumptions and insights cannot be transferred to other post-industrial societies. In actuality, the concepts upon which CRT is grounded have been applied, revised, and effectively expanded in transnational contexts (Yao et al., 2019), including Ireland (e.g., Kitching, 2015b). Indeed, scholars such as (McGinley and Keane, 2022) have used CRT to explore Anti-Irish Traveller racism in Ireland. Ultimately, much of the antagonism is of an atavistic nature, deeply rooted in a long-standing antipathy towards race-conscious social analyses (Warmington, 2020).

Regardless of the criticism and attacks, which Matsuda (2021) has labelled as 'boring and repetitive', CRT retains an international presence in research on education and continues to challenge the structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions (Sheridan, 2021). Critical Race Theory, as previously alluded to, has risen to become one of the most important academic perspectives on racism within the field of education, making remarkable contributions in and outside of America (Crawford, 2019).

4.4 CRT's relevance and application to education

A CRT approach is needed in educational research, particularly because it acknowledges the contradictory nature of education, in that schools are oftentimes sites of oppression and marginalization, while they maintain the potential to emancipate and empower. Contrary to the criticism that CRT is divisive, a considerate use of CRT can be a unifying force, creating opportunities for students from every background to grapple with the ways in which racial oppression has held everyone back and to understand that racism will only continue to hamper our collective progress as the world becomes more globalized and connected (Bailey, 2016).

Since CRT seeks to help others learn about and validate the experiences of the marginalised and those whose perspectives have often been ignored by policy makers, judges, educators, and those in positions of power in society, it can be instrumental in making educational institutions a unifying and constructive force that fosters productive citizenship in a world that is stratified and increasingly complex (Farag, 2021).

It would be worthwhile to emphasise two very important points before concluding this section. The first is that the term 'Black' is not only a phenotypical feature (the colour of the skin) but has a political qualification shared by all minoritised and racialised people. Racialisation integrates physical features and social characterisations. Racial ascription is always also a social assignation (Mascia-Lees, 2011). Howarth (2002) gives the example of the youth in Brixton, South London, who have had to face prejudice against Blackness even though they are not Black.

The second point is that the terms Black and white in CRT scholarship do not necessarily signify individuals or even group identity. Instead, they indicate a particular political and legal structure rooted in the ideology of white supremacy and colonialism's global impact, evidenced in conceptual categories of race that are implied in prevalent discourses. For example, notions of conceptual whiteness represent high achievers, middle-classness, high intelligence, and beauty. Those of conceptual Blackness, on the other hand, denote gangs, low achievers, laziness, welfare recipients, and the underclass. As previously stated, off shoot theories emerging from CRT have broadened the discussion of race and racism from the Black/white binary discourse to one that includes other races and ethnicities (Kim, 2016), making CRT an ideal tool with which to examine not only Black, Black-white mixed Ancestry and Asian but also Irish Traveller students' experiences of racism-racial microaggressions during their schooling years in Ireland.

4.5 Proposed theories: NomadCrit and TravCrit

Nonetheless, I have identified a gap within Critical Race Theory for theories that specifically examine the racial oppression experienced by 1) racialised white bodies, which, though white, fall under the shadows of whiteness and, therefore, do not have access to white supremacy's whiteness, such as Irish Travellers specifically; 2) Nomadic communities of colour. In the same way that there are several branches of CRT, such as the aforementioned QueerCrit, DisabilityCrit, LatCrit, TribalCrit (Still et al., 2024), and QuanCrit (Zimmermann et al., 2025).

I propose developing NomadCrit, which could apply to Nomadic communities of colour, and TravCrit, which could apply to white Irish Travellers. I assert that members of the Nomadic community and the Irish Traveller Community, ever on the margins as discussed in Chapter 2, deserve their own 'home' within the academy in the form of a theoretical framework that centres specifically on their unique experiences of oppression. Together with renowned American scholar of Chicana feminism, Gloria Anzaldúa (1990), cited in Solórzano and Yosso (2001), I believe that:

> Theory, then, is a set of knowledges. Some of these knowledges have been kept from us, entry into some professions and academia denied us. Because we are not allowed to enter discourse, because we are often disqualified and excluded from it, because what passes for theory these days is forbidden territory for us, it is vital that we occupy theorizing space, that we not allow white men and women solely to occupy it. By bringing in our own approaches and methodologies, we transform that theorizing space.

> Necesitamos teorías [we need theories] that will rewrite history using race, class, gender, and ethnicity as categories of analysis, theories that cross borders, that blur boundaries—new kinds of theories with new the-orizing methods . . . We are articulating new positions in the "in-between," Borderland worlds of ethnic communities and academies . . .social issues such as race, class, and sexual difference are intertwined with the narrative and poetic elements of a text, elements in which theory is embedded. In our mestizaje theories we create new categories for those of us left out or pushed out of existing ones (p.488).

In curating the theories of which Anzaldúa speaks, I have borrowed from Solórzano and Yosso's (2001) definition of LatCrit to conceptualize NomadCrit and TravCrit theory as follows:

NomadCrit and TravCrit theory in education are frameworks that can be utilised to theorise and analyse how race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact the educational structures, processes, and discourses that affect Nomadic communities of colour and white bodies, which are excluded from the umbrella of whiteness, such as Irish Travellers specifically. These critical frameworks are important for challenging the hegemonic ideology that supports deficit constructions of students from the Nomadic and Traveller community while assuming neutrality and objectivity. Drawing on the experiences of Nomadic individuals of colour and Irish Travellers, a NomadCrit and TravCrit theory in education also theorizes and scrutinises the place where racism overlaps with other forms of oppression such as ableism, sexism, classism, nativism, ageism, and heterosexism.

NomadCrit and TravCrit theory in education is imagined as a social justice undertaking that links theory with practice, scholarship with teaching, and the academy with the community. NomadCrit and TravCrit recognise that educational institutions operate in contradictory ways, with their capacity to oppress and marginalise co-existing with their potential to liberate and empower. NomadCrit and TravCrit theory in education are transdisciplinary and draw on many other schools of progressive scholarship. I conceive NomadCrit and TravCrit theory as natural outgrowths of critical race theory, but not as mutually exclusive. NomadCrit and TravCrit draw on the strengths inherent in critical race theory while simultaneously emphasizing the intersectionality of experience with oppression and resistance and the need to extend dialogue about race and racism beyond the Black-white dichotomy.

I had hoped and desired to develop these theories fully. I initiated the process by consulting established race scholars from the settled and Traveller communities; however, due to resource limitations such as time, I have not been able to advance these theories. I intend to pursue post-doctoral studies to achieve that goal.

4.6 Conclusion

To summarise, CRT, as applied to this body of work, means that my analysis is guided and supported by the perspective provided in Golash-Boza's sociological theory of race and racism, which posits that race is not a real, biologically constructed category, but rather a socially constructed one. I approach study participants with the recognition that though race may be 'unreal' as a scientific category, its modes of existence are very real and have innumerable material and social ramifications (Leonardo, 2005; Abrams and Moio, 2009) and that racialised 'Others' can be 'caged', constrained and strangulated by these social constructions of race.

CRT's stance that racism is permanent and an everyday occurrence means that I immediately adopt the understanding that racism in the lives of this study's participants is a given. This informs and shifts the research questions posed in this research. Many researchers start by questioning, for example, whether racial inequality exists and whether racism can affect outcomes. CRT's tenet that racism is endemic and deeply entrenched in society prompts a different type of question altogether, such as [the ones posed in this study]: Given the centrality of racism, what is your experience of racism? How have you been affected by racism? What changes are needed to achieve racial equity? (Castillo and Strunk, 2025).

CRT's precept of intersectionality guides me to approach study participants with an expansive and holistic view, bringing with me the recognition and understanding that, even though I am

researching the phenomenon of race, this represents just one domain of oppression and that participants' experiences of racial domination converge with other domains of oppression. MultiCrit requires that I analyse the experiences of participants with a dual heritage in a more nuanced way that honours and recognises their unique identity. CRT, as applied to this investigation, also compels me to approach this research with a clear understanding of my subjectivity and acknowledge my biases.

Equally important, CRT's emphasis on voice means that this study's first aim, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, centres around providing a platform for the amplification of participants' voices and positioning them as 'front and centre stage', as experts and legitimate sources of knowledge. Lastly, the theoretical framework's tenet of storytelling informs not only the second research aim of using stories to humanize, empower, and heal but also informs the research methodology employed, namely qualitative enquiry in the form of narrative. Thus, I utilise CRT to examine Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students' experience of racism-racial microaggressions. In the ensuing chapter, I expound on the research methodology employed to achieve these aims.

Chapter 5: Research Design

5.0 Introduction

> The multiple methodologies of qualitative research may be viewed as a bricolage, and the researcher as bricoleur . . . the combination of multiple methods . . . within a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 2).

In this chapter, I expound on the overall research design for this study. I begin by outlining the fundamental research approach adopted. I then discuss the researcher as a critical bricoleur. Subsequently, I examine the research paradigm under which this study is situated. This is followed by an exploration of the research methodology, various research methods employed, and a statement on researcher reflexivity and positionality. Finally, I address this study's limitations and propose directions for future research.

5.1 Qualitative Research

In line with scholars such as Singer (2016), who have championed the interconnection between Critical Race Theory (CRT) and qualitative enquiry, this study employs a qualitative approach to examine the experiences of racism-racial microaggressions among Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students during their schooling years in Ireland. Qualitative research is an excellent fit since, unlike quantitative research, it encourages deep interaction with marginalised/excluded groups, providing more opportunities to explore the realities of such groups (Chowdhury, 2023). Qualitative approaches to research have a long-standing history of posing the question 'who has been excluded?' and reflect on the contribution of research towards positive social and political transformations (Squire, 2018).

Qualitative research studies generally seek to address questions about the 'what', 'how', and 'why' of phenomena. This contrasts with the 'how many' or 'how much' questions that are posed by quantitative research (Tohen et al., 2015). The use of qualitative research methods, therefore, facilitates the production of more detailed and nuanced data (Crowley-Henry and Al Ariss, 2018). Qualitative research not only facilitates the generation of rich data but also the exploration of "real life" behaviour, enabling study participants to speak for themselves (Kuper and Levinson, 2008). The major qualitative research designs are narrative, case study,

historical, ethnographic, grounded theory, and phenomenological research. (Renjith et al., 2021).

5.2 Researcher as critical bricoleur

Within this qualitative research domain, I identify myself as a bricoleur. Bricolage is conceptualised as an eclectic approach to social enquiry in which researchers adopt flexibility and plurality by combining multiple disciplines, methodologies, and theoretical perspectives in their enquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 1999). While its origins are in poststructuralism, bricolage has developed into a critical, multi-perspective, multi-theoretical, and multi-methodological approach to research (Kincheloe, 2001, 2004a, 2005a; Berry, 2006).

As Berry (2004) posits, 'the empiricism of using one methodology or even one single theory presents only a partial answer to the original research question' (p. 105). In research such as mine, which focuses on multifaceted phenomena like racism, it is apparent that no single theoretical position or method can provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue's complexity. The bricolage is born from a recognition and appreciation of the complexity of the lived world. Furthermore, it exists for questions that do not have easy answers (Kincheloe and Berry, 2004).

In response to the research topics complexity, as outlined in the preceding chapters, in this enquiry, I have applied a sociological theory of race and racism, microaggression theory, which originates from the field of psychology, social psychology in particular, standpoint theory whose genesis can be traced back to Marxism and feminist philosophy, and CRT, a legal framework that has been applied across various disciplines.

Bricolage, according to Kincheloe (2001), 'recognizes the dialectical nature of the disciplinary and interdisciplinary relationship and promotes a synergistic interaction between the two concepts. In this context, bricolage is concerned not only with divergent methods of enquiry but with diverse theoretical and philosophical understandings of the various elements encountered in the act of research' (p. 679). Kellner (1999) proposes that incorporating various perspectives in one's analysis and critique facilitates a better understanding of the phenomenon under study.

More specifically, I position this qualitative research in the critical bricolage sphere. According to Kincheloe (2005a), critical bricolage is characterised by:

1) A shift from the positivist paradigm and research that is monological in its approach and serves to reinforce oppressive, exclusionary, and violent social structures;

2) An embrace of research endeavours that recognise the complexities of the lived world;

3. A shift toward emancipatory research approaches grounded in critical theories and cross-disciplinary, postmodernist, and poststructuralist epistemological intellectual frameworks. Its roots in poststructuralism challenge the idea that structures, such as language and culture, have fixed meanings and stable relationships. Poststructuralism emphasises the fluidity and instability of meaning, suggesting that meanings are always shifting and are influenced by various factors, including power dynamics and social contexts.

Critical bricolage emerges in a context reacting to positivism's dominance (Rogers, 2012). Ideologues advancing a positivist agenda have routinely excluded and ridiculed educational research that offers radical dissent to the hegemony of scientism (Hyslop-Margison and Dale, 2005). The epistemological foundation of positivism posits that knowledge of the world can only be obtained through the objective scientific examination of empirical facts (Owens, 2012; Ali, 2024). Positivism rests on the assumption that scientific research leads to an understanding of the world and human interaction in 'concrete and universal terms' (Hyslop-Margison and Nassem, 2007, p. 15). Berry (2006) asserts that positivist methods seek to uncover 'truths' about the social world independently of humans; however, for the critical bricoleur, human knowledge construction does not lead to universal 'truths' nor is objectivity a central tenet of enquiry (Rogers, 2012).

As Denzin and Lincoln (1999) state, there is much more to bricolage than multi-methods research; bricolage is an approach that enables the researcher to respect the complexity involved in the meaning-making and enquiry process by challenging the conventional principle that a researcher should remain a neutral observer. In alignment with CRT's central tenet of subjectivity, Rogers states that rather than idolising the perceived ability to be objective, bricoleurs engage in the political aspect of research.

Furthermore, knowledge production in a positivist paradigm is only achievable if researchers utilise the 'right' methods to collect data and observe the world; these approaches are described as monological in that knowledge is produced using singular methods and mono-disciplinary approaches that do not take alternative rationalities, multiple knowledge, or the complexities inherent in the research process into account. Monological research is problematic because it places constraints on knowledge production and ignores power dynamics (Kincheloe, 2008).

The positivist quest for objectivity disregards Philosopher and Historian Michel Foucault's argument about the interconnectivity of knowledge and power. For Foucault:

> Truth is a thing of this world . . . And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its general politics of truth: that is, the types of discourses which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault & Gordon, 1980, p. 133).

Foucault highlights that truth is culturally negotiated based on a range of epistemological and discursive rules, meaning that the rules used by a society to distinguish true or false statements are arbitrary; these foundational socio-historical rules are what Foucault refers to as the epistemé of a given society. These epistemé are politically negotiated as they are tied to the dominant power relationships in a historical period.   This means that in societies, only certain groups and institutions can gain prominence and become established as the authorities on knowledge. This can be explained by the fact that the rules for knowledge production in a given episteme could include: who is authorised to be a producer of knowledge (e.g., pundits, scientists, able-bodied men); which methods must be adopted to produce truth (e.g., qualitative, scientific or quantitative); or what institutions are validated as knowledge creators (e.g., governments, schools, church) (Rogers, 2012**).** The author further stresses that dominant groups preserve their legitimacy in the construction of knowledge by persistently undermining alternative forms of knowledge. Discursive rules result in the omission of knowledge of those not in positions of power; in this way, power shapes and restricts knowledge.

 According to Rogers et al. (2024), the cultural elite's control over the means of knowledge production has meant that insights from the margins of society have been subjugated. In a similar vein, Tuck and Yang (2014) stress that othered communities, such as Native and Black people, women and children, and immigrants, have not only been systematically excluded but also ghettoised, minoritised, and marginalised, which are narratives utilised to justify their exclusion.

 Kincheloe (2005b) argues that critical bricoleurs can disrupt this authoritative control over knowledge production. The author suggests that to contribute to social transformation, bricoleurs seek to gain a deeper understanding of two key aspects: 1) the forces of domination that affect the lives of marginalised individuals and 2) the worldviews of these individuals. In

this context, bricoleurs strive to remove knowledge production and the associated benefits from the control of elite groups.

Berry (2004) argues that the positivist epistemé adopted in modern Western societies fortifies oppressive conditions for marginalised communities. In a similar vein, Kincheloe et al. (2011) posit that 'mainstream research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression' (p. 164). In such contexts, critical bricoleurs seek to dismantle the positivist dominance in research, which, most often inadvertently, sustains marginalizing, oppressive, and violent social conditions (Rogers, 2012). Critical bricoleurs, then, are 'dedicated to questioning and learning from the excluded' (Kincheloe, 2004b, p. 48); according to Rogers, they seek knowledge often silenced in dominant research narratives.

 These actions are predicated on Foucault's conceptualization of subjugated knowledges (Foucault et al., 2003). Subjugated knowledges, Foucault posits, are the 'series of knowledges that have been disqualified as nonconceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges: naive knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudation or scientificity' (p. 7).

 Kincheloe (2005b) states that embracing subjugated knowledge is crucial in creating more democratic forms of knowledge production; confronting difference enables researchers to produce new forms of knowledge to inform policy decisions and political action in general. Thus, in alignment with CRT's tenet of valuing the experiential knowledge of the racialised and marginalised and standpoint theory's notion of epistemic privilege, this research shifts the knowledge production privilege from the dominant group to the margins. This study positions the experiences of Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students as legitimate sources of knowledge. This epistemic imperative acknowledges that the margin is "a site of radical possibility … a central location for the production of a counterhegemonic discourse" (hooks, 1989, p. 20).

In so doing, guided by my commitments as a critical bricoleur and critical race theorist, particularly the emphasis on political action and social transformation, as well as the mandate in Golash-Boza's theory of race and racism to work towards the elimination of racial oppression, I situate this investigation within a specific research paradigm.

5.3 Research paradigm

This study falls under the transformative research paradigm, formerly known as the transformative-emancipatory paradigm. The transformative paradigm came into existence during the 1980s and 1990s partly because researchers and members of marginalised communities expressed dissatisfaction with the existent dominant research paradigms and practices and because of limitations in the research associated with these paradigms that were put forth by feminists, people of colour, Indigenous and postcolonial people, people with disabilities and others who have experienced discrimination and oppression (Hesse-Biber, 2010; Mertens et al., 2010). Much of the theory behind the dominant paradigms had been developed from the study of male subjects and the white, able-bodied male perspective (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006).

According to Biddle and Schafft (2015), there are four basic belief systems that constitute a paradigmatic viewpoint:

• Axiology: the nature of ethics and what is valued/valuable

• Ontology: the nature of reality

• Epistemology: the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and that which would be known,

• Methodology: the appropriate approach to systematic enquiry

Phelps (2021) offers a visual representation of these four basic belief systems:
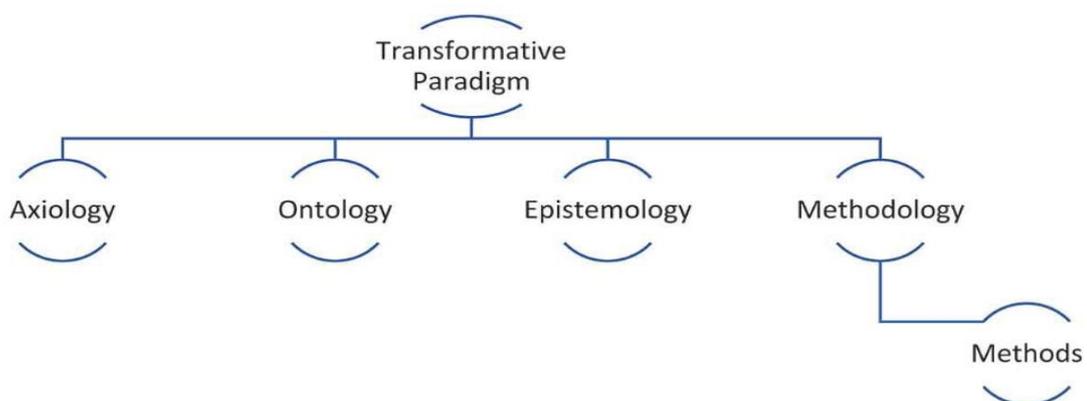
Figure 5. A visual representation of the four belief systems that constitute a paradigm (Phelps, 2021).

The axiological belief is of primary importance in the transformative paradigm and drives the formulation of the three other belief systems. That is to say, the ontological, epistemological, and methodological beliefs all flow from the transformative paradigm's axiological assumptions. The fundamental principles of the transformative axiology centre on advancing social justice, the furtherance of human rights, and respect for cultural norms (Biddle and Schafft, 2015; Mertens, 2007, 2010; Romm, 2015; Rocha et al., 2022). Phelps (2021) suggests that: 'the transformative paradigm, situates social justice as both etiology (origin or causation) and telos (aim or goal) of research' (pg. 206).

This paradigm is characterised by working with marginalised groups that are typically excluded and paying particular attention to power, privilege, and voice (Shannon-Baker, 2016). It places central importance on the lives and experiences of individuals and communities who suffer oppression and discrimination in whatever forms they occur, be it on grounds pertaining to race/ethnicity, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. Researchers operating within this paradigm are concerned with finding ways to ameliorate the effects of oppression and discrimination by linking their research activities to social action and broader questions of social inequality and social injustice (Mertens, 2003). In addition, addressing power differentials at the various stages of the research process is a central tenet of the transformative paradigm (Garnett et al., 2019).

Flowing from the axiological premise is the transformative ontological assumption, which I discuss in comparison with constructivism's ontological assumptions in order to underscore how different ontological assumptions mould research processes and outcomes, particularly as pertains to social justice and equity issues. Constructivism's ontological emphasis is on an individual's active construction of their own notions of reality through their own cognition, resulting in the existence of multiple realities (Bogna et al., 2020; Labonte and Robertson, 1996; Shannon-Baker, 2023).

As with the constructivist paradigm, multiple versions of what is perceived to be real are recognised in the transformative paradigm. However, the transformative paradigm emphasizes that accepting differences of perception as equally legitimate overlooks the harm caused by ignoring the factors that privilege one version of reality over another, such as the influence of cultural, ethnic, economic, gender, disability, social, and political lenses in the construction of reality (Mertens, 2009).

The ontological assumptions of the transformative paradigm carry epistemological implications, leading us to a deep exploration of the factors that cause us to accept one version of reality over another. We are impelled to question whose reality is privileged in a particular context; what mechanisms may be employed to challenge perceived realities that support and maintain oppressive structures? Researchers are compelled to reflect on who may be wounded if we accept multiple versions of reality or if we accept the 'privileged' version without interrogating any unearned privileges on the basis of dimensions such as gender, race and ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status, age, religion, or sexual orientation? (Mertens, 2010).

Within this paradigm, then, the ontological question of what the nature of reality and, by extension, truth, according to Romm (2015), is not answered by processes of science, nor is it answered as in constructivism by the assertion that there are multiple realities that are constructed in processes of living and knowing. Rather, the ontological question Romm argues, is answered by placing various viewpoints within a political, cultural, and economic value system to understand the basis for the differences - to understand how certain perspectives on reality become privileged over others and how specific constructions of reality come to be given more weight in society.

Researchers such as I who adopt a transformative paradigm are explicit about what realities are afforded presence and voice within the research and consider how the voices of the oppressed, marginalised, unseen, excluded, or inaccurately represented can be brought into the research process in a manner that advances social justice and human rights (Mertens, 1999; Mertens et al., 2008). Paradigms and, hence, methodologies hold political significance because they create different realities (Bacchi and Rönnblom, 2014). The transformative belief systems discussed thus far lead ultimately to methodological commitments about appropriate methods to gather data in a way that ensures that a reality is captured in an ethical manner that has the potential to result in the enhancement of social justice (Mertens, 2010).

To conclude this section on research paradigms, I apply the specifics of my study to Merten's (2003) criteria for a transformative framework:

a) Does the author openly reference a problem in a community of concern? This study explores the phenomenon of racism-racial microaggressions, a malady/societal ill experienced by a community of racialised and marginalised individuals.

b) Does the author openly declare a theoretical lens? I have discussed my employment of a sociological theory of race, microaggression theory, and the broader theoretical framework, namely, Critical Race Theory.

c) Were the research purposes written with an advocacy stance? The research aims, previously outlined, are oriented towards social justice and are emancipatory and rehumanising in nature.

d) Did the literature review include discussions of diversity and oppression? Discussions of oppression and the intersectional nature thereof are present in various chapters of this body of work.

e) Did the author discuss the appropriate labelling of participants? In this investigation, participants are named explicitly as Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students. Over the course of my studies, I have become increasingly aware of the power of language and terminology in reinforcing notions and positions of marginality and subjugation.

In conceptualising research participants, a concerted effort was made to counter labels and terms of inferiority. Campbell-Stephens (2021) argues that developing and using empowering language that challenges marginalisation and subordination is crucial. To that end, instead of referring to my study participants as 'minorities', which implies inferiority or lower status, I employ the terms minoritised and racialised, which recognise that these groups are not inherently 'minorities' but are positioned as such through social processes of power and domination (The Law Society, 2025).

Some participants have referred to themselves as minorities; in honouring their voice, I have not changed the language they utilised. Moreover, a significant proportion of the literature on racism labels targets of racism as victims; this study recognises that referring to people as victims of racism eclipses the agency of those who are targeted by racism and brands those who do not self-identify as victims (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013). Regrettably, some original direct quotations included in this study have used the term; otherwise, the researcher has not employed the term to refer to candidates anywhere in this study.

I was also intentional and deliberate about avoiding the use of acronyms such as BAME, which is deemed to be divisive and exclusionary as it categorises individuals based on minoritised ethnic groups rather than identities with which they choose to identify (Sahi, 2024).

Unfortunately, these realisations only came to me after I had issued and circulated some of the documents pertaining to the study, such as the information sheets, for example.

f) Did 'data' collection and outcomes benefit the community? Concerning story collection, feedback from a research participant indicates the affirmative to some extent: The full effect of the outcomes of the project, though yet to be determined, is anticipated to be beneficial for marginalised and racialised students and communities.

g) Did the participants initiate the research, and/or were they actively involved in the project? Whilst research participants did not initiate the study, I have involved them by extending an invitation to engage actively and collaborate in various stages of the research process.

Now that the study has been situated under a specific research paradigm, in the ensuing discourse, I discuss the methodologies and the various research methods employed in this enquiry. Guided by the transformative paradigm, the critical bricoleurs' emphasis on the voice of the subjugated, standpoint theory's foregrounding of the perspectives of marginalised groups, and the centrality of voice as well as storytelling in CRT, a narrative research design has been chosen as a mode of enquiry for this investigation.

5.4 Narrative Enquiry

In accordance with CRT's central tenet of storytelling and counter-storytelling, I use narrative enquiry to explore the lived experiences and constructed realities of study participants. Hardy (1968) posits that 'we dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, plan, revise, criticize, gossip, learn, hate and love in narrative' (p. 5). I embrace narrative as a vehicle for participants to do the aforementioned. Indeed, the foundation of narrative enquiry is based on the principle that people comprehend and attribute meaning to their lives through stories (Andrews et al., 2013; Meira and Ferreira, 2008).

The genesis of narrative enquiry can be traced back to the 1960s. Since then, there has been a meteoric rise of narrative enquiry research. The idea of narrative has infiltrated nearly every discipline and school. No longer confined within the domain of any one scholarly field, narrative study is now multi-disciplinary and used extensively in education (Bell, 2002; Barone, 2007; Clandinin, 2007). The approach was developed in response to the inability of positivism to describe lived experience (Riessman, 1993; Byrne, 2015).

It is methodologically distinct from the more linear-scientific, detached, and supposedly 'objective' type of research in that it affirms, values, and validates experience. Narrative

inquirers believe that there is a more valid way to conduct research that is associated with the ordinary day-to-day experiences of life (Clandinin, 2007). This allows the researcher to capture the lived, temporal, and emotional dimensions (Gilstein, 2024) of racialisation and marginalisation that other methods may not. Due to its departure from the 'hard sciences', numerical approach of positivism, narrative enquiry has often been dismissed as soft, idiosyncratic, undertheorized, individualistic, and even narcissistic (Hendry, 2010).

Almeida (2015) responds to the disapproval of using narrative for knowledge production by arguing that critics fail to acknowledge how Eurocentrism, as a dominant perspective, circulates and recirculates mainstream narratives about race, which constitute knowledge. These stories, interestingly, are regarded as "facts" due to the invisibility and dominance of white privilege and Eurocentrism. As such, criticisms against stories and experience as knowledge often end up being critiques against alternative ways of knowing. Furthermore, Witherell and Noddings (1991) propose that:

> telling our stories can be cathartic and liberating. But it is more than that. Stories are powerful research tools. They provide us with a picture of real people in real situations, struggling with real problems. They banish the indifference often generated by samples, treatments, and faceless subjects. They invite us to speculate on what might be changed and with what effect. And, of course, they remind us of our persistent fallibility. Most important, they invite us to remember that we are in the business of teaching, learning and, researching to improve the human condition. (p. 280).

Proponents of narrative enquiry have described it as a creative and holistic research method that emphasises not only experience but also relationships, participation, subjectivity, consciousness-raising, commitment, resistance, ethical action, and claiming voice and power. These characteristics have the potential to make narrative enquiry a spiritual and liberating research methodology (Bruce, 2008; Caine et al., 2013), ensuring its optimal alignment with the ethos of this research study.

I have adopted the following definition of narrative enquiry:

> Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that made up people's lives, both individual and social. (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 20).

What Clandinin and Connelly's definition illuminates is that narrative enquiry centres around experiences and the social contexts in which they occur; equally important is that it highlights the relationship and connection between the researcher and the participants in recognition of the power dynamics inherent in narrative enquiry. As in the critical enquiry worldview in which this study is situated, in narrative enquiry, the relationship between the researcher and research participants is close and/or collaborative (DeCuir-Gunby and Schutz, 2017). For Clandinin and Connelly, the emphasis is that the relationship is a partnership —a collaboration in which the researcher and participants are positioned as co-researchers. This collaborative stance is essential for the co-production of meaning, as stories in this study are not composed by the researcher but negotiated, interpreted, and reconstructed together, ensuring that meaning emerges from shared dialogue rather than unilateral interpretation.

People are often exploited for data in research by those in positions of power; their time, expertise, and investment in the study are taken with no attempt to equalise power relationships. Certain groups are mined for research data without realising any ownership of the knowledge produced or the research project's outcomes (McGarry et al.,2024). Recognising and addressing such exploitative practices by drawing on methodological instruments that not only position participants as experts in their own lives but also equalise power in the research process was a priority in this research project. Furthermore, Clandinin and Connelly also suggest that life and storytelling are continuous processes. King (2003), cited in Huber et al. (2013), posits: "the truth about stories is that's all that we are" (p. 212). Narrative enquiry, therefore, begins and ends in the storied lives of the people involved (Clandinin, 2020).

Narrative enquiry has also been identified as an effective strategy for 'giving voice' to marginalised groups. However, as researchers, we must be cautious about that phrase since 'giving' voice to the voiceless is a powerful, potentially harmful trope that masks structural inequalities (Callahan, 2018). The desire or intent to give voice stems from an assumption that the individuals or groups under study have no voice at all; when in reality, individuals have their own voice and can exercise it at will if they so choose (Ashby, 2011). In her 2004 Sydney Peace Prize lecture, "Peace and The New Corporate Liberation Theology," Arundhati Roy, renowned author and activist, stated that 'there is really no such thing as the voiceless. There are only the deliberately silenced or preferably unheard' (Roy, 2004, p. 1).

More importantly, the reality is that researchers cannot give voice to another; instead, we hear voices that we record and interpret (Larsson and Sjöblom, 2010). Narrative inquirers' work, my

work, is to facilitate the voice and agency of study participants, as voice is never mine to give or uncover. As with CRT and in alignment with my position as a critical bricoleur, narrative enquiry aims to empower and prioritize the voices and perspectives of people who have been silenced or excluded from public hearings of personal experience (Daiute, 2014). Narrative enquiry, therefore, encourages people themselves to give voice to their often-unheard stories (Lieblich et al., 1998). These stories can be a unique and in-depth way to gain insight and see the world through the eyes of others (Riley and Hawe, 2005). Stories as they are lived, told, retold, and relived circulate in and fill spaces between people, offering us insights into experiences. They resonate in ways that are instrumental in helping us to learn and form connections with others (Huber et al., 2013).

Furthermore, narrative enquiry not only supports the formation of connections and what hooks (2014) describes as the coming into voice of silenced voices, but it also has the overtly political agenda of disrupting and challenging the status quo (Trahar, 2013). Stories attempt to challenge the reader to question whether anyone should be exposed to the treatment presented in the story (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013). As such, in sharing participants' stories, I want readers to *feel* racism, to be held intimately, even for a moment, by its icy, deathly grip. I wish to immerse the reader in an experience that will prompt them to think deeply about how it feels to be so reduced, objectified, despised, hated, and denied their humanity and the right to exist in the full glory of themselves.

Finally, as pertains to narrative enquiry as a whole, as with any other research method, it has its limitations. Narrative is unsuitable for inquiries that seek to capture a broad demographic; the time commitment it requires makes it unsuitable for a large number of participants (Bell, 2002). With this in mind, the number of research participants involved in this study has been limited to ten. Furthermore, there is the reality that participants can never be free of the researcher's interpretation of their lives. The effects of this can be powerful (Josselson, 1996), not always in a good way. Considering this, the researcher has employed several techniques/methods to minimize this risk to the greatest extent possible. These will be elaborated upon later in this chapter.

5.4.1 Counter-narrative and Critical Counter-narrative

More specifically, a form of narrative enquiry known as counter-narrative is adopted to explore Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students' experiences of racism-racial microaggressions. In the ensuing discussion, I first examine counter-narrative in

general and then the specific counter-narrative adopted in this study, critical counter-narrative. The use of counter-narrative and the inclusion of narratives as a mode of enquiry offer a methodology grounded in the particulars of the social realities and lived experiences of marginalised students (Flennaugh et al., 2017). There are generally two approaches to using counter-narrative as a research method. The first, referred to as the whole narrative approach, involves eliciting narratives from research participants conceived of by either the participants or the researchers (or both) to counter majoritarian narratives. The second is the narrative factors approach, which elicits data of various types from participants, which the researcher uses to construct a counter-narrative (Miller et al., 2020). A whole narrative approach has been employed in this study, whereby stories were conceived by research participants.

Counter-narratives can be thought of as a naming of one's own reality or voice through the medium of parables, chronicles, stories, poetry, fiction, revisionist histories, stories, and counter-stories (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995). Counter-story has been described as a counter-reality experienced by subordinate groups as opposed to those experiences of those in power (Miller et al., 2020). Numerous critical theorists have provided similar definitions, seeing counter-narratives as 'perspectives that run opposite or counter to the presumed order and control' (Stanley, 2007, p. 14); as stories that challenge widespread beliefs and discourses (Solórzano and Yosso, 2001); storytelling which draws on the elements of critical race theory (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002) and the act of 'counter-storytelling [is] a means of exposing and critiquing normalized dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes' (DeCuir and Dixson, 2004, p. 27).

Indeed, counter-narratives provide space for the disrupting or interrupting of pervasive discourses that serve to paint communities and people, particularly racialised communities, in grim, dismal ways. They counter dominant discourses in the literature that focus on negative attributes, qualities, and characteristics of marginalised groups (Milner, 2012). Rolon-Dow (2022) adds that narratives are counter-narratives when they are focused on de-centring whiteness as the standard for understanding racial dynamics and exposing the fallacy behind ideologies that institutions operate in fair, neutral, and objective ways for all racial groups. Counter-narratives hold promise to expose, analyse, and critique the racialised reality in which experiences of marginalisation and oppression are contextualised, silenced, and perpetuated (Fairbanks, 1996).

In general, counter-narratives are an essential instrument to document and share the influence of race on the educational experiences of those living on the margins of society, whose stories counter those of the privileged regarded as normal and neutral (Stanley, 2007). Similarly, Milner and Howard (2013) state that the goals of counter-narratives are to convey the voices of those underrepresented in research and to utilise these voices as analytical devices to identify and critique majoritarian narratives, particularly those that target racially oppressed people. It is imperative that these narratives be told, particularly because the stories of the othered have often been dismissed, trivialised, or misrepresented in education research (Bell, 1992, cited in Milner, 2012). Counter-narrative as an analytical tool may be a powerful heuristic to extend and expand current dialogues and discourses in the literature and among and between people in schools, universities, homes, and other social contexts (Milner, 2012).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) state that communicating the experiences and realities of the oppressed is "a first step on the road to justice" (p. 58). The authors stress that an analysis of the education system would be incomplete without the voices of the oppressed. However, as powerful as sharing, analysing, and listening to counter-narratives may be, there are limitations. Delgado and Stefanic (1992) articulate it so well:

> The belief that we can somehow control our consciousness despite limitations of time and positionality we call the empathic fallacy. . . . believing that we can enlarge our sympathies through linguistic means alone. By exposing ourselves to ennobling narratives, we broaden our experience, deepen our empathy, and achieve new levels of sensitivity and fellow-feeling. We can, in short, think, talk, read, and write our way out of bigotry and narrow-mindedness, out of our limitations of experience and perspective. As we illustrate, however, we can do this only to a very limited extent. (p. 1261)

This does not imply that empathy is valueless; on the contrary, it is crucial. O'Mahony (2022) describes empathy as feeling what another person is feeling, but that is not enough in and of itself to fully address the complexities of race and racism. What is required, I believe, is a particular kind of empathy: compassionate empathy, which moves beyond the realm of feeling and understanding to taking positive actions based on that empathy (Powell and Roberts, 2017). Earlier, I said that in reading participants' counter-narratives, I wanted the reader to *feel* racism, and indeed I do; however, what good does the feeling do if it does not translate into action to bring about transformation?

It is with this in mind that Calmore (1995b) argues for counter-narrative as a praxis, defined by Freire (1972) as "reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed" (p. 126).

Correspondingly, Eveline and Bacchi (2010) argue that an agenda geared towards advancing change involves adopting research practices that are not only transformative in terms of knowledge production but also in terms of critical praxis as a 'politics of doing' for social justice. In line with this notion, building on and extending the definitions of previous scholars, Miller et al. (2020) advocate for a reconceptualization of counter-narrative as critical counter-narrative, which they define as 'a methodology for critically analyzing the racialised social reality in the education system and society by narrating the authentic lived experiences of people of color, searching for and acting upon emancipatory solutions, and transforming the educational system in order to provide equitable education for people of color' (p. 275).

Needless to say, critical counter-narrative is applicable to all racialised and marginalised groups that are excluded from white supremacy's whiteness, such as members of the Irish Traveller community. This notion of counter-narrative as praxis, which, in concert with Critical Race Theory and the researcher as critical bricoleur, emphasises the importance of emancipatory/transformative action to enhance educational equity, is what I ultimately adopt as a methodological instrument in this study.

In addition to collecting narratives as data sources and analysing them as content, researchers are urged to employ a comprehensive framework that focuses on whether counter-narratives move beyond the sharing stage and into transformative action (Milner, 2012; Lynn, 2006; Miller et al., 2020). Accordingly, research participants were afforded an opportunity to provide recommendations for transformative actions they believed were vital to bringing about change.

Counter-narrative has recently emerged in education research as a promising tool to stimulate educational equity in our increasingly diverse educational institutions and communities (Miller et al., 2020; Cheruvu et al, 2015; Milner and Howard, 2013; Ullucci and Battey, 2011). Ultimately, counter-narratives offer a small yet important contribution to the struggle of advancing toward a radical transformation of society (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002). Having outlined the overall research methodology, I delve into the specific methods used in this study in the next section.

5.5 Sampling

My study employs purposeful sampling, a technique widely used in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The specific method of purposive sampling adopted is snowball sampling. According to Noy (2008) 'A sampling procedure may be defined as snowball sampling when the researcher accesses informants through contact information that is provided by other informants. This process is, by necessity, repetitive: informants refer the researcher to other informants, who are contacted by the researcher and then refer her or him to yet other informants, and so on. Hence, the evolving snowball effect' (Noy, 2008, p. 330). This method is particularly applicable when the study focuses on a sensitive topic (Waters, 2015; Browne, 2005), as is the case with this study.

5.6 Recruitment and participation

I created an " invitation to participate in the research project" document (Appendix 1) in which I introduced myself and shared the specifics of the study, including aims and objectives, my contact details, interview options, and duration, as well as inclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria for participation in the research study were outlined as follows: Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic individuals (at the time, I had adopted the term BAME as I did not know any better), aged 18 and above, participation in the Irish post-primary education system, and completed secondary school within the last 3-5 years. However, finding research participants to commit to the process was not as easy as I had imagined. Therefore, in the typical bricoleur tradition of flexibility, adaptability, and making do (Mateus and Sarkar, 2024), a concession was made to extend the 3–5-year requirement so as to accommodate those individuals who graciously consented to invest in this research.

Furthermore, apart from excluding three schools that I have worked in, the type of school attended was not a key consideration since the emphasis is on students' lived experience of racism- racial microaggressions, irrespective of the kind of school attended.

I then applied for ethics approval. Once ethics approval had been granted by the university's Social Research Ethics Sub-Committee, the recruitment process commenced with me physically approaching a prospective candidate on campus, sharing the invitation document with them, and soliciting recommendations/suggestions for other potential study participants. Subsequent candidates were also approached directly, via email, or through networking applications. Study participants were recruited purely voluntarily and were not coerced or offered any inducements to participate in the research project. A key consideration was protecting the confidentiality of research participants. To safeguard their privacy and confidentiality, pseudonyms were adopted. Participants were granted the autonomy to select

their pseudonyms. When preferences were not expressed, the researcher was granted the license by participants to provide such names.

In a similar study conducted/undertaken to fulfil the requirements of my Professional Master of Education qualification, participants were randomly assigned pseudonyms. It was not until the first year of my PhD programme that I was introduced to the concept of decoloniality, and it occurred to me that I had ascribed Western names to all the research participants, even to those whose real names were non-Western. Armed now with the knowledge that one of the ways that colonial forces erase identity is by replacing both personal and place names and that names are a powerful act of reclamation (Vowel, 2018), this time around, where participants relinquished the responsibility to me, I ascribed names that were rooted in the culture and tradition of the participant. Table 3 below shows a breakdown of participants by pseudonyms, self-identified racial category, and gender. Figures 6 and 7 represent the racialised category and gender profile charts, respectively.

Participant Anonymised Name	Racialised category	Gender	Years since Secondary School completion
Cillian	Irish Traveller	Male	5+
Farah	Middle Eastern and North African (MENA)	Female	5-
Mulan	East Asian/Chinese	Female	5-
Rachelle	Black/White Mixed Ancestry (Zambian Irish)	Female	5+
Scott	Black/White Mixed Ancestry (Nigerian Irish)	Male	5+
T'challa	Black African	Male	5-
Thabani	Black African	Male	5+
Ayannah	Black/White mixed Ancestry (Caribbean Irish)	Female	5+
De'Andre	Black /White Mixed Ancestry (Caribbean Irish)	Male	5+
Chrismina	Irish Traveller	Female	5+

Table 3: Research Participant Profile
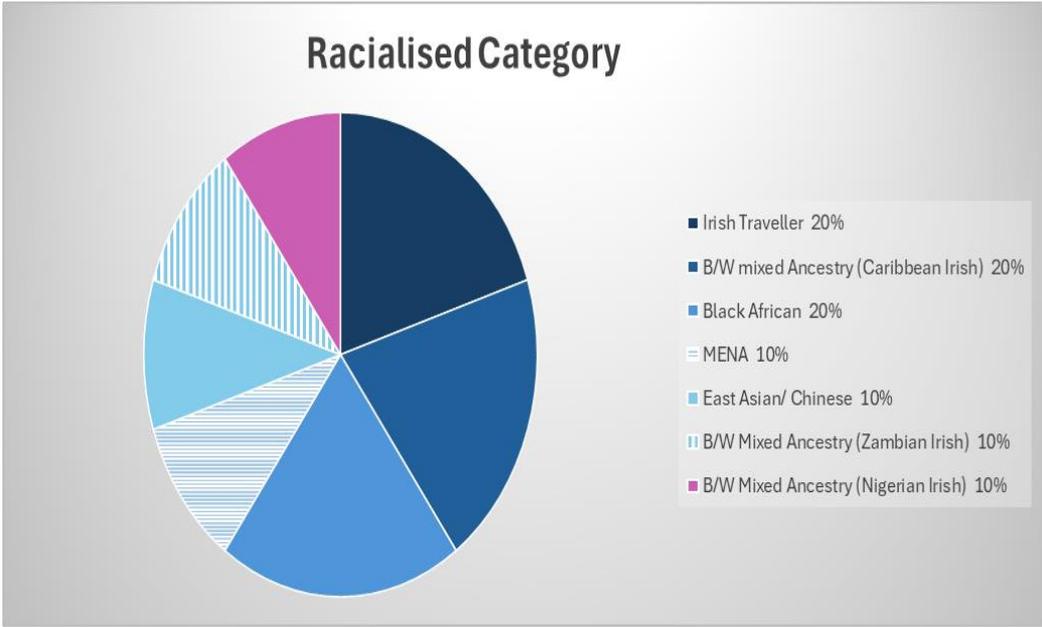
Figure 6. Racialised Category Chart
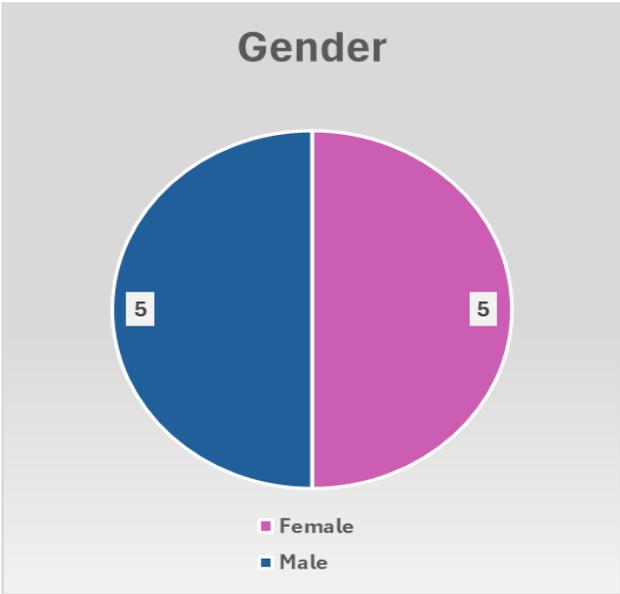
Figure 7. Gender Profile chart

5.7 Story collation

It would be remiss of me not to state that the idea of 'data collection' provokes a sense of dis-ease within me. For me, what I have gathered is not data. It is living, moving stories of people's experiences and reality. I prefer to use the term story collation instead. One-to-one

conversational, semi-structured interviews were conducted with research participants to gather their stories and experiences. Prior to the interview, participants were requested to give their consent to participate in the research project and for the interview to be recorded. Consent was an ongoing, negotiated process in which participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research without consequence at any stage during the process.

In all, ten conversational, semi-structured one-to-one interviews were conducted to elicit participant narratives. Interviews provide direct interaction with participants, which is an excellent start to ensuring that they are accurately understood and represented (Murphy, 2021). They provide valuable information about the social milieu in which people exist, offering insight into people's attitudes, experiences, and perspectives. They are therefore effective in gaining an understanding of participants' personal meanings and experiences of a given phenomenon (Ryan et al., 2009).

The semi-structured interview provides a repertoire of possibilities that offer great potential for attending to the complexities of a research topic. A key benefit of the semi-structured interview is its attention to lived experience while simultaneously addressing theoretically driven variables of interest (Galletta and Cross, 2013).

In general, the qualitative research interview context is a space for sharing stories, which not only provides researchers with rich information but also potentially serves as a healing, meaning-making function for participants. Talking to another person can be cathartic as it encourages emotional release and can make people feel better (Rossetto, 2014). There is overwhelming evidence to support the notion that talking about stressful experiences leads to improved mental and physical health (Lyubomirsky et al., 2006), higher grades (Pennebaker et al., 1990), positive effects on blood markers of immune function (Pennebaker et al., 1988) as well as less distress, negative affect, and depression over time (Segal, 1992).

Sharing information, stories, and experiences can even change people's thinking patterns (Rossetto, 2014). This organisation of thoughts can incite new perspectives, promote resolutions (Birch and Miller, 2000), and act as an agent of change (Romanoff, 2001). In this way, the study's transformational potential extends beyond the societal structures to potentially bring about healing change, however modest/minimal, in the lives of participants.

Whilst the interviews were grounded in the narrative tradition of placing the people being interviewed at the heart of the research study (Anderson and Kirkpatrick, 2016), in the typical

bricoleur tradition of combining or drawing from multiple methodologies, I borrowed mainly from feminist methodology by adopting a feminist interviewing approach. In feminist interviewing, researchers first and foremost make a concerted effort to reduce the hierarchy of the interviewer–interviewee relationship by engaging in mutual dialogue and disclosure. Contributing to the discussion and letting the participants see into the personal and professional world of the researcher helps to equalise the power imbalance (Campbell et al., 2010).

In that spirit, I also shared with participants some of my own stories and experiences of racism-racial microaggression. The interviews then became an intimate site of connection, of bonding, a beautiful space in which we vented and often wept together. We cried over the cruelty, the indifference, the injustice, the pain of isolation, ostracization, and loneliness that comes from our bodies and beings interpreted as 'other' and therefore inferior. During one interview, I had to halt the interview midway as the participant struggled to contain themselves. We wept, oh, how we wept, but we also laughed. Maya Angelou said: 'The Black child must learn early to allow laughter to fill his mouth or the million small cruelties he encounters will congeal and clog his throat' (Angelou, 1986, p.45).

Finally, feminist interviewing attunes to the emotionality of participants' lived experiences (Devault, 1996; Rager, 2005). Demarrais (2004) calls for careful attention not only to our emotions but those of others, stressing that this is an essential ingredient for quality research. A fundamental aspect of our humanity is the capacity to feel and to show emotion; therefore, to be human is to be emotional (Dickson-Swift, 2009).

Feminist interviewers anticipate that recalling past and present events may conjure up anger, frustration, and tears for participants when sharing their stories. The feminist interviewer engages rather than dismisses those emotions, encouraging participants to talk about those feelings while providing tissues, touch (if and where appropriate), and affirming gestures. Interviewers show their own concern and emotions by allowing participants to see that they, too, are moved by their words and experiences (Campbell et al., 2010).

Some qualitative researchers aim to see the world through the eyes of another, using themselves as a research instrument, experiencing research on both an emotional and intellectual level. Research is considered not only as an intellectual exercise but also as a process of exploration that is very deeply felt (Gilbert, 2000). I appreciate the manner that which Tillmann-Healy and Kiesinger (2001) cited in Rager (2005) articulate this point:

When studying emotional topics, we become vulnerable observers. By confronting the joys and horrors of others' experience, we face the joys and horrors of our experience. Because of this, we must ask ourselves before embarking on such a project: am I prepared to take on another's full humanity and to explore and unveil my own? (p. 24).

Finally, feminist interviewers should provide information to their participants and help normalize their experiences. Feminist interviewers have the responsibility of linking participants to resources, supports, and other assistance they may need at the end of the interview (Bergen, 1996). To that end, even before the interviews commenced, study participants were provided with a list of supports and organisations they could reach out to if they experienced any distress following the interview.

The interviews lasted an hour to one and a half hours. They used open-ended prompts and follow-up questions to explore Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students' experiences of racism-racial microaggressions. After every interview, I made it very clear how deeply appreciative I was of their time and participation. All interviews were recorded and transcribed via Otter.ai very soon after the meeting to establish a permanent written record and to serve as a basis for further analysis (Pickering and Watts, 2004).

Of the ten interviews, nine were conducted via Microsoft Teams, and only one was conducted in person. The predominant use of video interviews expanded the potential study population as people could participate irrespective of where they were geographically situated (Saarijärvi et al., 2021) on the island. It also eliminated, to a great extent, costs in terms of travelling as well as mitigated safety concerns. However, the use of technology to conduct interviews was not without challenges, as interviews were sometimes disrupted due to internet connectivity issues. When conducting the face-to-face interview, a space was sought that was available, convenient, and accessible to both the participant and the researcher, one in which interruptions could be avoided and an adequate sound recording of the conversation could be obtained (Edwards and Holland, 2013).

Establishing and maintaining a relationship with participants was integral to the research process. A deliberate and concerted effort was made to build and maintain an ongoing relationship with participants by providing an opportunity to talk about the research and the research process before the interviews commenced. Considering the topic's sensitive nature, I also checked in with participants after each interview to enquire about their well-being. I also

communicated with them during the write-up process to seek clarification or explanations when needed.

5.8 Narrative analysis

Narrative analysis comprised several steps. A feature of narrative analysis is that it involves interpretation. Narrative researchers do not position themselves on the periphery in a neutral, objective stance, merely presenting or analysing what was said. The aims of interpretation are to understand the phenomenon under study and facilitate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon (Kim, 2016; Riessman, 2008). Narrative data analysis and interpretation work in conjunction as a meaning-finding act through which an attempt is made to elicit implications for a better understanding of our existence (Kim, 2016).

 Since narrative analysis involves interpretation, there is a danger for the researcher to engage in arbitrary interpretation, especially when 'data' is appropriated to fit a particular philosophical orientation or when 'data' is transposed from one situation to another. This use of arbitrary interpretation often becomes a device to say what we want rather than really listening to or seeing what is being said (Munro Hendry, 2007). Indeed, Chabot (2019) states that oftentimes, when marginalised communities are talked or written about, they are either silenced or spoken for by representing what they say in our own words and for our own purposes.

Kim (2016) adds that researchers tend to write a good story more than a faithful account, that is, an account loyal to what the participant said. The author gives the example of the renowned psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, who presented the story of one of his patients, Dora, as an 'intelligible, consistent, and unbroken' account (p. 11) by filling in the gaps in her story, which led to conclusions that were not fully supported by the evidence.

Given this, my express commitment from the very onset has been to honour the voice of the study participants by curtailing my intervention and interpretation of their stories to the utmost degree. As previously stated, the narrative enquiry process is a collaborative one in which fidelity is to the participant's interpretation of events and dialogue between the participant and researcher. Approaching research as a collaborative process facilitates fidelity of interpretation and overcomes the dualistic boundaries found in research, such as subject-object, researcher-researched, and logic-emotion (Bruce, 2008). The author further stresses that, in narrative enquiry, participants not only tell their stories but are also invited to review them. This reflective approach enables the researcher to step back from the narratives and allows

participants to reflect further and more deeply on their stories. In this way, research participants are also interpreters of the meaning of the research narratives. This approach, according to Bruce, provides a validity check for the researcher in that participants can review the research results and indicate whether the 'data' appropriately reflects and expresses their experiences. It also affirms the importance of accurately characterizing participants' experiences.

Josselson (2004) identifies two approaches to interpreting narrative data: the interpretation of faith and the interpretation of suspicion. The interpretive effort from the point of view of the interpretation of faith is to examine the various messages in an interview text, privileging the voice of participants in multiple ways. The interpretation of suspicion, on the other hand, problematises the participants' narratives and decodes meaning beyond the text.

I have adopted the interpretation of faith approach to interpreting the stories told by study participants. I have accepted the stories that participants have shared as true and meaningful to their sense of their subjective experience. I have taken their stories at face value (Kim, 2016). The researcher has not attempted to engage in narrative smoothing or subjective interpretation by 'filling in the gaps' or violating the sacredness of the voice and story by rewriting/rephrasing the stories that I have been entrusted with.

Kim (2016) states that using contextualised and vernacular language is one way to honour the story the protagonist tells. The author maintains that the use of vernacular, everyday language also invites a broader range of readers in comparison to the language of the academy, which tends to be linear, analytical, and overly technical. Vernacular forms of speech make accessibility a hallmark of narrative enquiry (Barone, 2000). For this reason, I have presented participant narratives in their rawest form, which might not 'fit' with conventional academic paradigms. In line with my aim to honour the participants' voices, I have not attempted to rewrite the narratives in "better" language or polish or smooth them over. My commitment is more to the participant and their voice rather than the academy, which has been criticised for training researchers and students to think and act homogenously, thereby reintroducing and reproducing oppressive beliefs through sophisticated academic language and theoretical labelling and jargon, which in effect fortify western-based knowledge production (Chowdhury, 2023).

Chabot (2019) stresses that scholars and activists truly seeking to support marginalised people need to prioritize their words, stories, and truths, not their interpretation of them. 'While qualitative research provides readers with access to the world of people they would not

otherwise know and allows these people's stories to be told, the subject never actually tells his own story' (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998, p. 204). To ensure that participants indeed tell their own story, the researcher as bricoleur has also borrowed an element from life history methodology, a type of narrative research that provides a forum that allows authentic voices to speak for themselves. Counter-narrative and life-history are similar in many ways. As with counter-narrative, participants' voices are of central importance. However, in life history research, particular emphasis is placed on original voice. The precept of life history research is that the more authentic the voices are, the more powerful the stories are (Hatch and Newsom, 2010).

Congruent with counter-narrative, life-history research typically asks questions not from the point of view of powerful actors, but from the perspective of those being acted upon. The goal is to elicit expressions of what people living in particular social worlds already know about those worlds. A core principle of life-history research is that individuals from all groups have the right to speak for themselves and have their voices accepted as legitimate. Therefore, life-history work depends on individuals' authentic voices to make research findings meaningful (Hatch and Newsom, 2010; Kessler and Trapenciere, 2024).

As such, the critical counter-narratives in this study are presented in the original voice, the stories are told in vernacular, capturing the dialect and diction of the Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller individuals involved in this research. From the project's inception, the researcher was resolute about using participants' original voices. This intent was reinforced by a statement made by a participant during an interview: "We Travellers have a distinct way of speaking, and in school, we were constantly admonished and chastised for speaking the way we do; looking back now, I can see that was an act of acculturation. There was the expectation that we must and should assimilate to the dominant culture".

Therefore, the resolve to use the original voice of study participants is political; it is an act of resistance against the dominant powers and structures in second and third-level education. For me, as a researcher, to not present the narratives in the original voice of the narrators, contorting and reframing the stories by using 'academic language' to make them fit a traditional academic mould, would have been an act of symbolic violence. The oppressed must not be spoken for but must speak for themselves since systemic divergences in social positioning between speakers and those spoken for usually significantly affect the content of what is said. The impact of the practice of speaking for others is often erasure and the re-entrenchment of existing, unjust social hierarchies (Alcoff, 1991).

In seeking to capture the true heart and spirit of the individuals whose stories are featured in this body of work, the narratives are presented in the inimitable manner in which they were expressed to the researcher, capturing the purity and poignancy of their dialect and vernacular. While lengthy narratives were condensed and organized for literary cohesion, their words and expressions remained unchanged (Kearns, 2006). In translating from spoken to written form, punctuation conventions were adhered to to ensure clarity, cohesion, and readability. Ever conscious of how punctuation placement can change the meaning of the text completely, as previously mentioned, participants were given the written narratives to confirm the accuracy of translation.

Transitioning then from interpretation onto analysis. Due to their emphasis on subjectivity and co-constructed understandings, life history and narrative do not align with the characteristics of the postpositivist research paradigm, which assumes that approximations of reality can be discovered through rigorous data collection and analysis procedures (Hatch and Newsom, 2010). More than other qualitative methodologies, life history and narrative go beyond scientific and empiricist standards, relying on the authentic voices of participants to generate confidence in research findings (Wisniewski and Hatch, 1995). Therefore, this study's analysis comprised a simple four-stage process:

1) The first stage of organisation and preparation of data began with transcribing the recorded audio files immediately or shortly after the interview. Transcripts were compiled into one document for each research participant; non-narrative lines, such as casual conversation, were deleted, and participants were assigned pseudonyms they had chosen or permitted me to select. Any participant identifiers, such as names and places of employment, were replaced or removed to protect the anonymity of the study participants.

2) The second stage involved prolonged and detailed immersion in the stories, with each narrative read several times.

3) I then searched for evidence of experiences of racial microaggressions based on the existing knowledge/research in the literature. I examined the narratives to focus on discovering common themes or salient constructs in stories and organized them under several categories (Kim, 2016). That is to say, the counter-narratives were analysed and organised under several racial microaggression categories/themes as outlined in Williams et al.'s 2021 revised taxonomy of racial microaggressions (Table 2) and Johnston and Nadal's taxonomy of multiracial microaggressions (Table 4). In this sense, the analysis was deductive since the data was

organized into pre-existing ideas and research. Analysing data to discover emerging themes is a feature of qualitative research defined as thematic analysis. Thematic analysis fits within a spectrum of qualitative methodologies, including content analysis, conversation analysis, discourse analysis, grounded theory, interpretative phenomenological analysis, narrative analysis, and narrative enquiry (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Themes/categories of racial microaggressions were noted but not coded, as found in some forms of thematic analysis. This allowed a layered narrative to emerge (Ross and Green, 2011) as well as enabled the researcher to clearly distinguish racial microaggressions from the more overt and blatant forms of racism, which were not part of the initial research emphasis. Additionally, I noted how racism-racial microaggressions impacted research participants. In concert with this study's focus on social transformation, participants' recommendations for transformative actions that they believed were necessary to bring about change and promote more equitable schools and classrooms were noted.

4) The final stage involved organizing the narratives for literary cohesion and flow.
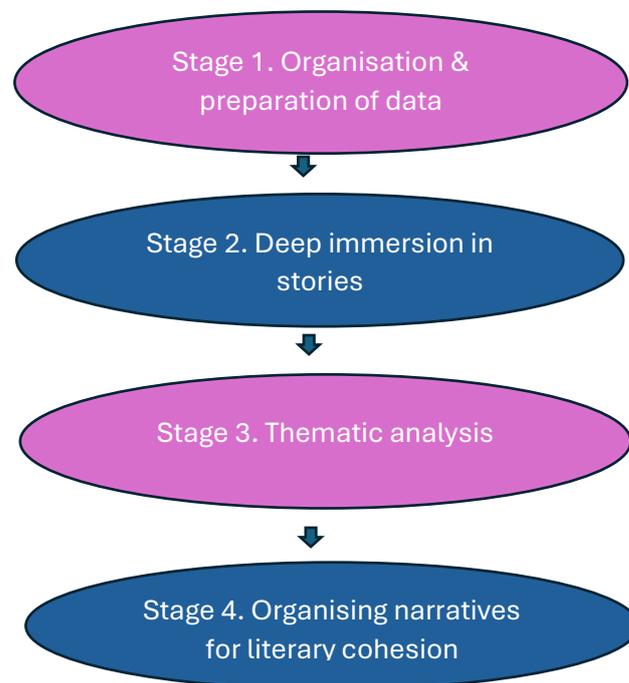
Figure 8. A diagrammatic representation of the research analysis process

Table 2 (presented earlier) and Table 4 below depict the microaggression taxonomies on which the thematic analysis of individual participants' stories was conducted.

Theme	Example	Message
Exclusion or isolation: occurs when a multiracial person is made to feel excluded or isolated based on their multiracial status	A multiracial person is told "'You have to choose; you can't be both.'"	You are not being authentic, because you don't fit.
	A multiracial person has difficulty filling out a form that asks for a single race only.	You do not fit monoracial society's norms.
	A multiracial person is not accepted by grandparent(s) or relatives because of their parents' interracial relationship.	You have a second-class status because of your multiracial identity.
Exoticization and objectification: occurs when a multiracial person is dehumanized or treated like an object	A multiracial person is asked "What are you?"	You are not normal, and it is okay for me to ask you about it.
	A multiracial person is told "Mixed-race people are so beautiful."	Your features are exotic and beautiful and can be sexually objectified.
	A multiracial person is told "We all will be like you someday."	You are the poster child for a post-racial society or the "racialized ideal."
Assumption of monoracial identity (or mistaken identity): occurs when multiracial people are assumed or mistaken to be monoracial (or a member of a group they do not identify with)	A multiracial person witnesses comments others might not say if they knew how the person identified racially.	Everyone in the group must be monoracial; it's okay to make comments about other groups.
	A multiracial person's mother is assumed to be a nanny or babysitter, or father is assumed to be an older boyfriend.	You must not be related to either one of your parents because you do not look like them.
Denial of multiracial reality: occurs when a multiracial person is not allowed to choose their own racial identity	A multiracial person is subjected to competition over "claims" from different racial or ethnic groups.	How you choose to identify does not matter; it's about who claims you.
	A multiracial person is accused of "acting or wanting to be White."	You're not allowed to act White, even if that is part of your heritage.
Pathologizing of identity and experiences: occurs when multiracial people's identities or experiences are viewed as psychologically abnormal	A multiracial person overhears someone say "All multiracial people have issues."	If you identify as multiracial, you must be confused about your identity.
	A multiracial person is told "You are a mistake."	Interracial families are not normal and must be because the mother accidentally got pregnant.

Table 4. Taxonomy of Multiracial Microaggressions (Johnston and Nadal, 2010).

It is pertinent to mention here that after conducting a review of several studies that purported to examine the phenomenon of racial microaggressions, Williams et al. (2021) noted that some studies included themes of blatant racism that were considerably more severe than microaggressions. The authors stress the increasing importance of setting clear boundaries between where microaggressions end and overt racism begins, particularly as the field of microaggressions research evolves.

Whilst this study set out to examine the experience of racial microaggressions and research questions were based on the said experiences, participants inadvertently also shared their encounters with overt racism, which the researcher felt would be unethical to edit/cut out of the narratives. To that end, bearing Williams and colleagues' exhortation in mind, experiences of covert and overt racism are clearly distinguished from one another in each individual narrative. Overt experiences of racism are italicised in red, whilst categories of racial microaggressions are italicised in Black. Furthermore, one of the categories within William et al's taxonomy of racial microaggressions shown above contained language that the researcher felt reinforced inferiority.

Therefore, in my analysis, I have rephrased category number 9, 'Pathologizing minority culture or appearance', as 'Pathologizing minoritised people's culture or appearance'. I have also extended category number 4, 'False colour blindness/invalidating racial or ethnic identity', to 'False colour blindness/invalidating racial or ethnic identity and experiences'. Finally, an underdeveloped theme emerged from the narratives that was not adequately captured by the taxonomy. A new category, 'Denial of the reality of racism/Dismissive of racism and failure to address incidents of racism', was added to the taxonomy.

5.9 Photovoice

A component of photovoice methodology was also incorporated into this research project to enhance participants' narratives further. This was not part of the original research design and was added 'along the way'. Berry (2015) states that a bricoleur uses 'many different tools, collecting different parts from different sources, does not utilise all the parts, and does not know ahead of time what shape the research will ultimately take' (p.81). Only after attending a seminar where other researchers had used photovoice did I note how images significantly amplified the voice and story of research participants. I then decided to incorporate photovoice into this research project, which was after I had already conducted some of the interviews and collated counter-narratives. Incorporating photovoice at this stage involved me reaching out to research participants again to elicit their approval and cooperation and seeking ethics approval for this research component.

Photovoice is a qualitative, arts-based participatory action research methodology that originated in public health research, typically involving marginalised community members (Bonati and Andriana, 2021). The methodology was introduced in the 1990s as a technique to enable female farm workers in China to document their concerns around working conditions

and village life. The outputs from the project were presented to policymakers who consequently addressed the issues that were raised (Wang and Burris, 1997).

Since its inception, the scope of photovoice has expanded considerably beyond its initial focus on community health. Recently published studies presented a wide array of photovoice studies with diverse populations, including immigrants and refugees, children, older adults, and those with limited literacy skills (Mulder and Dull, 2014). Photovoice has been successfully used in the fields of education, disability studies, and public health, indicating its vast applicability (Sutton-Brown, 2014).

Photovoice is a Participatory Action Research (PAR) method in which participants document their experiences through photography (Goessling, 2018). It examines contextually based meanings from an insider perspective, generating new insights into our socially constructed realities and cultures. It oscillates between private and public worlds in its attempt to publicize and politicize personal struggle through photography (Sutton-Brown, 2014). The strength of the method lies in the utilisation of the visual to articulate what is often difficult for participants to communicate; the product also often evokes emotions in observers in a way that the written word cannot (Moletsane, 2022). Other advantages of this approach are its proven ability to produce data rich in description, empower populations, and promote co-creative meanings (Dickinson and Connolly, 2022).

Furthermore, the approach holds special relevance for my research because it provides an opportunity to develop a story that has previously been rejected, silenced, or overlooked. It also encourages participants, who are assumed to be experts of their situation, to draw upon their personal histories and experiences while placing particular emphasis on the importance of telling their story, rather than trying to tell the story (Sutton-Brown, 2014**).** Research methodologies grounded in social justice, e.g., critical-feminist, critical-ethnography, and indigenous methodologies, have utilised photovoice to privilege the voices of those previously marginalised by research (Evans-Agnew and Rosemberg, 2016). I aim to do the same.

 In implementing the photovoice process, participants were asked to photograph or take a photo of an image that best depicts their lived experience. This ended up being a collaborative endeavour in some instances, wherein the researcher and participants partnered to curate images. For example, due to ethical considerations, images showing participants' faces were not permitted; therefore, I assisted the participant in finding a model who had similar features

to pose for the pictures to bring out the emotion and facial expressions, whilst maintaining the participant's confidentiality and anonymity.

Finally, in relation to the relevance of photovoice to this study. Another objective of photovoice is to instigate social change by sharing the outputs with appropriate people (Moletsane, 2022) therefore over and above including participants images within the dissertation, with this explicit political agenda in mind, I intend to compile a storybook of participant narratives to circulate in schools, universities, and other relevant organisations. This will ensure wide dissemination outside of the academy and increase the visibility of the hidden experiences and voices of Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students. The story book will contain participants narratives accompanied by their photos. In addition, I intend to organise an indoor exhibition of participants' photovoice at the university. Photovoice exhibitions have been used worldwide with the intention of fostering social change (Budig et al., 2018).

5.10 Researcher reflexivity and positionality

"No matter where you go, there you are" (Richter, 1984).

"Research is inevitably politically engaged, be it by default, design or by simple recognition" (Lynch, 1999, p 43).

A researcher has numerous and varied positions, roles, and identities that are intricately and inextricably embedded in the process and outcomes of education research (Milner, 2007). Kearney (2018) states that when he arrived in Paris in 1977 to study with the philosopher Paul Ricoeur, the first question the philosopher posed to those attending the seminar was: 'd'où parlez-vous?'translated from French as 'from where do you speak?' (p.11). Ricoeur's question is a call for self-examination and reflexivity. This question prompts me as a researcher to reflect on my identity and positionality and how these factors influence the research processes. This reflexivity is essential when adopting a narrative approach (Presser and Sandberg, 2019).

At the outset, let me state that in this research, I do not speak from an objective standpoint. I cannot. I am everywhere in this research; as Nicolai et al. (2024) state, 'the type of research conducted and the forms of knowledge generated are impacted by who is driving the research, formulating the research questions, and determining the appropriate methodologies, data collection, and analysis' (p.24). As such, an intimate relationship exists between the researcher and research participants and between me, the researcher, and the research (Parsons, 2008).

I do not claim any form of detachment from the research and research processes. As a critical bricoleur, I do not subscribe to the notion of detached neutrality. Within the Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework previously discussed, neutrality and objectivity are understood not only to be unattainable but also to be undesirable entities that lead to the misrepresentation of the experiences of marginalised people (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013). In addition, McGarry et al. (2024) state that research is never neutral but is saturated with questions of social justice.

In responding further to the question, I speak from my position as a Black daughter of the Mother and Father continent of Africa, a global citizen and social justice advocate, and an academic activist who has committed to fighting against racial oppression with the sword of the pen. I am a Researcher and Educator stationed in a PWI (Predominantly White Institution). My interest in this research topic arose from my own experiences of racism in all its forms and, indeed, from bearing witness to the life stories of other racially oppressed people, some near and dear to me, others acquaintances, colleagues, neighbours, and distant strangers. I became acutely aware of race and its ism in my early adolescence.

When I was eleven, my parents sent me from our home country of Eswatini (then known as Swaziland) to pursue my post-primary education in a boarding school in neighbouring Barberton, South Africa. My first year of secondary schooling coincided with the first year of racial integration in South Africa. The country, governed for many years by an apartheid government, had undergone a change of leadership from the Nasionale Party (National Party in English) to the African National Congress (ANC) under the leadership of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.

I attended a predominantly white, Afrikaans school where I was amongst a handful of students of colour. All my teachers, from the meanest to the sweetest, were white. For the first time in my life, I was in an environment where I was racially minoritised and where race and racism were major societal issues. In my home country of Swaziland, we had never had to face the monstrous beast of apartheid or segregation. All the 'races' lived, worked, and were schooled alongside each other.

 I never experienced the imprisonment of restricted movement brought on by Pass laws which required racialised South Africans to carry identification documents at all times (or else face detention and heavy fines) and limited their access to certain areas; I never experienced the gross injustice of receiving an inferior quality of education (Bantu education) than my white counterparts, I never faced the upheaval and trauma of being forcibly removed from my land

and home and resettled in a township where overcrowding and poverty, compounded by the denial of access to many job opportunities were the order of the day. Therefore, the child that I was never could understand why the other Black kids were so angry at me and called me a coconut (Black on the outside and white on the inside) for befriending the whites.

Nothing and no one could have prepared me for the level of hate and hostility I would witness in South Africa. It would be remiss of me not to mention that this was not, however, my overall experience. I encountered many wonderful teachers who loved and nurtured me. I was also privileged to forge deep and meaningful friendships with some of my white fellow students. The memory, though, of hearing the K word (the equivalent of the N-word) maliciously hissed at other Black students and me is forever etched in my psyche. I cannot erase from memory the sights and sounds of the bloody, racially motivated brawls between the white Afrikaner boys and the Black boys. I also watched how the composition of the student body in the boarding house quickly changed, one by one; the white students were taken out of the boarding facilities because living alongside 'dirty' K's became unbearable. We were unwanted, an abomination as it were. To this very day, years down the line, I can close my eyes and vividly feel the hate that billowed from most of the white bodies, contaminating the school atmosphere with its toxic fumes.

I recall too the more subtle racial injuries; being summoned to the headmasters office to be interrogated over the braids I had in my hair (till this day I very rarely wear my hair braided); a teacher that I really liked and admired ridiculing and making fun of my hair and that time my white friend, we'll call her Liezel, confided in me that she was so glad that I was not like 'all those other Blacks'.

I share all this to say that I identify with my study participants in that I too, as they are, have been and am labelled as an outsider, an 'Other', counted as one among the 'wretched of the earth'. This day, thousands of miles from home shores, a diasporan, my identity as a Black, African female immigrant places me on the margins of Irish society. It is I whom they speak of when they say immigrants should go back to where they came from; it is I, the immigrant, who is supposedly to blame for many of the social ills in the country. I, too, have suffered and continue to bear the heavy yoke of racial oppression and marginalization. I know how it feels to be so reduced by racism, so much so that:

> There are moments in my life when I feel as though a part of me is missing. There are days when I feel so invisible that I can't remember what day of the week it is, when I feel so manipulated that I can't remember my own name, when I feel so lost and angry that I can't

speak a civil word to the people who love me best. These are the times when I catch sight of my reflection in store windows and am surprised to see a whole person looking back . . . I have to close my eyes at such times and remember myself, draw an internal pattern that is smooth and whole (Williams, 1991, cited in hooks, 1994, p. 74).

Therefore, in relation to research participants, I am what is classified as an 'insider researcher' (McKenzie and Bartunek, 2023; Bukamal, 2022); this means that I, the researcher, share an identity, language, and experiential base with study participants (Asselin, 2003). This familiarity has enabled a better in-depth understanding of the participants' perceptions and interpretation of their lived experience in a way that is impossible without having been through it. However, it was imperative that I remained constantly vigilant to the danger of projecting my own experience and using it as the lens through which participants' experiences are viewed and understood (Berger, 2015). Berger argues that this self-scrutinization of the lens through which a researcher views the phenomenon under study is a tool with which credibility, trustworthiness, and nonexploitative research can be secured.

Furthermore, relevant to reflexivity and my position as an insider researcher, I engaged in story collation with my 'eyes open', adopting the assumption that I know nothing about the phenomenon under study. Recognising that although in some cases I might be part of the culture under study, I might not understand the subculture and therefore need to bracket my own beliefs and assumptions (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009).

Holmes (2020), however, contends that no matter how reflexive researchers are, they can never entirely objectively describe something as it is. Therefore, to further secure trustworthiness, I intentionally positioned the participants as experts in their own story/reality and as active stakeholders in the research process. For the research process to be a democratic one in which the voices and stories of participants were always at the forefront, participants were invited to be involved in various stages of the research process.

 Furthermore, considering that truthfulness of interpretation is a measure of the study's validity (Francis, 2014), in addition to using their original voice, I also worked collaboratively with participants to confirm that I had accurately captured their lived experiences, viewpoints, responses to racism-racial microaggressions, and navigational strategies. Counter-narratives were shared with participants, and suggestions for corrections were incorporated into the final counter-narratives. Future iterations could deepen this approach by moving toward more co-produced research and engaging with standpoint epistemology's insistence on the co-production of meaning and the negotiated politics of language in oppressed communities.

5.11 Ethical considerations

It is well documented that historically marginalised and oppressed groups, due to their social location, experience trauma that changes the way they make sense of themselves and the world around them (Comas-Diaz et al., 2019). Racist events, whether they are life-threatening or non-life-threatening, can be experienced as traumatic because 'they strike to the core of identity, resulting in a threat to one's psychological well-being and sense of personal safety' (Bryant-Davis and Ocampo, 2005, p. 480). Qualitative researchers exploring sensitive topics, therefore, need to assess the impact of the research on both study participants and themselves (Dickson-Swift et al., 2007). The researcher was mindful of the varied ways that trauma may be embodied, expressed, and navigated; therefore, a trauma-informed framework informed and guided ethical attention to ensuring the safety of research participants, whilst simultaneously promoting their agency, well-being, equality, and dignity (Seedat et al., 2004). The trauma-informed guidelines for ensuring the safety and promoting the resilience of research participants, proposed by Alessi and Khan (2022), were incorporated as best I could into the study design and implementation:

1. Preparation for entry into communities: learning about the impacts of traumatic events and historical trauma on individuals and communities- the researcher had knowledge garnered from personal experience and previous studies about the impact of traumatic events on racially oppressed and minoritised individuals and their communities. This guideline also prompts researchers to acknowledge inherent power differentials among participants and researchers. The researcher sought to ensure that the research process was democratized to reduce power differences and encourage disclosure and authenticity between herself and participants (Karnieli-Miller, 2008). As previously discussed, I intentionally positioned the participants as experts and active stakeholders in the research process and communicated this to them. Participation was not coerced in any way, and the participants' right to withdraw from the research at any time was communicated to them and respected. Furthermore, as another strategy to reduce power differentials, participants were invited to be involved in various stages of the research process, encouraging ownership of the research.

The first guideline also stresses the importance of adapting to participants' needs, acknowledging that individuals and communities who have experienced trauma manifest extraordinary resistance that may manifest in different forms, and prioritising participants' self-determination.

2. Preparing for the qualitative interview or focus group: establishing safety and trust in the research environment- This guideline focuses on external safety, relational safety, and internal safety. Ensuring the external safety of participants entailed working with participants to identify safe places to conduct the research, undertaking the research in a physical environment that was accessible and welcoming, and ensuring that the researcher and participant have a plan in place to ensure safety and privacy during interviews conducted online. Attending to relational safety, among other things, involved being accepting, accountable, and following through with any commitments I had made. To ensure internal safety, counselling resources were distributed to interviewees via an information sheet before the interview. Throughout various stages of the research process, participants were encouraged to ask questions, reminded that they could express hesitation about continuing in the research study, and that the researcher was committed to maintaining confidentiality.

3: Extending safety and trust in the qualitative interview process- this meant that I began the interview with the 'least stressful' questions, gradually moving to more stressful questions. The purpose of the interview was also clarified. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, the researcher expected participants to have strong feelings, and a concerted effort was made not to give advice or 'fix' the situation. The researcher instead focused on active listening, empathy, curiosity, and cultural humility. To minimise the risk of re-traumatisation, participants were empowered to set their own boundaries regarding what they wished to disclose and which questions they preferred not to answer. Finally, after each interview, a follow-up and brief check-in were conducted to enquire about participants' well-being and ensure access to support resources where required.

4 Knowing when to change course to avoid re-traumatisation during the interview- This guideline encourages researchers to recognise when participants may be reliving a traumatic moment and take the necessary steps to ensure that the participant does not experience further harm. For me, this involved, for example, pausing an interview and asking the participant whether they would like to stop it altogether. Researchers are advised to immediately refer participants to a counsellor if they remain distressed and are unable to continue. In all interview instances in this research, participants were able to complete the interview.

5. Committing to regular and radical self-reflection and self-care in interviews- Researchers are encouraged to access available resources to understand their own trauma history and how this could contribute to reactions such as sadness, helplessness, frustration, and over-identification that emerge at various phases of the research. Being an empath and someone who

has experienced racial oppression myself, I expected to 'feel' the pain of participants and the authors I encountered who document the struggles of the racially oppressed. Yet, many times when I experienced these reactions, I must admit that it was not always apparent to me in the moment that these thoughts and feelings were related to listening to or reading participants' trauma narratives and other related material. However, regardless of the source of my emotions, I had several self-care strategies to manage my feelings, which included prayer, medication, and time spent running or walking in the forest.

Finally, given that one of the participants shared an incident of historic sexual violence that took place when they were a minor, the researcher considered the ethical responsibility and obligation to report and disclose such incidents as required by Irish Law. This, however, was not a first-time disclosure; the incident had already been reported to the school authorities and the Gardaí at the time. Seeing that the relevant agencies had already been notified, an additional report from the researcher to the authorities was not legally required. The researcher, however, reported all disclosures to supervisors.

In line with recommendations from the World Health Organisation's ethical and safety recommendations for intervention research on violence against women (WHO, 2016), as with all the other participants, details of counselling services and support organisations were provided to the participant who shared the experience of sexual violence. Furthermore, given the nature of the disclosure, the researcher made a concerted effort to regularly check in with the research participant, more so than with any of the other participants. It is noteworthy that the participant now publicly shares her personal narrative as part of her advocacy efforts, with the intention that it may offer support or insight to others facing similar experiences. She felt it appropriate to share these experiences in this research, which is also transformative in intent.

5.12 Limitations and future directions
This study is not without limitations. In this section, I discuss these limitations and offer recommendations for future research.

Sample size and diversity of the study population: The sample size of 10 was relatively small, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to a broader population (Constantine, 2007; Constantine and Sue, 2007; Sue et al., 2007; Sue et al., 2008). As such, Wong et al. (2014) state that microaggression research with larger, more representative, and randomly obtained samples is particularly needed.

Sample imbalance of racial categories/ethnicity: Whilst there was no imbalance in gender within the sample size, there was an imbalance in terms of racial categories, meaning that racial or ethnic nuances may not be well captured. Researchers are urged to balance sample heterogeneity with the number of participants employed (Hill et al., 2005).

Furthermore, the decision to include participants of dual heritage identifying within the Black-white binary only was driven by the demographic realities of the available sample. Whilst this is reflective of the population that was accessible to the researcher, it presents an important limitation. The findings cannot be generalized to all multi-racial identities, especially those whose heritage includes other racial or ethnic groups, as their experiences of racism may differ significantly.

Reliance on self-report: This study's primary mode of 'data' generation was participant self-reports gathered through semi-structured interviews. Whilst self-reports provide the kind of information that reveals the phenomenology of the subjective experiences of subtle acts of racism, broadening and expanding on this operational form of measurement by employing qualitative observational methods such as direct observation of microaggressions in naturalistic settings such as classrooms would benefit our understanding of microaggressions (Sue, 2010b).

Recall bias: Participants were asked to reflect retrospectively on their experiences of racism-racial microaggressions several years after completing secondary education. As a result, recall bias could have occurred when participants shared their experiences. Recall bias occurs when individuals report a past behaviour or event. While retrospective reporting may have accurate aspects, it also includes inaccurate elements, such as underestimating or overestimating the frequency with which a particular behaviour occurred (Zurbriggen et al., 2021). This means that there is the possibility that research participants may have underreported or overreported their experiences of racism-racial microaggressions.

Transcribed 'data': I examined and analysed participants' narratives using transcribed audio recordings; I must acknowledge the possible limitation of not being able to fully appreciate the experiences since the transcripts do not capture verbal inflections or emphases (Constantine et al., 2008).

Cross-Sectional Design: This study examined Black, Black-White Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller experiences of racism-racial microaggressions at a certain point in time (mainly secondary school), thereby inhibiting the ability to note patterns and changes over time in their experiences.

Considering these limitations, future research should include more extensive and diverse samples. Furthermore, longitudinal studies examining experiences of racism-racial microaggressions throughout the various levels and stages of education and spanning even into the workplace arena post-education would bolster these findings and provide a more rounded and deeper understanding of the experience of the phenomenon and its long-term effects on targets. To deal with the issue of recall bias, qualitative researchers can consider alternative measurement methods, such as diaries, to ensure that recall is phenomenologically and temporally more immediate to a microaggressive incident (Sue, 2010b). Given the emphasis of qualitative methods on the adequacy and context of the gathered data (Morrow, 2005), the sphere of data generation could also be expanded by conducting both individual and focus group interviews; this could not only greatly enhance the richness of the data but also the understanding of the contextual qualities of the experiences (Sue, 2010b).

Whilst this study did consider intersectionality to some extent, its primary focus was on the experience of racism-racial microaggressions. Future research could focus specifically on other socially devalued group microaggressions, such as: Microaggressions experienced by international students attending Irish Institutions of Higher Education, the manifestation of Gender Microaggressions, Sexual Orientation and Transgender Microaggressions, Microaggressive experiences of People with Disabilities, Classist Microaggressions, and Religious Microaggressions in Ireland.

5.13 Conclusion

This chapter detailed the overall research design (and its limitations) adopted to explore Black, Black-white Mixed-Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller individuals' experiences of racism-racial microaggressions during their school-going years. A critical bricolage approach, whereby different theories from various disciplines has been adopted in response to the recognition of the complexity of the phenomenon under study and the insufficiency of one theory as a tool of analysis.

Centred in narrative as a methodology, this study drew from critical counternarrative, life histories, and photovoice, and incorporated elements from other research methodologies such as feminist methodology. Narrative enquiry, specifically critical counter-narratives presented in life-history form, emerged as the optimal research method to achieve this study's aim of providing a platform for marginalised voices to share their lived experiences in their own words. This approach, together with the photovoice component, privileged the voice and story

of participants and highlighted the importance of storytelling as a powerful instrument for social and political transformation.

In the subsequent chapter, research findings in the form of counter-narratives will be presented, followed by a root cause analysis/discussion section and a concluding photovoice gallery/participants' stories in picture form, which affords research participants the honour and privilege of having the final word.

Chapter 6: Counter-narratives - Freedom songs/Arias

aria

noun

A piece of music in an opera sung by one person

Figure 9. Image by Microsoft 365 Copilot (2025).

Thabani's story

My name is Thabani Mawocha*. I'm originally from Mwange, Zimbabwe. It's very close to Victoria Falls, not too far away from there. I've lived here in Ireland for let's say 17 years. We used to speak mainly Ndebele back home. I understood Shona, but Shona has kind of gone now. So, I can barely understand it. I can I guess, speak Ndebele to an okay level, up to the age of a 12-year-old, which was the age I was when we moved here.

Environmental exclusion

I attended secondary school at xxxx grammar school. So, grammar schools tend to be more religious than other schools. So, you know, I would go into school and in the mornings, you go to the assembly, read a bible verse, say a prayer, sing some hymns, that type of thing. It was an interesting school, mixed school, boys, and girls*. It was mostly white people. Actually, there were like five Black people in the entire school of about 1500 students. That comes with some 'interesting' dynamics.*

My relationship with the teachers and other students, in general, it was good. It was challenging as well because obviously they don't really understand the culture. It makes it very.... there'd be situations where there's tension. You know people not knowing how to properly interact with a child of a different nationality and teachers not really having an understanding I guess of why a kid might not be fitting in. *There were no Black teachers, all my teachers were white so I guess you couldn't really expect them to understand.* The teachers were trying their best, but obviously did not understand the…. I wouldn't say language barrier, but more the difference in way of thinking and also approaching the curriculum.

We were taught quiet differently in Zimbabwe. So, I guess it was a challenge in that way and that's not great for a kid. Then obviously, there was the little, tiny bits of ignorance, racism you expect in people, but you learned to cope as a kid. I liked school because I was relatively good at school. I played sports, so I had a lot of people to bond over with rugby and stuff. The friends did some silly racist things every once in a while, given that they were children. You'd get the little, tiny racism from them, but you learn to literally expect that as a normal way of life, which looking back, I'm like, that's ridiculous. No one should have to put up with that. Overall though I'd say I wasn't treated that different than the white students but, there were definitely many situations coming up where the teacher would act a certain way and you'd be

like, you definitely wouldn't be doing that if I was not Black. There was quiet a few situations with teachers just saying ignorant things, some of them could be less than respectful.

Racial categorisation and sameness

With teachers, it was more just a little, tiny piece of the casual commentary here and there. The little digs. It was never like a teacher actively went out of their way to be racially offensive. I was big into sports in secondary school. Sport was a big part of my school life. I think it's great, it bonds kids, it gives them something else to look at. It takes up so much of your free time when you're in school, it becomes a part of your life. So, my sports teachers here, they were very rough. Just rough verbally. Whenever you're in the gym, the teachers, it was annoying they'd make those comments and then they'd laugh and you're left confused, thinking like, was he being serious about that? They just weren't as kind, they weren't treating me as a child, basically**.**

 They'd have high expectations of you because of where you're from. It was weird. I remember when we were playing rugby, they always had higher expectations of me. People were like "okay, you should be able to do this". You know the whole idea that you're fast, you're strong, you're Black, you're from Africa. There were many situations where I will be given the rugby ball and told go through like five people. And I know for a fact if I was a local that amount of pressure would never have been put on my shoulders as a kid. The high expectations when it came to sports, maybe that was positive. I guess as a kid, it motivates you up to a certain point, but then I remember this teacher one time. *We're talking about building muscle, going to the gym or whatever and they kept on saying things like "yeah, well, you know, you have more muscle than everyone, it's because you genetically build more muscle".*

For me, though, I knew it's potentially because of how we were raised, you know my family fed us the right food, we got enough sleep and all of that. So, as a kid, you know, you're working really hard at sports, and I'm seeing other Black kids. I'm like, okay, these other Black kids aren't at the same level as me. How then, can you tell me that I'm only here because of where I'm from and not because of my own accomplishments, of putting in the work? you know, things like that. So, my achievements were not actually a result of my hard work. That was kind of, I guess it demoralizing as a kid.

In relation to the other kids, to be honest, there was a mix, kids can be quiet stupid and cruel, but I also had some people who were exceptionally kind to me, just because they could tell I was like different. I remember one kid who became one of my closest friends, I was wondering,

why was this kid so friendly? He was a Christian and I think his parents were volunteers or at least, they would volunteer at some point in their lives as missionaries, in different countries. So, you'd get those kinds of people, they were very, very kind to me because they appreciated what it was to be a Black child in a foreign land, they appreciated what it was like for me being from a different environment which they knew of, coming here and having to adjust to a new environment so they were kind.

The majority though, let's say the average white child, they'd be kind of rude, you know*, they'd say racist things,* they didn't really know better, children didn't know any better. This is what they heard in their family homes, so *I would be called names here and there.* There were some bad experiences to be fair in the past. I mean, there's been a lot...involving me and my family. The one thing that comes to mind straightaway is just the word .... the N word, the 'n [—]' word. A lot of kids when you're growing up, they want to say it, that was a lot of the tension growing up. It's just people being like, "yeah, why can't I say this"?

I remember one time one of the kids was like constantly just being annoying and constantly coming to me saying "why can't I say this to you"? And I'm like hey, listen, I'm not comfortable with it coming from you. When it did happen and you report it, teachers would talk to them and say, "this is rude, please don't say that again". Then they would try and find ways to get away with it. You know, the classic argument where someone's like, "but why can't I say this? it's just a word", they'd say "okay but now you're infringing on my rights to say a word, how is that not the same as you discriminating against me, if you can say it and I can't? this is racism".

I was like this is stupid, but people will try and find different ways to justify it. I remember this one time as well one kid, instead of saying it *he decided he will visually represent it, so he went out and printed it on a business card that said 'n [—]'.* I just thought to myself, you creative little minion. So, because he was told not to say it, he actually went as far as printing it out on a business card, and I was like okay what the hell? that's smart. People would always try and find loopholes or like in a song or something, they'd be rapping a song and singing the song and say the word and they would look at you as if to say "what? it's a song".

Even outside of school, when you're walking down the street or whatever, some ignorant person and some hateful person would be like *"'n [—]' go back to your country, blah, blah, blah'' all that type of s***.* So, when I came here, we were very few Black people where I lived. There were times when you could go like a week without seeing any other Black person who wasn't

your family. Now things have moved on a lot with the amount of influx of Black people, but it definitely was much, much, much worse only a few years ago, the ignorance was widespread, and people didn't really know what to do or say.

I remember one time, actually, someone like tried to beat up my brother. Some of the kids, just literally walking home from school, they jumped out of nowhere shouting *"come here, get that f****** 'n [—]'.* My brother escaped luckily, I think because he was in a public place so they then became afraid that they'd draw too much attention. *The amount of times people would just like try and come at you just because you're Black, it was crazy!*

In school itself though it was more the little, tiny situations which were quite common. I'm not gonna lie. I don't remember most of them, most of them are gone.....well looking back, I can say they were tiny now but back then, as a child.

Assumption about intelligence, competence or status – manifested via counter stereotypical surprise.

I remember for example how shocked people in school would get when I speak to them in fluent English and they're like.. "How can your English be so good"? "Your English is not so bad for someone who's been learning it for a year" and I'm like, what do you mean? I've learnt it my whole life. Little do they know we speak like four languages. I must say though it never went so far as the stereotype of people coming up to you and thinking that they have to dumb down or simplify their English. I never experienced that.

Racial categorisation and sameness incorporating connecting via stereotypes

Then there was the whole rap music thing. Jeez, alot of people expecting you to be a rapper or be involved in the rap scene or expected me to bust a freestyle. There was so many situations where it would be like "*so give us a freestyle Thabani, let's do a rap"* or "I'm more Black than you because I can rap". You know, people would say that all the time. They were like "you don't act like a Black guy" type thing. I didn't fit 100% into the mould of *Blackness that they had in their head. "Like how come you not more Black"? I'd be like, what do you mean? because every Black person is the same?* The typical Black rapper, that's not what Black people are, but one can sort of forgive that level of ignorance from young ones.

Pathologizing minority culture and appearance

And then you'd get the situation, that conversation you know, people would make comments regarding attractiveness and say I'd be talking about someone, say like a girl or something, or even a boy. *I'd say she's good-looking look at her, look how she looks, and they'd be like "yeah,*

she's not bad looking, she's decent for a Black girl" or Black boy. Those type of comments. Like why you saying that? What do you mean by good looking for a Black? What does that say about me? You know, at the back of your head you're like, am I ugly because I'm a Black person? So, I experienced that, situations where you're having discussions, and you have little, tiny interactions like that thrown on you all the time.

Assumptions of criminality or dangerousness

It was annoying and it just wasn't necessary, and it wasn't like it was kids specifically. *I remember as a kid when you went into a shop, or just when I went into the local shops like Tesco. The thing we used to experience with security guards, like they would literally stalk you. There was this old security man, you'd go down one aisle, and he'd be there. They wouldn't be looking directly at you. You go down another aisle and they're there. I used to think surely this guy just hates me for whatever reason. But then I spoke to my brothers about it and as soon as I had that conversation with them, we realised it's happening to all of us.*

Denial of the reality of racism/Dismissive of racism and failure to address incidents of racism (previously categorised as False colour blindness/invalidating racial or ethnic identity)

I talked to my white friends in school about it. They were like "*nah, no way, the security guard is literally probably just doing his job, he probably just patrols" and I'd say okay, has that ever happened to you? Has the security man ever done that to you? Have you experienced that? It was just tough to get that across because they would adamantly defend him. To them I was looking too much into something that wasn't really there.*

Exoticization via hair

I also got the whole hair touchy thing. I went through that; people love to touch your hair. You'd say no, that's disrespectful, you wouldn't do that to anyone else. Why are you doing that? and them being like, "Oh, your hair feels like a sheep". I'm like, right. Is that a compliment? "It feels like carpet", I had that before and also "your hair is like a sponge, if I pour water into it, will it come up"? Like little stupid things like that. Like those tiny little situations, all of them they add up, as a kid that made you feel alien, like you don't really belong.

So, there were the little maybe well-intentioned things but there were some devils too out there, I'm not gonna lie. There was this one time, this was outside school, actually we were high school age. My brothers and I, we're playing outside in the back alleyway, playing football and one of our neighbours came outside. He lived to the right of our house; he invited us to come

inside. "I want to show you this, all of you come in" and then we went in, four of us. So, I have three brothers, two younger, one older.

Anyway, he invited us into the house and we're like I wonder what this nice friendly neighbour has to show us. He was tall, very tall, very big. He was a bit drunk at the time. We went in and then he locked the door behind him. We thought, well, this is interesting, what's going on? He started shouting, "I got them, I got them". We were shocked. What the hell is happening here? Luckily, he was the only one who was drunk enough to do something so stupid because we saw through a window in the back of the house, one of his friends was sitting on a sofa looking at us like "what the f***? What are you doing"? This guy was like "I got them; I got them". They must have been having some racist discussion or some stupid s*** before then. My brother, my older brother, luckily was big enough at the time to be able to wrestle him out of the way, allowing us to escape.

We went out of that alleyway, and we went back home to the parents, and they didn't do anything about it to be fair, because they were afraid. My dad was like, "no, I can't tell the police because once you tell the police, that's it, it's game over. We were migrants, so involving police, might have affected our chances of remaining in the country. So, nothing was really done about that. I remember the other neighbour who was sitting on the sofa; he came to our house later in the evening and apologized for that man's actions, but we never heard anything from the tall, drunk guy. We even saw him a few times on the street. It was like he was fully aware of what he did. I think he just knew he could get away with it. Just imagine a situation like that weighing on your head as a kid.

There was one particular summer where the attacks had intensified. They literally came to our house, dragged our bin and burnt it. Kids, like older teenagers who were just having fun and didn't realise the impact of what they were doing, I guess. They also took our scooter; this was during the bonfires. After that, I never actually went to community events or public gatherings of locals, just because deep down, there was a fear. Just avoiding those kinds of situations, also, I remember I was afraid to walk down a certain street. I would just avoid walking down certain streets. I wouldn't go to certain areas at certain days of the year. I'd just stay away because you never know what they might do. They might start doing some s***. They might attack you. So, just having that awareness, being streetwise, became important.

There are so many incidents like that, too many. I could go on forever, I'm not gonna lie. There were some crazy situations which now that I look back, I'm like, they're ridiculous. They can

potentially be traumatic for a kid. Luckily, you don't get that anymore, back then I'd say we experienced racist attacks, like a few times a year, more than three or four times a year. It's weird that it was so possible, and it wasn't just our family. Outright racism was so widespread in the community. We must acknowledge though that there has been some progress, things are not as bad as they used to be. It's impressive what we have endured and survived. We have come a long way. When I look back, I know I'm lucky to be mentally sound, I'm fortunate to have had the mental stability to process it all. Having the wherewithal to put it all aside and realise that these people just didn't know any better. If I hadn't thought in that way and had the support of family, it would have totally destroyed me.

Coping mechanisms

I think a big part of coping was just forgetting. Which is weird. But like, I don't really remember a lot of the situations unless I go back and really try and think about what happened, like for this interview. So surely that helped me in a way. I think also the fact that I wasn't an only child, having my brothers to talk to was a huge help. Just sharing experiences and then making fun of the people who in our eyes just didn't know any better, you know joking about things, making light of it, like saying ah they do this because they're jealous. Just trying to find ways to justify the behaviour to ourselves.

Then just distracting yourself as well. We did a lot as kids, playing video games, I was always doing something other than school. Working out, or playing games, just never really slowing down and never stopping to think too much about what was going on, just moving on to the next thing. To be honest, as a kid, if I had to stop and process it, it would have weighed heavily on me, too heavily. I think I was lucky as well because I was so successful in so many ways as a kid, so I could look at them and say I'm so much better, obviously it wasn't that I was that much better but that arrogance, it is what it is, it was a coping mechanism.

Impact of experiencing racism-racial microaggressions

I don't know that I can say that my experiences negatively impacted my educational outcomes because I did well enough. I think I got lucky, I got lucky education wise but in terms of mental health it did impact me to some extent. I think I'd be lying to myself if I said it didn't, there were times when I was stressed, but I'm lucky, I can cope well enough with stress. I had the supports, so I was never depressed or anything but those situations like when you're walking down the street, being extra careful about where you are going. It's constantly running through your mind that something might happen, that someone will do or say something to you because you're Black. It was stressful. I must say though that all these things made me more resilient,

more patient, it has been a benefit in a way. I'm stronger as a person, as an adult. So, in a way I'd say I'm grateful for the challenges I went through as a kid, obviously, if I had a choice back then I wouldn't have chosen to experience the things I did.

Recommendations for transformative action:

Diversification of the teaching body

One negative thing was not having teachers that looked like you, so there wasn't much you could talk to teachers about in terms of one's experiences. No-one really understood, granted teachers are just ordinary adults, they're just people living their lives. If they've never known it or experienced it (racism), they don't know what's lacking, and they don't really realise the impact it's having. So, I guess they have no real incentive to go out of their way to make you feel welcome or educate the other ones or create an infrastructure. You can't really blame them in a way, after all 'only the wearer knows where the shoe pinches'.

Be that one teacher

There was this one teacher though, called Mr. McGrath. A really great guy, he loved to learn about my culture, he'd ask about it, he tried to learn my language, I taught him Ndebele a few times. He went out of his way to try and make you feel comfortable and learn about you. He was a good person. Unfortunately, that's all there really was in terms of making one feel accepted and included. I was lucky I guess that there was Mr McGrath, someone that cares.

Educate and foster an appreciation for different cultures.

I think it's also important that we teach kids about other cultures and not just in a generic sense. Maybe like in Home Economics for example instead of cooking only western foods like pasta and bacon for the 10th time get them to cook Sadza (Ground meal), you know, eating Zimbabwean, bring one of the parents in or something like that. Just include them, expose the children to different cultures.

That might spark the children's interest and curiosity and prompt them to explore worlds and realities outside of their own. Perhaps then they'd have a better appreciation of the human connection, that we're all just people at the end of the day, with the same basic human needs. Get kids to a point where they can see beyond difference to see that another person is actually a human being just like you are. I suppose what I am really trying to get at is that they move beyond an awareness of different cultures into the realisation that white, Irish culture or any other culture for that matter is no superior to any other.

These lessons are important, I mean even when it comes to the languages they learn in school. Why do we generally only have German, French and Spanish when we live in a global village? It's the same with History and even the textbooks, there needs to be more representation.

The last thing I will say is that we need to have conversations around race and race differences and inclusivity. There was none of that when I was in school. There was little or no infrastructure, the numbers of people of colour were low so it wasn't a priority for the school. Children of colour also need to speak up about their experiences, the other side of that though is that there has to be someone willing to listen.

De'Andre's story

My name De'Andre Fraser* I used to go by De'Andre Doyle, because that's like my mom's side of the family and I'm really close with them. I don't really talk to my dad or anything, but I started going by De'Andre Fraser again, just because. I'm 23 and I was born in London. My mom's from Dublin. My dad's from Jamaica. I identify as mixed race, just mixed race. I wouldn't completely identify as like white Irish, but it's weird because I've only really been mostly around white Irish people, like my mom and her family they're all white.

I've moved just about every four years of my life up to a certain point. So, I've lived on the line from Galway to Dublin, Ardmore, Lecrae Mullingar, and then Dublin and then I moved to Australia for four years. It was like a lot of travelling. So, I haven't really got to stay at one place for so long, but then when I came back from Australia, I stayed in Xxxxx for a couple of years. Then ended up moving back to Galway again for six months, but that kind of gave me the ick so I moved back home for a year and now I'm in Xxxxx.

So, I take photos. I'm a photographer, like the whole of last year, I was just like, you know what? **** it. I'm going to chase my dreams and just go full force at it. It was great, and I was living at home, so it was fine. I didn't really have any worries. So, at the moment, I'm working a day job in Xxxxx as well. I don't like hospitality, but they're really nice and they're really friendly, and like, I'm not stressed or anything.

 I've always been pretty artistically inclined. I've always liked doing stuff like that. My mom kind of had an inkling and was like, okay, I'm gonna push him to do more stuff like this. Got me into it. When I was a kid, I didn't really like to though. I was like, ya know, sort of chill but now that I'm older, I kind of get more into it, but at my own pace, like, so I'm not stressed and stuff like.

In terms of secondary school, so I did one year in Ireland, Dublin and then I moved right to Australia after that. Four years in Australia. A massive change. Definitely different. In terms of school wise, it was great. I definitely preferred it over there. It was so much better. So, I went to public school in Dublin. It was a mixed school, boys and girls. Thinking back, I had some good and bad experiences, like I'm pretty chill. It wasn't the best time in my life with my family because we were struggling to move over to Australia, and we were delayed for like a year. So, we had to move to Dublin for a year, but it was really nice. I met some great friends there who I'm still friends with today. We still get together and like, do our things in our group

and it's so nice. I love them so much. I did have some pretty bad experiences there, but it was fine.

Environmental exclusion

It was mostly Irish. There were like, I could count about five of the people that weren't completely Irish or that weren't like white in the school, including my brother because he also went there. Teaching wise, It was all Irish again. It's very daunting. Like, immediately I'm singled out. Like immediately, as soon as I'm in there, I'm in this situation where like, oh, all eyes are on me. He's different. Everybody looks at me like that. On top of that I was a very like, ADHD kid as well.

Generally, the teachers were all really nice. I had some really nice teachers actually, especially like my French teacher. My English teacher was absolutely lovely. All the teachers in there, just because we're going through all the subjects, they'll generally genuinely seem pretty nice. Pretty chill. Pretty accepting. I did have a couple of *people who would say racist comments and stuff.* Wasn't the best, but like, it was kind of like, here there, you know? Wasn't the majority of students. Genuinely most, a lot of them were really nice but yeah, there were one or two instances where I was like, oh, okay.

Not a true citizen and denial of multiracial reality

I remember I had got into like, an argument with someone waiting outside of class once*, and they told me to go back to my country and like that I wasn't from here.* I was like, oh, okay. Me that went to a Gaelscoil and has lived in Ireland, literally, most of my life. My mom is from Dublin. Like, my whole families from Dublin and they, like, barely even know me, *but they look at me and they're like, go back to your own country.* It's pretty daunting. It's pretty upsetting. That was a really bad one.

Assumption of monoracial identity and denial of multiracial reality

Literally, I had so many people just be like, "you're not an Irish". Just telling me like you're not meant to be here, you know? "You're not Irish", even though I consider myself Irish, but I'm also mixed race, you know, but it doesn't not make me Irish. But then they're also like, you're not Black either. So, you're just like nothing, and it's like, okay, all right, and I myself know what I am, you know? But I got a lot of that in school. Even whenever I go somewhere. I remember I went to my friends, they put on a punk festival every year, sometimes twice a year in Cork. Now I had a guy tell me like, "you're not from here". "You must be Brazilian or something like that". Okay, goodbye. I walked right away. Conversation over. *It's like they*

can't get past the concept that white... Irish isn't just white anymore, and it's like, okay. You know, especially older people, they're still in that kind of mindset. Especially after, like, all the immigration that's gone on in the world, and things change and it's like, no, they're still in that little box.

A lot of the abuse though in those years was you know, just kids. Kid's stuff. There's this one guy who I went to school with. I didn't realise he went to the school till I saw him the day after I went with my two cousins to the park. They are my two other white cousins. They're just playing in the park, and then these two guys came over. Saw me with my bike there and started like, coming up to me trying to talk s**t (nonsense*). Then one of them just straight up called me the N word* and I was like, okay, all right. We're going now. They started to follow us home and I was like, okay, no, thank you, went right home and like, told my mom. That was really upsetting, and then I saw him in school the day after, and I was like, What the ****?

  I never did tell my mum that the kid went to the school. Honestly, I was pretty independent. Like, I like to deal with my stuff myself and I'll like, go about it. I'll take it as I come and see what I want to do, if I want to just let it slide, or if I want to do something about it. As a kid, I'd more so be inclined to let it slide… these days, not so much. I'm confident enough to do something about it. Like as a kid. I kind of just took it and rolled with it, you know? But my mom would be even more upset than I was, you know? Like I was only 12, you know, at that point, and that's at school, you know? and there's also primary school, a lot of stuff that would happen when I was in Xxxx.

When I was younger like I had a lot of people… *I got assaulted on a bridge one day, by like 10 people who were waiting for me, because they knew like I walked that way and then one of the guys hurried up to me and then the rest of his friends jumped out of nowhere and started calling me like a Pak, a Paki bastard?* Like I'm not even Pakistani myself and stuff like that, and it was so bad. *Yeah, I got assaulted that one time, and that was really bad.* Even like people walking past the Gaelscoil, because I went to a Gaelscoil growing up, *like they shouted homophobic slurs a*round with Gaeilge, stuff like that. Like I'd only be like 10 to 11 years old and it'd be happening.

Even there were like points in the other primary school. In a different primary school, when I was much younger. Me, my older brother and like our friend Xxxx, we'd kind of band together because we're the only mixed-race kids or even other ethnic kids in the school. Sometimes there was this one guy, Xxxx *who'd always be saying like racist comments,* and stuff to all three of

us. It was so bad. I remember me and my older brother left, and it was just our friend Xxxx and it never stopped either. Xxxx told us so. Like, he did get a lot of that. *A lot of you know, a lot of "Black bastard", a lot of stuff like that being said.* I experienced racism from a very young age. There was an incident when I was only four, and it's like, it's this guy who was on a scooter. Me and my older brother were just playing outside. *He was like taunting us, calling us the N word,* riding around us because he had like an electric scooter that he went around, and he's like, "Yeah, I'm better than you". That was sad, that was probably my first experience with racism, and I was only four.

 The funny thing now though is it's always my white friends that say the N word and it's like, okay, no, no, it's not funny. You get to that point where you're older and you're like, no, its time to stop and you know, they... a lot of them would just be like "yeah, sounds funny, it's fun to me". They always, always *just be like saying the N word stuff.* Just even after I tell them that I'm not comfortable with it. It's moved along, whatever, stuff like that. A lot of casual racism through jokes.

Racial categorisation and sameness incorporating connecting via stereotypes
It was always, always with the chicken. I am a lover of chicken, fair enough, and I work in Xxxx. My friends would always *joke about me like loving chicken, watermelon, and stuff* . Like stuff like that. Whatever, but it would always happen.

Pathologizing minoritised people's culture and appearance
Then there was the issue of my hair. I've always liked long hair and I used to have dreadlocks as well. I cut them after I moved to Australia though. I remember, you'd get a lot of the stigma that like, dreadlocks are dirty, they're smelly, you know, a lot of hair stigma. "You can't wash your hair, and you can't do this". It's like, okay, yes, I can actually. Like a lot of people don't know so they just assume and go from there and it's always negative comments, you know?

 Impact of experiencing racism-racial microaggressions
All of these things definitely, definitely had an impact on me. When I was a kid, all of that really made me question like, where I'm from, what I identify as, who I really am. That always upset me, because it's like, everyone's telling me something. That really was a struggle for a couple of years. It was especially hard. It's like, I didn't really have any contact with my dad's side of the family, so it's directed predominantly by white people. These experiences also made me super defensive. I could be so defensive in environments where I really shouldn't be, like, really uptight. Quick to just be like, Okay, no! Quick to assume that someone's being

aggressive, or like spiteful towards me in those situations. So, stuff like that took me a while to get over, be open with how I feel and stuff, and just be sensitive, and, you know, let my emotions show and not be curled up in a ball. I kind of didn't deal with the racial abuse, at the time, when I was a kid, there was so much going on in my life. My mom wasn't always around, and she was in a rut as well, at the time, because we had to move to the small apartment, me my three brothers and her. It was a really tough time. Then, we moved to Australia right after, and it was like, okay, things are okay now, but I had all this kind of built-up trauma from the last year that I didn't address at all.

Recommendations for transformative action

It's very interesting, because like, in my school in Australia, you would have these extracurricular things or you'd have different days that were celebrated, like ethnical days that were celebrated in the schools. They would make a big deal about them, which was great, and you'd even have your Aboriginal days. People would all go to like the hall and there would be a celebration for it, or stuff like that...But in Ireland, there was nothing of that sort. That's why I preferred school in Australia, because of how diverse it could be, there were lots of different people like myself, you know. In Ireland in the school, you wouldn't get any of that, it would be very kind of strict educational, where they have their curriculum, and they kind of stick to it.

There needs to be an open conversation about diversity, racism, and those sorts of things. It all starts with a conversation, educating people and having diversity in schools, you know, even like say...I didn't have a lot of other ethnic people in my school, but they should still teach about these other ethnicities and culture, you know, and try and at least fill the gap. Or even just have posters on the walls in the classroom, anything that depicted other ethnicities, other races.

Mulan's story

My name is Mulan, and I am from China. From Hong Kong descendant. I was born in Hong-Kong. I moved to Ireland when I was, I would say five to six years old. So, I'm kinda like half and half, not too Irish, not too Chinese. It was quite difficult for me because, see, when I was a child in China and Hong Kong, I hadn't really started learning yet about like the school. So, I really started learning English when I came here. It was really tough for me.

One of the things people have to understand, there is white people, there's Irish people. There's Chinese people that came over here. Then there's people that are born in Ireland that are Chinese and are in the middle, half Chinese and half, like white. Yeah, they're known as banana, because on the inside, they're white, but on the outside, their skin is yellow. That's why they are called bananas. We call them, we call ourselves that, like, Chinese people know the name of it. That's the word that we call people that are living in foreign countries. It's even harder for people that are in the middle, because you don't know if you fit into more like white society, or do you fit into Chinese society? Are you accepted? So, you're in the middle. We're not fully Chinese or we're not fully Irish. So, where do we go? There's no specific group we fit into, even if we do get into that group, there'll be things that they don't like, or there's parts of you that don't fit into that group. So, most of us we kind of really have no friends. It's harder for us to make friends in Ireland.

In my experience family background is a very, very, very big factor here. Family background is so important when you live in Ireland, because we moved here, I will be counted as like the first age of immigrants, later as a second, third. In terms of family and like background, there was a lot of things I was restricted to, because I didn't have the proper connections, or anything. For example, I played volleyball for six years in school and like no matter how hard I tried, or how good I was, I was not up to par with the people that had connections with the coach. In sports, academic parts, it was all roughly the same.

I went to secondary school in a Catholic school in Xxxx. An all-girls Catholic school. It was a big enough school. There was only like, three or four secondary schools in Xxxx. It's not that big of a town. I completed my leaving cert in 2020. I am now in my first year in Xxxx University doing an Arts degree.

Environmental Exclusion

In my year, the year I went into secondary school in 2014, and *I remember in that year, specifically I was the only Asian in the whole year.* You know, and Xxxx because it's in the countryside, there's not really much.... it's a small community of Asians and it's not very diverse. *So, in my year and then my sister's year as well, we went to the same secondary school, there was only one Asian in both years.* Being the only Asian in my year like it didn't really bother me in a way, because, you know, there is no Asians over here, but because I came here at such a young age, like the touch with my Asian side was kind of like, not as big. So, you know, I wouldn't be encouraged to only talk to only Asians, I was talking to like every ethnicity.

Second-class citizen

There was parts in secondary school that made me feel as though I was treated differently because of my ethnicity, overall though the experience was quiet inclusive. I had a close group of friends, not many friends but a close group. They were all white Irish. There was never an incident in the secondary when I had direct, like racism. So, I was never called names. On the surface everything was you know.... everything was okay.

Assumptions about intelligence, competence, or status (ascription of lower intelligence or competence)

Like some of the teachers, they were a bit more uhhh... How would you say it? They were a bit more judging. For example, I remember in English because even though I came here at such a young age, in my family English isn't really big so at home I would speak Chinese. So, in the subjects of English and Irish, there will be little.... like no help at all with my family. So, everything has to be independently learned by myself. So, one *of the things is like instead of understanding and working with me, they were like.... they chose to put me on the lower level* ... that was one of the things that kind of stood out to me. But sometimes they don't understand because if the family is Chinese, there's a lot of things that they won't know.

That was quite difficult, especially Irish for me because I didn't understand why I had to do Irish, but because I came here before or during Junior infants it was mandatory for me. I feel like it's not really fair for like immigrant children. I thought it's inclusive, but it's sometimes quite hard, because you're bilingual, you have Chinese and English, and you're, like, stressing out. Adding another language on top of that, instead of acknowledging that, they chose to give up on me, and that was one of the things I was really upset about.

Like with education, there was not really second chances I was given. I had to fight for my right to stay in the class. *But I know it's like past, but it was so microaggression there, the teachers, they thought I wasn't good enough, because I was like bilingual. With French. I remember, instead of giving me another chance or recommending me to have tutoring like the other girls or like, patient with me, they chose to wanting to drop me down.* For me language was very hard, because I have to switch languages every time I come home and it was very difficult for me to pick up. But I still did well with my studies, but instead of giving me another chance, *the microaggression, they kind of forced me a little bit to drop down. So, they (teachers) don't have to work as hard or use as much patience as with other students.*

In fifth year, my French teacher wanted to move me down, because I wasn't doing the best, but I stood my ground and I spoke to a higher level (principal), because I didn't agree with what she said. Then in the end I like, passed, and I was like, wow, *I'm not sure why, why exactly is she trying to move me down?* Yeah. I just don't understand. Was that because that I needed more help than other students? Or like during class, I asked more questions? That was one of the things that I still to this day don't understand why? The only answer I could think of is race, racism. Like with the Black men, the majority, they don't do good in school, that's one of the stereotypes. How I felt other times, it will be similar to how those people felt as well, probably move down forcefully.

Assumptions about intelligence, competence or status incorporating connecting via Stereotypes (Counter-stereotypical surprise)

Stereotypes, the stereotypes*! One of my PE teachers said that compared to like, "as an Asian you're actually very fit". That was one of them because we're known as like very non- athletic.* A common stereotype about Asians is that we're smart and good at Maths. So, like for myself, no one really commented on that but for myself, because I'm so used to that specific stereotype space, "Oh, Asians should be good at math". When I wasn't good at math, I kind of like saw myself in a way.. oh, why am I not good at math? Is that because of me? Instead of people telling me "oh, you're not good at math, or you should be good at maths", me myself, because I've listened to all the stereotypical words, I believed I shouldn't be like that, I should be good at math. I should be like smart. So, when I am not good at math, I'm not smart enough. I kind of like say mean things to myself personally, like oh, why am I not like that? Why am I not good enough? It shouldn't be like that.

Pathologizing minority culture and appearance (microaggressions enacted via food)

During lunchtime I would remember that because for our culture we kind of we stuck to our culture and like lunches we have like you know rice, other lunches that are like... we're used to in our culture. *For example, like rice and noodles, dumplings, sushi sometimes. And I remember when I bring lunch and there was mixed glances and mixed feelings with the other students.*

Like some students that were like more culturally like...willing to accept some other culture or like to go out to eat other culture foods that are like more known. They'd say, "Oh, your lunch is like great". *But like other students that are not really used to like other cultures, or like mainly more Irish, you know, you'd get dirty looks...... and "what's that smell"?* Kinda like in that way but because I'm in an all-girls school, you know, they will find ways....so that you understood, but it's not mean. Back then I was, you know like generally I feel bad, like oh no, they're judging my lunch, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

After those incidents, it made me scared to express my culture. So, it kind of like pushed me with peer pressure to like join in you know blending with the school... you know sandwiches. Just do what everyone else was doing. *It made me kind of very scared to express what I like and what's a part of me that's Asian. But sometimes when you express like a part of your culture, you just get judged by them. So, you nearly have to deny a part of your culture to fit in. And they don't really understand.*

Environmental exclusion- via recognition and acknowledgement of other cultures other than the participant's own
There was actually zero to no opportunities where we get to like express ourselves and our culture and, that made me jealous because there is like St. Bridget's day, Ash day, mass day there. There was not even a single day for, or even like, a holiday where we can celebrate Chinese New Year's. Over the six years there was not even like a sense people know about it..nothing like "ohh, happy Chinese New year's". Nobody knew about it except the people that were from the same ethnicity. *You know there will be nothing. I would be jealous about Muslim culture because they would say, "Are you okay for Ramadan? do you need anything"? I mean, for years, there would be nothing, and in a way, we would be jealous. Is my culture not as important?*

Exoticization
One other thing I remember, there was a trend on the internet and tick tock. You know, about all the models slanting their eyes to make the fox eye trend? That was during my secondary

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school time. *I remember when girls were like posing and they were like stretching their eyes, kind of make it look seductive you know? This whole trend, it really annoyed me, because as a kid in primary school, they will do that exact same pose to like call out or mock Chinese people that our eyes are small. So, in secondary school, the girls started doing it as a makeup trend. You know, posting online. I was very disappointed and angry about it, that we have to battle with that throughout our lives, and yet they turned it into like a trend.*

In Ireland, when something like that happens, it's not regarding diversity, and culture. It's more of a trend, and that's what bothers me. *Instead of learning about our culture, and like accepting our features, they learned to do it as a trend to make themselves more popular.* I didn't like that at all. It's kind of like with the skin tanning. You know, it's more healthy to look tan and, they'll come up to me and be like, *"Oh my God, you're so lucky, you don't even need fake tan". Then I'd say like, I've never tried it before, and there'll be shocked, "huh you've never tried fake tan" and I'm like, yeah, I'm naturally this colour. And they'll be like, "Oh, you're so lucky"* but yeah we were disrespected throughout because of our skin colour for many like, periods of time. So, with tanned skin and everything, just like, oh, okay.

Now even the trend is still going on, where people try to make themselves look Asian, because they now think that Asians look more youthful, they look younger, and like, cute. Instead of accepting that, like, "oh, you know what, Asians are really beautiful, they are cute". Instead of saying that, they turn to say, it's a trend. It's popular. You know? *They kind of take that culture we have and misappropriate it and with like chopsticks in their hair and everything. They think it's a trend. They think it's cool. But for us, it's very disrespectful.*

Pathologizing minoritised people's culture and *racial categorisation and sameness*
Also, I remember in my last year of school 2020, when the COVID was just starting off and at first, it was taught that Asians....because in China they ate bats that's why the virus spread. Even though throughout the years in school I didn't get very obvious racism. *For the first time some people during that year specifically, there was a lot of very typical jokes that were said. I remember I would get asked because people will say "ohh Chinese, they eat like dogs like cats or like other animals". I would get asked very often in school, "Ohh have eaten cat before or have you eaten dogs before or ohh is your lunch, you know animals"? blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.*

I remember people asking me during the COVID time" Ohh is that true ? Do people actually eat that"? There was a few people that I didn't agree with. *They were like ohh you know, we*

should all go back to China because blah blah blah they ate everything like and that's why this virus spread to us. I remember that time was very, very difficult for Chinese ethnicity no matter where you are. You see the thing is with the COVID and China, it gave people a reason to stop hiding the racism. They took their chances. I was very disappointed. They took the opportunity. I wasn't really hang out with those girls but sometimes you kinda know because of the glances.

I was very surprised by the reactions because, as I said before, my school wasn't really openly racist in a way, but all of a sudden it was. *There was a shift in attitude when the news came up about China, it was almost like a certain change in their personalities and attitude towards Asian, from being inclusive to like isolating in a way.* That was one of the main things I remember that was racism. In the whole of Ireland, there was like sudden shift and till this day the amount of racism rose in Ireland and still has stuck there with the people that believe in it. It created a lot of like anti- sentiment.

Recommendations for transformative action

First, I will tell the education system or the government to just be more inclusive, not only the Chinese people, but all ethnicities regarding their holidays or culture, whatever. Ireland should be more informed, be more culturally diverse. All everywhere, not just Dublin but the countryside as well they should try harder because, you know, we don't just live in Dublin. We live everywhere in Ireland, and I know Dublin some of the places are like diverse, but they should try better to spread throughout all schools, all secondary schools, you know, facts about Chinese. Their holiday and like the next ethnicity just have like a cultural diversity day in all schools and colleges.

In my school, there was never any talk about diversity or talk about racism and you know.. how to deal with differences. I never saw anyone like me represented in school, not on posters in the classrooms or even in the textbooks. There was actually zero to like little if I remember, from history, to geography, to religion to anything. The only Asian person I remember is in CSPE, one of the world leaders from Taiwan and everything. I would like more ethnicity and diversity to be put into like textbooks, like schoolwork, or like just anything to spread ourselves. Also, instead of the media spreading like the bad things, they should be like, proper, how do you say like? capital understanding that we're not just like, all stereotypical, we're not all just bad, during the COVID. There's more to that and like, debunk all the theories regarding Chinese people. The school also did nothing to help. With all this happening, the school could have said, "Well, we have Asian students here, and this may be affecting them, let's address this".

Rochelle's story

My name is Rochelle*. I live in County Xxxx, and I work in healthcare. I come from a healthcare background. I'm also self-employed. I'm developing a medical diagnostics device. That's me in a nutshell, really busy, working in a male dominated world. My mom, she's Irish. My dad was Zambian, he passed away when I was two, but I still inherited his wonderful genetics. I was born and reared in Ireland, so Ireland is literally all I know.

My schooling is a bit complicated because of everything that's happened to me. So basically, I started primary school in Xxxx, and I done primary school in Xxxx up to first class and then I left that school and went to Xxxx to finish my primary education. I came back to Xxxx for secondary school, I thought I'd give it a go. I wanted to be closer to home and I wanted to have a social circle close to home. I stayed there for first and second year and then I had to leave subsequently because of what happened to me then as well. I went on to finish my secondary education in another school in Dublin.

Environmental Exclusion

The first two years of my secondary education, we were mixed, both boys and girls, but it was a predominantly Catholic school. It didn't matter if you were Catholic or Church of Ireland, you had to go to mass on holy days or whatever. In terms of demographics*, I always use the phrase that I was like a fly in milk. So, there was myself and two other boys, but of course, because they were boys, not that it was easier, but they didn't experience half the things that I experienced. I was the only Black girl, which made things slightly more difficult.*

It was the same in primary school. I was the only Black girl. I was modelling for Xxxx Modelling Agency, which left me being in the Irish Times, The Independent, and I was doing all these newspapers. When I went to school on a Monday, the Sunday paper would be there, and my pictures would be there. Then it was almost like, because of the attention other people outside the school will be giving me I was bullied for that as well as for being Black. The torture started as far back as primary school and continued through to secondary.

Exoticization and eroticization leading to sexual assault

Every day, for the two years I attended that secondary school, I was abused in some form. Verbally, physically, mentally, every day, it was relentless. *I was sexually assaulted and also raped because a boy wanted to know what it was like to have a Black girl.* There were three boys from my school involved in the sexual abuse but one main boy. When it happened, I told my mom what was happening but the teachers, the teachers were as bad as the students. When

I would report certain incidents to the principal, he used to always use these words "you are a young, attractive, interesting, and different girl, you're bound to attract an enormous amount of attention" basically saying would I not just shut up and enjoy it.

Even with the sexual abuse, I was failed the protection that I should have received. None of them helped me, not even as far as the guards. In small rural Ireland, you know, the guards and the school principals they all know each other, they grow up together. So, the guards basically told me that if I was looking for gold-plated pavements, I'd come to the wrong station. Institutionally, I was let down across the board.

Second-class citizen/ignored and invisible
Those boys were left to get away with what they had done to me. They were the ones that were protected instead of me. I was ruining the school's reputation you know; I was getting the star footballers in trouble because if you got in trouble, you couldn't play, so it looked better if I got in trouble. *I was the one that was made look like I was causing all the trouble. They were preferred over me. Who was I? I was nothing after all, a Black girl.*

I'll never forget this particular incident. GAA is huge in Ireland, and I had joined the school team. I had been practicing and practicing. Was I the best player? No. Did I show up at every training, rain, sun, or shine? Yes. Did I put myself in uncomfortable situations so I could go training? Yes. I done everything and I had been selected for the team. We were playing the county final and that's of course a huge thing. The players are treated like royalty.

I had been selected for the girls' team, I was absolutely delighted, I was early for school with all my gear and everything. *Now the boys who also played GAA, they're going on the same bus as us, we're all going on the same bus. Those boys were part of the school team. The school was now faced with an issue. Who do we bring, Rochelle or the boys? They brought the boys. I went out. I was packed. I was ready. I got up on the bus and my principal was standing on the back of the bus. My mom's maiden name is McDonald*, and he goes "young Mc, I don't know where you think you're going but you're not going anywhere on the bus with us. Off the bus and into school I had to go. So, I never got to play or be involved, and I was absolutely gutted, my heart was broken.*

Denial of the reality of racism/Dismissive of racism and failure to address incidents of racism
There wasn't a single day where I did not have to deal with prejudice, hatred, or mistreatment in one form or another. It was just relentless. *A golden example of this is we were in Home Economics, and we were doing e commerce and business in Home Ec. Basically, my teacher*

indirectly decided to blame every Black and foreign immigrant that has come into Ireland for the state of our education system for the state of... Oh everything was their fault, everything that was an issue was blamed on the likes of Rochelle and her father, they are what are making the country the way it is today.

We were mainly taught about how multiculturalism is wrong and how it ruins our ecommerce system, how all Blacks and Polish will drain our society and take our jobs. That would have been our discussion in school, in a classroom and the teacher never steered the conversation to bring it back on track. You know maybe saying, yes, you can have that opinion but here are the statistics that actually show we need each other. As a country, we need multiculturalism, other groups contribute to the economy, they bring something valuable to the table, we need them. It was never ever flipped around; it was a big fat bitchin session about all foreigners, and the teacher just let that roll on and on and on and on without bringing it back and stopping it in its tracks. It was yet another strike, among many, to my personhood and identity.

Not a true citizen, assumption of monoracial identity and denial of multiracial reality
I sat through the whole class, and I waited until the very end. All I remember saying is If that's what you're teaching the next generation we haven't got much hope have we? because ecommerce doesn't work the way you're teaching it and I stood up, I put my school bag on my back. I used to always say I packed my bag of feelings, everything, the shame, the guilt, everything into a bag. That day, I was made to pack my dignity as well as I walked out the door of that classroom, and I was 13 or so. *Foreigners were unwelcome, repulsive even. I was unwelcome. I was repulsive. The fact that my father was Black made me foreign; I wasn't considered Irish even though that is what I am.*

Avoidance and distancing and *ignored/invisible*
You would see it when it came to sharing certain books*. Or you're sharing paint, nobody ever wanted to share with the Black girl even though they knew me in my first secondary school, but I couldn't ever, I couldn't ever put my finger on why, you know, there would be a distance maintained from me.* It was almost like I was going mad you know, because they won't necessarily have to be doing anything outrightly to me, but I knew it was because I was not just Rochelle but because I was Black, you know? *At times I was also ignored, it was almost as though I was invisible.* I had eye problems which meant I needed prescription eyeglasses, which I hated wearing so I never wore them. That's just the thing I've always hated, still do to this day. With my glasses because I wouldn't wear them, I needed to sit closer to the board. I used to always say Oh I can't see Sir or Miss, I can't see. So can I sit here in the front? Not being

able to see was one excuse but it was also the fact that I wanted to sit directly in front of the teacher so they could see me and look after me. *It never worked, they would avoid me, it was almost like they chose to ignore me, like I didn't exist. I mean, I did two years of secondary school and I never had any of my schoolwork corrected ever.* All these kinds of things, it was just incessant, from the subtle to the more extreme.

I remember a particular incident from woodwork. I'm very independent and so woodwork was something I really wanted to do, because I wanted to be able to put up a shelf and you know, be able to do stuff. We were doing a project; I remember I had put so much effort into it. My woodwork teacher used to always pair me with the one of the three boys, and it will be the worst of the three that I would have to work with. So, I never got any work done in woodwork because the boy would be taunting me.

 I mean, I'd be in constant distress in the class at all times. Anyway, I decided I would work on the project at home. So, I headed off and over the weekend I made Ireland, the shape of Ireland, but I had to cut the wood, and it took me the whole weekend. This was for my junior cert project. I had no help in any way whatsoever from my teacher. All the theory, I followed the textbook, I done it myself. I remember, I was so so so so proud of myself. I brought it in, and my teacher, because I wouldn't clean up after that boy, I refused point blank to clean up the area that he had made a mess of, he went ballistic.

 He started screaming at me at the top of his lungs so loud I could see the veins on his neck coming out and hair from his head. He was furious at me. He had graded my project, but I didn't know what grades I got. He, excuse my language, but he f****d it across the room and shattered it into hundreds of pieces. I had the 32 counties put out like a jigsaw on spikes, so each thing had spikes. It was a really, really good project. I went over in front of everybody, in front of the whole class and picked up the pieces. I still have a little piece of wood that I picked up, on it is my A1, my grade. That's all I have left of project. All of that just because I wouldn't bend over and clean the floor in front of that boy.

Another day in the computer class, one of the main boys out of nowhere he came in and put his arm around my neck. He pulled me backwards and started like to really hurt my neck. He had pulled my head backwards and it was really rough, and he knocks me backwards, off my chair. I was in a skirt. The skirt that I had gotten in trouble for not wearing. I was wearing the trousers, but I got in trouble for not wearing the skirt, so I had to go back to wearing the skirt. So here I am fallen over backwards in a skirt, and everybody could see everything then.

I hated all classes, Irish, computers, and another one, it's like a recreation class. I dreaded them, they were my worst classes because we were always left unattended in those classes. I hated science, my science teacher used to say to me "will you shut that hole in your face, shut that big hole in your face" and he'd be shouting at me. I've never even said anything. If I had a question he'd go "shut that big hole in your face". So, if it wasn't the students coming at me, it was the teachers.

When I say it was relentless, I mean that. I had no peace. *I have been called all sorts of names. Black bastard, a slut, a whore, a tramp. The N word was used quite frequently.* That was from my peers and then my teachers were not a good example. One incident in particular, I had ordered a chicken roll for my lunch, I found there was bones in the chicken, which can happen to anybody. I brought it up to my principal, my principal who was male, white male, excuse my language, but he f****d my chicken roll across the counter. I handed it back in explaining what happened and he f****d it across the counter, telling me that I was nothing but a little Tramp and he was sick and tired of me… in a jam-packed canteen of other students. I had no protection in any way whatsoever.

My mom often gets quite upset about one particular incident. I'm walking out the school towards her, *and somebody said I'm a little Black bastard and I just turned around and said yeah, I am and what about it?* I never forget how upset that made her and I couldn't understand what was upsetting her. But I genuinely had just become so used to it. I couldn't understand why she's so upset. What's the deal? What's the big deal? If she had heard everything else I was called, then maybe I'd understand her being upset, but that particular incident was nothing. It was a walk in the park compared to what I usually experience. Yeah, so if someone called me a whore I used to go and what about it? Rather than I'm not a whore, I'm not this, or I'm not that because I was always fighting the battle for myself, based on being Black.

I remember when I moved school, to be called by my name was like, strange for me. Teachers would run after me and go, "Rochelle, Rochelle, I'm talking to you". They'd call me and I'd look behind me thinking they must be calling someone else. So, I ended up having to explain to the chaplain and to the principal. I didn't answer because I was so traumatised, so fragile when I did arrive at that school, so the teachers were then made aware, so they'd give me another chance. I couldn't even recognise my name when they called me because I was so used of being called other derogatory terms other than my own name. It took me over six months to answer to my name, because I was so used to being called other derogatory terms as a way of being, as a way of being spoken to.

Anything to do with my real name was always an issue in that first secondary school. You know, the roll, when you go into a class, and they call your name, and you have to get marked it. Everybody will be called their last name. So, you'd have O'Brien, you'd have Murphy, blah, blah, blah and they'll go through the list. I would wait, wait, and wait, and wait and wait and my name was never ever ever called out until I moved secondary schools. I never said yes or I'm here as part of roll call. I knew that was what I was to do but I never said yes, I'm here as part of roll call. Now everybody else in my class will be called out, the Byrne, the Murphy, their whole name will be called but I wouldn't even get Rochelle, or it will be Rochelle Xxxx, (my mums surname) if I was being called out over the intercom. They would never address me by my birth name, which is Xxxx and that is purely because I'm Black, because it's a Black name, because they weren't doing it to anybody else.

I used to think I was going mad or you know, I would actually feel stupid for letting things like that upset me. But a person's name is the only thing they freely own in this world. It used to really really upset me but again, in my head, I would almost rationalize and go how's that racist Rochelle? the voice in my head will be like how is that racist? How do you report somebody for not calling you by your name?

It got so bad at one stage my mom was going to legally change my name and so that would no longer be an excuse because maybe they won't see me as Black, If I have an Irish name but then I decided no, I like my name. I like all of my name; my full name is Rochelle Xxxx and I recently found out that name means an awful lot more than I ever thought. Thank God I never changed it because I am Rochelle Xxxx, and I always will be Rochelle Xxxx. I said I don't give a hoot what this small town thinks of my name. I know it means something way more outside of here, and there's a big world out there. I wasn't just going to change my name to Rochelle Xxxx just because it's more suitable for school. My teachers used to say, "you have to explain it to us in layman's terms". My name is Rochelle Xxxx. I often used to sit and just say my name is Rochelle Xxxx Xxxx and they would be like "what, what"? It's not even that difficult. It was my name……it was my hair.

Exoticization via hair

When I had hair done naturally and as an afro it used to really annoy me, people would put things in my hair, like they will be poking me, and I almost didn't realise it wasn't a thing of "oh well your hair is beautiful". It became another thing, you know, "x y z with the afro", it

was almost like another mark against you. For years, I hated my hair because of what I was. That hatred became my normal thinking about myself and my African features and my hair and everything across the board.

At some point in secondary school, I researched what hair means to African women, and the spiritualness, the intimacy of it, that beauty, the sacredness that was I could say, stripped by people who didn't like me and used my hair as another weapon against me. This story always gets me. I went to Africa when I finished secondary school, and I went to have my hair done. I experienced the spirituality, African hands running through my hair. That's something I've never had because *somebody always wanted to poke or prode my head*, or hairdressers didn't want to do my hair. I could never understand why I had to go to only one Peter Mark to get my hair done, because nobody else could do my hair, and nobody was trained to do my hair.

Experiencing African hairstyling was a very poignant and actually quite a moving experience for me because in that moment it was no longer a mark that could be used against me because I looked like everybody else when I walked out. This time, from since I was a kid, my hair growing from my scalp, like my real hair, had been embraced and appreciated by somebody, not just anybody but, somebody of African descent and culture. It was liberating. It was a reconnection with myself and my African identity.

Pathologizing minoritised people's culture and appearance
They would always make fun of my African features in school. It would be, "monkey", "gorilla", "ape", you name it. Planet of the Apes was a big movie back then. So, I used to be called Caesar. That just goes to show the mentality of the people I had around me, the mentality of their parents. It always goes back to the parents. It's just the mentality of what was around, the ignorance that still is around. It's later, it's only now as I'm getting older that I appreciate all of my African features. When I was younger, I used to hide my African features. I would never wear coloured lipstick on my lips. I would never wear reds or tones that would really, really suit my skin. You would almost always find me in basic, plain makeup and just glitter on my eyes, just a little bit, not too much, in case it emphasised my big eyes, in case it emphasised my big lips, because that was another undertone and something else that could be used against me. *You know the size of her lips, the size of her eyes, or whatever.* Whereas now I'm quite proud of all of those things but as a kid in secondary school who was already facing one battle after another due to my Blackness, it was quiet a different story.

It would be one thing If the racial abuse only took place on school grounds, but it didn't, it followed me even outside the constrains of the school. One day, I hopped on the bus home after school, and there were these boys. There were three white boys. *These boys, they started chanting racist chants towards me. "How to get a pack of Blacks into a telephone box, throw a can of beans and watch them run". Stupid things like that. "How to get a dozen niggers killed, put a rack of steaks on the M50 and watch them run across after it", all that kind of stuff.* Normally, I can stand on my own two feet, but I had absolutely no voice. Now when I say I had no voice, I couldn't talk at all. There was no sound, there was nothing. So, because of the trauma of everything that I had gone through, and me not dealing with it, and not being provided with the right therapy my speech was impeded.

My school refused to help me find the correct treatment and therapy I required because I was the Black girl, and I didn't need it. I was mad, and it was all in my head, that's what they were telling me, rather than getting a professional opinion. So, here I was, the only Black person on the bus on this particular day, with these white *boys hurling racist abuse at me*. I thought somebody is bound to help me. Nobody did. The boys continued their taunting.

They were singing. There's a song, it's 100 years old and they actually sing it, the white supremacists sing it in the Great Debaters. These boys are singing and doing the march. Eventually, the bus driver had enough of the trouble and chaos that the boys were causing. *So, guess what he does? He picked me up and flung me out. He threw me off. Instead of kicking the boys off, he threw me off instead. That has happened to me in later life as well. I'm often the one that is punished or almost made feel like I'm the one causing the scene, because it's easier to get rid of me*. It was raining that day. When I say it was torrential rain, it couldn't rain any heavier, really, really, heavy rain. I had to walk home in the lashing rain because at the time I was still too young to have a phone for school. I had to walk to Xxxx in the lashing rain. It took me over an hour, an hour or more to walk from where I was to Xxxx.

Impacts of experiencing of racism-racial microaggressions
Eventually, it all just became too much. It had gotten to the state where I was struggling to cope because even when I left the first school, it was still really really bad. I had to live in the same town. I had to socialize here. The boys involved in my sexual abuse are from this area. I had no respite from them, even after I had left the school. It was almost like I was an abomination because I spoke out about the sexual abuse. Nobody in the town spoke to me. Still to this day, I am stigmatized.

This one day I came out to the kitchen. My mom has a couple of health issues and she's on medication. So, I went to the medicine press, and I knew if I took the combination of three particular drugs, I would go to sleep and I would never wake up, like that would be it, it would literally be lights off. I had the tablets ready to take in my hands and I heard my mom open her bedroom door. I got such a fright, I dropped the tablets everywhere and she came up and she was like, "what are you doing"? I burst out crying and I explained everything to her, and she said "you know what? You doing what you're doing, succeeding at taking your own life would be giving them the justification that they don't deserve". You know, because if I kill myself, oh, well, there's another one, problem solved, she'll shut up now, nobody will know what we've done. We've silenced her, which is what I often say when I speak about this.

Even to this day, I still have people almost pressing the mute button on me. So, it's almost like a gag order, like pressing the mute button. If I do work around this issue, when I explain all the things that have happened to me, there's always somebody that will pop up and go shhh or almost like blow out the candle. That's okay though because my story will still get out there. I'll still help people; I won't be quiet. I will keep speaking. They didn't conquer me nor will they. I always use the phrase 'turning pain into power'.

My experiences also affected my educational outcomes. If I didn't go through half the stuff I went through, I would have done ten times better because I loved school. I loved education. I love learning new things, but I had bigger things going on besides statistics or maths or how to cook scones in Home Ec. I was literally just trying to survive each day. I was a zombie. I was zombified going through school, and that was not from any kind of medication. That was because of my own mental state because of everything that had happened to me up until that point.

I finally got professional help at 17, but from 12 to 17, I was merely existing, so my junior cert, everything was affected. My mental health would have been totally different if everything didn't happen to me, my exams would not have been affected. I don't feel sorry for myself, these things happen, and I wouldn't be me if they hadn't happened. Not that I'm glad it all happened.

Coping mechanisms

I had four female friends in that whole entire secondary school, and they were the backbone. I don't know what I would have done without them. I've always said this, without them, I wouldn't have survived. I genuinely would not have survived. The other thing was that I didn't

want those who thought I had become their victim to think that they had won because I'm nobody's victim. That's what kept me going. I said, I will go to school every day even though I didn't want to go. I will go to school every day. I have done nothing wrong.

Recommendations for transformative action

Education around these issues is so important. I don't mean sitting down and looking at YouTube videos about the potential scenario. People need to hear real-life stories; they need to be shocked. Children are our future, even if they're being educated incorrectly at home, teachers have a role to play here. Teachers are gods to kids. What teacher says goes from a very young age. So, educate the educators, and they can pass on the message. As those children grow, they can think back and say "Oh, I remember the story Miss O'Brien told me about that when I was in first class, I remember, so I know that's wrong". It needs to be part of our school ecosystem, desperately needs to be part of our school ecosystem.

Debates or conversations, we need to have conversations over issues of race and racism. There were never any conversations about different races or cultures, anything of that sort in my first secondary school. There were never any constructive debates until I went to my other secondary school in Dublin. I never was a part of a constructive debate or conversation. This is something that still hasn't changed. It's just a thing that isn't spoken about even now.

Ministers and TDs also need to take an active role. We need to have a government that represents Black people, one that is reflective of our multicultural society. Black children need to see themselves represented. Finally, white privilege, it needs to be understood by those who are the holders of that privilege.

Chrismina's story

My name is Chrismina*. Not Christina, Chrismina. People get it wrong all the time. I've actually had sent away for my very first passport and I got my passport back with Christina. It's the same in all my documents, for Chrismina, they got it wrong. The actual government presumes that it's wrong on my birth certificate, its wrong on my license.

I am a teacher by profession. I studied in Cork, in Xxx University. I did my undergraduate in English and History and then I did my Master's, my Professional Master of Education for two years. I did that in English and History as well. So, I'm a qualified English and History teacher. I left Ireland after finishing my studies and did my NQT (newly qualified teaching) year over here, in the UK. So, I've been teaching in the UK now. This is my third year.

My third year and I'm still teaching, I'm hanging in there. I feel like I went into education to make a difference. It's really important to me, like from my background, and everything, being an Irish Traveller. I thought, I wasn't treated the same as the other kids or given the same chances as everyone else. I felt like I was on the back foot. That made me struggle a lot, and then I was like, you know, what? I'll become a teacher. I'll make the changes that I want to see. I felt I did that in Ireland in terms of being the 1% of Travellers that go to university, and I am proud to be part of that. Education is a huge part of me, and like, every interview I've ever gone for, people say like it just shines out, I have a passion for it.

I moved to the UK because one, my partner moved over here and then another reason was I was struggling to find work in Ireland. I felt so much pressure that I've gone through university, I've been a role model for my community, what if I come out and I can't get a job? Everyone is looking up to me and seeing that and they'll be thinking, "we go to university then we won't actually get a job". That could stop people from my community from going to school. So, I felt, I had that pressure. You just feel so much pressure, because I fought back for so long against everyone to go to university, and then the fact that I could come out without a job was terrifying. So, I made the move to go to the UK.

It's really, really different over here. I've actually just started a new school. I've just changed schools, which is a big thing, because I was really nervous about starting over again. I'm really happy I made a move because my last school was really, really hard. I had bruised ribs. The kids were in the middle of a fight and like, I went in and broke them up and the kids actually started taking it out on me. That school was really bad. By the end of it though I felt like I would have stayed for the kids, but when you don't have supportive people behind you, like

staff, you just feel like you're on your own. It happened to me that I felt so isolated, but I think I've just always felt that from my background anyway, like there's something wrong with me. You always just feel like, what's wrong with me? Like I'm always the odd one out.

Environmental exclusion and second- class citizen/ignored and invisible

In terms of my schooling, I was treated terribly in Ireland, like right from primary school, from the get-go**.** *I was kind of treated as the odd child out in the classroom. Our classroom wasn't very diverse. There was maybe four or five Travellers throughout my year group in primary school and I was sat at the back with one of the girls that was special needs who had a TA, a teaching assistant.* I was given a colouring sheet and told to sit there quietly. As a result, for years, I've struggled to read and write.

Assumptions about intelligence, competence, or status

I'm an English teacher, but I still struggle with my spelling sometimes because I was at a disadvantage. I'm open with the kids that I teach now. When like, I get things wrong all the time I tell them, I'm still learning, life is a learning journey. So, I use what I can to kind of teach kids, but I do feel like my experience there has held me back. *I feel like because I'm a Traveller everyone thinks I'm always going to be behind them. I'm never good enough because from that young age the presumption was made that I am not capable.*

I was actually not just given different work from the others. I was also taken out of the room three or four times a week and put in a separate room. Again, I was given little baby books, like baby books that you would read to a little toddler and colouring sheets and told to stay where I am and do that work.

I used to get really upset because all my friends were not being taken out. I used to play sports with all the girls, all the popular girls we'd call them, and they obviously wouldn't be coming out because "they're really intelligent". I had to be taken out of the room and my mum hated that so she went to the school and said to the teachers, like "Chrismina is not coming out anymore", and they said to my mom, "if you do not let her come out of that room, we will not get funding and she cannot have her schoolbooks".

We couldn't afford the books. My dad has never worked, well he worked when I was a baby, but he broke his two legs. My mom works really, really hard. She always has, and she has always pushed us with school. University and my leaving cert was different but with school, she always made sure we were there and had everything we needed but she struggled to pay for our books.

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The school wanted us, kids from the Travelling community because they get funding, but they don't use that funding in the correct manner. I don't feel like we got a fair shot in the school. I don't think that funding was put to use in the way it should have been put. My mom was told "your child will not get her free books for school if she does not get taken out". So, they had to put it on like a system that I was being taken out for "extra support".

Second-class citizen (manifested via being excluded and receiving differential treatment)
I felt so isolated. *On top of that, I wasn't invited to kids' birthday parties either. I think that's what gets me most looking back, that hurts the most. I was the one that wasn't invited out of the whole class. Like you can imagine, little girls running in a primary school giving invitations, and I was the only one that was left out. I was treated differently.* I felt like people did respect me because I was sporting, I was playing hurling, and like, everyone knew me from that. I suppose I was kind of a little bit popular. Even with that, *you still don't get the invite*, and why don't you get the invite? I mean you're friends with the kids. I think that's where it's most challenging, that even though I was playing like with the kids, and we were on the same teams. I was still not good enough.

So, like growing up, I've always felt like an outsider, and I think it was reinforced consistently throughout my education. Those things happened in primary. Then I went on to secondary school where things escalated, *it kind of got a little bit more physical, where I'd be pushed and kicked and stuff by people.* I feel like I'm always going to have some things that happen. Like I've had my primary school issues, secondary school, same thing during my teacher training. Now that I'm in the professional world, I'm having the same issues.

Back to secondary, I didn't get to go to the same secondary school as everyone else. I went to the school that was maybe not for the smartest of kids. It was a Deis school that I went to. I think there was four of us out of the entire primary school that went to the Deis school, including me. The rest of them went to the Catholic school. I remember saying to my mom I really want to go with everyone, but it came down to my mom couldn't afford to buy the uniform. It was this kind of thing. We've always struggled, but my mum always did her best for us. It was hard because all my friends that I did have went off to another school, and that friendship kind of leaves then, doesn't it?

So, I ended up going to the Deis school, and to be honest, everyone that went to the school were kind of the rough crowd, or the wrong crowd, and that's who I started falling with. They smoked weed, they did drugs. I've never done it myself because I felt like my parents taught

me right from wrong, and I knew that in my culture, that that was not acceptable if I did that. So, I kind of had my head on my shoulders from my mom and dad.

On the flip side, looking back now I think, how lucky did I get? You know, even though I had an awful experience in school, I feel like I got really lucky going to that Deis school. When I walked in the door I would barely be reading and writing but because there was 12 of us in the entire group in first year, I was able to get that one-on-one support.

Environmental exclusion

I was the only person from the Travelling community in the group. I would say that there were maybe six of us, like half the class was white Irish. The other half of the class were from Slovakia, Brazil, and different countries. At that point, I used to think sometimes, I really don't feel like I'm one of the Irish kids in the room. I wasn't enough Irish to fit in with the group of Irish kids that would be in my classroom. I felt I aligned more with people from other countries. I could relate on a level with them. *They didn't fit in. I didn't fit in.*

They would get racially abused for the colour of their skin and I used to think, you can see their otherness. You can see it, it's out there. Whereas me, even though I am white, I was carrying mine within me and I felt like, would it be easier if it was also visible, just out there? Based on all the adversity that I have experienced due to my ethnicity, I went through so much that one might have said ah, I could blend in. I don't have to tell anyone that I'm a Traveller. Whereas I've never been like that. I'm always like, this is who I am, but that came with a price.

Second class citizen/ignored and invisible and Denial of the reality of racism/Dismissive of racism and failure to address incidents of racism

Being a Traveller meant that you were treated as lesser than. I remember there was an incident in the PE Hall. I was great friends with one girl in particular in my class and we'd been playing dodgeball in the hall. One of the boys kicked a football at us, and it ended up getting me in the face and he kicked this other girl into the stomach with the ball. At this stage, my mom didn't really get involved much in high school matters. I felt like she thought she helped me all the way through primary school, so her thing was "she'll be fine now". *Anyway, I reported it, and I said it numerous times to the teachers, but I feel like they just felt like, "Oh, she's a Traveller, nothing really happened at all, it'll be fine". Being a Traveller meant that I didn't matter as much so things got swept under the rug and were not dealt with.*

Now my friend's mum said, "that's enough, I've had enough of it", and she ended up coming into the school with her daughter and me. She said, "these two girls have been bullied by that

guy". *Now, this was the first time my friend had ever got bullied by this boy. It was usually just me,* but my friend was standing up for me as well. Her mum hated that *I used to get bullied for being a Traveller*, because her mum was very passionate about being inclusive. So, her mom came up and that boy, he got expelled from school. *I still feel to this day, something was done about it because someone from the settled community reported it, rather than the Travelling community. I strongly feel that, had my mum gone there, nothing would have been done that day. Whereas because her mom went into the school, and maybe admittedly her mom was probably a little bit more articulate than my mom would have been, they did something about it, and the boy was removed from school.*

 Second-class citizen - manifested via differential treatment

 I also had a business teacher who came in, and she wasn't actually part of the school, she came in as a substitute while our other teacher was off, and this was in my leaving cert now. So, this is an important year, and I was taking business as an exam. *Every single lesson, I would get shouted at, the minute I came in the door, "why you late"? and I could be walking in with four people. I would walk in with some of the other girls, we'd come in together, but I would get shouted at.* Then I'd sit down, and I'd get shouted at to sit in the other seat, and I'd be like, why? She'd just keep nagging and nagging. She would just keep shouting and shouting and shouting. She would constantly pick on me. I just felt like they brought in someone who was blatantly racist.The things that she said and things that she did.

So, it got to a stage where I started not going into the room. I was not going into her classroom. I said forget it. I can't actually do it. I mean, you have the pressure of the Leaving Cert. I had the pressure of trying to study this subject by myself because I could not be in a room with that woman. It all came to a head when my dad, now I love my dad, he never stepped foot in a school since the age of 12. He left school at 12. He had not been in a school since. He came up into the school and started shouting, demanding that I leave school, he's like you're not staying. I don't care if you have exams, you're not staying in the school anymore if this is the way you are treated. So, I think all of that really set my parents up for disappointment, because they were like, there's no way you can go to university if that's how you're treated. He wanted to pull me out of school, and I don't know where my life would have ended up if that happened but my English stepped in. She came into the room and like said to him "Dad she's here, she's okay". She said, "I will look out for her, and we will keep her separate from that teacher. We will not let her near her". That English teacher used to let me sit in her classroom and study by myself away from everyone else.

There was so much that went on. *I also had a lot of students like from primary school right up until I left secondary school making demeaning comments. I feel like even now, you're always gonna have people make comments. Like I was "the dirty stinking tinker, I was the smelly tinker", this kind of thing and like*, you kind of, I feel like I've grown a thick skin but looking back now I feel like maybe I wasn't as strong as I thought because I feel I am very sensitive and I am quite an emotional person now. Whereas before, I'd be like, swearing at people. I'd be like, whatever, and like, I'd be quite aggressive towards the comments, whereas now I feel sorry for people that make them. I kind of pity that narrow-mindedness.

Connecting via stereotypes

I felt like a few friends that I did have from primary school, once we got to secondary school, they started making like little comments about things. *Like "oh, when are you going to be on My Big Fat Gypsy wedding"? or "Are you going to have a big dress like that?". Like, "Are you getting married at 16"?* But they thought it was cool to have a friend that was a Traveller because they thought that Big Fat Gypsy Wedding was going to come and video me and they could be in it. You know, you're never seen as part of the crowd. I didn't have much, and I felt then being a Traveller, you kind of feel like, are they judging you? You never really know.

I always wondered If I'm around them, have I said something wrong that they have picked up the wrong way, or they're gonna judge me for? Like, I've always been very conscious of how I speak, how I dress, how I do my hair, what jewellery I wear. Because there's stereotypes attached with all of it. *I used to wear like gold stuff, like gold hoops. Little hoops, and they were like, "Oh, is that a Traveller thing?" and I'm like, no, it's a pair of gold hoops. I felt like I kind of really rebelled against all of it. I was like, that is a stereotype*. It's not culture. It's a stereotype, and I felt like a lot of people in my community have lived up to this stereotype.

Racial categorization and sameness

The stereotypes, always the stereotypes. Even those comments that friends would make about, "Oh, I'd love to be part of your wedding when you get married, which sounds lovely, but they were obviously applying a stereotype to me. It wasn't the students only, a teacher would make a lot of comments, like, "*does Chrismina leave school now?" and "is she getting married?"* she would ask other students these questions about me.

When I got to my junior cert, I was dropping out. I was gonna follow everyone else. *I was going to drop out because I had that pressure to live up to the standards that every Traveller girl lives up to. Even though I wasn't going down that path. The path of oh I want to get married*

young. I want to have kids. I want to move into a trailer. I wasn't thinking any of that. But I was just thinking, it's normal to live that way. That's what's expected of me, so I left school, but there was an intervention.

The thing about stereotypes is that we're all expected to be the same. I think that's what makes it hard then that if one person does something wrong, its associated with the whole group, but what's frustrating is if one person does something good, it's just that person. No one else. It's not applied to the whole group. Even now, I'll get people who will say I don't sound like a Traveller. I get that all the time; I don't sound like a Traveller. Which is something I'm really interested in is about dialect and stuff like but what does a Traveller actually sound like? and I'm like, what am I supposed to sound like?

Pathologizing minoritised people's culture and appearance and second -class citizen
 There was always a very real sense that Travellers and *Traveller culture was looked down upon. Like there was something wrong with being a Traveller, that we weren't as good as everybody else. We were lesser than.* Over and above the stereotypes, there would be negative references made to me regarding Traveller culture, like with horses and stuff. In some situations, I don't know if I maybe read into the comments too much.

Pathologizing minoritised people's culture or appearance- cultural disrespect and devaluation/invalidation through name based microaggressions
Even with my name, my name was definitely a big one. This teacher used to mispronounce my name every single time. Even though I would be assertive with my name. Yeah, like it's Chrismina and there's no shortening down or there's no Christina. It's Chrismina. I don't mind correcting people. Even though I would correct her all the time, she'd still get it wrong. Chrismina, like that's the name my family gave me, and I should be proud.

Assumptions about intelligence, competence, or status- manifested via low expectations
It wasn't only the mispronunciation of it. I feel like for years, right up until I probably left primary school, I used to spell my second name wrong. I was never told anything different, and I never knew anything different. Other kids would learn to spell theirs. Mine didn't matter. *I was a Traveller. It was probably a case of I wouldn't need it, that kind of thing, seeing that the assumption was that I wouldn't finish school anyway. The low expectations was definitely a big one. The standards that they had for us were non-existent.*

Impact of racism-racial microaggressions

Honestly, I feel like being part of the Travelling community, just in general, and the tragedies that we've experienced, has affected my mental health and it still does to this day. I'm very, very sensitive, a very soft person, and like a lot of things get me down. I think that just comes back to the feeling of never feeling good enough. Like that, it's been from a young age. Mental health is not something that's talked about in the Travelling community and like throughout my whole childhood, all my primary school years, and into my secondary school years, there was nothing but suicide in my family. Like a 15-year-old, a 24-year-old, two uncles, three uncles actually, like, there's been a lot, and that happened the last two years of primary school and the first two years of secondary school. So, in this space of four years, that all happened. I feel like all that I experienced in school impacted me a lot because that was going on. My parents thought 'they're kids, they don't know what's really going on'. So, I feel like my whole life I carried the pain of losing family, and seeing that happen over and over again, and being told by people, "oh go on and kill yourself, that's all your family are good for".

So, you get this thing happening all the time and then going through school and being treated like that. I've never felt good enough. I've never felt like I fit in, and still to this day. If I do something wrong, or I feel like a lesson hasn't gone well, I feel like my mental health like spirals down because it brings me back to those feelings. Don't feel good enough, or don't feel like I fit in. I'm looking at the head teacher I have at the moment, who is lovely. I said to him, the first week he like sat down with me and was checking in and I said I feel like I have impostor syndrome. Like, I shouldn't be here. Like someone should come along, tap me on the shoulder and tell me, you're in the wrong building and that's how I feel I'm gonna go through life for the rest of my life. That's quite sad because everything I was subjected to in school affected my mental health to the point now, where I'm living with impostor syndrome. I'm almost too afraid to ever be too happy because I feel like it'll just be taken away just like that.

Recommendations for transformative action

Be that one teacher. That time I had decided I wasn't going to go back to school, my mom and dad were like, "Fine, do what you want". There was no kind of like, oh we'll stop you. They were fine with that, but it was a teacher in school, my English teacher, actually, which is why I became a teacher. She intervened. She came to our house and knocked on my front door and said, "You're coming up to school".

She went out of her way. She came down to my house because I lived right behind school. It was quite close. She came down and she said, "You're coming back to school". She didn't have

to do that. So, I feel like my English teacher was the one that saved me. We need more teachers like that English teacher. There were other teachers as well, teachers that told me "Yeah, you can do it, we believe in you, let's do it, we'll help you," and I got my Leaving Cert.

That same teacher that came down into my house, she gave me a card on the day of my English exam, saying how proud she was of me and everything. It's amazing that I had that experience of a teacher like that during my Leaving Cert. Of Course, everything wasn't roses in the garden. But it was this kind of encouragement and praise that I needed because I feel like I didn't get told by my parents that they were proud of me. I didn't like… up until I'd left home. I don't feel like my mom told me that "I love you". I don't feel like I heard those words very often. I sometimes think that was because she was too busy providing for the family. Sometimes I look back now, and I can see that, but at the time, you don't think of all these things when you're that age. So, I feel really lucky that I had some teachers that kind of stepped in and, like, took me under their wing and took care of me.

I think building positive relationships with students is so important. We need to get in there. We need to recognise every single kid that comes into that room for the individual that they are, that starts with addressing them by their name, their correct them. I've always said, if I'm pronouncing your name wrong, please, please tell me because I do not want to offend anyone, and I don't want to be getting the kids name wrong. So, I think we start with that, make sure we're getting their name right, and make sure we don't shy away from calling on that kid because I've seen it.

I find I've seen that a few times. I like to, when I have a free class, I like to kind of walk around and see the kids and let them see my face. I've noticed that a few times, teachers won't call on kids that have names that are different or that are difficult to pronounce. Those kids, they don't get called on as often as the other students with more Anglicised names in the classroom, because their names are difficult to pronounce. So, the effort that it will take to learn the names and pronounce them correctly it's just too much for teachers. So, the easy thing to do is avoid it. Avoid them. Or just don't bother to learn to pronounce a name correctly. There's one particular girl who I've noticed that teachers call her different versions of her name, and that's not right. I think we need to know more about building those relationships; those positive relationships are so important to keeping that kid in school.

I also think it's about people changing their perspective as well, being more open minded. When you see me, what makes you think the next Traveller that comes along won't be like me, or

won't be a criminal? We need to be more mindful with the people that we meet, we need to take each individual as just that, an individual. In the school that I'm in at the moment, they have a lovely motto, which is count by ones, count each person as an individual. I feel like people need to take that up. We need to get to know people on a different level and on personal levels.

That's why I love meeting people, because when I get to talk to people, I'm quite bubbly and I think I'm quite charismatic. When I meet people and they find out that I am a Traveller, people are like 'No way'. What I want is to get rid of that shock factor. I don't want people to be shocked, because we actually are a lovely group of people. We probably are one of the friendliest groups of people. It's just because people think these negative ideas and there's negative notions around the Travelling community, that is the problem, and I think we need to do something about it. We can do something, and it starts with schools. It starts with the parents.

I think I'll never get over not being invited to the birthday parties. The thing is, when you look at kids, you know, innocent little kids, they don't know anything but what we teach them. I mean, the kids don't write the invites, do they? Some of those kids, they were the ones that called me names and stuff. Kids don't know what a smelly tinker is or what a smelly knacker is. They don't know what they mean. They're obviously hearing them from somewhere. I've learned that these kids have been taught that. Kids don't see differences between each other unless they are taught it, and I think that's where it all comes back to educating people.

In the schools, we need to maintain engagement throughout lessons. I feel like we were very much like, taught each subject in a silo. There was a subject called CSPE, I'm not even sure what that is anymore, and I believe we learnt about the world in there. Racism might have come up as a topic or two in there, but I don't think that's enough. Over here, we have lessons that are called life lessons, where everything from religion to the justice system, to business, racism, are covered over a full term. So last year, I taught life, and I taught racism for a full term. They were taught about the different levels of it; they were taught about discrimination. They were taught about Gypsy, the Traveller, the Roma communities, we went into detail on them.

And it wasn't pressure that they needed to have books and they needed to have all of this writing. It was facilitating those conversations, and it was just a beautiful lesson that I got to teach. I got to see these kids realise that some of the things they say are not appropriate, some

of the things they do are not appropriate. So, I think having something like that would be really good to make sure those conversations are being had in schools.

In my time in secondary school, I don't feel like there was a lot of conversations around Traveller culture or race and racism. Outside of one conversation we had in English class, I couldn't tell you one incident. I never even saw a picture of Travellers or Traveller culture. Racism never became a topic of any conversation really like in classrooms with teachers. It just, it wasn't talked about. I think sometimes teachers might feel uncomfortable about having those conversations, which it can be uncomfortable if you have kids there that can be quite defensive about it. I feel like as teachers, it's our job to create a diverse, inclusive and welcoming environment, we're there to create that. So, we need to be having those difficult conversations, those uncomfortable conversations, and challenging it. So that each and every kid in that room is counted as an individual, and they feel recognised, and they feel like their teacher is standing in their corner.

I feel like a lot of teachers shy away from that conversation and to be honest, as a Traveller mentor, I found a lot of those conversations were put on to me. Like in the school, teachers will come to me and be like, "Can you talk about this"? can you do this? And I was like, I can do that, but now I feel like. No, that's part of your job. You should be doing that, you should be having those conversations, no matter how uncomfortable they are. I had a really interesting conversation with a guy that works in my school, who is Nigerian, and he's a music teacher. He kind of said, like, he sometimes feels like the burden of Black History Month is put on him. I used to feel like that in Ireland. The burden is put on us, but it's not our burden to carry that. Black History Month should be put on the history teachers; it shouldn't be put on us just because of our ethnicity. Maybe we don't want to do that.

Curricular representation is another important thing, something that I was very passionate about before I left Ireland. I was involved in some conversations about the history curriculum, about getting Traveller history its own section in that history book. Why is it not there? We recognise everyone else. Well, I'm not sure about everyone else's history, but we recognise alot of history. We can cover America, and we can cover World War Two, and we can cover the likes of Hitler and Mussolini. But why aren't we covering the people that have been in our country the longest, people that have been here, that are sitting in front of you? Why aren't they recognised?

Because if Travellers are not seeing Travellers teaching them, if they're not going to the doctor and seeing them in the doctor's surgery, they're not going to hospitals and seeing them there, if

they're not seeing it in the police force, where are they supposed to see themselves represented? Who are they supposed to look up to? It starts with what we're looking at in front of us in those books. We need to see ourselves represented. We need to be recognised. We are an ethnic group, yet most people just shove it under the rug. "You have your ethnic, ethnicity status. Go away". Why should we go away?

They say, "you have your status, shut up now". That's the attitude of people. But no, that's not what we want. We want there to be 10, 20, 30% of us in third level education. We want to see ourselves in professional careers. We want to have people that our young people can look up to, we want to see ourselves recognised. I think that's a huge thing that we need to push for more and that the Traveller community really needs to start getting onto because I feel like a lot of Travellers are shying away from it, and we can't. A lot of us have gone through the system now; we need to keep pushing to get more in there. The more people we see and the more acceptance we get, I feel like that will slowly diminish. I think until I see more people like myself, I'm gonna feel like an impostor because you feel like the only one out there. It can be a very lonely place.

Finally, then I think, finding more opportunities for kids to mix in school because in schools usually, those group of kids that are outside the dominant group stick together, because they don't talk to anyone else, since no one else will talk to them. So, I think projects, more projects where kids have to work together.

Ayanna's story

My name is Ayanna*. I'm 24. I am Jamaican Irish or Jam Irish. I currently work as a diversity inclusion officer at Xxxx, and I also kind of work freelance as a journalist with a local newspaper. I describe myself as an activist as well, I'm intersectional, kind of different groups, so like LGBT, anti- racism, disability awareness, Palestine, and stuff like that. I find sometimes you can't have an opinion on racism or talk about your real-life experience online or in a newspaper, without somebody denying your experience or sending you abuse. As an activist, who campaigns on issues such as racism, Palestine, and ending direct provision, I also find I cannot escape racist abuse both in person and online.

Exclusion and isolation, not accepted by relatives because of parents' interracial relationship
I am adopted, my real mum was white, Irish. My dad, who I have never met, was Black. My biological mother couldn't take care of me since she was involved in drugs, so social workers came in. I was adopted by another Jamaican and Irish couple. My biological mum died when I was just three years old, which is something I still cry about. I never really got to meet her because I was a baby. My Jamaican dad was essentially bullied out of the family, and his requests to stop my adoption were ignored. *My biological mum's siblings did not like the fact that I was Black and even warned my adopted parents of my race*, even though they are an interracial couple.

Environmental exclusion (primary school) and pathologizing minortised peoples culture and appearance
Once I had been adopted, I moved to Xxxx, where I was essentially the only Black student in the primary school there for a couple years. I got stared at and people questioned my afro hair and big lips, and as I got older, I was even asked did I pump my lips, as people were just not used to people of my race and people with my facial features. In secondary school, *there were always racist jokes made at all the Black students,* and when I started working, I faced a lot of micro-aggressive racism.

Pathologizing of identity or experiences (interracial relationships and children of mixed ancestry are wrong and abnormal)
Once I worked as a caterer and kitchen assistant in a business in Xxxx, I was employed through an agency and was working in a different place each week. In this one premises, a fellow employee said to me, "*You're a mongrel*", *and started asking me if my dad had a mistress and was my mum Black?*

Environmental exclusion (post-primary)

Zoning in on my post-primary experience, I did my secondary schooling at Xxxx Grammar School for the first four years, and then for my Leaving Cert, I went to the Institute of Education in Xxxx and did the remaining two years there. The grammar school was a private school that my mum wanted me to go to. I didn't really want to go to the private school, because I heard bad things about it, I kinda had no choice in the matter. *We were in a classroom where 95% of them were white and, there was only like four, yeah, four or five of us were Black or like students of colour. Like, I just remember when I first came, it was just me, this girl named Sxxxx, Rxxxx and Jxxx. We were the only Black people there, and then somebody else moved to the school, but then they moved back out. I'm not sure why…. yeah, so in my year, only four Black people.*

Denial of the reality of racism/Dismissive of racism and failure to address incidents of racism

As a whole, I hated my experience there. Well, like I got along with some of the teachers, but when it came to actually trying to complain to the teachers about bullying, just bullying in general, and then there also was some racist elements as well, they did nothing. The teachers, the head, sorry I forget the actual position, but the ones that deal with bullying complaints… *uhm did absolutely nothing and said, "get on with your day", "just ignore it",* like how could we ignore it if uhm… if the school is saying, if there's bullying report it and like I remember our school had a mandatory anti-bullying week that all schools had to kinda like participate and they'd be talking about this and in my head, *I was like, such hypocrites because every time I reported something even worse than the racism incidents they were just ignored and I felt like what's the point?*

Instead of addressing the issues, the authorities victim blamed me and made my experience really bad in school. It was just a horrible experience. So, it wasn't just the students making my life bad, it was also the fact that I had no teachers in the school to support me, the teachers wanted to wash their hands of it. They said I should get off Facebook and not be on Facebook then I won't get bullied, but that wasn't the case.. seeing as I was not being bullied on Facebook. It was a group chat where this was happening, you know that was talking about me and other students. Like the bullying happened throughout my whole four years, but it became worse when I was doing my junior certificate. I know the junior cert isn't as important, but I really wanted to get good grades in that junior cert but all the bullying that happened… really affected me but luckily, I did do okay in junior cert, but it was really hard because I couldn't really study properly throughout the whole year.

They bullied me and then I moved to the Institute in Dublin. After I had left, I'd meet a couple of people in Tesco's and they were saying "when you left, they started bullying Cxxx" and Cxxx happens to be Guatemalan, she also was a person of colour, so when I left, they bullied another person of colour. I'm not sure if it was racially motivated or the fact that Carla happens to be a quiet person, a very shy person, *but they went from bullying one person of colour to another.* The boys were a menace when it came to being in the classroom, *making racist jokes and playing with people's hair,* and then yeah, the bullying, the bullying in general, even if it's not racially motivated, it always happened.

Pathologizing minoritsed people's culture and appearance

So, I uhhh like obviously, *my hair was a big problem, I started hating myself …. hating who, what I looked like, and because of all the bullying, the insults, I used to have to ask my parents to please do something to straighten my hair*. I remember one time I actually… went out and bought clip-in extensions, I had to get somebody to put them in because I just hated myself.

I have my hair relaxed (straightened) now but *I used to have very fuzzy afro-type hair and I used to wear that into school and people would be laughing at my hair and then when I used to have braids in as well people would be laughing and they laughed at other Black students...* the other Black students, the braids used to fall out of their heads cause their hair was so short compared to mine, it would easily fall out and people would be taking the hair and uh you know throwing it across the classroom and just embarrassing the girl or the woman, she's a woman now…yeah like just embarrassing her like because her hair fell out, like it was no fault of her own. Her hair was short and couldn't hold the braid and so there's no need to embarrass her.

Exoticization via hair and skin

I know myself when I try to tell people that touching my hair is a form of micro aggressive racism or you know *if they're tanned and they're telling me "Ayanna I'm just as dark as you"* … I'm also saying that's micro aggressive racism what you just said there, and people don't take it serious because they think racism is just saying the N word or stuff like that, that's what they think racism is, they don't think about the other 'small' things as well. Uhm, so yeah, it's like people don't take it seriously, especially secondary school children... *when you're trying to explain to them that when you touch my hair without permission that was micro aggressive behaviour, they're like "no, I just touched your hair, like how is that racism"? And stuff like that... they're very dismissive.*

I think other microaggression is definitely from teenage girls, as I think a lot of people don't realise tanning yourself to the point where you're almost as dark as somebody Black, you shouldn't be doing that, it's also a health risk but uhm a lot of people I know have been tanning themselves… but they're also pumping their lips. I remember telling somebody, one of my peers in college that I don't like the fact that right now pumping lips is a fashion trend because when I was in school, primary and secondary school a lot of people slagged me for having big lips, because I had the biggest lips in the classroom at the time, before other Black students started coming in and I used to get insulted, they used to insult me a lot and now it's just a fashion trend….uhm pumped up lips and I find that, I myself, I feel like that's a form of microaggression as well because how could Black people who have those features naturally be insulted for all these years and now it's a fashion trend?

Racial categorisation and sameness
Over and above the slagging around my appearance, a lot of the boys in school would make remarks….uhm about not just me, but all the Black students in the school. They used to make racist jokes, like micro aggressive jokes… uhm that they would see online, and they thought it was okay to repeat in the classroom. *For example, there was the joke about uhm…. chicken, like how Black people love chicken…uhh it's a stereotype but they would always be like…. "oh chuck chuck chuck" and they would be making like jokes saying uhhhh…… "you love chicken"* **…** one person did report that to the school, and the school did nothing about it. *I remember like in school a lot of people they listened to the stereotypes of different nationalities for example, if you're from an Asian background, you must be good at Maths, if you're from an African or Caribbean background, then you must be good at sports.*

Not a true citizen, assumption of a monoracial identity, denial of multiracial reality, and experiences
I also had an identity crisis as well uhm because when I used to introduce myself saying I'm Jamaican and Irish, for some reason white people in my class wouldn't believe me when I said I'm half Jamaican because people just regard Jamaica as this popular country like there's no way someone from Ireland could be from there because we're such a small community, like there's not many Jamaicans here. I'd say there's less than 1000 living in Ireland, like obviously there's more living in the UK. *They'd also doubt that I'm Irish, so obviously I'm a person of colour and they were like "no you're not, there's no way you're Irish, there's no way you're Jamaican" so I had this total identity crisis like how I identify myself when nobody believes me.*

Effects of experiencing racism-racial microaggressions

The experiences I have shared really affected me. They affected my mental health and my studies in a big way. Then obviously the bullying, like everything, everything, even the incidents that were not racially motivated, caused me to move school to Dublin. I didn't go to that school in Dublin because of them promising a good Leaving cert, it was because they promised that they would actually deal with bullying and I was told that everyone in the institute makes friends so I ..so that's the reason why I left, mostly because I wanted to have a good social experience before I left secondary school forever and I did have a good experience in the other school so uhm yeah.

Recommendations for transformative action

Every school has to do mandatory bullying awareness week because bullying happens everywhere, whether it's racially motivated, it's still bullying, and it's in every school. I don't think anyone can go through secondary school without witnessing or experiencing bullying themselves. Now that we're in the age of the internet and people are making memes about like people's misfortune, it's gone from being in the classroom to continuing online and like people…. I feel like sometimes teachers find it hard to tell people that when you do things like this, it's offensive, especially when you are talking about stuff that's racially microaggressive.

I feel like they should have lessons in school where racism is spoken about. Whether that is relying on anti-racism organisations or just doing the lessons themselves in school as part of that anti-bullying initiative... but you know schools shouldn't be afraid to talk about racism uhmmm and other things like homophobia as well because you know in secondary school, you're more likely to experience some sort of stuff. Like people are finding out who they are and stuff like that, so there definitely needs to be a whole new lesson revamp that's disability, LGBT-friendly, anti-racism-friendly, like it needs to be taught to students and to staff.

Also, there needs to be some sort of accountability. I'm not asking people to suspend and expel people, but some accountability, like when a racist incident takes place, taking the respective student/s out of the classroom and saying, "hey what you did was racism and we do not tolerate racism in this school" and just give them like a few warnings…like "if you do this again or a third time there will be consequences, there will be maybe contacting your parents and stuff like that". Obviously, I'm not trying to be that type of person who is a punisher, but there needs to be some kind of accountability because If you let them get away with it, students feel like, or realise that oh I can be just as racist as I want because our teacher is not going to do anything about it, so students need to be held accountable.

I also think every single teacher, lecturer, before they start teaching, should go for mandatory anti-racism microaggression training, then they will know what to do, they will know when to spot it…. For example, I feel like when you are in a diverse classroom people are going to tend to ask where you're from, if like for example if you're from a Nigerian family and you say, "oh I'm Irish because I've lived, I was born in Ireland, I've never even visited Nigeria in my life". A lot of the children are going to say, "You're not white like me, so how are you Irish"? I've seen it in my adult life; children and teenagers do it as well. I think sometimes teachers also encourage that……. every classroom activity is like "say your name, where you're from" and then I feel like teachers then also ask "but like where are you really from, where are your parents from"? They shouldn't be doing that; it shouldn't happen. If a student doesn't give an answer to that question that a teacher expects, they should just accept that instead of digging and probing.

Cillian's story

My name is Cillian*. I'm a 33-year-old male. I am an Irish Traveller. I have an undergraduate degree in Sociology and History, and a Postgraduate degree in Professional Master of Education. There is a bit of intersectionality in terms of my education because I did take a traditional path into third-level education as an undergraduate, but as a postgraduate, there was a 10-year gap between my undergraduate degree and the postgraduate degree. So, I did kind of experience life as a mature student, so to speak.

I have worked in education as a secondary school teacher. That was some experience. I love the classroom, but I think most teachers will tell you, most teachers who take teaching kind of as a vocational thing will tell you they love the classroom. I think, though, as a Minority, I found the staff room a very hostile place, a hostile environment, going in there even as a fully qualified teacher. I know five qualified Traveller teachers, and not one of them are working in teaching capacities right now. I'm very much a grown adult and was made to feel uncomfortable at times by the teaching staff, my colleagues. I often wonder how students from Minority backgrounds where there's a power dynamic element in place must feel.

A group of Traveller teachers, me included, were once invited to a meeting with the Department of Education. One of the Traveller teachers said, "you have to remember that even as teachers when we step into the classroom, or we step into a school, we're stepping out of our world and into yours". That's something that has stuck with me from the meeting because I finally found the words, found a name for something I have been feeling for ages, my entire educational life.

Environmental Exclusion

My secondary school was, I don't want to name it, *because just not very many people with my background would go there.* It's very white, very middle class, very Catholic. *When I attended there, I think I was only the second or third ever Traveller to have attended the school. There was one a year ahead of me, and it was two the year I went in. We never learnt or spoke about the Travelling community in class.* It's hard to give an overall picture of my experience because it was like very Jekyll and Hyde. You know, the good points of it were very good. The bad points were very bad, I suppose. It's kind of reflective in my choices for Leaving Cert subjects. I didn't necessarily choose subjects I was interested in. I more or less chose subjects where I got on with the teachers more.

Second class citizen (messages of being devalued and unwanted) differential treatment on account of ethnicity.

So, you know, you had staff who were very supportive and very, very good. I do want to say that, put on record that at that school, there were some amazing teachers there at the time. *Then you also had staff who, as soon as they kind of figured out what your background was, were just not interested. You know, and they weren't very, they weren't very coy about hiding that either. They were very, very open about their disdain for who you are. Not who you are as a person, but who they perceive you to be as a person.*

In terms of being treated differently on account of my ethnicity, for certain, I was. I've pretty much had that confirmed to me at times by certain staff. I have two or three memories of that. I remember starting French in second year and a teacher you know; she was big into social status and whatnot. So, she just comes in asking this person who they were and who they weren't and all that stuff…she gets to me and is like, "what's the name? McCarthy*? Oh, are you related to McCarthy's", which is a drapery shop in the town. I said no. Very well. "Are you related to such and such"? No. *Then it dawned on her, I was a Traveller. I remember to this day, I remember the change in her face, like the look of disgust. An actual look of disgust just flashed across her face for a moment,* and I've always asked myself, did I imagine that? But if I imagined that, why is it so salient, to be burned into my memory years and years later, you know.

I'm not a paranoid person; I'm not someone who holds grudges. So why is this memory so burned into me? If I imagined it? That look of disgust on that teacher's face once she figured out that, oh, he's a knacker, there was nothing violent about it. *There was nothing explicit about it. But it's that implicit, "you are not welcome here". "This is not your space". Do you know what I mean? It's kind of like, you know, you're this...... "you don't belong here".*

Then there'd be certain classes where you'd just be thrown outside the door at the slightest infringement, including getting questions wrong. Apparently, getting questions wrong meant I put no work in or made no effort. When in reality, I had made a mistake. Obviously, this just led to a case of like, it didn't matter what I did, I'm getting in trouble anyway. So, you kind of upped your behaviour level with that. D'you know?

I also remember being told frankly, at the end of first year by my teacher, that in the choice subjects *"you're not wanted in this class next year, don't take it"*. Despite your scores. My scores were above average in that class. That was technical graphics. Actually, I was averaging

well above 75% on all the tests, but I was getting marked down for the most stupidest of reasons. Like on one point, and this is actually something that sticks out to me, but I was told I got marked down because there was snot on my paper, which wasn't true. How ridiculous is that? I mean, I'm not an animal, but yeah, *I was pretty much told not to take that class next year because I wasn't wanted.* To firm up the point, another member of that teaching department came up to me one day and said, *"I know all about you, blah, blah, you're not wanted... you're dropping technical graphics*".

In terms of my relationship with the other pupils, again it's a funny one. It was hit and miss. There's always going to be hit and miss when it comes to massive social groups. I would say that in some ways I'm thankful in terms of my three best friends that I met in that school all the years back then. They'd be my closest friends, you know, if I'm getting married next year, those three lads are going to be my three groomsmen. On the flip side of that, going back to first year again, I always remember this very, very clearly. *I was called a knacker on more than one occasion by different kids.* Sorry, I shouldn't use the word. I'm trying to reclaim the word in a way. It's like the Black Americans did in America, they took the word n***** and they sort of like, you know, reclaimed it.

I remember one lad, funny thing actually was I played football with him and *GAA outside the school when we were in primary and all of that, he called me knacker and I reported it, and nothing was done.* So, it leads to this situation. *Another kid who I hadn't known from primary school, just kept saying it almost to a point where I was bullied... knacker this, knacker that.* I reported it of course to my class teacher initially, but it continued, reported to my year head, it continued. Reported it to my year head again, it continued, reported it to my year head a third time, it continued, until it eventually led to a physical altercation.

Denial of the reality of racism/Dismissive of racism and failure to address incidents of racism
At that point, I was dragged out of class, given out to and I turned around and said to my year head, I said, *I'm tired of putting up with these racist comments, being called a knacker*. *Now, I'm obviously paraphrasing, because it was a long time ago, but I still remember the words that were said back to me, "they're not racist comments, they're discriminatory".* Now, 13-year-old me couldn't have challenged stuff. Whereas if that had to happen tomorrow, I could say what's the difference? I remember it as clear as day, it's funny how these memories like years later, still stay in your head. There are other really, really subtle incidents that I can't think of at the top of my head right now because I've been out of school for quite a while now. But, they're there, I remember the feeling of them.

With the student body, things did improve in certain ways, because you do fall into cliques and groups, and then you don't socialize with people that you don't have to socialize with. You'd have issues, and how much of that was down to your ethnicity or not, can't be said. There were times when you did feel you had suspicions that there were racially motivated reasons behind it, and there was times where it was just a case of people not getting on, just personality differences.

Impact of experiencing racism- racial microaggressions.

These things stay with you forever. My most salient memory is actually from primary school. I do remember, like, in first class, and I'm just seven years of age or whatever. I remember, you'd have birthday parties or whatever, and invites would go out, and I do remember one class. The child brings in the invites, and the invites get handed out to every member of the class, and then only one person was left out. Me. Now, I don't hold any ill will for them, but it's just, you know, the invite goes to every single member of the class, and you're left out. Obviously, as a seven-year-old, you don't have words for that kind of racially motivated incident, but years later, you do. It sticks in your stomach, and you hate it. Again, it's that implicit message that you're an outsider, you don't belong, you're not wanted. Even that incident with the teacher and the look of disgust on her face when she figured out I was a Traveller.

Even to this day, like, you know, I have an honours degree at undergraduate level, I have a first-class honours degree, a first-class master's degree, and a first-class honours master's degree, and yet I always feel impostor syndrome. I always feel the need that I have to prove myself more than staff members who are from the settled community, or the white settled community. I do have a bit of a chip on my shoulder. I always feel like I can never say no. When someone puts work on me, I can never turn and say no, that's outside my role. I always just kind of, I'll take everything on myself. I feel like I'll prove myself to my detriment at times because I'm so antipathic to asking for help, even when help is required.

I never feel like I'm good enough. Even though you know, I can acknowledge I have achieved, but I never really feel they're my achievements. I always feel like a fraud. You know always questioning how genuine those achievements are. I always feel nervous. Anxiety is a big thing, social anxiety in certain situations. I'm not necessarily socially anxious; it's more a professional anxiety, as opposed to a social anxiety. I never feel confident in my work. That otherness has imprinted itself on me in a way.

It's the implicit things. They create hostile environments. They send subliminal messages to Minorities or people of colour. They create mental anguish and feelings of anxiety. The thing is that they're very, very hard to pin down. I much prefer someone who is outwardly prejudiced or outwardly hateful towards my community, my ethnicity, than someone who hides behind perfunctory politeness. Microaggressions are far more damaging than explicit discrimination or explicit racism. When an offence is explicit, you can call it out, you can name it, whereas microaggressions make you second-guess yourself and essentially question your mental status. So yeah, like, absolutely, has it impacted? Has it led to mental health problems? Yes. Let's just say it's led to very serious mental health problems sometimes in the past.

Coping mechanisms

What helped me to cope was those few friends that I made.

Recommendations for transformative action

Just be that one good teacher. I remember being kicked out of a class, and this teacher walking past and telling me straight, "Cillian, you're out of class, what did you do this time?" When I told her, she said, "That's it."? She just goes to me, "Cillian, you're very good at history. Really good. Probably one of the best students I've ever had". This is not a woman who gives out praise very, very lightly, and so it's actually a proud moment for me as well. I suppose that burning into your memory works for the positive things too. What she said next is really what sticks with me. She said, "They talk about you in the staff room, don't give them ammunition". I think what she was trying to say here is that you're a good student, you're capable, but there's people in that staffroom who are just looking for any issues to get rid of you or to oust you, to ostracize you. Now, I'm putting meaning into her words there, but that's the meaning I took from what she said.

Another time, I'd lost my history book, and this same teacher stopped me outside class again. "What's the issue here? what's going on"? I said, Look miss, I can't find it I'm sorry, you know, because it was a renting book system. I told her about the situation at home. My father was out of work. There had been a grant for older students in place, and my mother had returned to adult education. This teacher just produced an older copy of the book, gives it to me, and says, "Whatever you do, do not lose that one". You know, it's just an act of kindness. It's just an act which furthers my loyalty to her and made me more determined to do well in her class, you know. It wasn't charity. It wasn't me being made a pet project or anything like that; I never got that vibe. She just wanted to treat me human. I think that she was disgusted by some of the behaviour that she had witnessed from other staff members towards Travellers in the school. I

do know from years later that she was actually one of the biggest advocates for trying to diversify the student body within the school.

Her attitude towards me was in stark contrast to my Accounting teacher for example. This accountancy teacher was very much a rote learning kind of teacher and wanted to start in the exam papers pretty much from the first week of the semester of fifth year. So, we had to get exam papers. It was a tenner frankly, but we just didn't have it, there wasn't spare at the time. We just couldn't afford it, and this teacher just constantly embarrassed me. In front of the class, this was never an issue that was taken outside of the class. This was constantly in front of the class and just embarrassment, dragging you over the coals in front of all your peers and classmates, and just making an absolute show of you. So, I started acting up obviously, and it was decided after about four or five weeks, it'll be best for me to move out of that class, and I completely agreed with that decision.

The other thing is that teachers need to be open to being called out and open to reflecting on their actions and improving. No-one is perfect. Even I have performed microaggressions on students without being aware of it. I've had a situation where I had a Black kid in my class and messed up with the name, and you know, the kid got upset. So, I call them over after the class, and the first thing I said to him was you're not in trouble. I understand why you're angry, and I'm sorry. You're perfectly within your rights to get angry.

That's actually another thing that drives me up the ****** wall. The stereotype of the angry Black and it's used against every Minority. You know, what? Anger is allowed. It's a perfectly natural human emotion, particularly when you feel victimised. When I apologized to the student, their anger dissipated straightaway. I don't think they expected that. They expected that they were in trouble because they reacted, and I just said, No, you're not. It wasn't even a disarming tactic. It was actually just genuinely trying to understand. But it's something that I had to improve on. As teachers, we need to be able to say, "look, I'm sorry, I was the one in the wrong there. I made a mistake".

In many cases, this does not happen. Instead, teachers weaponize microaggressions to cause disciplinary issues and turn around and say it's the kids that are out of control. Fresh in my mind is just stuff from my time in the staff room, stuff I've heard about Traveller kids, stuff I've heard about Black kids. Stuff like "they play the race card, they play the Traveller card, they play the discrimination card". It's like, no, that's just a cop out from you to not challenge yourself as to what you're doing wrong. That's what that is. That's a chance for you to improve

yourself; to be reflective and you are refusing it, because you are laying the blame at the feet of a child. We're the adults in the room, and we should act like it.

Scott's story

My name is Scott*, I am an artist, I work as an actor. I do screen, sort of Film TV, a bit of stage acting as well. Then my job is, I'm a theatre producer, as well. So, it's all very artistic. I was born in Manchester. I'm biracial or 'half-caste' as some would say. My mom is Irish, white. My dad is Black, Nigerian. In school, there would be comments about that, comments about my Mum liking Black men. Anyway, they met while they were studying in Manchester and then moved to Ireland when I was about two.

Being biracial, it's a very profound feeling of not belonging anywhere. I don't belong anywhere. My home is on the move, almost, my home is between cultures, and amongst many different things. Part of what home and belonging is to me, is the acceptance that I will never belong anywhere. Whatever that bit of humanity is that people get from having somewhere that is their own, I have just come to understand that I won't necessarily have that outside of the family unit that I've got, or whenever I eventually have a family of my own. It's something so familiar that you stop being sad or upset about it, because it's a double-edged sword. On one side, you don't feel tethered to anything, so it can be quite freeing. On the other side of things, you feel like the bird with nowhere to land particularly flittering and fluttering between places.

I remember, I had just started secondary school, when I was around 14, my grandmother (a very staunch white Irish Catholic lady), who's like my second mother, wasn't well. She was on her deathbed in hospital at the time. She was in there with another seriously ill lady who was in her 90s, called Mxxx. I still remember her name. She was very, very old-fashioned; she was like a living history book. When I would go in and visit my granny, sometimes I'd go in and visit Mxxx, she'd give me chocolate and stuff and she was quite nice to me but one thing Mum said was not to make her aware that I was her son because that could be quite shocking for a sick old woman.

Multiracial exoticization

One of the things that Mxxx said that sticks with me till this day, it was so politically incorrect, but lovely. She said, *"looking at you, you're neither one or the other and you're beautiful, there should be more"*. I've learnt to just embrace my identity and find the things that I love in my skin colour because if other people can't find them, then I've got to find them for myself. That's the main feelings about it, I guess.

Not a true citizen

My first employment was like on farms, like south of the countryside. So, it was dealing with interior secluded Irish farmers. I helped out with like TB testing to make sure that there's no spread of tuberculosis between cattle herds and all that kind of thing. Each farmer, there isn't one that didn't have something to say when he saw me. The thing is, they were friendly. So, one of them said, when I arrived on his farm, he said, *"Geez, boy, you look like you from a queer warmer place. Where you're from?" I was like, you'd never believe me if I told you.* So, I'll just tell you somewhere different, and I said I'm from Timbuktu.

Environmental exclusion

Back to secondary, I did my secondary schooling at a Catholic school in the countryside. *The number of students was about four hundred and eighty, something like that. All to that, there was me as the only kid with any African descent.* I thought that was normal up until I moved away in my later teenage years. I thought that was normal. A lot of those teachers in the school who were part of the parish and stuff were, I think if it was nowadays, we would just call them closet racists to be fair. *Do you know, interestingly, in school, nothing was ever taught about Black people. There was nothing to celebrate them, there was not one achievement. I don't think we ever studied a single person or got examples from a single person who was Black,* so as far as I was made aware growing up, Black people were athletes and rappers and stuff.

Secondary school for me was like prison, to be honest, I just did my time, some subjects stuck out to me. I had some good friends that I'm still friends with now. But only a few really, generally, school isn't something I liked at all. I just couldn't wait for it to be over. That's generally my feeling towards it. It always was just ratty from the first day I went to school. I was kind of like, I can't wait for this to be over. So, honestly it didn't feel too far different from a prison sentence. Every day I still wake up and I see students and stuff and I'm like wouldn't that be terrible? Imagine if they put me back there? I just honestly couldn't wait to get out of there every day. I hated it. I couldn't stand the teachers, nor the people, nor what was being taught, the uniform, how you had to get there every day asking to go to the toilet, all of it. All of it was just no.

It felt like you were walking on eggshells whenever you had discourse with anyone. So normally, whenever I had like a discourse with someone, and it went slightly sour, for whatever reason, I knew in that eventuality, the first thing that would be used would be my skin colour against me, to try and hurt me or whatever, because kids argue, especially at that age. So, I was hyper- aware of that, if I wanted to take it to that place, or if I said something back, then I was

going to be racially abused. But that wasn't enough to dissuade me from sticking up for myself, as it were. So, I had to develop a thick skin at the back of that. People just making little nasty jokes, snide remarks, but that was pretty much a day-to-day hour to hour occurrence as far school went. So, my way of dealing with it in school was then to actually not be Black or white but be grey. So, no one noticed me in many cases.

I realised from even younger than secondary school, it was one of my earliest memories, I realised that I had brown skin. To begin with, I didn't know that my skin was brown, I just knew I was Scott because I was in the family sort of circle, my mom was white, my brother and sister were mixed race. So as far as my circle went, and my childhood understanding, people were just different colours sometimes and you know, my mom was white, and I am brown and that's just the way it is. *And then when I went to school, it was sort of oh, right, everyone's, white. So, my first sort of comprehension of being Black was to be a little bit of like, a freak, because I don't look like anyone here.* That was where my mom sort of, made more effort to teach me about my African roots, what that means culturally, where we're different culturally, where we're the same, through things like folklore and food, and those sorts of things. So, I knew from what I'd been taught at home to be proud of my ethnicity and my background but then when I went into the school setting, I had to defend it on the day to day. So, it took quite a lot of personal resilience to be able to do that though. It was exhausting to say the least.

So, from the age of 2 to 17, I was in Ireland. When I turned 17, I went back to England. Really me going back to England was running away because like growing up and going to school in Ireland that was just that of *being the odd one out and feeling like I'm ostracized on a day-to-day basis.* And I just knew in England...that was the first place I knew nearby where there was other people like me and other people of colour, and this wouldn't be as much of a thing. When I went over there, I sort of fell in love with that feeling of no one looking at me like I was a freak anymore. I was just another guy. That was nice.

Assumption of monoracial identity, denial of multi-racial reality, not a true citizen
Over time, the more Black people that I met and connected with**,** I felt like them because being amongst white people, because I'm both and I share both cultures to an equal level in many respects, but amongst white people, I know, no matter how much I understand the culture and take part in it, I will always be on the fringe of it, always, because of my colour. I will be someone that isn't of that culture. And that's it. Whereas whatever shade of brown you are, there's that sort of shared lived experience, we've both kind of been through this. The

togetherness comes in the face of being marginalised slightly by the majority white group in many cases. *The thing that always confused me is the ignorance around it because someone sees me as culturally closer to an Indian person, because they're of colour. And yet, I have one white parent, who is Irish, and a grandfather who's from England, and so culturally, genetically, whatever way you want to come at it, I'm closer to white and yet I'm constantly thrown in with the other. So that's kind of just become the group that I've learned to adopt and identify with, and I still haven't figured out how to be a true part of white culture and all its ongoings. I'm an outsider, I can't possibly be Irish because I'm not white.*

Racial categorization and sameness

I started to get confused ideas about what it was to be me and what it was to be Black, *because a lot of what it is to be Black, I don't really like that statement generally, was being applied to me by pop culture through TV that other students would be watching. So, the rappers that were famous at the time, Black athletes, and stuff like that.* So, if I did anything that would remind someone of any of those people, it was quite cool. You know, or like, even being slightly ashamed to be the best at like athletics in my year group. Also, like winning records and stuff like that, doing the 100-meter sprint faster. It's like it was a nice thing, but afterwards it's the wave of well, you know, *"he's Black, so obviously he's going to be fast, like there's no point in sort of trying".* So, I became hyper-aware of things like that. It was always about my skin colour, never an acknowledgement of me as an individual. If I did something good, it was attributed to my skin colour. If I did something that was perceived to be bad, it was because I was Black and not simply just Scott.

Pathologizing minoritised people's culture and appearance

I mean, even with my hair. One of the things that was strange was, I got my hair braided. *I got cornrows one time from a family friend Kxxxx and when I got on the bus, I silenced the entire bus. Like everyone was you know.... rowdy school children and as soon as I got on to the steps and went up it was like shhhh, a hush.... when my hairstyle was seen.* Yeah, yeah, yeah. That affair of getting on the bus was pretty profound. That was a significant one.

Then there was people just making little nasty jokes, snide remarks. It was endless. *One day in history class, the lights went off and someone said "where did Scott go? and the whole class are laughing, they thought it was great.* Which kind of hurt your feelings cause you're kind of hoping someone goes like "ey, that's not funny" but being the age that we were, in secondary school, you know what it's like...... so that didn't really happen, which kinda made me feel very alone, I guess.

It was just anything and everything, getting changed in PE, it'd be like remarks. There's one time a guy grabbed my hand and turned it over to the light side and said, "look abita good in everyone*". Once the teacher used the N word in the middle of class, and everyone just turned around and looked at me*. Yeah, like, "how do you feel that Mr. Mc Xxxx has just said the N word out loud with an err pronunciation".

Criminality or dangerousness

Yeah, sometimes it would even be your friends making remarks, jokes about being a thief or dishonest. I didn't report any of these incidents. So, the reasons why I wouldn't tend to report is because who do I report? which incident do I report? If I reported every incident of racial abuse, I'd be in the office all day, every day. . because it was so common, so frequent, it's just expected it would be on. The only times I would really say anything is whenever I was also in trouble. It would be like a dispute where I've had to defend myself. So, it would be a case where I'd say, yes, but Sir, or Miss, they said this to me. You could see with teachers, a lot of the time, they weren't trained to deal with these incidents. They didn't know what to do. There was no contingency.

Second class citizen-differential treatment to white counterparts

Then there were the teachers....some who were a bit more conservative, let's say I just didn't trust them, or I felt the same ill feeling from them. The careers advisor, like the counsellor at the school, because it was a Catholic school, the counsellor was a staunch religious lady. I think she's since passed away. So, I'm kind of reluctant to talk about it but I didn't have a good relationship with her, *because she...I just felt like less when she was talking to me, compared to other students, you know. Also, she used to...she'd come down harder on me for certain, behaviours.* Yeah, she wasn't a very savoury kind of person but that wasn't everyone's experience with her. This teacher was in charge of student welfare and stuff so this is who I would have had to report any incidents to. There was just there was no way I could bring myself to report.

Racial categorisation and sameness (compelled to disclose their racial group to enable others to attach pathological racial stereotypes to the person)

She was no exception. Doing occupational studies/vocational studies we went from secondary school one day a week to the local tech college and I was doing a brick laying module. During the roll call when we were giving our names, the administrator or technician, I can't remember what his job title would be. *He was like leading the class and he said, "what's your name,*

Islam or something"? That was pretty rough, by then I think I was around 15 and I had started to develop a little bit of like an edge and I went back at him, and it led to this whole thing. I ended up in the principal's office with my granddad next to me and yeah, we just had to sort of fight our case about I shouldn't have to be the one getting punished for it.

Second-class citizen/ignored and invisible, Denial of racial reality (dismissive towards racism) There was a classroom assistant who was privy to these ongoings, she was in the meetings and she kind of upheld the report that came from the tech college and completely ignored the racial abuse I had experienced that sort of sparked my 'rebellious, systems against you' sort of phase that a lot of people of colour go through in relation to discrimination. That, unfortunately, has been a recurring theme in my life when it comes to authorities. *My side of the story being completely ignored/disregarded. A white person's version accepted over mine and ultimately me being the one punished for trying to protect and stand up for myself.*

I wrote a piece entitled 'Blackness', written from the perspective of what I call 'The Shadow', an entity born as a side effect of marginalisation. In the worst moments The Shadow takes control of my being and begins to assail me with doubts. Against my better judgement, I start to believe the lies and deceptions whispered into my soul by this nefarious force.

Blackness

"Blackness. The central theme of our life:

And yet we always try to ignore it-

At least for as long as we can ignore it-

But the world always seems to find a way

To remind me that we are in fact BLACK.

If you were to ask ME, what true Blackness is,

I'd say it's a force in other people.

In that street crosser, who only crosses

When he sees our silhouette approaching.

In the averted eye of passers-by,

It's night and they think we're dangerous.

What of the man who says "I did not mean you"

When he finishes the punch line of his derogatory joke;

He is most curious for a joker,

And followed his quip-asking where we

came from.

It is in these people I see this force,

Yet Black is something we should believe we are?

In all fairness. We did grow up quiet poor.

It's true we come from a fatherless home.

And we've been in trouble with the police-

I think of these things, and I get angry-

Funny. Maybe we are Black after all.

Have you looked at what the world thinks Black is?

At best it is- cool, calm and collected,

It is urban, but never suburban-

Labelled as 'streetwise, but seldom as smart,

Only articulate on a barre verse.

And what is it at its worst? We'll leave that………

The thing is, I don't want to be angry.

I only want to live a normal life.

All I'm really trying to say is this:

Given what we oftentimes have to start with,

How do we even get ourselves going?

Where is our out?

What If we don't become famous athletes,

Like Kobe, OBJ, or Henry?

And what if we aren't a famous artist,

Who raps like Kid Cudi, Dave, or Jay Z?

Are we going to become stuck? If not,

You must show me where the middle ground is.

You must show me the place where people fall

When they are allowed to shoot for the stars.

I've looked, and I cannot see it for us.

Has anyone seen it? See, another question.

The problem is that all I have is questions-

On which nobody has any answers,

And so, I begin to drown….”

Impact of experiencing racism-racial microaggression.

The aspects of the shadow, I realise were only born from the ill will of other people. Blackness is an aspect of other people that is now on me rather than something I was born with. It took the longest amount of time to realise that and so any time I get feelings, or any statements come to me about that aspect of me I am able to realise now and rationalise that's not me. That I am actually bringing the opinions of other people to the forefront of my mind, that was an interesting revelation.

Even so, going through all of this did affect me, big time, honestly. Not only me but my mum as well. My mum struggles with mental health …..that was also accentuated through race. Like she often said it, as soon as she had Black children she was pushed out of her own community and had to become part of a different community, so that ostracism and isolation it takes a toll on you.

There's a lot of things to do with skin colour that can grind you down. I guess that Shadow character is why I have given it a name because when I look at what I would be If I hadn't pushed back against the adversity. The Shadow is what I would be. I would be this hugely resentful angry person that's got a chip on the shoulder with the rest of the world, and I would just do easy things. I'd probably get into drug dealing and sell aload of drugs… because that's what everyone sees when they look at me anyway.

I think what happened was, over time in secondary school, I started to develop like a resentment or cynicism towards people for the most part, and that would take many years to get away from really. So yeah, generally in secondary school, it would stir up a lot of anger and resentment. So, once I hit 14, I got into martial arts, and I've been an advocate since and that's been the best sort of outlet for me.

Recommendations for transformative action

It seems like we need to almost work to bring people up to speed. Just have people interact with each other on a human-to-human basis. That work's hugely important, and it should be emphasised. We should strive towards it. Learn what a human is, learn what humanity is, like actually have a grasp for it because I know that once you get to the core of a person, you get the human, it's all the same.

You want to be accepted, you need community, you're just trying to get by, you've got your fears, and everyone has something to offer. Had you not been blinded by phenotypes, which is just the outside expression, then you would be able to get down to that level and then you would stop doing unintended damage to people. Start asking yourself simple questions… like what does it mean to be a human? It's something most people don't think of and because we never think of it like that, we make mistakes, on a day-to-day basis. We start dehumanising people because we never stop to acknowledge and let it in through our psyche that we're all just human.

It's not even about doing better. It has to be that when you come across another person you say right, "I've got a human here and if that's the baseline I start off on then there's a high probability we become friends". From alien to friend. I don't like the whole us, them argument. There isn't a "them", even if you go to the biological fundamentals of things or evolutionary biology, at our most distant, we're cousins who escaped each other for a while, lived somewhere else, so we look different, then we came back together. We need to tell each other the story of what happened since we all separated from each other because as far as years on planet earth go not that many have passed since we did that. During that separation some people became Asian, some people African and some people became Western Europeans and so on. Those are very subtle differences in the grander scheme of things when you look at humanity. We all still seek company, we still seek laughter, expression, friendship, partnership.

The other thing is education. It's so important to teach about societal issues such as racism. I just find it's a shame that it's not taught, because we'd rather bury our head in the sand. I think there's a lot of societal issues where the attitude is 'because it shouldn't be happening, it won't happen'. Things that shouldn't happen, happen all the time. If you're a young person of colour, and you're not sure how to compartmentalize racial abuse, then you can be in trouble. Then it just falls down on what kind of personality you have, some people are sensitive that these things can have horribly adverse effects in the long run. It shouldn't be what I've had to do, where you have to learn through trial and error yourself how to protect your own humanity, so that you're not ground down and you don't succumb to resentment and become a much weaker form of the person you could be.

T'challa's story

My name is T'challa* and like people in my primary school or my family, my close family call me Xxxxxx. I am fully Nigerian, I'm Yoruba. My parents, my dad is from Xxx State, my mom is from Xxx and I was born in Lagos. I moved from Nigeria, Lagos about six years ago, with my dad and my sister. I'm 21 years old. I moved to xxxx county first. And that's where I completed my secondary school. So, when I came over here, they brought me to TY, so from TY to sixth year. I did my Leaving Cert. Everything here is different, especially not being raised in this particular country.

Once I completed my secondary school, I had to take a year out. And that's because, you know, I had to wait about three years before I could qualify for a student card. And I also had to like, you know, wait for my, you know, this, it's called a stamp four like a GNIB. I had to wait for that as well. So, once I got that, I was able to go straight to university. So that's good. I'm in my third year now. I'm studying computer science and software engineering. And like, you know, I'm happy with my decisions. Everything is looking good. I'm excited for the future.

The secondary school that I attended was a Deis school. It was looked down on because it was a Deis school. So, I don't know if that would have been the best school for me to go into, you know, coming from Nigeria, because like, it was very obvious how different it was compared to the other school. I didn't want to go to an all-boys school anyway, I wanted to actually go to a mixed school, because that's what I'm used to. I couldn't wait to leave that school to be honest with you.

Environmental Exclusion (curricular elimination and having to endure environmental messages of being unwelcome and devalued)
Coming from Nigeria, I was coming from a place where, you know, there was you can say normality, like I was familiar with the people around me. I grew up with them to an extent. So, I was coming here, and I'm somebody that doesn't necessarily mind change. I don't mind, I can get up tomorrow and move to somewhere else. I don't mind change. Okay. This was the first time in my life that *I felt, you know, like an alien*. In majority of my classes, I was like, *the only Black person* like there were only about three other Black people in my year. In secondary school I didn't have any white friends, so I just kept to myself. *I would not even see Black people in my textbooks or even on posters and pictures on the walls of my classroom. There*

was none of that, the demographic wasn't large enough for that. That's how I felt. So, it's like, yeah, because we don't have that many of you it doesn't really matter.

Avoidance and distancing

Even though there were a couple of Black people in my Deis school, *even they looked down on me and that's not the best thing when somebody of colour…that you'd expect to stand up for you in certain situations looks down on you because you're coming from a particular place. It's a bit weird. So, I was on my own for a good bit.* These were Irish people, I didn't know how to speak to Irish people. It's not like I couldn't speak English, I could, you know, but it's different banter, people are already in their friendship groups. Like you're looking to the Black people, they're not that many, and they're all the same, they're more or less like the Irish people, and like *they're not interested in you, they don't want to speak to you. So, I was pretty much on my own for a bit.*

Second-class citizen/ignored and invisible

I think there was one Polish guy that, you know, tried to speak to me and tried to become my friend. That's the first guy. Can you imagine? A white Polish guy wanting to befriend me before you know, a person of colour, you get what I mean? But that was ok. For me, I was only worried about my sister, I could handle all of that. To be honest, I think my sister had a rougher time compared to me. So, I had to kind of like, look after her, protect her and even become closer because she didn't have anyone else. So yeah, that was how it was for me. *I have been ignored alot of times in schools. People just don't see me. Nobody sees me. Do you get me like? I don't mean to sound dramatic. Like, nobody sees me. But yeah, sometimes it does feel like that. Nobody sees you.*

One thing I'll say is, coming from Nigeria where I had never experienced racism, it took me a while to recognise when teachers or my fellow students were being, you know, mic.., micro aggressive, or when somebody was being like, racist to me. And there was like, there's a feeling when it happens. Yeah. It's, a feeling of helplessness. And it's also a feeling of like, you almost feel less than you understand what I mean? So, it was hard for me to like, deal with those feelings, especially coming over here. My dad would say stuff to me, like, be very mindful of your appearance. You don't want to seem like this guy, do you understand? so when even your parents are telling you that "ahh be mindful, you don't want to come across as this" … This imposter syndrome, this like feeling below other people really sets in.

And like, if you're asking me about the relationship with the teachers, man. Like, I didn't like majority of them. And it's not,.. I don't look for trouble. I keep to myself a lot. I'm a very quiet person but I only liked two. And one of them was my maths teacher because like I was bad at maths, but he was a good teacher generally. And like he was a lovely person as well, he would care for your mental health to a certain degree. You know, he was good with kids. I'll put it that way. My business teacher, well there were couple of reasons why I love him because he was not like… you can say he was tapped in, like he knew there were levels to the system that were not completely right. So he was, he would give us like, options that you do with your work. You know, like, he made me fall in love with business. And that's why like, business is a part of my.. it's a part of who I am. I love business, and I intend to become a businessman in the future. I look back on my secondary school experience and he'd be like, a big figure there and yet even him, you know, there's some questionable things he said, there were some behaviours that were questionable.

Criminality or dangerousness, *racial categorisation and sameness*
I only had good relationships with two teachers, everyone else, they were passive aggressive. They said some comments; *they would look at you as violent or maybe aggressive.* Or maybe they didn't understand you, just said some silly stuff, to be honest. And it's almost like you're dealing with it all by yourself. For example, when I was in secondary school I had waves, you might not be familiar with the hairstyle. When I played sports or engaged in any sort of thing like that, I would put a durag on to protect my hair. This was like during P.E or during training or whenever I would come back from training. And there's this little woman, and she'd always be like, "take the durag off, take this off, put your hood down all this type of stuff". And like one day I just decided to be like, Miss, what's, what's the problem? She said, *"you guys look like thugs".*

So, we said Nah, you know, like, we're just gonna do this now. Because why not? Like, we started wearing it whenever we felt like wearing it, you know, because it just became a disrespectful thing towards us because who are you to tell us *we look like thugs because we have our durags on or hoods up?* This is just like, it's just very, like, it's racist. In secondary school they give you a journal right..so when we graduated, they changed the journals. I saw from my sisters journal they said 'no durags allowed'. You know, they fully made that like a law.

Exociticization via hair

This whole thing with issues around our hair and hair accessories is so normal. *Even till today, "oh can I touch your hair, your hair, your hair, your hair"?* You get that every day of the week, honestly. I don't know what it is, they're just "Oh, my god, your hair your hair?

Racial categorization and sameness (manifested via counter-stereotypical surprise/exceptionalising stereotypes), assumption about intelligence, competence or status
Also, I remember my guidance counsellor, he said something to me like, *T'challa I'm very impressed with your English like, you know, coming from Nigeria…I didn't think you guys spoke good English. Like, that's very impressive.* You speak English better than, you know, some of the students here and you know, it's just a thing where he's coming from a place where he's uneducated. You understand what I mean?

Oh my days here's another one. You know when you're in English class and you're reading parts of the book? Maybe this person reads this part and the other person the next part? I will never forget this**.** *Because I am from Nigeria people thought I couldn't even read or speak or know English, just based on the fact that I wasn't saying anything, but I wasn't saying anything because nobody was talking to me.* Anyway, so this one-day people were reading and it got to my turn, and like, you could tell that everybody was waiting to see what my English was like, if I could even read at all. So, I read it with the English I was taught in Nigeria, like English. I can speak English. And after I finished, one guy just started clapping. And it was a thing where like, what are you? what are you clapping for? Like, what did you expect to come out from my mouth? You get what I mean? Like my early days, my early days here, and I didn't recognise that as like, microaggression. Until I look back, I was like, Why? Why was this guy? Why was this guy clapping like, you know, round of applause.. this guy like? If the students are like that, the teachers are like that as well. You know?

I did a lot of higher-level subjects. And like, the other Black people, there were only like, I'll say only one person with me in some of these classes. Well, I remember one day, it was funny. I walked into higher level class English for the first time in fifth year because *I wanted to do higher level and then walking into the class, the teacher gave me this like, this look.* The person that I walked in with was a Black person as well, he had history with that teacher. Okay, but for him to turn around and be like, *"are you guys in the right place"? So, I was just like, what do you.. what do you mean by that? Like, what do you mean, am I in the right place? So, I turned around and like, yeah, this is higher level English, of course, I'm in the right place.*

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So, I don't know if it was a thing where he just thought we couldn't keep up. Or we couldn't handle it or whatever. I mean this guy didn't know me. Bear in mind, I don't know this teacher either, he's never taught me, I'm new. So, it was just like, you know, it was interesting that his automatic assumption was that I was in the wrong class. That as well made me work harder because my dad always told me if it's a Black person and a white person, and you guys have the same qualifications, just know that they're always gonna go for that white person. So, it was always in my mind to work harder than everyone else around me, you know what I mean? So, like, I took that as a challenge, even though there could have been like, something beneath it, I just took that as a challenge, you know.

Even with the white students, so being Nigerian, or coming from, like, not growing up with them, *they tend to look at you like ahh, you know, maybe higher level is not for you. Maybe again, you know, you should drop down or maybe like, I'm not fit for particular topics.* This is new to me. Rather than being patient with me, trying to understand me or trying to like, figure out ways that work for me. It's more of like, maybe you should just like *maybe dial it down a notch.* Maybe this is not.....*it's just too intense for you.*

Exoticization and Eroticization (via sexualised stereotypes)
And other than that, like people would make jokes about, like, you know, you know, Black men having huge whatever, like, (penises) that was a joke that happened all the time. Like, it's just, just all of this like dumb nonsense and I, like I'm the type of person like if I don't understand the joke, I can't laugh with you. If it's not funny, it's not funny, I can't, I can't force it. You know, even when I was like new and I was, you could more or less say I was looking for validation, but I couldn't, I couldn't force it.

One experience that sticks with me till today, I was walking in the park, this was in secondary school. I was walking in the park, with a white girl, she was a German girl. And there were some drunk people in the park. And they came up, they came up to us, not very close, but came up to us. And he asked me, he asked me, oh, what are you doing? I was like, you know, confused. My cousin was in the park, but he was far away. And like he has been here longer than I have. But anyway, the guy came and said like, what do you think you're doing? Like, what are you? What are you doing here? And I didn't understand the question. So, I didn't answer. And he was like, "*You Black bastard, what are you doing? what are you doing with this girl"?* I was so confused, like, what do you mean? Do you know this girl? You don't know this girl. You don't know who she is. We're just going for a walk. We're literally both in our

school uniforms. What are you?... What are you talking about? And he just told me to get away from his face. *He said again, "Black bastard"*. I just…. you know, me and the girl just left. And obviously, like, the girl I was with was confused. I was confused. I went home that day, just thinking about it. Like, I even, I even cried when I got home. And I never probably, you know, broke down the situation. I just, I just went on with my life. It's still there. Like, why did that happen? Do you understand what I mean? I know this is all about like secondary school, like, but I think now more than ever, its (racism) happening now, especially with the job I'm doing, it's happening a lot more. It's just, it's just annoying man. Honestly, it's just so annoying.

And there was another situation where I was walking with my friend. And I had like, my gear bag on because we just finished P.E, so it's a big gear bag, you know, and I'm walking down the hall, and this white person bumped into me**.** *And this guy just says, "Black bastard".* So, I dropped my stuff on the floor. And I go up to him and asked him, what did you say? He said, "You heard what I said". Bear in mind, there were witnesses there, people that heard what he said, do you know? and I took him to the wall, I pinned him against the wall. I told him to say it to me another time, and that was when he started to act like a victim, do you know what I mean? and when I looked around, I saw that a crowd had gathered. I just thought to myself ..now they're gonna say, I'm the aggressor. You're gonna say this, you're gonna say that about me? And I just, like, dropped him and I walked off because the teacher was asking me to let him go.

 They suspended him. Okay, they suspended him, but they also suspended me, internal suspension. There was no, what made you act that way? How do you feel? There was no understanding, nobody saying, I understand why you would feel that way. What made you stop in that moment? like, none of that, just straight internal suspension and for what? Because *somebody called me a Black bastard* and I wasn't having it. Do you understand what I mean?

Denial of the reality of racism/Dismissive of racism and failure to address incidents of racism I had to stand up for myself, who else was gonna? who else was gonna stand up for me? Certainly not my teacher. *They were well known for brushing these kinds of things over,* there was no "I'll bring this to someone". *Nobody, nobody cared, things were just brushed under the rug.* I later learnt that being aggressive doesn't work. That's the last thing you want to do. I don't want to put myself in a situation where I have to, you know, get myself in trouble with the guards or get myself in trouble with anyone for that matter. Because I'm not trying to ruin my record, I know where I want to be in life. And I don't want stuff like that to ruin it. So, it's,

it's very, very hard. I can't even lie to you, it's hard sometimes, you don't know how to deal with certain situations. *And when you bring it up to the authorities, they don't deal accordingly so you're just left with that helplessness.* That sense of helplessness and frustration and anger at the injustice.

I'd like to say as well, the *teachers in secondary school never really stood up for like, people of colour.* I remember this vividly; I was in a biology class. And I don't remember what they're called, or like, you know, when you're doing Leaving Cert, but you're doing a different type of Leaving Cert? Applied Leaving Cert is what it's called, I think. Anyway, they brought those students into one of our biology classes. I don't remember what my biology teacher was talking about. And one of the applied students says, *"yeah, it's because people are coming over and taking our jobs"*. And like obviously, me and the Black person beside me, we look over to the person that says this. You know, there's usually a type of, you know, there's a type of people that say stuff like this. *So, we look over, we're just like, disgusted and the teacher hears this, and doesn't address it, doesn't talk about it, doesn't educate, doesn't do anything. So, we're just left, we're just left like just on our own dealing with the situation ourselves. The teacher doesn't step in to talk about any of that.*

Impact of experiencing racism-racial microaggressions

It definitely took a toll on me. I had to deal with all of that myself because there was nobody to speak to. There was nobody to speak to….. in terms of research, like you don't even know what to, you don't even know how to put your feelings into the internet to look up: Why am I feeling like this?

So, it did affect me, like there were times where I just felt like that's just not for you...like do you understand what I mean? You gonna be looked at like this, looked at like that. Yes, definitely had an effect on me and like, obviously there were times when my sister would come home or she would cry based on like our experience, how people look at her differently and everything like that, like that affected me as well because that's my sister. That's my best friend. And I took everything she was feeling, I took it on myself as well. So yeah, it was tough, especially the school that we were in. That Deis school, it was tough.

Coping mechanisms

I just kept thinking about the future, like, I'm a very positive person. So, I just said, you know, I miss my friends back home, I miss all of them but let me acknowledge the opportunity that I have now. I know I'm going to end up where I want to be like, there are opportunities here for

me to propel myself forward. So, I kept thinking of that. This is only for the time being, I'm going to get into my course, I'm going to graduate, I'm going to make my money, I'm going to change people's lives back home. That's how I just kept moving every day. And there's some days where I was like, God, this is too much. I don't even want to come into school. Like, I don't even want to deal with these people. I don't want to deal with any of this wahala (nonsense).

But I know not everyone is like this. It's difficult, like my sister was not like me, I was my sister's strength. My strength.. I don't know where I got it from. Aside from like, praying. Yeah, just like…it was me versus me. I knew where I wanted to be. So, I couldn't afford to slip now. My sister could put her head on my shoulder, but I had nowhere to put my head. My friendships did get better towards the end of secondary. I had, like two friends only in that school that I was like, yeah, at least you're in today. At least I can laugh. Like, if I can laugh, I can forget about the... I can forget about some of the issues I'm facing. And another person from Nigeria, just like me joined the school. So, like, we dealt with the same thing. So, it was a thing of like, yeah, we understand each other here. So, me knowing that I wasn't by myself as well was good. And as long as I could laugh, I could forget about the inconvenience for a bit.

My overall experiences of being treated differently because I am from Nigeria led me to start to feel a certain way. I felt like I couldn't rely on anybody but myself. So, I wanted to take everything into my own hands. And what I mean by that is like, I wanted to seize my future. That's when business really became my thing. So that's when I started like learning, learning new skills, like I learnt marketing for myself, because like I said, I'm somebody with huge ambitions, I really want to change people's lives, especially people's life back home, because there are a lot of opportunities here.

Don't get me wrong. It's just the people back home don't have these opportunities; I wanted to create it for them. I eventually started falling more in love with myself as a person. So, all this.. my dad telling me that "oh you can't look a certain way, you can't put your hair like this certain way. Because like, he was basically warming me up for the white man's approval, like I need to fit the white man's approval. Otherwise, you know, you could suffer. Like I said, he doesn't know any better. He's just trying to protect me. So, I understand where he's coming from. I learned to be more independent, that my value comes first, it doesn't matter how I look. And I know I have to work ten times harder than the Irish or the white person has to. That's just, that's just the game. Obviously, that makes me a tougher person in the long run do you know?

So, I've used my tribulations as my strength. And that's one effect that's had on me. So, you can even say a lot of my goals, I built off the insecurity that I'm not good enough. 100%, that's one thing that fuels me, but I know for a lot of people it's not the same. They feel like they're not good enough and like they stay where they are. And it's important that we act as voices for these people. So, there are alot of insecurities that have stemmed from these experiences, but it's important that us as Black people learn to love ourselves.

Recommendations for transformative action
Going back to the incident where the other student called me a Black bastard… It's important, it's important for teachers as well, to validate how somebody is feeling you know? because that goes a long way. Even if somebody was to sit down with me and say you know, Simon, I can't imagine how that must feel, and I can't imagine being put in a situation like that. Like, this is how I would react as well, you know, just validation, that just goes a long way. Even if you're a white person, just start validation as a first step, you can then educate after, like, okay, maybe saying "you don't need to resolve it with violence, but I understand why you would want to do that", you know. "I understand that feeling of helplessness" **…** just validate, validate, validate, validate. That's what kids want to hear, rather than just being punished. You know?

Also, it's nice to have this conversation as well. Because, you know, when you speak to someone, and like they understand. You know, like, they've been through similar trials and struggles, it does something to the heart. Like, it's like, a weight is off, because you can actually communicate with someone, do you understand what I mean?. So, I mean, this is, this is good for me as it is for you. I won't even lie to you. It's really good. You know, we have people like you, you know, fighting for us, trying to represent, trying to educate people as well. In school racism was never, never spoken about. It was almost like it's your problem. You guys can figure out how to do it. Like, it was never like.. there was not a day where, okay, we're educating. We're educating people about this. Never.

Teachers should focus more on emotional intelligence, empathy, because bringing that forward to you know, people of colour, or African kids or whatever, it's very, very important, you know, just feeling like you're understood, rather than just being painted as whatever, is always going to go a long way. So, given the situation where somebody called me Black bastard, I reacted. In my mind, I know how far I could have gone, but I pulled myself back. Okay, because of how it would have looked and I'm not really trying to get myself in trouble because I have huge ambitions, I don't want to ruin any of that. Okay. So, me being able to walk away from that

situation and there's, there's been times I've walked away from situations because I know full well how it would have gone. And to be honest with you, if I was born here, I probably wouldn't have walked away from the situations because like, my dad…he didn't do this on purpose, he just wanted me to be careful, but he almost put a fear of white people in me. So, I really think having that conversation with the children and just trying to understand where they're coming from, is very important.

And now in terms of like, the other kids, whether they're white people that don't understand the struggles, teach them, let there be days... you know how there's like mental day or mental health awareness. Like let there be an awareness day for diversity, let there be like, a seminar on different types of microaggressions. Talk about why, why maybe people feel the need, or maybe where it's coming from, maybe they don't understand why do you say this? Educate them, because that's very, very important. Because if you're just educating the Black people, it becomes very frustrating that the white people don't understand.

So, why not just educate both of them at the same time? So maybe, as a Black person, you're feeling all of this, you don't know why you feel like that. But you know, you're feeling that, you know that it's there, let there be a class maybe where people... people like us can come in to talk about experiences to the whole school or the whole class. So, they know, they see both sides? I think that's very important. If someone like you was to come into my school, and just to speak to me, it would have helped so so much.

Farah's story

My name is Farah*. I am 21 years old. I'm originally from Libya but I'm diaspora. So, I'm like, first generation here. I was born and raised in Ireland. And my parents, they're both Libyan as well. I am a final year law student in Xxxx University. This is a bittersweet moment for me. Uni has been great, I feel like I just started college yesterday, but having to study through Covid, the pandemic and everything has also been challenging. I'm really happy though that I chose this course. It's a really interesting course and it does pique my interest every day I go into class. That's what I wanted out of a course.

I plan to further my studies in the future. At the moment, I have two options, I can sit the final examination and pursue an offer with one of Ireland's largest law firms. I'm also considering moving abroad, to the UAE, with my family. So, I might actually go down the English route to become a solicitor over there instead. It's kind of an option between the two and weighing more so about comfort and my faith, being able to practice more comfortably over there and all that kind of stuff. So, I'm kind of just weighing out my options right now and seeing what's available to me and which route will be the best for me in my future.

For secondary school, I went to two different schools, because we moved areas. So, the first school that I actually went to was a Deis school. It's like where school is in an area…I don't know if you've heard of these kinds of schools before, but it's where it's in an area that has maybe more Minority, or people from the Traveller community. So, there was a lot of people in that area who were from a Minority background or an Ethnic Minority background, right.

So, because there was such a big population of different cultures, different races in the school, there was no distinction, like it was very easy to get along with everyone, very easy to make friends, very easy to talk to absolutely anybody because nobody really saw, you know, your scarf or your skin colour or anything like that. It was......it was easier in that sense. I was there for two years. And then I moved to the complete opposite, a semi- private Catholic school for my leaving certificate. It was a big jump, a big change. And then we ended up moving up to where I'm going to university now. I've been studying here since and, honestly, it's been such a beautiful jump going from secondary school to university life and starting to have that freedom.

Both secondary schools were all girl's schools by the way. In the first school I went to everyone was very confrontational. So, if there was an issue, it was spoken about, dealt with in the moment. Things were thrashed out as opposed to the silence and not tackling matters as you should. The second school I went to, everyone was a little bit primmer and more proper. It was like, I feel like everyone was just, you know, I don't want to say privileged, but something along those lines where they didn't feel the need to have a conversation about an issue that had happened maybe a day before or a week before.

Environmental exclusion

It was a predominant......predominantly Irish school, there was like a handful of foreigners that were there, like how we called ourselves. It was majority young Irish girls, and then a handful of maybe…. the very small handful of Muslim girls, a very small handful of Black girls, very small handful of like Asian African girls, this kind of thing, you know. And because of that, there was like…. I remember when I first moved there, my biggest worry was if I'm going to be able to make friends.

Second class citizen/ignored and invisible

I went to it on the first day, *and nobody really wants to approach you to get to know you like that.* One can see from my skin colour, I'm pretty pale, but I think because I wore a scarf and I have like darker features like my hair, my eyebrows, my eyes, I can be seen as different. *Even so, I was like, okay, let me try push myself, I'll try talk to more girls. And it was just one of them situations where they, I don't know how to explain it. Maybe we just didn't click, we didn't connect, because we didn't share the same interests. But there wasn't really any effort on their end to welcome me in any way. And it was quite heart-breaking.*

You know, it was genuinely like, my biggest hell going into school every single day. And it was like, I would go to school, and I couldn't wait for like the day to be over, I just wanted to come home, I was only going to school because it was something I had to do, I was obligated as it was compulsory for me. It was specifically in the second school I went to, it was like, every single day, I was just trying to take it class by class, hour by hour. Between the students… and I had more of an issue with my teachers, they were very openly.... maybe you'd call them microaggressions, I feel like a lot of them were a bit more from an older generation and I don't blame them for this either, right. So, they were brought up in a particular way, with a particular mentality. And it's very difficult to re-educate yourself on something that you've learned about your entire life. Yeah. Maybe in a sense, some of the things said to me was microaggressions.

At the same time, it made me feel so out of place, and so uncomfortable to go there every single day, like I felt like it was a prison that you could walk in and out of, you know. It was a place of torment, tormented by both teachers and students. When I tell you it was a prison, it was a prison. They had designated like…...you can only walk on the left side. And, you know, these bathrooms are specifically for first, second and third years and then these bathrooms are specifically for the leaving certificate students, and it was very, very strict in that sense.

There was so much more hostility. From a Minority, like an Ethnic Minority background in the second school that I had gone to, you know, it was a very strange, strange thing. I don't know, I feel like it makes you feel out of place when no one else is accepting you, or whatever it may be, but I think that's definitely something that's been taught through the generations. It's like this stigma that people have developed over time. And parents stick that into their kids, teach it to their kids as well. So, it makes it a little… a little bit more difficult in that sense for you to actually put yourself out there because they don't even have the mind to actually open up that door in the first place for you, you know? Like, I know a lot of girls that are still, maybe they're just about to do their leaving certificate, but they're still in the school. And it's the same situation till now. It's very, like a segregated environment. There were never any initiatives to promote diversity or encourage multiculturalism. They never spoke about different races or, you know, different backgrounds, different religions, and stuff.

We haven't been on the bus in a while that drives past my school, but every time we would go past it, my heart would sink into my stomach. I'd feel so anxious, just driving past the school. Like, if there's ever a reunion, I will never go back. I never even went to my debs because of how much I didn't like the school. Yeah, I never went. I was like, I don't want to be there. They had a whole dinner and everything. I was even supposed to win some award, and I wasn't there to accept it. I despised every second of that school to the point that when I had the opportunity to leave and not look back, I went running with it, I went sprinting like Usain Bolt. I will never go back there!

Avoidance and distancing
It's very, like a segregated environment, you know, and it's segregated until you are needed in that sense. I remember, I used to play football. And the girls knew that. But I played with the team outside of my school. And what happened one day, I was in class, and the girls were like short on one player that they needed to go play this match. *And so, I'd never spoken to these girls before. They never gave me the time of day,* but they run into my class, and they said, "we

need you, like we'll stop off at your house to pick up your gear, but can you please come and step in for us"? And I was so excited. I was like, hell yeah. Like, I finally get a chance to bond with the girls. *In the whole bus ride, I was by myself. No one sat beside me. No-one made the effort speak to me. There was no attempt to kind of welcome me into the team, which is normally the case when you join a sport with people, you know.* So, it was only like, we need you now. So, you can come help us, but you know, apart from that, we don't really want to be friendly with you on that kind of level, you know?

Second class citizen- Being targeted, receiving differential treatment to white counterparts.
I had this teacher for Irish, who went on to be my Irish and Geography teacher for my whole leaving certificate and she was terrible. Like, I don't even know how to explain it to you or how to put it into words. But there's been multiple students who have come out and spoken out against her, I'm pretty sure there was a case taken against the school specifically because of her. You know, she was terrible, really. So, for me, I had her for two subjects, that meant I had her practically like, every single day in the week. I never got away from her. It reached a stage that every single time I left her class, I would run to the toilets, and I'd call my sister in tears. I'd say, you know, today, she did this to me.

One of her big things was that she didn't like students wearing a jacket in her class. In the winter months, the school never turned on the heating and I'd be super cold, like they had us wearing skirts, and just one jumper. *So, obviously I would wear my jacket, and she'd always fight me about this all the time. Ironically, no other student would ever be called out about the jackets being left on in the class. I even tested this theory out myself. I saw there was a few of the other like Irish girls going into the class with their jackets on so I was like…. I took my jacket off. I went in and my Geography teacher said nothing, absolutely nothing to the other girls. So, I put my jacket on and straightaway, she called me out. I was like Miss, they've been wearing it since they've come in, it's cold in here. It was like, why are you specifically targeting me about this? You know, there were so many instances like this, that they….* I guess they are microaggressions looking back now, like at the time, I just thought that they didn't like me. Yeah. And that's why they kept on calling me out for silly little things.

And even with my Geography with her, we had like a project we had to do, and it goes towards a certain percentage of your leaving certificate grade. There was a school trip at the time. *When we had started the project, I think that was in fifth year, there was a school trip away to France. So, when I had come back, you know, I went up to her, I had caught up on like what needed to*

be done and I wanted her to correct what I was going to submit. She said to me that I should get other students to look at it seeing as I had wasted my opportunity to get her to help me since I went on the school trip. Keep in mind, there were other white students as well in the class who had gone on this trip, but she had helped them. I then approached the other geography teacher, and I asked him to help me. I explained to him, you know what happened, and that she refused to look over my project and he said to me that he couldn't because he didn't want to step on her toes. So, I had no support from anyone in the school.

You still see it till now, even like my little brother. He's in school, and he's having to deal with this kind of stuff as well and he's got very young teachers as well, fresh out of college, fresh out of their graduation, they just finished their Masters, *and they are not treating him fairly.* It's definitely a situation of this racist mentality being taught down through the generations. And it's…... it's terrible. And there's only so much that you can do, even as a guardian for a child to go in there. You can only say.... you can only say racism so many times. And if the school does nothing, then what's the next step? You know? Well, what else can you do?

Pathologizing minoritised people's culture and appearance
What was the worst for me? I think that my experiences with that Geography and Irish teacher were the worst thing. There was definitely a bias against me purely because of my...my different background and my different faith 110%. *The worst comment she made was specifically about banning the hijab. It got so bad that at one stage she actually said in the class, this is quote for quote, by the way, like, it's been what, like five years now? and it still sticks to me. We were studying about the French Muslim conflict, and she said word for word, "you know, if it were up to me, I'd ban the hijab in Ireland, because Muslims should be integrating rather than sticking out of a salad, like a tomato". And then after that, she said, "Don't you guys agree"? and I'm the only foreign girl in my class and all the girls started nodding.* So, it made me feel that much more isolated you know and that definitely took a toll on my confidence and how I perceived my peers thought of me, because, like, I think what made me so upset about it is that like*, everyone agreed with it.*

Not only that, in my leaving certificate year, I had decided that I no longer wanted to wear the scarf. So, I had taken it off. I've obviously put it back on since then. But I had taken it off. And really, truly it was because I didn't feel comfortable in the environment that I was in to be so openly, visibly Muslim. I remember I was pulled out of my class by my year head, and she's like this older woman. She is quite lovely; to be honest with you but she just had......she has

these ideologies that one would take to be racism. Like I said to you earlier, it's just that older mentality, that more traditional view, and it's how they've just been raised. So, she pulled me out of class, and she sat me down, she said "*I noticed you're not wearing it anymore". She was so excited; she was so happy. "You're not Muslim anymore". You know, "we're so happy for you"* …. Blah.Blah. Yeah, and I was sitting there. It's such a strange situation to be in as a 17-year-old, you don't really know how to go about educating somebody, an elder without disrespecting them, you know? It was strange.

It was a very strange experience in that school. I'm just very happy that I'm finished with it. I felt like I had to give up my religious and cultural identity in order to be accepted. That was a lot. I think it also weighed into the fact that I was obviously a little bit younger, and I feel like it's such a vulnerable age to be in when you know, you're making big decisions. To some people, a scarf might just be a fabric, but really and truly to a Muslim woman, a scarf is her identity. It's her representation of who she is. It's also a consistent reminder for her to remain modest in not just how she dresses but also how she speaks.

And that's why the transition from school to university was such a big thing for me. I was able to excel and grow into the person that I am, and feel comfortable in myself as well, because none of the lecturers ever made me feel like that. None of my peers ever made me feel like that, you know. So, it was a beautiful experience in that sense that I was able to step away from that hypothetical prison into a liberating campus who will support you and encourage you no matter what, you know? Unlike in secondary school.

Denial of the reality of racism/Dismissive of racism and failure to address incidents of racism
Going back to that Geography teacher, it was also the fact that she's a teacher, and she has these very politically driven and very racist like ideologies that she's teaching to the future, to us. Right. She's shaping everyone's mentality and that's the problem. *My biggest concern is that she never got any repercussions from what happened in that situation. She never got fired, she never got suspended.* The only thing that happened was that I was actually affected from that. I had to move to another Geography class, and I had to drop another subject because of it. That's what hurts me the most, it's like, where is the justice?

After the banning of the hijabi incident I had to go to my parents and tell them what was going on and like explain to them the situation. It was terrible, like, it got really, really, bad. My dad sent an email, he got The Board of Education or something like that involved. So, they ended

up moving me out of her class but yeah, the other geography class was on at the same time as one of my other subjects. So, I had the choice of either keeping Geography or Physics, I couldn't keep the two of them all based on the fact that I couldn't stay in her class anymore. So, I ended up having to drop my second subject, which is Physics, in order to keep doing Geography, you know, it was terrible.

Another incident, I had this teacher, he was an amazing teacher, I had him for one of my subjects…. and like, you just can tell that he's always got good intentions. We used to do this thing on a yearly basis where we would do a walk, but you dress up, right. So, the year that I was doing it with them, the theme was like, a blast from the past. So, it was like dressing up from different decades, right. *This teacher had done Blackface and worn an afro wig, even though he was a white man….and, like, no one batted an eye.* That's what baffled me the most, like all of the students who were from an Ethnic Minority background had been absolutely baffled by the situation.

So, the next day, he actually went to his classroom, and he found a note on his classroom door saying, like, basically, you're racist. You just did Blackface. That's not acceptable. You should be embarrassed of yourself, blah, blah. They ended up finding out who the girl was that did it, and they suspended her for three days. Wow!!! Which was the worst…yeah, the worst way to go about the entire situation. *And nothing happened to him. He didn't really like say anything to students to make it any better. That's just how the school is, you know, but they're, they're very like pro..... they're very anti-bullying though.* They will go on about no students ever experiencing bullying, unless it comes from one of the teachers.

It was a very strange situation, to be honest with you. *But like there was loads of situations like that where teachers would say something that's like out of line....to a student and nothing whatever happened to the teachers, but like, God forbid, if a student tries to take action, you know.* I think it definitely comes back to this whole power play, that teachers are given so much power over children. Too much power. I don't know if it's maybe because of the age or because they're older, and that's what they've learned and stuff, but it's not fair. And if a student is to speak out against racism, they're gonna get serious, serious repercussions, you know.

 It just went on and on to be honest, there was no rest. There was another teacher, I didn't even have her for any subjects. She was just a teacher. I came into school late one day and she pulled me to the side. Oh, by the way, I have older brothers, and one of them was walking me to

school that day because I just wasn't feeling the best. So, when I go into school, she comes over to me, she goes, "I saw you walking up with a boy" and I said, what are you talking about? Number one, like you're not my tutor, you're not my year head, you're not even, I don't even have you for any subjects and I've never really spoken to you before. So, you know, what's that got to do with you? She goes...... the way she was kind of wording it was like, you know, sorry to put it so bluntly.... but you know, you're representing the school, don't be acting like a slut. You know what I mean? The way that she approached me, and I was like, 17 at the time, you know, I'm not really into that kind of stuff. I'm not doing that kind of stuff. And I'm a little bit more religious.

So, I'm kind of like .... that's out of line. Yeah, so we were in front of the reception when this happened because I'd just come into school, and you know, I said to her, It's not your place to speak to me like that. So, she turned to the receptionist, and she goes... "I've never" what was it exactly? "I've never met such a disrespectful student", right? So, I said to her, I've never met such a disrespectful teacher, and she got so annoyed with me. It's kind of like, you said it to me, you're being rude to me. So, I'm not going to just stand here and take it you know. She pulled me out of class later on that day; she brought my year head in.

They brought me to like this little really small box room. They both sat me down, like I was taller than the two of them. So, they sat me down. They stayed standing up, and they were just like talking down to me. They did it on purpose. It was like an interrogation. "What are you doing? Why are you walking with a boy"? Blah, blah, blah. I said, it's my brother. It was my brother. That was my brother. And they made it such a big ordeal that I just was like, I need to go home, I want to go to my mom, I want my mom to deal with this. She went in and she ended up speaking to them. By the end of it, like, it was an unnecessary, very unnecessary situation to the point that I was walking around the school crying.

What bothers me the most about the whole situation is that was in my sixth year, my leaving certificate year, and the class that they pulled me out of, it was English. It's like, if you miss any part of the class, you're missing a whole chunk of the course. You know what I mean? They wasted my time, my valuable time, over something so minuscule, and it means absolutely nothing. I even said to them, I said, if it's actually an issue, you can call my mother and bring her in, but if you're going to just continue wasting my time, when I have the biggest exams of my life, at the end of this year. I'm leaving, I don't want to stay here. Do you know? It was just ridiculous, and I felt like they were trying to find any reason to pull me aside.

You know what though? I have to say, like, it did definitely teach me to have thick skin. I feel like it's made me so much stronger for it. Like I do come from a big family, and obviously, you already have that when you come from a big family. But it's very different when you're in school, and you're really trying to force yourself to be heard. And no one really wants to listen or even give you the opportunity. It's very, very strange. So, going from that environment and kind of taking on that trait of like having that thicker skin and not letting every single word affect you or hurt you, you know, going into college with that. It makes you so much stronger as a person. And I feel like it definitely taught me to mature from a much younger age, because you're dealing, in my opinion, when you're in secondary school, you're dealing with people who have this authority over you, who want to, I don't want to say abuse this authority over you. But like, they're what's the word?

They're like, they're power hungry or something like that. Right? Yeah, where they have all this power. And they're like "I'm saying this, so you have to do it, and you can never talk back to me, you can't". In their mind, it's like if you have something to say to them, it's considered disrespectful, but it's like, hang on a minute there. You just said something to me. That's not right, and you just want me to sit here and pretend it's okay, and if I say something, I'm gonna get a note in my journal or detention or suspension. You'll still see it to this day, like people…like I've been out of school for three and a half years now, but the stories I hear from people, siblings, or even my own little brother, like they still have to put up with it. The best advice I can give them is that you're only in the school for this period of time in your life. Just take it on the chin, and once you leave, you're never gonna have to deal with them again, you know, and that's the only thing that really you can do to move on from it.

Racial categorization and sameness-assumptions of religious homogeneity
Oh, I just remembered, there was another incident involving my faith in the first school; there was this one teacher. She was the only problem teacher in the whole entire school. *So, there was a girl there who had been absent from school for like, a week or something like that. And she came back. So, this teacher decided, "ah let me speak to her, you know, I haven't seen her in a while". So, she pulls her into a classroom by herself, and she goes to her, "listen, I know about the Muslim culture, and I know that they can send you away for a weekend and marry you off and then you can come back as if everything's normal". The girl looks at her like, Are you actually crazy? How can you say something like that to me? That's just unheard of. That's not normal. That's a strange thing to say to a student, you know, it wasn't even out of like, I genuinely care about you. She was being nosy. She had this theory of what all Muslim women*

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have to go through and it's clearly not the case. You know, if that was the case, I wouldn't be in school. You know what I mean? It was such a silly, silly thing to say. I don't know. But it's fine. She didn't get married at that time anyway. But still, it's like just a weird thing.

I think there is a general presumption about specifically like.... Muslim girls that we are all forced to do a lot of things, we're forced to wear the hijab, we're forced to dress modestly, we're forced to get married at a young age. If you actually look at the reality of things in Ireland anyway, I'm not speaking about anywhere else. But here, specifically, that, a majority of the time is not the case. Of course, there are exceptions in every scenario that you look at, whether it's culture or religion, there's always going to be that minority exception of extremism, you know? The majority of the time, and the rule of thumb, though, is that everyone has a choice, and everyone practices as they will. I chose to wear my scarf. I chose to take it off, and I found myself, and I chose to put it back on, and it was a beautiful experience for me. *The whole point is that I had the choice to do that the entire time. People would look at a Muslim and think, no, you can't think for yourself. You can't speak for yourself. Like......do you know those silly little ideas that people have that are just not real?*

Pathologizing minority culture and appearance- enacted via food
Even small things like bringing your lunch, and I don't know…. like a typical Irish lunch would be a ham sandwich, maybe a pack of crisps, that kind of stuff. For me, my mom's making me traditional food, and she's putting it in a lunchbox, and she's giving it to me. There's something simple, like rice with nuts or something, you know. And you have that lunchbox out in your class while you're eating your lunch. Like we also had these designated spaces for lunchtime, depending on what class you were in, right? So, you'd go there to have your lunch, you couldn't go anywhere else, except to the cafeteria maybe, but it was always full. So, I'd sit in there, open my lunchbox, I'd start eating, and then you'd hear you know, those stupid little comments like, "what's that smell"? You know what I mean? Or comments like "that's weird, What IS that"? Little things like that. I feel like that's quite common. A lot of girls would experience that in schools that are predominantly white.

Impact of experiencing racism-racial microaggressions
My experiences in that school shaped me to believe that people will speak to me in a certain way for the rest of my life. This is how you know, x, y, and z are going to happen. And especially because you're a Minority, you're not going to be as lucky as the other students when you go to apply for universities or jobs.

In terms of education, I feel like it definitely put me at a disadvantage. Like I said before, I was studying eight subjects for my Leaving Certificate and then I had to drop it down to seven because of a racist teacher. Now I only had one extra subject to rely on, in case something didn't go right in my other subjects. So, in that sense, yes, it definitely affected my education. It definitely affected how I saw teachers in my school at that time. Apart from my English teacher, I was very nervous to speak to them, and to ask them, you know, questions about maybe the homework or the exams themselves, or family advice for me.

It was crazy. Like, I remember, it was so weird. When I was in that geography class, I failed every single class test, every single one, like I never passed any of them. Yet when I went to the new Geography class, the first time I saw a class test, I'll never forget, this one was 53% I got back on it!!!! I know it might be a small number, but it was a massive achievement for me. I was like, you know, from always failing to actually passing something for the first time. Like, it was definitely something nice. I think, majority the time the teachers that I had issues with, if they were teaching me, I definitely struggled in that class. When I was in that Geography teacher's class, majority of the time, any class that I had, after her class, I'd always be late to it because I'd go to the bathroom every single time, and I would be crying on the phone to my sister. It's a lot to take on; you're being racially bullied by a woman that's three times your age. You don't know what to say or what to do...yeah. It was heavy like.....having to deal with that.

I feel so sorry for younger me. I wish I had someone like who I am now at that time to be able to speak up for myself and take care of me because, like, even now thinking back, like I get emotional about that kind of stuff. It makes me sad, you know? So yeah, reminiscing on it, it makes me sad. I remember the first time I was late to my next class, which was the English class and maybe it's why the teacher was so nice to me….. straight away he was like, "why are you late Farah"? and I just looked at him and obviously, like, my eyes were bloodshot, my cheeks, my nose are red and swollen. He said to me, "look, just sit down, it's okay". And he never would pester me or anything like that. He was just soft with me and kind to me.

I think that's all I needed. I was so young, you know. As a teacher in a secondary school and you're working with children, there needs to be a level of patience that you have to have for children. We all know how difficult teenagers can be and that's fair enough. If you feel like you can't give them the patience that they deserve, you're in the wrong field. That's not the field for you. I know it's not the field for me because I wouldn't be able to deal with that. Like that's something I am able to identify myself. I think there needs to be like a better mechanism in

place to be able to identify these kind of teachers because, quite frankly, a lot of teachers from that school should not be in that field. They would be better suited in the army or something. I feel like in terms of my mental health, it gave me that thicker skin that I told you about before. And I'm so much stronger now for it, but it definitely makes me feel emotional looking back to it.

Coping mechanisms

Honestly my family was my biggest support mechanism in there. My sister was my biggest support, and if there was ever an issue that required some hands-on work, my mom and dad were the first soldiers in line, you know. But just like I said to you before, I was just counting every hour, every second, like, going from class to class, I would not linger in the school longer than I had to stay, I just wanted to go in there, learn and come home, I didn't want any of the extra nonsense that came with it, you know.

The only pro is that, because I came from an Ethnic Minority background, I was able to gel in or mix in so much better with girls that were also from an Ethnic Minority background as well, which I think was a beautiful experience. Like I've obviously grown up here. So, I know lots about Irish culture, but I was able to learn so much about, for example, Nigerian culture, Pakistani culture, which otherwise I would never have had the opportunity to learn about. That in itself was a beautiful experience. We were able to relate on so many similarities, like cross-cultural similarities that I would not have noticed before, you know. I know this is definitely something positive that came out with this entire experience.

I actually made friends with this Brazilian girl, and she was friends with the only two other like Brown girls in our entire year. So, we kind of formed a little group with each other, and we stayed by each other's side. We were able to kind of get through every single day with each other. That handful of foreigners, we all kind of stuck to each other. Because it was nice to have that, that group, that sense of home and school, you know, people that can relate to what you're going through. And after transition year, a lot of them actually left the school. So, when I went into fourth and fifth year, that little fat piece of family in school had shrunk to relatively nothing, you know. I think the racial abuse started because it was such a smaller group. It was easier to be, you know, targeted.

We ended up finding this little place in a stairwell that we could sit, you know, eat our lunch without having to deal with any of that bullshit. I think like halfway through the year, this

random teacher came downstairs, she was like, "you guys can't sit here, blah, blah, blah, you have to go somewhere else", so even that special place was taken away from us.

In my leaving certificate year, I just stopped hanging out with people altogether, I would just go like from the campus, and there's the school grounds, there's still a green field behind it. Sometimes one girl would come with me, sometimes no one would come at all and I would just go sit there. I would eat my lunch. I would enjoy my own personal time and being able to actually relax away from all the noise before having to go back into it, you know? That was probably like, that's the only the best way I can describe it, just taking it literally day by day, step by step. It wasn't a nice place to be in and at the same time I had to be there, I had no other choice.

Recommendations for transformative action

Racism needs to be tackled at the core and these teachers that are in school right now, there needs to be more oversight, some more authority over them, for them to be held accountable. The issue right now in Ireland is that you can't really fire a teacher. They get like, a permanent contract, and you can't let them go or they just have to retire, right? Unless they do something like seriously bad, like they lay their hand on a child. But apart from that, if they say something that's out of line, they won't get sacked, because they're protected by this permanent contract. Right? When we were trying to report my teacher, the principal even said to us, "there's not anything that I can actually do because she has a permanent contract. So, I can't let her go. I can't suspend her; I can't do any of that kind of stuff" you know.

So, these teachers who have permanent contracts and a more traditional mentality, they're so protected to the point where they don't feel the need to limit what they're saying or watch how they're treating their students or hold themselves accountable for their actions. And that's having like a domino effect then because all the other teachers are saying that well, it's okay. Or you know, I can't speak out against them, otherwise, I'm gonna lose my job because I have a part time contract or I have a temporary contract, you know?

You have someone that's been in the institution for over 25, 30 years of their life... for a newer person to come in and to speak out against that individual? It's not going to only potentially affect their career, but it's also going to affect, you know like the staffroom. It's going to be tension there, and they're gonna put a spotlight on themselves, and it's going to be a difficult situation to have to endure for them. There needs to be a deterring kind of action taken against

the teacher to prevent other teachers from doing the same thing. And just let them know that, you know, just because you have a permanent contract does not give you full power and full authority to be discriminatory to your students.

This (racism) is a national issue and you know, it's been an issue for God knows how long now. So, whatever they're doing right now, whatever enforcement authority they have right now is not cutting it, they're not doing the job that they're supposed to do. There needs to be an official authority and official oversight. There needs to be consequences for teachers who take these actions, these racist actions, it's just as simple as that. That's the best deterrence, you know, you show people, this is what will happen, if you're a racist, if you pick on a student because of the colour of their skin, because of their faith. You can't do that; you need to go. Also, I feel like with this issue, it's a case of re-education of those bam in the centre, a re-education of the students.

With that being said, it wasn't every single teacher, like I had this one amazing teacher. He was my English teacher for my leaving certificate. He saw past all of that stuff (skin colour, nationality, faith) . As long as you were a good student who did their homework on time, and who was just with the class, he respected and loved you so much. He made me feel like I was able to do anything. He applauded me for my work. He specifically would call me after class to, like.... he was an older man, you know, and it just, it made me feel a little bit more rest assured with him, in a sense, and like, okay, well, you know, I'm doing something right in school. Like, if it wasn't for him, I would have, I don't know what I would have done. Yeah. Like, he was just absolutely incredible, and he was so passionate about teaching English that he saw past everything else. It's either, are you a good student? Are you a bad student? In the meaning of those words, you know, not in the meaning of what fabric are you wearing? What colour is your skin? Yes, like, he was an exception to the normality of the day to day there though, unfortunately. We need more teachers like him.

Chapter 7: The Cadenza

kə-ˈden-zə noun

A virtuoso solo passage inserted into a movement in a concerto or other musical work, typically near the end.

7.0 Introduction

"white supremacy is not a shark, it is the water" Tran Myhre (2022).

My name is Amira McCarthy. I am Irish. My identity is legally enshrined in my passport. It was issued in Dublin, where I was born. These are facts. Republic of Ireland, Dublin, Rathfarnham are labels that partly define my identity. I am also a scientist. I have studied genetics and evolution, and I research and write about how history intersects with those two biological forces. I studied genetics at University College London. I also consider myself to be a critical race theorist. I am delighted to be invited onto the 'stage' to contribute to this collection of deeply personal freedom songs. In this 'cadenza', my work is to offer an analysis of the arias so generously rendered by the ten contributors to this study.

This chapter aims to provide a root cause analysis of narrators' experiences of racial oppression. In the field of functional medicine, an investigation into the root cause involves identifying and addressing the origins/ root of a disease to treat and heal it. This approach is fitting since white supremacy is defined as an insidious disease that sustains the conscious and unconscious acceptance of a racial hierarchy in which those who are not considered white are consistently placed in a position of subordination in relation to whites (Solórzano and Pérez Huber, 2020).

In this root cause analysis chapter, participant testimonies serve as evidence to illustrate how racism, whiteness, and white supremacy function and manifest within the studied context. The researcher, however, acknowledges that each testimony is a complex personal account. Each participant interprets an experience for themselves; there are emotions, meanings, or personal negotiations in each account beyond what the researcher has identified, which are beyond the aims and boundaries of this chapter to interrogate.

The analysis is organised under following sub-sections: race and racism, schools as sites of suffering, shifting the gaze to white supremacy and whiteness, white supremacy and whiteness in predominantly white institutions: a homogenous teaching and student body, white supremacy and whiteness: racialised identities and stereotypes in PWIs, white supremacy and whiteness: the role of implicit bias in PWIs, white supremacy and whiteness: navigating a predominately white environment in an othered 'non-belonging' body, white supremacy and whiteness: the violent erasure of the othered self, white supremacy and whiteness: educational

violence and harms through approved literature, white supremacy and whiteness: pathologizing of culture and appearance and exoticisation of Black and Black-white Mixed Ancestry bodies. white supremacy and whiteness: the vilification of 'Black' hair, white supremacy and whiteness: enforced whiteness via dress codes and policies, white supremacy and whiteness: an incisive and historical analysis examining the harm behind touching or asking to touch people of colours' hair, white supremacy and whiteness: entrenched in the concept of cultural competency, and finally white supremacy and whiteness: at the root of our stories-denuding the deification of whiteness.

In conducting this analysis, I draw inspiration from the CRT Microaggressions Tree Model shown below, Figure 10, to show how the racial microaggressions and indeed overt racism experienced by the Black, Black-White Mixed ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller individuals who participated in this study are rooted in white supremacy.

FIGURE 1   *Tree model of the white supremist roots of racial macroaggressions*
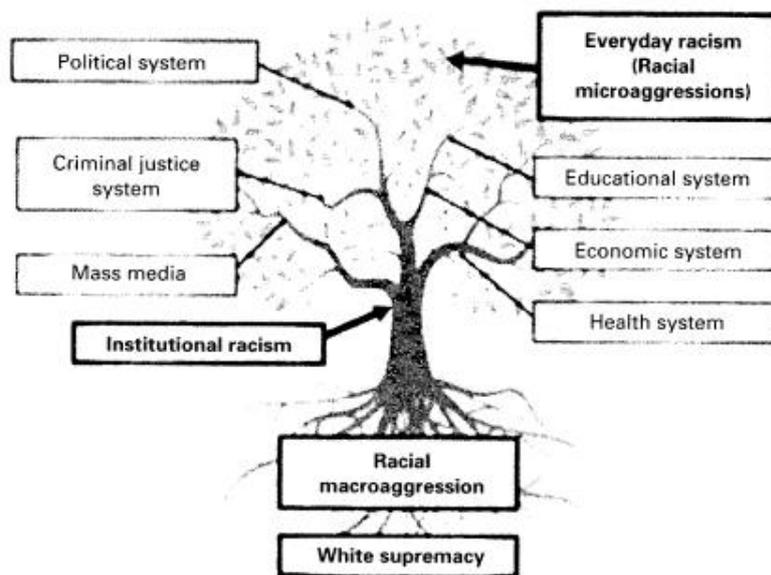
Figure 10. Tree model of white supremacist roots of racial microaggressions (Solorzano and Huber, 2020).

The Tree model of the white supremacist roots of racial microaggressions is helpful for analysing the interrelation between microaggressions, institutional racism, and white supremacy (Huber and Solorzano, 2015; Solorzano and Huber, 2020). In this model, the

ideological foundations of white supremacy are the macroaggression represented by the roots that hold racism in place and lead to microaggressions. The tree trunk represents institutional racism, including structural mechanisms like policies and practices that uphold the subordination of racially minoritised groups. Institutional racism is also sustained by the lack of commitment or meaningful action to create an environment conducive to the full inclusion and success of racially minoritised communities. Social systems, such as education, are represented by the branches of the tree, where racial hierarchies breed inequities. The leaves symbolise the microaggressions that reinscribe racism through everyday practices. Turning the gaze to white supremacy in the analysis of racism-racial microaggressions helps reveal ideological foundations that inform microaggressions and the variety of ways in which white supremacy is expressed (Rolon-Dow, 2022).

7.1 Race and Racism

 First and foremost, any analysis of racial oppression would be incomplete without a thorough examination of the concepts of race and racism, and in particular, the idea of race as a social rather than a biological construct. One of the identity markers that the researcher sought from research contributors was their race. It never ceases to amaze me how the term is used as a matter of fact. Race very often recommends itself as a guiltless/innocuous word, a neutral term for an empirical fact. It is not (Fields, 2003).

Historical context is required when exploring racial disparities in any space or system. As a scientist, I've always been fascinated by the term and its origins. The term became popularised during the 19th century as part of a broader pseudo-scientific project of biological/scientific racism, which divided human beings according to physical differences or 'phenotype', such as skin colour and biological ancestry, to support the theory of assumed superior and inferior human 'races' (Bryan, 2012). By the mid-19th century, 'race' had become one of the most used and abused terms of ethnographic literature.

It is of utmost importance to emphasise that the term 'race' represents the conception or the doctrine that nature produced humankind in distinct groups, each defined by inborn traits shared by its members and that differentiate/distinguish them from the members of other distinct groups of the same kind but of *unequal rank* (Appiah, 1993). Embedded at the core of the concept is a withholding of the presumption of equal humanity (Loury, 2002). Concepts of race have always been associated with attempts to categorise humans, at times to simply describe them, often to create pseudo-scientific delineations, with the intent to subjugate and exploit (Rutherford, 2020).

Racial categories were conceived in the context and backdrop of European colonisation, slavery, and genocide, and form the basis for racial/racist thinking today (Golash-Boza, 2016). Over the years, the meaning of racial categories such as white, Black, brown, or yellow has carried religious, scientific, political, and cultural weight. Race has been understood as a sign of God's pleasure or displeasure, as indicative of evolutionary development, a measure of intelligence, and a signifier in human geography (Omi and Winant, 2015). The overarching theme is and has been that white is supreme/superior in every way possible. DuBois (1920), cited in Baird (2021), states that the belief is that: "of all the hues of God, whiteness is inherently and obviously better than brownness and tan" (Baird, 2021, np).

The truth of the matter is that race is *a* social construct, a nefarious, human-invented classification system with no biological basis whatsoever. One of my all-time favourite quotes is by Junot Díaz, who states, on the cover page of the book, 'Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life', "race is a monstrous fiction; racism is a monstrous crime". Race, then, you see, is the principal unit and core concept of racism; that is to say, the practice of racism gives birth to the illusion of race (Fields and Fields, 2012).

Ultimately, the colloquial use of race is a taxonomy that is not supported by fundamental biology, such as genetics and evolution; race is only real because we perceive it, and racism is only real because we enact it. Neither race nor racism has a foundation in science (Rutherford, 2020). Fredrickson and Hacker (2002) assert that race is a fictional creation. However, one of history's sad lessons is that fabrications are more effective than facts for inciting oppression and much worse. The biological construct of race, referred to by Roberts (2011) as a fatal invention, continues to undermine a just society and promote inequality.

While the concept of 'race' may be biologically unreal, its manifestations are all too real (Warmington, 2009). Race is extremely socially and politically real and very often used as a tool for violence and oppression (Aiyetoro, 2023). As is evident from the stories, racial oppression was and is very much a lived reality for racialised and minoritised individuals. Study participants were well acquainted with the atrocious, formidable foes that are racial violence and oppression. They were able to reflect on their own experience with overt racism and racial microaggressions.

Participants experiences of racial microaggressions were largely consistent with the categories of microaggressions identified by Williams et al. (2021) namely: not a true citizen, racial categorization and sameness, assumptions about intelligence, competence or status, criminality

and dangerousness, pathologizing minority culture or appearance, second class citizen/ignored, and invisible, connecting via stereotypes, exoticization and eroticization, avoidance and distancing and environmental exclusion and Johnston and Nadal's (2010) multiracial microaggressions taxonomy. Themes distinctive from William et al's taxonomy include: the assumption of monoracial identity, denial of multiracial reality, pathologizing a multiracial person's identity, and experiences.

An interesting point to note is that although the interview instructions utilised in the study emphasised participants' experiences of subtle racism and discrimination, participants still described many incidents of overt racism in the form of verbal abuse, derogatory racial slurs, physical violence, vandalism, and racially motivated abduction of minors. One participant was further subjected to brutal, racially motivated sexual violence. Thus, we gather from the narratives that participants were encumbered with the full weight of racism in all its vileness and egregiousness.

Furthermore, the research questions were centred on experiences in secondary school settings. However, narrators also shared experiences from early childhood and primary school as well as incidents that took place outside of educational contexts, confirming CRT's tenet of not only the permanence but also the ubiquity of racism in society. Over and above the 'usual' stresses and strains that come with life and schooling, such as finances, health issues, pressure around homework, exams, and grades, balancing schoolwork with extra-curricular activities, and meeting the expectations and demands of parents and guardians, participants bore the additional cumbersome yoke of racial oppression.

7.2 Schools as sites of suffering

Owing to the research question posed, most of the racist encounters shared by participants occurred within the school setting. It behoves me, therefore, to highlight that schools and the way that they are set up are oppressive; they function as inherently undemocratic institutions and as establishments that embody white supremacist, anti-Black, and colonial ideologies (Sánchez Loza, 2021).

Consider research findings which indicate that whilst Black adolescents experience racial discrimination in various settings, schools very often top the list when researchers inquire about specific places in which adolescents have the most experiences with racial discrimination (Gale, 2020). This is particularly harmful in education settings where teachers and other authority figures are, at times, the perpetrators of such acts of violence.

For many Black children and families in the U.S., Britain, Ireland, and Scotland, schooling is a site of Black suffering. Not only is it a site of suffering, but it is the suffering that we have been least willing or able to acknowledge or provide a platform for in educational scholarship (Dumas, 2014). The findings from this study are testament to the veracity of this finding. For many of the research participants, Asians and Irish Travellers included, school was indeed a place and space of suffering and deep wounding where encounters with racism in all its forms were commonplace.

Schools are too often sites of othering and alienation, disproportionately affecting groups that are not part of the dominant culture, including Black students, Indigenous students, students of Colour, LGBTQIA+ students, low-income students, students of immigrant and refugee background, and disabled students (Kuttner, 2023). This othering, as we have seen in the counter-narratives, can take many forms, from racist bullying and overt discrimination to the more subtle microaggressions that convey a message to racialised and minoritised students that school is not a place for them or their communities (Celeste et al., 2019). This process of othering is inscribed with power and is integral to the white supremacist notion of whiteness as normative and supreme (Gillborn, 2005; Leonardo, 2002).

7.3 Shifting the gaze to white supremacy and whiteness

Let's focus our gaze more intently now on white supremacy. I hope it is clear at this stage that racism operates at both institutional and interpersonal levels. These levels of racism are simultaneous and interactive and can be broadly characterized as supporting the political system of white supremacy (Enumah, 2021). Gillborn (2006) posits that white supremacy encompasses not only the racism of white supremacist hate groups but also refers to a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites have overwhelming control of power and material resources. The author further stresses that conscious and unconscious ideas of white supremacy and entitlement are pervasive and that relations of white dominance are re-enacted daily across a broad array of institutions and social settings.

Within this system of white supremacy, whiteness is described as "a set of assumptions, beliefs and practices that place the interests and perspectives of white people at the centre of what is considered normal and everyday" (Gillborn, 2015, p. 278). Elsewhere, Ahmed (2007) describes whiteness as a continual and unfinished history that positions bodies in specific directions, impacting how they take up space and what they can do. An interesting component of whiteness is the many shades of difference within this category. Some people are 'whiter'

than others, some are not white enough, and many, [such as members of the Irish Traveller community], are inescapably cast beneath the shadow of whiteness (Nayak, 2007).

Whiteness functions as a standpoint that upholds social privilege and as an invisible identity, perceived as the norm for what it means to be "human" (Wolgast and Wolgast, 2025). The power elite constructed white supremacy and construct it even now to define who is fully human and who is not (Okun, 2021). Dehumanization processes have linked certain targeted and othered groups to animals or objects that must be cleansed, managed, or eliminated (Steuter and Wills, 2011). In America, during the colonial period, projected images of African Americans as monkeys, gorillas, or apes justified the institution of slavery. Black people were treated as assets to be traded, mortgaged, and wagered, loathed and vilified. In many contexts, Blacks were regarded as objects devoid of volition, feeling, and a sense of responsibility. (Fisher, 1992; Fede, 2012). Slavery and miscegenation laws, along with other cultural practices, were integral to a budding white supremacist ideology that used the construct of race for measuring and judging the humanity of Black's against normative conceptions associated with Western Europeans (White, 2017).

White contends that an early modern binary construct originating in the West is one factor that contributed to the rise of white supremacy in the United States. This construct divided human nature from culture into spheres of greater and lesser value. The supposed "civilized" European races distinguished their own normative humanity from other groups they encountered in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Racialised notions of difference emanating from the nature-culture dichotomy resulted in deprecating views such as those of the savage Native Americans. According to the author, Nineteenth-century scientific investigations or the rise of scientific racism later sanctioned this epistemological framework. For example, Robert Knox in The Races of Men (1850) used the slant of the brow to make associations between the Black and the orangutan and outline differences between those two and the European. A few years later, Nott and Gliddon (1854), prominent scientists of their time, documented in an influential ethnological study their perception of objective racial realities with illustrations comparing Blacks to gorillas, chimpanzees, and orangutans.

In the same period, Ernst Haeckel, an esteemed professor of zoology, based on his theory of polygenesis, represented the human species in a hierarchy from lowest to highest, ranking negroes among the lowest races and characterised them as savages related to apes. Haeckel

contended that people of African descent were psychologically similar to apes and dogs and consequently assigned a different value to their lives (Haeckel, 1880).

Centuries later, simian imagery has become an effective strategy for anti-Black rhetoric, with ontological implications (White, 2017), as we can infer from the counter-narratives, simian imagery, and the idea of relating to those not considered white as sub-human persists. Rochelle shares how she was dehumanised. "They would always make fun of my African features in school. It would be "monkey", "gorilla", "ape", you name it. Planet of the Apes was a big movie back then. So, I used to be called Caesar". In Cillian's testimony, he laments that only one out of all the teaching staff in his school "treated me like a human being." Stemming from the way he was treated, T'challa expresses experiencing "feeling below other people" and that "you almost feel less than". Scott, reflecting on his experiences of racial oppression in predominantly white institutions, states that 'we start dehumanising people because we never stop to acknowledge and let it in through our psyche that we're all just human'.

7.4 white supremacy and whiteness in predominantly white institutions (PWIs): a homogeneous teaching and student body

Scott's statement above on his experiences in PWIs provides a segue to highlight that several studies support the notion that overt and covert racism towards 'Black' students is common and occurs within primary and secondary school settings where the student and teaching body are predominantly white (Dumas, 2013). Similarly, several studies have illustrated how Traveller children, and their families, are subjected to racial repression, discrimination, and overt institutional racism in schools (Deuchar and Bhopal, 2013).

One of the ways that racism was enacted upon Black, Black-white mixed ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students in this study was via environmental racial microaggressions. All the study participants alluded to the fact that they experienced environmental and representational violence manifested in the form of a homogenous teaching and student body. Almost all participants described a school setting where they were one among a few students of colour or ethnically minoritised.

The current prevailing narrative in the literature is that schools in Ireland are becoming increasingly diverse while the teaching body remains largely homogenous (Quirke-Bolt and Purcell, 2021). Whilst a diverse student body was not the reality for most, if not all, of the story contributors, the lack of heterogeneity in the teaching body certainly was.

Racial/ethnic misalignment in teacher-student backgrounds was a pervasive feature of Black, Black-white mixed ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students' secondary school experience. Statistics on the racial composition of teachers in Ireland are startling. Teachers from minoritized backgrounds are estimated to comprise only one percent of the primary and two percent of the secondary school teaching population (McMahon, 2019). Notwithstanding the discourse, schemes, and various projects aimed at redressing the homogeneity in the teaching profession, the underrepresentation of minoritised teachers on school faculty persists (Keane et al., 2023).

Many students will complete secondary school having been taught only by white teachers and members of the settled community. The immediate future in terms of racial demographics will not be any different because more than 95% of trainee teachers at undergraduate and postgraduate levels are white (Keane and Heinz, 2015) and are being instructed by a teacher education profession that is itself predominantly white. Moreover, a study on teacher education curricula in Austria and Ireland revealed that in both countries' curricula, migration-related diversity appears marginally and that curricula are far from sequentially building up knowledge and competencies that productively respond to the challenges of culturally diverse classrooms (Herzog-Punzenberger et al., 2023)

The teaching demographic imperative compels us to examine whiteness and its relationship to teaching closely. The sheer number of white people in the teaching profession has implications for the role white teachers play in creating and maintaining patterns of inequality and existing racial hierarchies, particularly since the system of domination maintained by white teachers is white supremacy (Picower, 2009). Cultural capital theory suggests that racial/ethnic mismatch between teaching and student bodies contributes to the reproduction of inequality across generations (McGrady and Reynolds, 2013). Indeed, everyday racism [as we can gather from the counter-narratives] thrives in an atmosphere of non-representation (Mohamed and Baegan 2019).

What is also evident from the counter-narratives is that not only were teachers and school leaders enactors of racism, but they were also enablers thereof through the forced silencing of participants, promulgated/propagated through fragile race avoidance and inaction/non-intervention. As Rochelle states, 'it's almost like a gag order, like pressing the mute button'. In most narratives, patterns of silence and silencing by educators and authorities are evident. Rochelle's testimony of sexual assault and the reaction, or rather non-action, of school leadership and the gardai speaks most loudly to this truth. The prioritising and privileging of

the white voice and narrative over Rochelle's own is telling, verifying the notion that not only is 'white right' but white is always right.

It is imperative to underscore at this juncture that the sexual violence perpetrated against Rochelle cannot be analysed in isolation. It must be understood in the context of the historical and racialised significance of sexual violence against Black women, deeply rooted in systems of colonialism, slavery, and white supremacy, which shape Black women's modern-day experiences of sexual violence as well as how institutions respond to these experiences.

The sexual abuse perpetrated against Black women by white men originated during the 'Middle Passage', the forced voyage of enslaved Africans (Tillman et al., 2010). Enslaved Black women were regarded as property and therefore deemed unrapeable (hooks, 1981; West, 2012). hooks posits that rape was commonly used by colonial whites to control Black women. Indeed, for much of American history, the rape of Black women was not legally recognised as a crime (Pokorak, 2006; Digeser, 2023). The commodification of Black women's bodies, coupled with stereotypes surrounding Black sexuality, was the impetus to the oppression of Black women, which persists to the present (Wyatt, 1992, Acquaviva, 2022). Black women like Rochelle continue to face disproportionate rates of sexual violence, heightened by institutional neglect and racial trauma. Their experiences are shaped by intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and class (Barlow, 2020). The statement made by Crenshaw (1989), as Rochelle's testimony highlights, rings true even today: "Their femaleness made them sexually vulnerable to racist domination, while their Blackness effectively denied them any protection" (p. 159).

Furthermore, in relation to silencing, Farah's account of her classmate being suspended for confronting a teacher over his donning a Black face during a school play, an act that is considered demeaning and hurtful to the Black community as it invokes a painful racist history in which Black people were negatively represented/depicted as lazy, ignorant, cowardly or hypersexual (Kaur, 2019) is another example of an act of silencing. These silences and acts of silencing create and perpetuate an educational culture in which inequities are ignored, the status quo is maintained, and whiteness is both protected and entrenched (Castagno, 2008).

These stories confirm what many racialised and minoritised people know from experience: the system of white supremacy is not set up to protect them, and attempting to defend or stand up for yourself by opening your mouth to sing against injustice almost always results in punishment. As Scott expressed, "my side of the story being completely ignored/disregarded. A white person's version accepted over mine and ultimately, me being the one punished for

trying to protect and stand up for myself". Farah adds, "and if a student is to speak out against racism, they're gonna get serious, serious repercussions, you know".

Furthermore, narrators also shared how there was a deafening silence over the topic of race(ism) and racial relations in their schools. In almost all the narratives, participants testify that the subject was never broached. Where it did arise, it was through racist and economic nativism revealed in classroom discussions where racialised immigrants were positioned as othered and unwanted, when not instigated by the teacher but by white students, this was neglectfully and recklessly left unchecked by teachers.

DiAngelo (2019) labels this avoidance of open and honest discussions about racism as white fragility. This fragility maintains white supremacy. Such silence becomes an instrument for establishing and preserving dominant discourses; in this way, it becomes a weapon of marginalization, disenfranchisement, misrecognition, and exclusion. Meaningful conversations about race and equity are a crucial first step in deconstructing hegemonic discourses, assumptions, and stereotypes surrounding racialised and minoritised communities (Beville and McQuaid, 2012).

7.5 white supremacy and whiteness: racialised identities and stereotypes in PWIs
Undergirding the racist encounters experienced by research participants are stereotypes that are rooted in the stereotype of white supremacy promulgated by colonialists in the 1400s, the stereotype constructed whites as inherently good and deserving, genetically superior and as saviours of people of colour (Melson-Silimon, 2024), racialised groups were as we will later explore in more detail, were characterized as the antithesis of this.

Stereotypes are expressed by overt racists and well-intentioned people whose experience and cultural history steer them toward views that are not supported by the modern study of human genetics (Rutherford, 2020). Stereotypes shape impressions and judgements of minoritised groups as opposite and other (D'Arcy, 2017). These damaging stereotypes are a form of racialised violence and were a common feature in the racism experienced by Black, Black-white Mixed Ancestry, Asian, and Irish Traveller students in this study. Both teachers and students interacted with participants from a hyper-simplistic racial schema, which, among other things, led to racial categorisations of sameness and incidents of counter-stereotypical surprise/ exceptionalising stereotypes.

As we have seen from the discussions of Golash-Boza's theory of race and racism in an earlier chapter, stereotypes play a huge role in experiences of racism. Racial stereotypes and prejudice

shape teachers' perceptions of students. white teachers, for example, are influenced by racial stereotypes that suggest Black students have less academic potential than white students (McGrady and Reynolds, 2013; Downey and Pribesh, 2004; Irizarry, 2015). T'challa's account, whereby the teacher questions his presence in the higher-level class, is but one example of this.

T'challa's experience illustrates how racism is enacted through subtle messages that are rooted in the white supremacist ideological beliefs about the intellectual inferiority of Black people. T'challa's encounter is not a novel or isolated case; research on Black students and teacher expectations indicates that teachers often base their evaluations of Black students on their race rather than their academic abilities (Dusek and Joseph, 1983; Lightfoot, 1978; Paul, 2005; Silver et al.,1995).

 Furthermore, part of the persistent racism directed particularly at people of African ancestry is focused on their bodies, i.e., physicality, power, and sexuality (Rutherford, 2020). Lingering stereotypic beliefs about Blacks also depict them as athletically superior while intellectually inferior to whites. Angela Harris (2000) cited in Smith et al. (2016) explains this historic and prevailing notion as follows: "Though Black males may possess a brutish maleness, they are lacking in the mental and moral qualities that are necessary for 'civilized' men: gentlemen, patriarchs, rulers" (p.1191).

Thabani's account, in which he narrates that his athletic success was misattributed to ancestry rather than training and healthy eating habits, is a testament to this. Furthermore, the association between physicality and race extends beyond sport and into sex. There is a widely held belief that men of African descent have larger penises than men of other populations, as attested to by T'challa in relaying his experience of objectification via eroticization.

This stereotype is part of a broader pattern of racialised sexual myths that have historically been used to dehumanise, objectify, and exploit Black bodies. Black sexuality has a painful history that cannot be divorced from histories of chattel slavery, imperialism and colonialism, scientific racism and eugenics (Banks et al., 2025; Bailey and Stallings, 2017). The most recent (2014) and largest meta-analysis has found no indication that penis length or girth correlates with any population, racial category, or ethnicity (Rutherford, 2020); however, despite evidence to the contrary, these myths persist, feeding the construction of Black men as hypersexual fiends.

The social construct of race that I mentioned earlier also contributes to the stereotypical imaging of Blacks (Hodge et al., 2008). One of the most influential scientists who promoted racial pseudo-science and whose work was very influential in the mid-19th century (when these social constructs were developed) was Carolus Linnaeus, a Swedish botanist who determined that all human beings could be divided into four groups as follows:

Americanus: reddish, choleric, and erect; obstinate, merry, free, regulated by customs.

Asiaticus: sallow, melancholy, Black hair, dark eyes, haughty, ruled by opinions.

Africanus: Black, phlegmatic, relaxed; women without shame, crafty, indolent, negligent; governed by caprice.

Europaenus: white, sanguine, muscular; inventive; governed by laws (Linnaeus, 1758, pp. 20-24)

These groupings align with the contemporary idea of race in that the four categories continue to be meaningful and physical traits, such as skin colour, are associated with cultural and moral traits. In other words, these groupings form the basis for racist thinking today (Hudson, 1996; Golash-Boza, 2015; Golash-Boza, 2016).

The stories involving Black male students in this study portray an element of Black racial misandry, which is an ideological pathology that is reinforced in academic ontologies, axiologies, and epistemologies whereby Black males are held in suspicion, marginalised, rendered invisible, treated with decreased empathy, and placed in one or more socially acceptable stereotypical categories (Smith et al., 2016). The Black misandry microaggressions in the form of assumptions of criminality and dangerousness are predicated on the erroneous beliefs that society possesses that Black males are violent, unintelligent, lazy, or aggressive/angry (Tucker, 2007; Brooms and Perry, 2016).

In the words of T'challa, 'They would look at you as violent or maybe aggressive'. As was mentioned in an earlier chapter, stereotypes of this sort often result in increased surveillance and discipline of Black children, contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline (Carter et al., 2017; Okonofua and Eberhardt, 2015; Skiba et al., 2014). Consider Thabani's account of racial profiling in which security personnel persistently monitored him and his brothers in the grocery store; his white friends, on the other hand, confirmed that they were not subjected to the same intensive surveillance when visiting the same store.

Despite having 'white' skin, the outlook, in terms of pernicious stereotypes, is no different for study participants from the Traveller community who are, in a very real sense, considered as

not white by the dominant group. Whiteness, we are reminded, is 'less a matter of skin pigmentation and more an organising principle of late modernity' (Nayak, 2007, p.738). Cultural stereotypical offerings of Irish Travellers depict Irish Travellers as thugs, scapegoats, victims, and fools who lack agency, subjectivity, or integrity (Holmes, 2012). Traveller women are commonly perceived as being oppressed, having low aspirations, being wedding-obsessed, and having little interest in life beyond familial duties (Stapleton, 2020). As with Black students, Traveller students are often viewed through a deficit lens and experience racially motivated bullying by peers and teachers as well as low teacher expectations (McGinley and Keane, 2021; McGinley, 2024). Cillian and Chrismina's stories most explicitly confirm this reality.

Chrismina's narrative also brings to light the troubling reality that some schools segregate children into Traveller-only classrooms or 'special units' where students do not receive proper instruction. This practice is ongoing, as confirmed in a recent report, The Travellers of North Cork report undertaken by Dr Patricia McGrath at UCC (McGrath, 2023). Senator Eileen Flynn, cited in (Casey and Phelan, 2023), expressed concerns that during those hours of segregation, Traveller children were very likely given colouring in 'work', essentially depriving them of a decent education.

Chrismina's experience of segregation, being given 'baby books', not being corrected when she had misspelled her name, "because she probably wouldn't need it' negatively impacted, amongst other things, her literacy to this day. At the intersection of race and gender, as a female from the Traveller community, the assumption is also made that Chrismina, per the prevailing stereotype, will not complete her education or pursue further studies but take up familial duties in the home instead.

I must digress ever so slightly at this point: the intersectional lens this study assumes compels me to note an element of economic or class-based oppression, as both participants alluded to not being in a position to afford books and exam papers. Cillian recalls, "We just couldn't afford it, and this teacher just constantly embarrassed me. In front of the class, this was never an issue that was taken outside of the class. This was constantly in front of the class and just embarrassment, dragging you over the coals in front of all your peers and classmates, and just making an absolute show of you".

From an Asian perspective, the damaging effects of stereotyping can also be seen in Mulan's account, where she experienced Anti-Asian racism to a greater extent during the outbreak of

the COVID-19 virus. Chinese people and culture were blamed for the pandemic, which served to reinforce stereotypes of East Asians as the "yellow peril" (Li and Nicholson, 2021). When U.S President Donald Trump used racist terms such as "Chinese Virus" and "Kung Flu" to associate the Covid-19 infection with nationality and ethnicity, Asian people, including Chinese students like Mulan, immediately faced a resurgence of the long-standing "yellow peril" discourse fed by the White House and Western media (Yu, 2021).

Another stereotype associated with Asian students is that they are hardworking and high-performing. An interesting aspect of Mulan's experience is that the 'high performing' stereotype (the high-achieving model minority) was not applied to her because of her English-language deficiency. She found herself in a position where her lack of English skills undermined her intelligence. Her teacher steers Mulan towards lower-level subjects because of her English-language deficiency. Teachers misconstrue Mulan's language support needs as low academic ability. We also draw from Mulan's narrative that race-based stereotyping is not only pervasive but turns inward on the self as well.

Self-stereotyping led Mulan to feel like she was a failure because she did not live up to the prevailing stereotype of the high-performing Asian student. "So, when I am not good at math, I'm not smart enough. I kind of like say mean things to myself personally, like oh, why am I not like that? Why am I not good enough?". Worth emphasizing about stereotypes is their inordinate strain on people. They induce hypervigilance and rumination as individuals caricatured by them anticipate their use and spend time and considerable energy trying to disconfirm them (Kwate and Mayer, 2011). As T'challa stressed in relation to his academic abilities being undermined, 'That as well made me work harder'.

Furthermore, in line with Golah-Boza's theory of race and racism discussed in Chapter 3, participants' experience of stereotyping within the narratives reveals the gendered dimension to racism; it is very clear, I would hope that males are racialised in very different ways to their female counterparts. What is also evident is that racial groups are racialised in distinctive ways.

All in all, we gather from the narratives that minoritised and racialised students are often viewed as a monolithic group, thus stripping them of individual personhood and positioning them as interchangeable with all other people in the same social group. Narrators found themselves, their bodies, imprisoned and caged in pre-labelled boxes built by racial stereotypes founded on notions of white supremacy. One resultant effect is a denial of the heterogeneity, hybridity, and multiplicity that exists within communities of people (Eng and Han, 2000). As

Chrismina stated, 'the thing about stereotypes is that we're all expected to be the same. I think that's what makes it hard then that if one person does something wrong, it's associated with the whole group, but what's frustrating is if one person does something good, it's just that person'.

7.6 white supremacy and whiteness: the role of implicit bias in PWIs

One cannot deliberate upon debilitating stereotypes without mentioning the role of implicit bias. A trend of implicit bias has been observed among educators. Students' behaviour is observed, measured, and addressed using biased lenses. Racial bias has been found to be a significant contributor to decision-making among classroom teachers, school leaders, school psychologists, and beyond. Within homogeneous teaching bodies, implicit bias is a major contributor to the racial violence enacted upon 'othered' subjects who are oftentimes viewed as objects (Sevon, 2022).

7.7 white supremacy and whiteness: navigating a predominately white environment in an othered 'non-belonging' body

Moving through life as an othered and objectified entity in predominantly white environments and institutions was taxing, exacting, and debilitating in more ways than one for narrators. Consider Thabani, whose freedom of movement was curtailed, having to avoid certain places for fear of being attacked. Imagine constantly having to scan your environment in expectation and dread of the next assault, feeling perpetually unsafe. That hypervigilance, heightened nervous system, muscles tensed, the weight of an undue burden imposed on a "kid," as Thabani put it. Fanon (1952) once lamented: "and then we were given the occasion to confront the white gaze. An unusual weight descended on us. The real world robbed us of our share" (p. 90).

The blows and injuries were incessant, making life so unbearable that Rochelle attempted to take her own life. Farah describes it as 'hell', "It was a place of torment, tormented by both teachers and students". It was indeed a crucible of sorts. "The white man is all around me; up above the sky is tearing at its navel; the earth crunches under my feet and sings white, white. All this whiteness burns me to a cinder" (Fanon, 1952, p. 94).

Within this collective homogenous teaching and student body, at a formative and sensitive time in their lives in which a sense of belonging is crucial for overall well-being and development (Allen et al., 2024), study participants reported that they often found themselves burning and then drowning in the ashes of social isolation, alienation, the double-bind of invisibility and hypervisibility, ostracization, devaluing and non-belonging.

The non-representation, the acts of racial/educational violence, the silences and silencing, communicated the subtle message to students of colour and members of the Traveller community that they do not belong in these environments. That they are unwelcome. This often leads to an outsider-within status (Harwood et al., 2012; Lewis et al., 2021), an impostor syndrome as it were, and a sense of inadequacy that stubbornly persists well beyond the school-going years, as is more clearly evidenced by Cillian and Chrismina's narrative.

Cillian woefully explains how 'even to this day, like, you know, I have an honours degree at undergraduate level, I have a first-class honours degree, a first-class master's degree, and a first-class honours master's degree, and yet I always feel impostor syndrome'. Chrismina echoes this sentiment, revealed in a conversation between her and her employer (the school principal). 'I said to him, the first week he like sat down with me and was checking in, and I said I feel like I have impostor syndrome. Like, I shouldn't be here. Like someone should come along, tap me on the shoulder and tell me, you're in the wrong building, and that's how I feel I'm gonna go through life for the rest of my life. That's quite sad because everything I was subjected to in school affected my mental health to the point now, where I'm living with impostor syndrome'. A point worth underscoring here is that the minoritised and racialised students who contributed to this study do not display feelings of alienation and impostorism due to any innate deficiency or inadequacy on their part but because they are positioned as such by members of the dominant group. As pertains to students from the Traveller community specifically, Traveller students have reported a lack of a sense of belonging and connection to their peers (Lynch and Lodge, 2004; Boyle et al., 2018; Quinlan, 2021). In one study, 42 percent of the nearly 5000 primary school students reported high or very high levels of social distance from Travellers. A report by Lynch and Lodge (2004) found that three-quarters of post-primary school students in their study believed that Travellers would not fit into their school environment.

This wound of non-belonging ran deeper still for narrators of mixed ancestry, Irish-born, descending from one white native Irish parent and a parent of colour. The stabs of "go back to where you come from" and "where are you from"? Added fuel to the fire of non-belonging. The narrow/exclusionary construction of Irishness, rooted in whiteness, is tantamount to a skinning, really, a stripping away of and denial of identity that left study participants in a state of limbo. Neither here nor there, a perpetual foreigner in one's own land, never a true citizen, always a second-class citizen because surely one can never be Black AND Irish, God forbid!

This agony is best expressed by Scott, who states: 'being biracial, it's a very profound feeling of not belonging anywhere. I don't belong anywhere. My home is on the move almost, my home is between cultures, and amongst many different things. I'm an outsider; I can't possibly be Irish because I'm not white'.

7.8 white supremacy and whiteness: the violent erasure of the othered self

Identity-based injuries were also inflicted by demeaning/devaluing the participant's cultural identity and heritage. Rochelle's narrative is a prime example of this. During roll call, the teacher calls out the full names of every child, except hers —the interloper, the second-class citizen, the only Black child with a 'foreign' surname.

 These acts are racial microaggressions that reinforce a racial and cultural hierarchy of minoritised inferiority. Names usually carry cultural and family significance, connecting children to their ancestors, country of origin, or ethnic group, and often have deep meaning or symbolism for parents and families. Acts like avoiding or mispronouncing names devalue self-worth and negatively impact cultural identity. These subtle experiences with racism can have a lasting impact on the self-perceptions and worldviews of a child (Kohli and Solorzano, 2012).

This study's findings suggest that minoritised groups are still subjected to education systems that are unresponsive to, or even repressive of, their cultures. Study participants all had to navigate what Lee (2005) identifies as ''culture[s] of Whiteness'' (pg. 30–31), which could be defined as the invisible but salient reality that white cultures, experiences, histories, and identities permeate educational structures from instructional practices to the curriculum.

We gather from the narratives that not only was there complete erasure in terms of representation in the student and teaching body, but also an eradication of participants' culture and identity through the academic curriculum. Participants did not see themselves represented in the curriculum, let alone on posters and pictures on school walls (environmental exclusion). Mulan stated 'I never saw anyone like me represented in school, not on posters in the classroom or even in the textbooks' , Scott too stresses that 'in school nothing was ever taught about Black people. There was nothing to celebrate them, there was not one achievement. I don't think we ever studied a single person or got examples from a single person who was Black'.

Chrismina lamented: 'we can cover America, and we can cover World War Two, and we can cover the likes of Hitler and Mussolini. But why aren't we covering the people that have been in our country the longest, people that have been here, that are sitting in front of you'? Thabani posed a poignant question 'why do we generally only have German, French, and Spanish when

we live in a global village? It's the same with History and even the textbooks; there needs to be more representation'. De'Andre echoes those statements and argues that 'they should still teach about these other ethnicities and cultures, you know, and try and at least fill the gap. Or even just have posters on the walls in the classroom, anything that depicted other ethnicities, other races'. So, we witness a complete and total erasure, a pervasive absenting of racialised and minoritised communities. This is particularly troubling since absence is not solely nothingness; it is a phenomenon that causally affects real social outcomes (Tatar and Adigüzel, 2019).

Ladson-Billings (1998) positions the school curriculum as a colourblind white supremacist master script due to the silencing and erasure of minoritised voices and stories. The power to define the curricular content and the discourse around education lies largely with white racial actors. It tends to be steeped in a history in which whiteness is structured and positioned as superior to all the other racialised groups (Najarro, 2022).

Not only is whiteness structured and positioned as superior, but the curriculum in Ireland and indeed many parts of Europe also feeds/fuels what I refer to as the 'Europe is best' fallacy. Europe is typically positioned as the pinnacle of human achievement, the centre of the universe, as it were. The idea is promulgated that Europe has a monopoly on civilisation and progress and that Europeans are the universal knowers. Across education, the curriculum signals the superiority of knowledge from ancient Greece and Rome. For example, Euclid and Pythagoras figure prominently in math classes, while contributions from Babylonia, Egypt, and Arab-Islamic cultures are often invisible (Bostick, 2021).

 A cursory review of the history of mathematics clearly suggests that mathematics was not an isolated European phenomenon. Consider Brahmagupta and Aryabhata of India, who made some of the world's most important mathematical discoveries. Brahmagupta is responsible for the treatise that invented and defined the concept of zero. Aryabhata'a work contains a very close approximation of the value of pi – 3.1416 and focuses on spherical trigonometry. His system had direct implications for the field of astronomy. It enabled him to calculate the movements of the planet, eclipses, the Earth's size, and even the exact length of the solar year to an accuracy of seven decimal places. He also correctly proposed a spherical Earth that rotated on its own axis. The ideas of Brahmagupta and Arybhata's made their way to the Arab world initially and then on to the West, giving us the very form of numbers we utilise today (Dalrymple, 2024). Despite these groundbreaking achievements, these mathematicians remain unknown. In the European idea of the Orient, the East is primitive, backwards, heathen, and

uncivilised; the West, on the other hand, is natural, civil, Christian, and normal (Almeida, 2015). Africa, too, is painted with the same brush stroke as the East.

It appears that the sentiments expressed by esteemed historian Hugh Trevor-Roper in his famous 1963 speech cited in (Dabiri, 2020) at Sussex University, which was broadcast on national television and published in a popular periodical and a book, persist till today:

> "Perhaps in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at present, there is none, or very little: there is only the History of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is largely darkness, like the history of pre-European, pre-Columbian America. And darkness is not a subject for History" (pg. 4).

Du Bois (1920), in his 'Dark Water, voices from within the veil', cited in Mitchell (2018), posits:

> "How easy then by emphasis and omission to make children believe that every great soul the world ever saw was a white man's soul, that every great thought that the world ever knew was a white man's thought, that every great deed the world ever did was a white man's deed, that every great dream the world ever sang was a white man's dream (pg. 491).

A Eurocentric curriculum has serious ramifications; it foregrounds ethnocentrism, reinforces institutional and systemic inequalities and stereotypes, as well as colonial mentalities and power relationships (Biraimah et al., 2024). Furthermore, the omission of knowledge from other cultures in the curriculum is a form of epistemic racism and silencing. Epistemic racism positions the knowledge and ways of knowing of the dominant group as legitimate, invalidating those of racialised groups (Beagan et al., 2022).

Similarly, epistemic silencing privileges some knowledge and ways of producing knowledge over others (Starke and Mastracci, 2023). Through the curriculum, marginalised students, as in the case of this study's participants, experience alienation and isolation from their histories and societies as well as a disconnect from their own cultures, receiving an education that is tantamount to intellectual abuse and betrayal, whilst students from the dominant group end up with a sense of inflated dominance (Bostick, 2021).

Larrick, cited in Welch (2016), puts it ever so beautifully:

> 'Although his light skin makes him one of the world's minorities, the white child learns from his books that he is the kingfish. There seems little chance of developing the humility so urgently needed for world cooperation, instead of world conflict, as long as our children are brought up on gentle doses of racism through their books.' (p. 367)

The curriculum reinforces power structures and continues to add privilege on top of those already privileged (Vu and Pham, 2025). Students already in the dominant social or cultural group remain there, possibly even increasing in social or cultural capital, and those outside the dominant social and cultural groups do not (Knapp, 2021).

7.9 white supremacy and whiteness: educational violence and harms through approved literature

Moreover, some of the English literature/novels included in the curriculum are particularly offensive and demeaning to racialised students. Take, for example, Scott's narrative in which the teacher reads the N-word aloud from the book "To Kill a Mockingbird," and all his white classmates, as if choreographed, mockingly turn to look at him as though to say, the teacher said the N-word and there's nothing you can do about it. The use of racial epithets in classrooms is unacceptable; there is no need whatsoever to use racially derogatory slurs and denigrating language to teach children about slavery or racism. Using such language in the classroom also licenses such words to be used elsewhere.

Some school districts in the United States have gone so far as to remove books such as 'To Kill a Mockingbird' and 'Of Mice and Men' from required reading lists, as well as ban the use of the N-word in all school classes. The books are available for individual consumption and can only be used by teachers working with small groups. The teacher, however, must undergo training on facilitating conversations on racism, implicit bias, and racial identity beforehand (Marshall University Libraries, 2022). Closer to Irish shores, in Wales, these books were removed from the GCSE curriculum due to their inclusion of racial slurs (Shead, 2024).

In an interview with the BBC, The Commissioner of Children in Wales welcomed the exclusion of the books from the curriculum, stating that 'discussions of the book in class had been psychologically and emotionally harmful for some Black children' and that 'it was important to have opportunities for positive, constructive, informed discussions on race and racism but there were alternative texts available, which could still offer the same opportunities but in a less directly harmful way'. The Commissioner emphasised that this was not censorship but rather a safeguarding of the well-being of those children who are negatively impacted by the use of denigrating and derogatory language in those books and classrooms (Sanders, 2024, n.p).

By and large, the curriculum as experienced by the students in this study sends a message to minoritised and racialised groups that their culture and heritage are not important and that they do not belong. Not only do they not belong, but they are also somewhat inferior, not worthy of

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recognition or acknowledgement. The danger is that students, in internalising the script of 'white' cultural superiority, may come to accept the assumptions of inferiority. Under the white gaze of the curriculum, the teaching body, the student body, the body schema of the "Black" other crumbles, disintegrating under the weight of colonial ideas and the thousand details, anecdotes, and stories told by whites about the Black person. A racial epidermal schema replaces the body schema. These alterations to the body schema corrupt the psyche, resulting in changes to the Black person's self-awareness so that she experiences herself as object-like in various ways (Fanon, 1952).

Given the diversity and multiculturalism present in our schools today, the continual presentation of a narrow Eurocentric worldview, and by extension whiteness, presented as the implicit standard to rank all societies' hierarchies, is unacceptable. The curriculum needs to be reflective, inclusive of, and sensitive to the diverse student population.

7.10 white supremacy and whiteness: pathologizing of culture and appearance, and exoticisation of Black and Black-white Mixed Ancestry bodies

Further, over and above experiencing educational violence in the forms heretofore mentioned, under the umbrella of the culture of whiteness/white supremacy, participants also experienced pathologizing of their culture and appearance. In some cases, this pathologization led to participants denying and rejecting aspects of their culture and identity to avoid rejection and further attacks on their humanity. Farah and Mulan's stories most poignantly demonstrate this.

We witness the intersectionality of racial and religious oppression in Farah's experience. Over and above the racial discrimination meted out against her, Farah's teacher makes comments about banning the hijab in Ireland. The pressure to conform to normative whiteness drives Farah to stop wearing her hijab, thereby erasing an integral part of her identity. Mulan experiences culinary racial microaggression and 'lunch box shaming' when she brings in ethnic food, which leads her to denounce her Asian culture by bringing in sandwiches so she could blend in and not be criticized by her peers. The notion of whiteness as normative creates an assumed centre to which others are expected to conform. (Lewis et al., 2000). This conformity sadly comes, as we can witness, at a very significant cost for 'othered' beings.

Participants were also subjected to exoticization in various forms. Mulan experiences harassment through cultural appropriation via the adoption of the fox eye/ slanted eye trend by the white girls in her school. Chinese features, slanted eyes in particular, have been a target of mockery for decades. Many Chinese women have even undergone surgery to alter their slanted eyes. This practice is built on the legacy of the history of Western Science and race that

privileges the white body as normal and beautiful. Through the imposition of Western standards of beauty in Asia, plastic surgery and skin-lightening products have become popularized, arising from insecurities and feelings of inferiority rooted in the hegemony of Western imperialism. The fox eye trend appropriates Asian eyes and is ignorant of past racism. Slanted eyes are seen as aberrational but then accepted when people from the dominant group endorse it as a cool trend, in the process exoticizing and eroticizing. The message communicated to the Asian community is that acceptance depends more on who wears/bears something rather than where it originates (Lee, 2020).

Ayanna also shares a similar story. Throughout primary school, she is taunted and tormented for her "big Black lips," but then in later years, the very feature that she was bullied for is suddenly embraced because the dominant racial group sees using Botox and collagen injections to enlarge their lips as fashionable. Artificial Black skin (tanned) and features are deemed attractive on a white body, yet ugly in their natural state on a Black body. The ability to 'plunder and pillage' other cultures at will and decide what is beautiful and when it is lovely speaks volumes to the power and privilege that white supremacy culture yields.

Moreover, exoticization via hair was a very prominent feature in the narratives of Black and Black-white mixed ancestry contributors. Strong themes of hair discrimination and harassment occurred through verbal statements and non-verbal cues, such as physical touching of hair. Interestingly, every narrator who self-identified as Black or Mixed Ancestry, male and female alike —60% of this study's population —brought up the issue of hair. Many may not realise that hair is an integral part of Black people's identity. For example, in a 2022 study by Rogers et al., 93% of Black girls spontaneously mentioned hair when describing their intersectional identities; however, consideration and attention to hair are woefully absent in most racial identity literature.

It is worth emphasizing here that hair was not an issue for narrators until it was made so by members of the dominant racial group. Ayanna states, 'Obviously my hair was a big problem, I started hating myself …. hating who, what I looked like because of all the bullying, the insults, I used to have to ask my parents to please do something to my hair. I remember one time I actually… went out and bought clip-in extensions, I had to get somebody to put them in because I just hated myself. I have my hair relaxed (straightened) now, but I used to have very fuzzy afro-type hair, and I used to wear that into school, and people would be laughing at my hair. Then, when I used to have braids in as well, people would be laughing and they laughed at other Black students'.

Rochelle also shared how 'It [her hair] became another thing, you know, "x y z with the afro", it was almost like another mark against you. For years, I hated my hair because of what I was. That hatred became my normal thinking about myself and my African features and my hair and everything across the board.'

7.11 white supremacy and whiteness: the vilification of 'Black' hair

In the early 1800s, St John, cited in Hutton (2016) penned the following words about Black/ Negro hair:

> "The principal trouble to the female negro mind is her unfortunate wool. How she envies her more favoured sisters their long tresses! How she tries to draw out each fibre, and endeavours to make something of it by carefully plaiting it with false hair! Even the smallest negro servant will spend hours in oiling, brushing, and tending this poor crop, whose greatest length will only compass three or four inches. It is only when women are more than half white that the wool turns into hair, and even then, it has sometimes a suspicious crispy wave, which, however, looks well" (pg. 30)

Of white beauty and hair, Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States of America and ironically author of the preamble to the Constitution of the USA, which states that "All men are created equal", cited too in Hutton (2016), had this to say:

> "Whether the Black of the negro resides in the reticular membrane between the skin and the scarfskin, or in the scarfskin itself; whether it proceeds from the colour of the blood, the colour of the bile, or from that of some other secretion, the difference is fixed in nature… And is this difference of no importance? Is it not the foundation of a greater or less share of beauty in the two races? Are not the fine mixtures of red and white, the expressions of every passion by the greater or less suffusions of colour in the one, preferable to that external monotony, which reigns in the countenances, that immoveable veil of Black which covers all the emotions of the other race? Add to these, flowing hair, a more elegant symmetry of form, their preference of them, as uniformly as is the preference of the Oran-ootan for the Black women over those of his own species. The circumstance of superior beauty, is thought worth attention in the propagation of our horses, dogs, and other domestic animals; why not in that of man?" (pg. 21).

Though penned in the 1800s in an American context, the sentiments and convictions conveyed in the quotations above are prevalent even in the 21st century and apply globally. Indeed, not much progress has been made since the days of slavery and missionary schools, where Black hair in its natural state was deemed unsightly, ungodly, and untameable (Cox et al., 2021). It never ceases to amaze me how little has changed since then.

The counter-narratives confirm the reality that Black people's features, hair included, continue to be a site of oppression and ridicule. Natural Black hair remains misunderstood, villainized, and eroticized in virtually every facet of society (Cranston-Bates, 2012). Most people of African descent experience discrimination, rejection, and aesthetic trauma based on the various textures and styles of their hair (Wilson et al., 2018).

The white supremacy structure in which we live valorises white beauty and aesthetic standards whilst pathologizing Black aesthetics. White-dominated culture has racialised beauty so that hair that reflects European ancestry is normalized and deemed more attractive than hair that reflects African ancestry. In many societies, racial hierarchies celebrate a standard of beauty that devalues and excludes African hair textures (Robinson, 2011; Taylor, 1999). Black pride in stylization, aesthetics, and beauty runs counter to white supremacist hegemony (Tate, 2009).

The statement 'Oh, but it is just hair' is often made, but it is **not** just hair. It may be 'just hair' to those lacking the cultural competence and awareness to comprehend the deep cultural, historical, and identity significance attached to Black people's hair and the struggles that their locks bear witness to. Hair is racially, culturally, and religiously symbolic and therefore loaded with socio-cultural meaning. (Cox et al., 2021). In a racially stratified society, it is not surprising that racial, as well as cultural, social, religious, and political meanings are attributed to hair. Thus, hair must be understood in the context of structural and ideological white supremacy, which venerates white European beauty and aesthetic standards, all the while denigrating features associated with the Black body (Joseph-Salisbury and Connelly 2018).

Moreover, hair is central to constructions of Black style (Mercer 1994). Hair is the basic, natural symbol of what people want to be; its social-cultural significance should therefore not be underestimated (Thompson, 2009). For many people of African descent, women in particular, hair is emotive, symbolic, and an inseparable part of their identity (Mbilishaka et al., 2020). However, Black people often find themselves in a position where they must kowtow to white normative standards to avoid harassment and discrimination, leading yet again to the cultural violence of identity erasure.

A case in point is Ayanna's account of being bullied and taunted for her natural hair in school. Ayanna, in search of a survival mechanism in a culture where the social, political, and economic choices of racialised communities are conditioned to the extent to which their mutable and immutable physical characteristics align with those of the dominant racial group

(Thompson, 2009), begs and pleads with her parents to have her hair chemically relaxed/straightened.

Ayanna was desperate to modify her African hair texture to bring it closer to a European norm. This is not unusual; Black people frequently find themselves chemically straightening or cutting their hair to be accepted by White people. From a tender age, Ayanna understands that in a colonized world, hair is a salient feature and of equal value to skin colour when it comes to the construction of social value, so that straight hair can compensate for Black skin and reward an individual with higher social status (Neegan 2008). As a means of ending the racial abuse, she adopts hegemonic ideologies that correspond to whiteness, an act which hooks (2015) described as capitulating to white supremacist ideologies.

Yet again, succumbing/surrendering to white supremacist ideologies comes at a very high cost. Consenting to the hegemonic notion of beautiful hair is an extremely violent process. It is entangled with all forms of violence: physical, direct, structural, cultural, and symbolic. It is beyond the scope of this analysis to delve deeper into all the various forms. Suffice it to say that straightening/relaxing hair to achieve the acceptability of European hairstyles is a physically violent process in that the erasure of one's natural self and the attendant cultural identity is often achieved through slathering one's hair with poisonous and harmful chemical concoctions, which often leave the scalp bruised or burnt (Oyedemi, 2016). The process is harrowing. Dash (2006) quotes Malcolm X, the African American revolutionary and human rights activist who applied lye chemical to his hair in the early '50s. Malcolm vividly describes the process:

> "The congolene just felt warm when Shorty started combing it in. But then my head caught fire. I gritted my teeth and tried to pull the sides of the kitchen table together. The comb felt as if it was raking my skin off. My eyes watered, my nose was running. I couldn't stand it any longer; I bolted to the washbasin. I was cursing Shorty with every name I could think of" (pg. 29).

Some might say that today's self is less rigid than previous notions of identity, which are bound to family, culture, and religion, and lead to multiple ways of identity construction in which an individual moves in and out of multiple identities. In this sense, the self has become fluid, boundaryless, pluralistic, and splintered (Gergen, 1991). Therefore, an argument may be proffered that if one's hair is linked to identity, the tendency of Black women to adopt Caucasian and Asian textures of hair is not necessarily a dismissal of their natural identity, but an embracing instead of the multiple identities presented in the notion of a postmodern self (Oyedemi, 2016).

Advocates of the hybrid ideology of self-hybridization, a cultural logic of globalisation could also argue that there are traces of other cultures that exist in every culture and that rigid distinct culture is gradually evolving into a hybrid culture in every cultural domain, be it music, fashion, and other cultural practices (Kraidy, 2005). An example of this might be Caucasians wearing locks or Asian women braiding their hair in African style. Similarly, an African woman wearing straight, European-textured hair is the logic of a hybrid culture brought about by globalization.

However, the idea of a postmodern self is limited in the context of hair. While white and Asian women sometimes utilise hair extensions, this artificial hair is mainly used to augment their natural hair. In contrast, in the case of most African women, it is about the complete erasure of their hair identity. Furthermore, the ideology of hybridity also does not hold any water when it comes to hair. While white and Asian individuals may occasionally wear African hairstyles, we do not see Chinese women en masse in China or White women anywhere in the world donning Afros, braids, locks, Nubian bumps and knots, etc, as a daily image of themselves. Caucasian girls deciding to braid their hair on holiday in Kenya can in no way be compared to what is happening in the psyche of Black women worldwide. What we see is Black women everywhere in the world, en masse, wearing straight/ false hair over their natural hair as their natural identity, thereby denying their true essence. For many Black African women, the ideologies of postmodern self, hybridity, and globalization regarding identity and hair are a phantasm (Oyedemi, 2016).

hooks cited in Siebler (2023), argues that individual preferences, irrespective of whether they are rooted in self-hate or not, cannot negate that Black people's obsession with hair straightening reflects the psychology of oppression and the impact of racist colonization. It is worth mentioning that capitalism is benefitting hugely from this phenomenon; by one estimate, the global wig, weave, and hair extension market is worth ~$8B, and is forecasted to grow to nearly $12B by 2029 (Arizton Advisory & Intelligence, 2024). Capitalism played a decisive role in the origin of racism and is constantly reproducing new breeds (Parray and Gupta, 2024).

7.12 white supremacy, whiteness: enforced whiteness via dress codes and policies
Then again, not all Black people succumb to the societal pressure to adopt Eurocentric standards of beauty as pertains to hair. Unwilling to conform to societal standards of hair and beauty, Black people use their hair and hair accessories, such as durags and hair wraps, to engage in an expression of self that is rooted in their Black identity (Banks, 2000). In school contexts, Black students who bravely and proudly embrace African stylization and cultural

expression often find themselves in situations where whiteness is enforced on them. Teachers and administration wittingly or unwittingly usually use dress codes and policies around dress codes to force specific social norms on students (Fieldstadt, 2019; Buchmann, 2019).

Frequently, dress code policies at school and work reflect a white understanding of professionalism that unconsciously pushes Black presentation of self to the periphery of civil society. As there are negative stereotypes associated with Black hair (Harris, 2014), teachers and administrators amplify these negative stereotypes by telling students that these hairstyles are unprofessional, inappropriate, or distracting from the learning environment. In this way, Black students are coerced into adopting hairstyles more commonly associated with whiteness. Such practices further white hegemony, which prioritizes whiteness as the only aesthetic acceptable in the school setting. white supremacy is constructed through aesthetic superiority (Rogers, 2022).

T'challa's narrative gives eloquent witness to this. T'challa is targeted by school personnel because his physical appearance is not in conformity with white norms and expectations around self-presentation. T'challa's Black hairstyle and protective hair care practice of wearing a durag are racialised via association with gang activity. His teacher instructs him to remove his durag because "he looks like a thug". The school administration then proceeds to alter the school dress code policy to include durags as a violation of the code of conduct; in this way, acts of domination are imposed on subjugated bodies to enforce specifics social norms (Rogers, 2022).

Such policies overlook Black children's needs because their hair care practices differ from those of their white peers, thereby normalizing white hair care practices without accounting for racial differences among students. Driven by anti-Black constructions of Black hair care practices and styles, Black students [like T'challa] are penalized for using healthy hair care practices. To avoid punishment, Black students adopt a white aesthetic for the sake of avoiding unnecessary confrontations with teachers and administrators (James-Gallaway et al., 2024). Subtle policies create a setting in which Black students are covertly and impeccably indoctrinated and subordinated into whiteness. Through the control of hair and aesthetic silencing, conditions of white supremacy are maintained and perpetuated (Rogers, 2022).

7.13 white supremacy and whiteness: an incisive and historical analysis examining the harm behind touching or asking to touch people of colour's hair

Some narrators also brought up the issue of hair touching, which is worth unpacking. Dash (2006) draws attention to the peculiar relationship white people have with Black hair and the

Black body, positing that white people view Black hair as alluring yet threatening, something they seek to touch because of a fascination with difference or maybe because Black hair is symbolic of a distant otherworldly detachment and the supposed lower 'racial' status of the Black subject. The act of touching, according to Dash, can be perceived as a peculiar form of power-knowledge.

For T'challa and countless other people of colour, hair touching is experienced as a form of harassment. To understand why touching a Black person's hair is demeaning, it is important to take the historical context into account. Understanding the history and patterns of how many Black people around the world were treated can provide insight into why touching or requesting to touch a Black person's hair can be hurtful and offensive.

In 1904, Ota Benga was stolen from his home in Congo, Africa, and taken to the United States, where he was put on display and exhibited in a cage alongside apes in the Bronx Zoo. There, Benga became a spectacle, with nearly a quarter of a million visiting the zoo to see him. Before Benga arrived at the zoo, Benga and a group of others were paraded at the World's Fair in St Louis, where they were pinched, poked, and prodded while their pet monkeys and parrots were taunted and burned with cigars. They were also subjected to the biting cold without adequate shelter or clothes. Out of the public eye, they were measured, photographed, and plaster casts of them were taken for busts (Newkirk, 2015). We see from Rochelle's account that this poking and prodding is not a thing of the past; she shares how 'somebody always wanted to poke or prod my head'.

Resuming our historical analysis, across the Atlantic, on European shores, in the summer of 1897, King Leopold II imported 267 Congolese to Brussels to place on show around his colonial residence in Tervuren for the education and amusement of white Europeans. Out of a population of 4 million, 1.3 million Belgians visited the palace, walking over a rope bridge to get the best view. That particular summer was bitterly cold, and seven of the Congolese lost their lives to influenza and pneumonia. Their bodies were dumped in an unmarked mass grave in the local cemetery. Human zoos were by no means a novelty to the West and had been a regular feature earlier in the century in London, Paris, Oslo, and Hamburg (Boffey, 2018).

What of Sara Baartman, whose story is part of a long narrative of scientific racism? Sara was a young woman taken from her homeland in South Africa and exhibited in London and Paris as a carnival or freak show attraction at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Promoted as

'The Hottentot Venus', her 'unnatural' body was placed on public display for a fee (Lyons, 2018).

Her death in Paris, at the age of 28, enabled George Cuvier, a French naturalist, zoologist, and a founding figure in the new field of comparative anatomy, to subject her body to an autopsy and dissection in 1815 and publish his findings in 1817. Her distended buttocks and elongated labia were the focus of both her display in the carnivals and Cuvier's report on her corpse. Cuvier's investigation of Baartman's corpse would advance his theories of racial evolution. Afterward, her fully articulated skeleton and her preserved genitalia and brain were exhibited in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris until they were placed in storage in 1974 (Johnson and Rolls, 2023).

Baartman was prey, her body fetishized in life and death by all Europeans, pleasure-seekers, and professionals alike. She was rendered as a specimen, her body explored, poked, and prodded to feed the colonial obsession/preoccupation of Khoisan women's enlarged buttocks, or steatopygia, and extended labia minora, or nymphae, namely, labial hypertrophy In Europe, Sara Baartman was the 'African other' who confirmed that the West was advanced in civility and whose 'unruly' body; displayed, painted, and ultimately dissected, justified the continued brutality of colonization (Johnson, 2024).

For millennia, people of African descent have been ogled and treated like zoo animals in the name of entertainment and the public's fascination with their features and bodies, which have routinely been labelled as 'other.' Asking to touch or indeed touching a Black person's hair is therefore likely to conjure up feelings of otherness and make an individual feel like they are on display, with their body being seen as entertainment for their white counterparts (Gassam Asare, 2020).

The seemingly innocuous act of hair touching is alienating. Treating Black people's hair like it is an aberration feeds into the narrative that white hair is the norm and anything outside of it is abnormal or a deviation. Not only is it alienating, but it is also a violation of personal space, not to mention a hygiene hazard. Among the many reasons it's completely inappropriate to touch someone's hair is all the germs carried and transferred by our hands (Rogers, 2022).

7.14 white supremacy and whiteness: entrenched in the concept of cultural competence
As we approach the conclusion of this chapter, I contend that the onus is on teachers, school administration, and school leadership to be racially and culturally literate, they ought to be aware and mindful of the cultural significance of hair as well as the great psychological,

emotional, physical, and financial costs/toll involved in Black individuals adopting Eurocentric standards of beauty and stylization. Resisting white supremacy is a full-time job; conforming to it is equally taxing and socially paralyzing, as it leaves people of colour, their culture, and their voice at the periphery. Professionals working with students are positioned as key custodians with a duty to advocate for inclusive and culturally relevant grooming policies in educational institutions (Pitts, 2021). This should not be taken to mean that I am advocating for cultural competency as the solution to racism.

Cultural competency is purported to be an issue among teachers and school leaders. A study on teacher responses to cultural diversity in lower secondary schools in Austria, Ireland and Norway revealed that many teachers and schools have difficulty constructively engaging with the challenge of cultural diversity in the student body. Foley et al. (2025) refer to a gap between policy and practice concerning creating culturally responsive school environments in Ireland. A European-commissioned study on diversity in teacher education also found that there are very few initiatives in Europe aimed at training teacher educators in linguistic and cultural diversity (Herzog-Punzenberger et al., 2020).

However, this emphasis on cultural competency leads me to a crucial aspect of cultural competency that I must address. Cultural competency is often regarded as an appropriate response to addressing white supremacy and the problem of racism, when it is in actuality a product of institutionalised racism that reproduces white supremacy (Grenier, 2020). The concept of cultural competency positions the assumed white [educator] as the hero/protagonist at the centre. They are the ones who benevolently learn about the 'Other' and hone their skills and abilities to ' educate' all Others. Thus, the white [educator] becomes the 'authentic knower' and the solution to the problem of racism in [education] (Razack, 2007), while the Other becomes the problem which needs to be solved (Razack, 1995).

This 'benevolence' extends into the metaphor of the white [educational professional] as the welcoming host and the Other, racialised individuals as guests within [educational] institutions. The implication is that the ones extending the welcome have a natural /organic place within the institution and a natural position of authority within it compared to the Other who is being welcomed. In this way, cultural competency becomes a new and sustaining way of reproducing institutionalised white supremacy and existing power relations between white [educators] and racialised Others within [educational] contexts. Whereas cultural competency assumes that an [educators] knowledge of the Other is adequate to provide culturally appropriate care, a critical approach calls for a deeper reflection of the ways in which [education] systems and practices

uphold and perpetuate white supremacist ideologies, leading to culturally inappropriate care (Grenier, 2020). As such, Walcott (2014) argues that cultural competency should be considered both a product and extension of raciological thinking and practices that elevate white [educators] to positions of power and privilege and the racialised Other to one of subordination.

Ultimately cultural competency has been criticised for its reductionist, static and objectivist framing of culture and potential for promoting stereotyping (Azzopardi and McNeill, 2016); its objectivist framework as a competence or skill that can be acquired through training and learning and which can be appraised (Kumas-Tan et al., 2007 ; Wear et al., 2012); and its liberal approach in which racism is attributed to ignorant and prejudiced individuals or a 'few bad apples', instead of deeply rooted systemic processes (Anderson, 2024). As Ahmed (2012) states 'such approaches tend to exercise the figure of the 'racist' as one who can be charged and brought before the law. The very appearance of this figure is what allows a reduction of racism to an individual person who suffers from a false set of beliefs. The reduction of racism to the figure of the 'racist' allows structural or institutional forms of racism to recede from view by projecting racism onto a figure that is easily discarded' (p.42).

 7.15 white supremacy and whiteness: at the root of our stories - denuding the deification of whiteness

After all has been said and done, ultimately, lying at the very root of the racism experienced by the narrators in this study, from the more covert hair touching to the more overt acts, is that venomous and often stealthy serpent of white supremacy and her progeny, whiteness. What a peculiar beast this! From the day she was conceived and birthed by colonialism and imperialism till this very day, she has never 'given up the ghost'. Her heart beats well into the 21st century, pillaging and plundering, stripping and maiming, ravaging and devastating souls as she goes on her way, telling her age-old, twisted pseudo-scientific lie of distinct races and the inferiority of the racialised and minoritised.

For generations, scholars of colour such as Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, and Franz Fanon, as well as some white scholars, have maintained that whiteness lies at the centre of the problem of racism and that racism can be disrupted by problematizing whiteness (Nayak, 2007). An interrogation of whiteness and the privileges it affords is paramount. Whiteness as a truth and an unnamed knowledge system must be named and challenged. The fiction that white people constitute a race and that this race is endowed with 'natural' abilities unavailable to others must be exterminated. Unless the idea of whiteness as a natural category is denuded, stripping away its deification and, ultimately, exposing it as naked, ugly, and all too human, the underlying

belief in superiority enshrined as natural to the category will remain intact. The imperative is to abolish the concept, idea, and ideology created decisively to divide people (Dabiri, 2021; McCormack, 2022).

The truth is that we are one. We are interconnected and part of the same web of life. As the Great Native American Chief, Seattle of the Duwamish tribe, proclaimed: "Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect."(Xavier University, no date). Thus, an injury to one is an injury to all. white supremacy is not harmful only to those who do not qualify as white; it is damaging to us all.

A dear friend of mine once concluded her Master of Education thesis with this quote by Aimé Césaire: "And no race holds a monopoly of beauty, of intelligence, of strength, and there is a place for all at the Rendezvous of Victory.". It is a beautiful quote; however, she had completely missed the crux of the matter. She was operating from a 'speaking truth to power' framework that did not consider how truth has been colonized and the very fabric of reality reconstructed by Western frameworks mapped out by white supremacy, Eurocentric logic, and colonialism. A framework that must be dissolved (Dabiri, 2021). The better and more accurate point to be made is that the biological concept of race is neither truth nor reality; it is fiction, a mere phantasm. However, what does hold true is that there is a place for all at the rendezvous of victory. W.E.B. DuBois (1920) in Dark Water: Voices from within the veil, cited in McCormack (2022), poses this poignant question: "Is not the world wide enough for two colours, for many little shinings of the sun?" (pg. 43).

I would like to take the liberty to extend an invitation and challenge to the reader in the form of a quote from a Native American Elder: "Honor the Sacred. Honor the Earth, our Mother. Honor the Elders. Honor all with whom we share the Earth-Four-leggeds, two-leggeds, winged ones, swimmers, crawlers, plant and rock people. Walk in balance and beauty" (Xavier University, no date).

7.16 Conclusion

I hope the reader is impressed with the veracity of Tran Myhre's philosophy that white supremacy is not the shark but the water and that notions of white supremacy and whiteness do not reside only in the bosom of Nazi's and members of the Ku Klux Klan. Consciously or unconsciously, policymakers, school leaders, school administration, students, and other members of the dominant racial group maintain and perpetuate white supremacy and whiteness.

Indeed, critical race theory highlights how white supremacy is structurally all-pervasive and perpetuated unconsciously as well as consciously (Bhopal and Preston, 2012). Therefore, Reddie (2022) stresses:

'yet without an examination of whiteness and the reasons why it has become an aberrant form of ethnic identity, racism will continue to morph and shape-shift as white people recalibrate how they will organise themselves in the world in relationship to those who are not white'. (p.169).

Needless to say, findings from this study inform implications for education research, practice, and policy. This study suggests that any efforts to ameliorate racism-racial microaggressions must address institutional structures, policies, and worldviews that reflect racist ideologies. To address the racism that continues to haunt and taunt racialised and minoritised students, we must centre the voice and stories of the caged bird/oppressed, learn from them, and most importantly, address their root cause.

Usually, in a traditional thesis, at this stage, the researcher, in their position as 'expert', will provide a list of recommendations and conclusions. In keeping with the researcher's commitment to privilege and foreground the voice of research participants, I direct the reader once again to the voices of research participants, those positioned in this study as experts in oppression and crucial founts of knowledge. In keeping with the action-oriented approach of this study, each narrator has rendered a tune in the form of strategies for tackling racism. Indian scholar, literary theorist, and feminist critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) once posed the question: "Can the Subaltern speak?"

The minoritised and racialised individuals involved in this study have sung their freedom songs; in their narratives, they have identified, in their own voices, transformative actions they believe need to be taken to untether the caged bird and work towards racial equity. The question that remains is: who is willing to listen? As Thabani stated, "the other side of that, though, is that there has to be someone willing to listen," and most importantly, act upon the recommendations offered by study participants.

Chapter 8: The Outro

<div align="center">plural outros</div>

: a short, distinct closing section at the end of something (such as a piece of music, a performance, or a news report)- Merriam Webster Dictionary.

This doctoral research concludes in a manner that, yet again, reflects the researcher's commitment and intentionality to privilege and honour the narrators' voices and stories. Each study participant has chosen an image/s that they felt in some way represents or speaks to their journey of traversing or navigating the world as an objectified and marginalised being. The outro, as I have named it, is the narrator's voice in photo form. It reinforces participants' narratives through an image they felt represented a part or the whole of their story. The researcher indulged and welcomed the desire of some narrators to have their image or images accompanied by a poem.

Whilst some of the images portray the brutality and harsh cruelty of the cancer that is racism, others tell of the indomitable nature of the human spirit. They sing a song of survival against all odds, they echo a chorus of courage, resilience, and hope in the face of societal injustices and adversity, of roses that endured and grew in the concrete of bigotry. Others still invite us all to look beyond the colour or pigmentation of one's skin to see a person, a fellow human, fearfully and wonderfully made (The Holy Bible, 1979, Psalm 139:14), created too in the very image of God.

Thabani's Photo story

I think of all the tests and experiences, the racism that I went through as a mountain that I overcame; the hills in the distance in the picture represent the challenges I know I still have ahead of me as I navigate this life as a Black man.

De'Andre's Photo story

I went back to the bridge I was attacked on, and I took some pics. The photos tell of the emotional baggage and trauma that I carry with me till this day. It's a weight, a very heavy weight to carry. All the things that happened, the racial abuse, it doesn't just go away, you know.

Mulan's Photo story

WE ARE NOT A VIRUS

Still I rise, like a phoenix from the ashes, even after everything that I went through.

Still, I Rise

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise

Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

(Angelou, 1978).

Chrismina's Photo story

I persevered, I got my third-level education despite all the obstacles and challenges that come with being a Traveller. I forged my own path, and I'm proud to be part of the 1%. The expectation was that I was not capable because of my background.

Ayanna's Photo story

Cillian's Photo story

This image represents all the barriers and obstructions that exist in relation to societal and educational inclusion as a Traveller, that's education for me. You can't be a Traveller beyond this point. To overcome the barrier, you must leave a little bit of yourself behind. I also want to share the lyrics of a song by Pecker Dunne that speaks to my experience as an Irish Traveller.

Go to sleep my little tinker

Let all your troubles pass you by

For you have no place to camp now

Ah that's a tinkers lullaby.

Ever since you were a baby

Cradle in your mothers shawl

The site they said they didn't want you

And now you have no home at all

When your mother died and left you

You had to fend all alone

All in this land of saints and scholars
And still you have not got a home.

Although your clothes are torn and ragged
And your hair is silvery grey
Some day you'll die and go to heaven
And you will find a camp down there.

Go to sleep my little tinker
Let all your troubles pass you by
For you have no place to camp now
Ah that's a tinkers lullaby.

These images portray my experience as a biracial person, that neither here nor thereness……being ostracized, always an eternal outsider.

Is it Black with white stripes, or white with Black stripes? Why does it matter to us so much? An interesting fact about a zebra's stripes is that they are like human fingerprints in that every zebra has a unique stripe pattern! The emphasis should be on recognising and appreciating the uniqueness and beauty of each individual and treating them as human beings.

T'challa's Photo story

My reasoning behind this particular picture is to portray the isolation that you feel, on the outside looking in. You're fenced in by the hate, all alone in those white spaces, and they won't let you in.

Farah's Photo story

This picture represents all the hell I was put through as a Muslim girl in that school; it was a prison. I was imprisoned in so many ways.

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Appendix 1

<u>Invitation to participate in the research project titled: "A counter-narrative study on racialized micro-aggressions in post-primary contexts from the perspectives of individuals from different ethnic and racial minority groups".</u>

I am a doctoral student at Maynooth University conducting a research study exploring Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students lived experience of racial microaggressions during their time in post-primary education. The research is funded by the Irish Research Council.

If you are a **Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)** individual, aged 18 and above, have participated in the Irish post-primary education system, completed secondary education within the last 3-5 years and have experience with the phenomenon of interest (racialized micro-aggressions, microaggressions are defined as subtle verbal and non-verbal insults/assaults directed toward People of Colour and ethnic minorities, often carried out automatically or unconsciously) during your time in post-primary education, I would love to hear about your experience. I invite you to participate in the research study which involves an hour-long conversational interview and an opportunity to choose what aspects of the research you'd like to be involved.

Understanding how students experience racism, particularly racial microaggressions in their school lives can provide critical insights to develop appropriate policies and practices to tackle racism at local school level. School leadership, educators and students alike can also be challenged to think about the role that they play in either perpetuating or alleviating existing racial injustices in the school environment. "Research exposes injustice. We cannot fight for justice when we are not informed, and by informing others we create action."

If you are willing to participate in the study or know of someone who might be interested in participating, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher at the following address: melanie.mckenna.2020@mumail.ie.

Appendix 2

Maynooth University
National University
of Ireland Maynooth

Dr Carol Barrett
Secretary to Maynooth University Research Ethics Committee

12 September 2022

Melanie Queen Groening Mc Kenna
School of Education
Maynooth University

Dear Melanie,

The Social Research Ethics Sub-committee has reviewed the ethical protocol for your project: **A counter-narrative study on racialized micro-aggressions in post-primary contexts from the perspectives of individuals from different ethnic and racial minority groups** and we would like to inform you that ethical approval has been granted.

Any deviations from the project details submitted to the ethics committee will require further evaluation. This ethical approval will expire on 30/09/2025.

Kind Regards,

Dr Carol Barrett
Secretary,
Maynooth University Research Ethics Committee

c.c.   Dr Bernie Grummell Desmond, School of Education
         Professor Sharon Todd, School of Education

Reference Number
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