

‘Deferred, denied, and dying dreams’: The experiences of minoritized ethnic prospective pre-service teacher candidates in Ireland.

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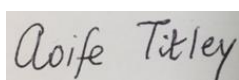
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Abstract: Aoife Titley

‘Deferred, denied, and dying dreams’: The experiences of minoritized ethnic young people interested in pursuing a career in primary teaching in Ireland.

Notwithstanding efforts to increase higher education participation in Ireland, there remains inadequate representation from groups such as lower socio-economic, minority ethnic and individuals with a disability (HEA, 2016). This is particularly the case for primary initial teacher education (ITE) in Ireland, where despite the diversification of teaching emerging as somewhat of a policy priority in recent years (DE, 2018; 2023), student teachers remain overwhelming white, female, settled, middle-class and Catholic (Keane & Heinz, 2016). Students from racialised groups face a myriad of cultural complexities, institutional limitations, and economic constraints to becoming a primary teacher. These barriers span the continuum of access and admissions, post-entry to ITE and transition to teaching.

This research study, situated within a framework of critical participatory action research, explores the narratives, motivations, and experiences of 16 minoritized ethnic young people interested in pursuing a career in primary teaching in Ireland. Data were collected through an asynchronous multi-phased qualitative research design, utilising the visual methodology of PhotoVoice as a baseline and then followed with in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus groups to further explore the lived experience of the sample. The conceptual framework for this study is interdisciplinary in nature, and draws upon sociological understandings of critical race theory, the philosophical concept of epistemic injustice, and components of communion from psychology, to illuminate storied understandings of why more minoritized ethnic young people in Ireland are not considering primary teaching as a career.

Findings from this study challenge many misconceptions and prevailing wisdoms as to why there is not greater diversity in the teaching profession in Ireland. A range of counter-stories are presented which mitigate the cultural de-valuation of participants and give voice to their untold stories about injustices surrounding unequal access to, and engagement with teacher education in Ireland. This research contributes to educational discourse by documenting the narratives and experiences of prospective minoritized ethnic candidates to ITE in a meaningful and authentic way and offers a range of responses for teacher educators and policymakers to consider in the current debate about diversifying the teaching profession in Ireland.

List of abbreviations

B.Ed.: Bachelor of Education degree
BLM: Black Lives Matter
BME/ BAME: Black and Minority Ethnic
CPAR: Critical Participatory Action Research
CF: Conceptual Framework
CLIL: Content Language Integrated Learning
CLS: Critical Legal Studies
CRT: Critical Race Theory
DARE: Disability Access Route to Education
DCU: Dublin City University
DE: Department of Education
DEIS: Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DITE: Diversity in Initial Teacher Education Project
DPCF: Draft Primary Curriculum Framework
EAL: English as an additional language
EDI: Equality, diversity, and inclusion
EI: Epistemic Injustice
FE: Further education
GCE: Global Citizenship Education
HEA: Higher Education Authority
HEAR: Higher Education Access Route
ICE: Intercultural Education
IIET: Immigrant Internationally Educated Teacher
INTO: Irish National Teachers' Organisation
IPPN: Irish Primary Principals' Network
ITE: Initial Teacher Education
IDR: Interdisciplinary Research
LC: Leaving Certificate Examination
LCA: Leaving Certificate Applied
MIC: Mary Immaculate College

MIE: Marino Institute of Education
MU: Maynooth University
NAP: National Access Plan
NCCA: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NIPT: National Induction Programme for Teachers
NQT: Newly qualified teacher
OCO: Ombudsman for Children's Office
OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PATH: Programme for Access to Higher Education
PDST: Professional Development Service for Teachers
P.MEd: Professional Master of Education postgraduate degree
RTA: Reflexive Thematic Analysis
TC: Teaching Council
TEG: Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge
UNESCO: United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and context to the research

Notwithstanding efforts to increase higher education participation in Ireland, there remains inadequate representation from groups such as lower socio-economic, minority ethnic and individuals with a disability (HEA, 2022). This is particularly the case for primary initial teacher education (ITE) in Ireland, where despite increasing diversity in teaching emerging as somewhat of a policy priority in recent years (DE, 2018, 2023), student teachers remain overwhelmingly white, female, settled, middle-class and Catholic (Keane & Heinz, 2016). As a result, in the context of an increasingly diverse student population (CSO, 2023), there is a striking disparity between the cultural and linguistic make-up of students in Irish schools, and the teachers who teach them. Moreover, students from under-represented and racialised groups face a myriad of cultural complexities, institutional limitations, and economic constraints to becoming a primary teacher. These barriers span the continuum of access and admissions, post-entry to ITE and transition to teaching (USI, 2018; Brown, 2014; Kohli, 2021). Consequently, the lack of diversity in the teaching profession emerges as a significant issue in the context of teacher education in Ireland, and is one that has resonance for pupils, parents, teachers, school leaders and policy makers alike (DE, 2023; Schleicher, 2014).

Statement of research aims and question

The relative lack of in-depth, qualitative research on factors affecting the diversification of the Irish teaching force means that we lack sufficient understanding of the complex forces shaping the under-representation of minoritized groups. Our understanding of this topic has certainly been aided by quantitative findings about ITE applicants and entrants from the Diversity in Teacher Education (DITE) Project in recent years (Keane & Heinz, 2015; 2016; 2018; Heinz & Keane, 2018; Heinz et al., 2018; 2019). This project established Ireland's most comprehensive national evidence base with respect to the socio-demographic characteristics and motivations of applicants and entrants to state-funded primary and post-primary, undergraduate and postgraduate, ITE programmes (Keane et al., 2022).

At an international level we can draw upon qualitative studies about the experiences of both minoritized teacher candidates (Brown, 2014), minoritized teachers (Santoro, 2007; 2014; 2016; Lander & Zaheerali, 2016) and immigrant internationally educated teachers (Schmidt, 2010; Cho, 2016; Schmidt & Schneider, 2016). However a demonstrable lacuna in the literature relates to the perspectives of prospective applicants to ITE in Ireland, i.e. young

people who are in the process of still considering their career options, at both undergraduate and postgraduate programme levels. There is a need for qualitative research which explores this question from a range of different vantage points, and which centres the everyday lives and subjective understandings of minoritized ethnic young people in this process.

Accordingly, the overarching research question for this study is as follows:

What are the experiences of minoritized ethnic young people interested in pursuing a career in primary teaching in Ireland?

Several guiding sub-questions also frame the study:

1. What are the real and perceived barriers to initial teacher education in Ireland for young people from minoritized ethnic backgrounds?
2. How do young people from minoritized ethnic backgrounds respond to prevailing societal assumptions as to why there is a lack of diversity in the primary teaching profession in Ireland?
3. How do young people from minoritized ethnic backgrounds in Ireland regard the profession of primary teaching and what are their motivations to teach?

This research provides rich insights into the needs, motivations, actions, and understandings of minoritized ethnic young people in this regard.

The specific aims of the research are:

1. To design, develop and implement a values-led, interdisciplinary, and critical participatory action research project which foregrounds the voices, stories, and sense-making experiences of minoritized ethnic young people interested in pursuing a career in primary teaching in Ireland.
2. To generate knowledge which advances further understanding about the constraints, challenges, and barriers minoritized ethnic young people face when choosing primary teaching as a career.
3. To challenge prevailing wisdoms and subvert uncritical explanations as to why there is a lack of diversity in primary teaching in Ireland.

Contextualising initial teacher education (ITE) in Ireland

This research was conducted against the backdrop of unprecedented change in education in Ireland, and in ITE in particular. Until recently, ITE policy in Ireland had been generally ‘left to its own devices’ (Waldron, 2014, p. 102), with few guiding documents in the area. However, new state-sanctioned interventions in teacher education and recent

education policy trends have resulted in exceptional changes to how primary teachers are educated at a pre-service level and policy makers remain keenly interested in shaping teacher education in Ireland (Conway, et al., 2013).

Following a government-approved National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, and a subsequent document from the Higher Education Authority (HEA) (2012), fundamental reform of third level education emerged as a priority. In 2012, an International Review Panel was tasked with managing a review which would ‘envision innovative strategies so that Ireland can provide a teacher education regime that is comparable with the world’s best’ (Sahlberg, 2012, p. 9). The review panel recommended the number of primary ITE providers to be reduced and for teacher education to be university-based, and research-underpinned. The report also recommended that ITE should cover the span from early childhood, primary, secondary, and other sectors of teacher education to allow for meaningful synergies to occur (DES, 2012).

ITE courses have now been extended and concurrent and consecutive courses have been reconceptualised. The former Froebel College of Education, now the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education officially moved to Maynooth University (MU) in September 2013, with MU becoming the first institutional context whereby students at both primary and post-primary teaching levels and students of adult and further education were located within the same Centre of Teaching Excellence. The incorporation of St. Patrick’s College (SPD), Mater Dei Institute (MDI) and Church of Ireland College of Education (CICE) into Dublin City University (DCU) was completed on Friday the 30th of September 2016 and led to the creation of a new Institute of Education (IoE) with the largest critical mass of ITE expertise in Ireland (DCU, 2014). The IoE provides both pre-service and in-service continuous professional development for educators across the full education continuum and operates as a fifth faculty within DCU (DCU, 2014). While it was envisioned that Mary Immaculate College (MIC) would be formally incorporated into the University of Limerick (DES, 2012), the recommendations of the International Review Panel have not been fully realised for this cluster and it appears unlikely that developments will move in that direction in the future (Hyland, 2018). The Marino Institute of Education (MIE) is now part of a Collaborative Institute of Teacher Education along with Trinity College Dublin (TCD), University College Dublin (UCD) and the National College of Art and Design (NCAD).

As a result of all these structural changes, there are now a range of institutional contexts within which ITE is situated in Ireland. This is pertinent in the context of this

research as this reconfiguration offers potential opportunities to reconceptualise pathways into teaching and to diversify the demographics of student teachers currently accessing ITE. For example, in the context of the institution in which I work, the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, it means that primary ITE is now located within a university with a strong reputation for widening participation in higher education (MU, 2022) and has one of the most diverse student and alumni groups in the country (MU, 2022). This is important in that student teachers from minoritized backgrounds will have the opportunity to be integrated in the wider social and cultural life of the university and included in more typical student experiences than might have been possible in the previously smaller, stand-alone colleges of education.

Diversity in teacher education.

Until recent times, Ireland was historically and erroneously perceived as a homogenous country comprised of a monocultural population with monocultural experiences, despite its longstanding co-existence of immigration, emigration and diversity including Irish Travellers, Black-Irish people, Jewish people, and other immigrants as part of Irish society (Fanning, 2007; Devine, 2011; Lentin & McVeigh, 2002). Furthermore, there have been distinct religious and linguistic traditions in Ireland which have played a significant part in Irish history for generations. Ireland reached its ‘migration turning point’ (Ruhs, 2005, p. 8) in 1996, transforming Ireland from a country of emigration to one of in-migration for the first time. This led to an increase in diversity among school populations, with CSO figures revealing that there were 96,497 ‘non-Irish national’ students and pupils aged 5 years and over resident in Ireland in 2016 (CSO, 2017). Around 11.6% per cent of children currently enrolled in Irish primary schools come from some sort of a migrant background (CSO, 2017). Diversity in primary schools can be further seen through the pupil population of Irish Travellers and increasing numbers of students identifying as coming from mixed race or mixed heritage backgrounds (CSO, 2017).

The diversity that now exists in the typical Irish primary school classroom is not mirrored in the student demographics of ITE. This ‘demographic divide’ or what Boland and Keane term as a ‘diversity gap’ (2012) warrants further unpacking. In considering the existing demographics of ITE, it would be a disservice to present Irish student teachers as unproblematically homogenous and not to acknowledge the intersectionality of their lived experiences in relation to age, gender, socio-economic status, marital status, religious identity, and sexuality. Nonetheless, the evidence clearly reveals significant commonalities among pre-service teachers in Ireland, in that they tend to be overwhelmingly white, female,

settled, Catholic and middle-class (Keane & Heinz, 2016) and their exposure to diversity is very limited. Leavy's (2005) study of pre-service teachers bears this out, where 59% had little or no 'exposure' to Irish Travellers, 65% had never met a refugee or an asylum seeker and 20% had never even had a conversation with someone who was not Irish. More recent statistics do not show much change. Approximately 60% of white Irish entrants to primary ITE reported having little experience with ethnic groups different to their own and approximately 20% reported having none at all (Keane & Heinz, 2016). Research from one ITE provider in Northern Ireland would suggest similarity of findings, with over 31% of student teachers indicating that they had little or no contact with people from different cultural backgrounds (Hagan & McGlynn, 2004).

The DITE Project is the first national research project which has gathered quantitative data on the demographics of both applicants and entrants to all state-funded undergraduate and postgraduate, primary, and post-primary ITE programmes (Heinz et al., 2021). In 2014, 95.8–96.2% of undergraduate primary entrants claimed only Irish nationality and further 2.8–3.5% of undergraduate primary student teachers claimed Irish nationality plus a secondary non-Irish nationality (Keane & Heinz, 2016, p. 9). 100% of respondents specified either Irish or English as their first language (Keane & Heinz, 2016). It is interesting to note that the number of respondents claiming a non-Irish 'single' nationality, or a non-Irish 'mixed' nationality were too small for the researchers to perform meaningful chi-square analyses (Keane & Heinz, 2016, p. 9). This is very revealing, showing an overwhelming majority (approximately 99.7% at upper level of the dataset) identifying as 'white Irish' based on the census categorisations. This is in comparison to 86% of the population who would self-identify as being white Irish and 89% of new entrants to university in general (Keane & Heinz, 2016).

Recently the *2021 Children's School Lives* report explored the experience of Junior Infant classes in Ireland. All teacher participants who opted to report their ethnic background (n=101) identified as white and Irish (NCCA, 2021). Moreover, Byrne and Murray (2016) show that teacher education /educational practitioner courses at undergraduate level are consistently more likely to be taken by Irish born applicants relative to applicants born outside the Republic of Ireland. It is clear from the research in the field that whiteness is embedded in constructs of teachers (Devine, 2011; Keane & Heinz, 2016) and that in this context, whiteness can be regarded as a 'floating signifier' of teaching in Ireland (Hall, 1996). While an overview of other indicators of diversity is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to note for context that numbers of student teachers from mature backgrounds,

student teachers with a disability and one parent student teachers also remain low in ITE in comparison to the general population (Keane & Heinz, 2016; Byrne et al, 2013; Keane et al., 2017).

Students entering primary ITE courses are also more likely to be socially advantaged than those on other higher education courses, in that they are less likely to have attended a DEIS school, to be in receipt of a higher education grant or to have entered college through an alternative route (Darmody & Smyth, 2016). Diversity can often be ‘clustered’ in certain schools and certain types of schools. For example, Irish Travellers and Roma are over-represented in DEIS schools (DES, 2017) with about half of all Traveller primary pupils enrolled in DEIS schools, and as many as 95% in Dublin (Watson et al., 2017).

The Irish education system operates on an assumption of heterogeneity (Deegan et al., 2010); as such policymakers have tended to theorise diversity as something ‘new’ or ‘sudden’. Consequently, there is an inclination to believe that the situation will change naturally over time once we are more ‘used’ to diversity. But the experience of other countries who have had diverse populations for ‘longer’ shows us that this is not the case, and a lack of diversity in the teaching profession can be considered a widespread and international phenomenon¹ (Hartsuyker, 2007; Moran, 2008) with most teachers generally being drawn from the cultural majority and majority socio-demographic background (Schleicher, 2014).

Contextualising diversity in Ireland

This section highlights the experience of racialised minorities in Ireland. In doing so, it aims to provide a context for the participant narratives that will be shared in Chapters 5 and 6. Rather than invisibilise or homogenise groups that are included in the research sample by presenting a generic profile, a lens of ‘othering’ is adopted to understand the historical racialisation, hierarchical differentiation and lived experience of minoritized groups such as Irish Travellers, asylum seekers and migrants² in Ireland.

The meaning of social group in this sense is informed by the work of Young (2014), who argues that collectives are differentiated from other groups in relation to cultural forms, practices, or ways of life; whereby members of a particular group feel a bond or affinity with others in the collective because of shared or similar experiences.

Groups are an expression of social relations; a group exists only in relation to at least one other group. Group identification arises, that is, in the encounter and interaction

¹ This will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

² Profiling information about the participants in this study is included in Appendix A.

between social collectivities that experience some differences in their way of life and forms of association, even if they also regard themselves as belonging to the same society (Young, 2014, p. 9).

‘Othering’.

Sociological theories of ‘othering’ have been fundamental to many theoretical shifts in our thinking about race and ethnicity, in particular through post-colonial theory and critical race theory. Lentin and McVeigh (2002) argue that ‘race’ or ethnicity cannot be ‘known’ in the same way as class or gender:

Ethnicity is quintessentially dialectical because it never is except when it is not. In other words, ethnicity is about constantly (re) negotiating and maintaining boundaries, and about inclusion and exclusion, where inclusion always excludes and differentiates between who is allowed and who is not allowed to belong to the collectivity’ (2002, p. 15).

The common understanding behind ‘othering’ is that societies are designed to categorise both differentially and hierarchically, and consequently, certain groups are constructed as different from the rest of the general population. ‘Othering’ therefore classifies and defines ‘us’ in terms of who we are not. It invites us to think in the most fundamental of terms, as there can be no sense of self without the ‘other’. In an education context, Freire reflects on the cultural identity of the learner:

It is by doing things in a certain way, by thinking or speaking in a certain way, by having certain likes and habits that I recognise myself in a certain way of being similar to other people like me... It is in experiencing the differences that we discover ourselves as I’s and you’s. Precisely it is always you as an other who constitutes me as an I, as long as I, like the you other person constitute that person as an I (2005, p. 127).

As such, interculturality sets up relational understandings. Through contact and connections in society, in this case in the arena of education, individuals can become classified as either ‘normal’ or ‘other’. It is the very existence of difference or ‘others’ which can upset what Devine terms as ‘taken for grantedness’ (2012, p.19). Constructs of whiteness as normal and Blackness as ‘other’, of sedentarism as normal and nomadism as deviant, sets the parameters for identity making which includes some and excludes others through practices at an institutional level (*ibid*, p. 18).

The institutional othering of asylum seekers.

An asylum seeker is a person who seeks to be acknowledged as a refugee under the terms of the 1951 Geneva Convention. Within the migrant population of Ireland, asylum seekers are a particularly vulnerable and isolated group, and it can be argued that this

marginalisation is a direct result of official government policy. In Ireland, asylum seekers are obliged to live under the system of direct provision while their claim is being processed. The system of direct provision was introduced in 1999 as a short-term solution to housing recently arrived asylum seekers. This involves housing asylum seekers in institutionalised-style hostel accommodation, where they are provided with three meals a day and receive €38.80 per adult and €29.80 per child in a weekly allowance. Significant ongoing complexities exist for asylum seekers entering the labour market³ (IHREC, 2018).

The system of direct provision has been consistently criticised since its inception by several stakeholders at national (IHREC, 2014) and international level (UNHRC, 2014; Dunbar et al., 2020). Logistics of the system, in particular the length of the stay in direct provision, how families are often separated, how residents can be moved at short notice, poor health and safety standards, the existence of food poverty and the cramped living conditions for residents contribute to isolation and the social exclusion of asylum seekers in Ireland. The impact of this type of confinement has serious consequences for the mental, physical and emotional health of residents in direct provision. Particular concern exists in relation to the experience of children in direct provision, and issues in relation to overcrowding, child protection and insufficient space for homework and recreation means the system is generally regarded as a wholly inadequate way of life for children and young people (UNHCR, 2014⁴; Ombudsman for Children, 2020; Children's Rights Alliance, 2022; Dunbar et al., 2020).

Complexity of the migrant experience in Ireland.

In 1996, Ireland officially became a country of net immigration, which happened at a much later stage than most other EU countries (Ruhs, 2005). Around this time, as increasing numbers of immigrants arrived to Ireland, they were subject to a short-term 'market-driven' approach (MacEinrí, 2002). Boucher (2007) argues that policy wrongly assumed the 'guests' would go home after a certain amount of time and would not want to stay on in Ireland as permanent residents. This misreading of the migration landscape has led to state and institutional failure to meet basic obligations under international rights treaties, such as ethnic

³ Up until 2017, Ireland was one of only two countries in Europe which did not allow asylum seekers to work while their claim is being processed. After increased pressure from human rights organisations, criticism from the UN, and a Supreme Court ruling, the Irish government finally confirmed that from February 2018 asylum seekers would have the right to apply for a work permit under the Employment Permits Act 2003. However, serious limitations were imposed at this time and continue to have an impact on the accessibility of the labour market for some people seeking international protection.

⁴ At the examination of Ireland's fourth periodic report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the UN Human Rights Committee raised concerns that victims of trafficking were placed in direct provision centres, that there was an absence of an independent complaints process and concluded that the system was not conducive to family life.

monitoring in state institutions, equal provision of state services and ensuring adequate responses to racism such as in policing (Fanning & Michael, 2017).

How migrants succeeded in Ireland was influenced by several factors, including categorisation (asylum seeker, refugees, work-permit or authorisation holder), country of origin, their access to employment rights and their lived experience in Irish society. Ireland's initial lack of coherent policy during this time resulted in many contradictory experiences for migrants, leading Boucher (2007) to describe Ireland as a 'land of conditional welcomes' (p. 186). It is therefore important not to assume a common experience of being a migrant in Ireland. Lentin (2004) argues that 'intercultural' politics in Ireland constructs ethnic minorities as 'static', ignoring intra-ethnic heterogeneities and contestations such as class, gender, and age (p. 3).

Foundational to this, is the acknowledgement that there is no universal 'migrant young person' experience in Ireland; their identities are multiple and intersecting; 'hybridised' and context-specific (Devine, 2009; Ní Laoire et al., 2009). While many migrant children do not refer to themselves as simply 'Irish' or as simply 'not Irish', they are frequently placed in situations where they are expected to choose one nationality or another (Ní Laoire, 2009). Almost 1 in 7 young people living in Ireland today come from minoritized ethnic identities (CSO, 2017). There is significant complexity to the identities of these young people, as well as a desire for these dual or multiple identities to be acknowledged. Migrant young people often must negotiate being accepted by both their minority ethnic peers and their majority ethnic peers who all make differing demands and judgements on them (NYCI, 2017). This sense of competing demands can also be seen in their home lives, where second generation young people also act as socialising agents, often helping to socialise their first-generation migrant parents into new (Irish) cultural norms and values (Machowska-Kosiack & Barry, 2022).

Recent research by Ní Dhuinn and Keane (2021), reveals that a lot of minoritized ethnic young people have experienced negative peer relationships in Irish schools, and that their wider school experience encompasses varying identity battles, such as not being recognised as Irish, experiences of racist bullying and being constructed as 'deficient' learners. Schools are key sites for the integration of migrant children and their well-being. Broadly speaking, migrant children in Ireland place a high value on education, have very positive attitudes to school and their parents have very high goals for them (ESRI, 2015) and a very strong interest in their children's education (Adebayo & Heinz, 2023). Typically, migrant students have strong support from their families, high deference for authority, are

highly motivated and ambitious (Gilligan et al., 2010; Fass et al., 2019) and progress to higher education in extremely high numbers (McGinnity et al., 2022).

However, many migrant children also experience family fragmentation as they move, for various reasons relating to migration policies, practices, and processes (Ní Laoire et al., 2009). When a migrant family home experiences the absence of a family member, this can make school more difficult for the child and have an impact on confidence and academic attainment. School can also be the first place where children experience feelings of ‘being different,’ whether from peers, school practices or the curriculum (Ní Laoire et al., 2009). In most countries, first-generation immigrant students (students born outside the destination country whose parents were also born outside that country) perform worse than students without an immigrant background, and second-generation immigrant students (those born in the destination country to parents who were born outside of the country) perform somewhere between the two (OECD, 2015; Eurydice, 2019).

It is important to note that race, nationality, or skin colour is the second most common reason children are bullied in schools (UNESCO, 2019) and a key finding from NYCI research about the experience of minoritized ethnic young people was the frequency they experienced racism and the extent to which it had become a ‘normal’ feature of their everyday lives (NYCI, 2017). What is significant about these experiences is that the impact of racism and comments on young people often result in them excluding themselves from opportunities due to a lack of confidence in whether they are welcome to attend events or be part of groups (NYCI, 2017). This is particularly relevant in the context of the labour market, where Black non-Irish people are five times more likely to experience discrimination and face hostility when seeking work and are more than twice as likely to experience discrimination when in employment (Joseph, 2019; McGinnity et al., 2020; IHREC, 2018). The Irish Network against Racism (INAR) received over 600 reports of racist incidents in Ireland in 2021 and their annual report indicates racism is on the rise (INAR, 2022). Similarly the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission annual report revealed 48% of young people either witnessed or experienced racism in the previous year (IHREC, 2021). Recent research confirms this emerging trend and reveals that second-generation young people in Ireland experience ‘concerning amounts’ of racial and ethnic discrimination, prejudice, stereotyping and racialisation, across all levels of society (Machowska-Kosiack & Barry, 2022), which impacts integration and a sense of belonging.

The ‘othering from the inside’ of Irish Travellers.

In January 2017, following a consultation process and report to the Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, it was recommended that Traveller ethnicity should be recognised at the earliest date possible. On March 1st, the then Taoiseach Enda Kenny officially recognised Irish Travellers as an ethnic minority. This move was broadly welcomed for several reasons. Firstly, it is not typical for international agreements and EU legislation to name specific ethnic groups in documents, so discrete recognition was needed for Irish Travellers to be afforded additional protections at this level. Secondly, it is widely acknowledged that Irish Travellers are considered to meet all the sociological and anthropological categories⁵ for ethnicity, not to mention the essential characteristics of Indigenous People as defined by the United Nations (UN, 2007). Six years after this historic announcement, ethnic status has still not been enshrined in legislation and as a result it is too early to predict what material impact this will have on the lives of Travellers in Ireland. Haynes et al., (2020) argue that while it is unlikely that this recognition is likely to afford the community any additional rights, it may be the case that the ethnicity declaration might give Travellers a firmer basis for arguing for the activation of pre-existing rights. While this represents a positive development, it remains starkly at odds with prior official policy and government discourse on Traveller issues. Travellers are generally regarded to be one of the most marginalised groups in Irish society who experience widespread exclusion, disadvantage, and discrimination (Bloom et al., 2014; O’Connell, 2002) and exceptionally strong levels of racism and prejudice (MacGréil, 2011; Watson et al., 2017; NCCA, 2023b).

The All-Ireland Traveller Health Study (DHC, 2010) reveals sobering findings in relation to Traveller health. These include a 15-year lower life expectancy for Traveller men compared with the general population, an 11-year lower life expectancy for Traveller women compared with the general population, a 3.6 times higher infant mortality compared with the general population and that Traveller men are 6.6 times more likely to die by suicide than men in settled communities. A more recent publication by the Ombudsman for Children’s Office (OCO, 2021) revealed details about sub-standard, unsafe, and overcrowded conditions at a Local Authority-run halting site where 66 Traveller children lived with their families. They concluded that a high rate of childhood illness was directly caused by insufficient living conditions, that there was unacceptable risk to life posed by the conditions there and that

⁵ These categories are typically informed by the work of Barth (1969) who identified features in relation to biological self-perpetuation, group membership, shared fundamental cultural values and cultural differences, overt unity of cultural form and own field of communication and interaction.

local authorities had failed to ensure that children living on the site enjoyed a safe standard of accommodation (OCO, 2021). It is clear that unequal health outcomes are still a feature of the lived experience of Travellers in Ireland.

It is important to excavate past policy and treatment of Travellers in Ireland to fully understand the deep disadvantage that Travellers experience. Over sixty years have now passed since Ireland first adopted assimilationist social policies towards Travellers, and these policies have been mapped and problematised by sociologists in recent years (O'Connell, 2002; Lentin & McVeigh, 2006). A common sentiment emerging from these policies tends to regard 'Travelling' as the problem and 'settling' as the solution. In wider society, particularly high levels of discrimination, anti-Traveller sentiment and media sensationalism have been well-documented (MacGréil, 1996; McDonagh, 2002; Ni Shuinéair, 2002; O'Connell, 2002).

Lentin and McVeigh (2002) suggest that much of prejudice in Ireland is focused on the Other 'inside'; it is an 'endogenous racism' (p. 22). They argue that the official discourse has always been that it is the existence of Travellers, rather than anti-Traveller racism that is the 'problem'. So while othering in a general sense can be understood as who gets to join the 'collectivity', it can also be adaptively understood as that same collectivity defining its boundaries, appropriating members, and denying differences in the context of identity. The treatment of Travellers in Ireland can be considered 'othering from the inside' as Travellers are made 'invisible', not for what they do, but for who they are. In other words, the only way to escape anti-Travellerism is to stop being a Traveller (Lentin & McVeigh, 2006). While the introduction of official ethnic status for Irish Traveller is certainly a positive move, it cannot be divorced from the hitherto historical and structural responses to Travellers from the Irish State.

Racism against Travellers is prevalent in Irish society and is normalised and often regarded as an almost 'acceptable' form of racism (Tormey & Gleeson, 2012). In Ireland, there is a social reality where Traveller students not only self-internalise but go as far as to hide and deny their identity in order to be accepted among their peers in school (Kenny, 1997; Devine, 2010, p. 64). This is also the case at third level where even though Travellers are significantly under-represented, those that are enrolled in Higher Education do not feel comfortable disclosing their Traveller identity (Keane & Heinz, 2015). For some Traveller students in the UK, they can experience cultural dissonance, in the form of a clash between the expectations from mainstream society and from their home cultures (McDonagh & Fonseca, 2021; Harding, 2014)

While there may be a willingness to acknowledge that there is widespread prejudice and discrimination towards Travellers in Ireland, there is a strong resistance among policy makers to name this treatment of Travellers as racism (O'Connell, 2002). Racism against Travellers goes much further than what Fanon (1986 {1967}) would class as the 'epidermal' and literature in this area suggests that Travellers have become 'othered' in quite specific ways:

In this sense, racism in Ireland is an important challenge to the notion that racism is always about colour or visible somatic difference – it suggests that racism is about deeper and more complex matrices of power and signification (Lentin & McVeigh, 2002, p.37).

'Enactment of privilege': Researcher positionality

Given the extent to which the participants in this study have experienced 'othering' in Irish society, it is also necessary to address my own role and positionality within the research process. Bettez asserts that the 'inferred fixity of the concept of positionality' is problematic (2015, p. 935) and that we are not simply reduced to our identifications, which no matter how hard we work to articulate, are continually shifting and fluctuating. DiAngelo and Sensoy (2009) explain:

The call for positionality is an assertion that knowledge is dependent upon a complex web of cultural values, beliefs, experiences, and ascribed social positions... Thus, who you are (as knower), is intimately connected to your socialization into a matrix of group locations (including gender, race, class, and sexuality) (p. 446).

Blasco (2012) acknowledges that reflexivity is generally regarded as both a strategy and goal of intercultural practice and can be regarded as a crucial skill for intercultural educators and researchers. However, she argues that the self is not always self-accessible and doubts that this 'self-accessible self can supposedly engage in the same constructive forms of reflexivity irrespective of the temporal and special contexts it inhabits' (2012, p. 475). While conceding this potential limitation, it is nonetheless essential to engage with my own 'cultural situatedness' (Blasco, 2012, p. 476) for this research study. Positionality in this context is understood as being an amalgamation of factors relating to the race, class, gender, social groups, and professional status that is part and parcel of my lived experience.

While the process of naming positionality may have been harrowing and confronting at times, as the facilitator of the research, it was impossible to divorce myself from the wider context and not reflect on how I saw myself, and in equal measure how the participants saw me. Otherwise I might have been cutting off essential insights and opportunities for

understanding within the process. To that end, a ‘Researcher Identity Memo’, a technique borrowed from Maxwell (2005) is included in Appendix B for further insight.

A note on language and terminology

Anti-racist work requires vigilance about the ways we use language (hooks, 2003). Terminology to describe racialised groups can be highly contested and is ever evolving. Upon reflection, I have decided to use the umbrella terms of ‘migrant’, ‘Irish Traveller’, ‘Black’, ‘Black-Irish’ and ‘person of mixed heritage background’ throughout the dissertation to describe participants where appropriate. I also draw upon Gunaratnam’s (2003) understanding of the term ‘minoritized’, to recognise the active processes of racialisation that are at work in designating certain groups as being in a ‘minority’. It is important to note that literature from different geographical regions indicates a preference for the use of certain terminology in relation to teachers and students from minoritized ethnic backgrounds. In research from the US and Canada for example, the inclination is for the term ‘student of color’ (*sic*) or ‘teacher of color’ (*sic*). In the UK, the description ‘Black and Minority Ethnic’ (BME or BAME) is more common. So in deference for the context from which the literature is derived, there may be some interchangeable terms evident throughout the dissertation. I acknowledge that no language choices are without issues and accept that not everyone may be satisfied by the final terminology chosen in any paper. However the language used in this dissertation has been reflected on and has also been discussed at length with the research participants as part of the decision-making process.

Overview and organisation of thesis

This study explores the experiences of minoritized ethnic young people interested in pursuing a career in primary teaching in Ireland. It is organised as follows:

Chapter 1: This chapter is the first of seven chapters and provides the reader with the necessary background and context to diversity in the teaching profession in Ireland as well as highlighting the gap within which the research is operationalised. It shared the aims, overarching question, and sub-questions of the research, as well as giving contextual information about the research sample in relation to migration, prejudice, and school experiences in Ireland within an overall framework of ‘othering’. Researcher positionality and terminology choices were also explicated to give the reader preliminary insight into the approach of the researcher.

Chapter 2: This second chapter synthesises and evaluates a range of pertinent national and international literature to outline the continuum of barriers to ITE which exist for minoritized ethnic young people in Ireland. It provides a justification for the current focus of

diversifying teaching and provides an overview of the benefits to minoritized students, minoritized teachers, and the cultural majority. It also contextualises the research within the current and rapidly changing national education policy context.

Chapter 3: Drawing on components of critical race theory (CRT), epistemic injustice, and the theory of communion, this chapter assembles the interdisciplinary and hybrid conceptual framework for this study. Graphics are also presented to provide simplified visual maps for the reader and establish preliminary ground for understanding the lack of diversity among the teaching profession in Ireland.

Chapter 4: This chapter outlines the asynchronous and multi-phased research design to this study and the data collection instruments chosen to best capture the ‘messiness’ of qualitative research data. The study is situated within a framework of critical participatory action research and foregrounds unequal power dynamics and strategies for conducting research across difference. This chapter also includes a comprehensive account of the reflexive thematic analysis approach taken to theme construction and the reflective and ethical considerations which influenced active decision making in the research field.

Chapter 5: This chapter employs the CRT instrument of counter-storytelling to present storied understandings of how minoritized ethnic young people feel about the lack of diversity in the teaching profession. Photo counter-stories which honour the narratives of the research participants are positioned in direct opposition to four stock stories often propagated to account for why minoritized ethnic young people in Ireland are not choosing primary teaching in greater numbers.

Chapter 6: This chapter focuses on a range of racial injustices that have shaped the lived experiences of the minoritized ethnic young people who participated in this study. Concepts of epistemic injustice, hermeneutical injustice and testimonial injustice are applied to the participants’ negative experiences of formal education. These injustices are offered as a framework through which their hesitancy and lack of confidence to pursue their teaching dream can be understood.

Chapter 7: In this final chapter, the findings, contributions and follow up actions of the research study are summarised and further contextualised. Potential limitations are acknowledged by way of highlighting avenues for further research. The sub-questions are revisited to underline the impact of the study in the context of teacher education policy and practice. A personal reflection offers insight into how the study supported the researcher to develop a ‘living educational theory’ (McNiff & Whitehead, 1998; 2005).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This dissertation explores the issue of diversity in primary teaching, with a particular focus on the voices and experiences of minoritized ethnic young people as they navigate the complex journey of becoming and being a teacher in Ireland. This chapter contextualises the debate about diversifying teaching within a range of national and international research and policy documents⁶. Next, it explores the benefits of having the teaching population more accurately reflect the student body, with reference to the perspectives of minoritized students, minoritized teachers and wider society. Finally, I offer a continuum framework for understanding the range of barriers, disincentives and deterrents which may exist for a minoritized ethnic young person considering a programme in ITE in Ireland.

The diversifying teaching ‘turn’: Policy context and trajectory

Policy discourse around increasing access to ITE for under-represented groups has increased in recent years, but whether this has resulted in a coherent and congruent policy space, is not yet clear. Policy in relation to widening participation in teaching is pluralistic in nature, stemming from explicit but minor references in government publications, to the broader context of how this issue is strategically regarded at an EU level. In the absence of one definitive policy document about diversity in the teaching profession, this section analyses multiple statements and initiatives which may help contextualise the recent turn to diversifying teaching in Ireland.

Existing policy context: Availability of statutory funding.

References to the lack of diversity in the teaching profession could scarcely be found on the policy agenda 10 years ago, but the importance of this issue has become much more evident in official policy developments of late. The recently published *Initial Teacher Education Policy Statement* (DE, 2023) references the importance of supporting a teaching profession that reflects the diversity in society in multiple places, and a commitment to increase diversity in ITE in particular is evident throughout the statement of vision and principles, as well as the implementation plan itself (DE, 2023, p. 46). Outside of the Department of Education and its related bodies, commitment to this issue is apparent in the current programme for government as well, where there is a commitment to develop a ‘positive action programme to overcome barriers and increase the number of teachers from

⁶ For an explanatory note of how the literature review was conducted, including a *PICOS* overview of the search strings, please see Appendix C.

our migrant communities’, in conjunction with the Teaching Council and other relevant teaching bodies (Department of the Taoiseach 2020, p. 96).

Action 27 of the Migrant Integration Strategy developed by the Department of Justice states:

Proactive efforts will be made to attract migrants into teaching positions, including raising awareness of the Irish language aptitude test and adaptation period for primary teaching (Government of Ireland, 2021, p. 25).

The government intend to enact this goal through the third National Access Plan (NAP) for Equity of Access to Higher Education which was launched in 2015. This plan aims to ensure that students entering higher education courses reflect the diversity of the wider population in Ireland. NAP identifies specific target groups that are currently under-represented in higher education, such as Irish Travellers, students with disabilities, first time mature student entrants, part-time/flexible learners, and further education award holders. In 2017, the then Minister for Education and Skills Richard Bruton released €2.4 million through the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) to support university initiatives which would widen access to ITE. This funding stream is now in its second phase and funding will run until 2023. In March 2022, the Minister for Further and Higher Education Simon Harris announced €450k funding to assist Traveller and Roma students in higher education (DFHE, 2022).

The PATH funding initiatives aim to reach potential students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. While it is heartening that Irish Traveller students are listed as a target group, it is important to note that migrant students were not specifically named as a demographic. Several initiatives, including scholarships, access programmes and foundational courses are now up and running in many Irish universities⁷. One of the most relevant of these initiatives to the debate around ethnic diversity in teaching is the *Turn to Teaching Project* in MU which was launched in September 2018 and aims to enhance access to ITE for under-represented cohorts. Through the design and delivery of a school-based community outreach and professional development project, as well as a university-based access programme, it has created meaningful, high-quality alternative pathways into teacher education in MU (O’Sullivan et al., 2019). It is important to note that entrants into the Turn to

⁷ PATH initiatives are currently funded in Dublin City University, Maynooth University, a consortium of UCD, TCD, NCAD, Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT) and MIE; and a further cluster of University College Cork (UCC), Cork Institute of Technology (CIT), Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) and Institute of Technology Carlow (ITC).

Teaching project are more diverse in ethnicity, disability status and academic history than those entering ITE directly. They are more likely to have come from one parent families, and more likely to have greater levels of disadvantage in terms of family history of education (O’Sullivan et al., 2019). Another relevant PATH-funded programme is that of *Tobar*, based in MIE. This programme supports Irish Traveller students (at both second level and in the middle of undergraduate degrees) to pursue a career in primary teaching. The programme provides many supports at pre-entry level comprising workshops; school visits; familial engagement; assistance with applications; academic supports; taster lectures and bespoke open days (Burns et al., 2022; Colum & Collins, 2021).

Policy windows.

In addition to analysing existing policy, it is important to draw attention to forthcoming changes within the wider education sector, so called ‘policy windows’, (Kingdon, 1995) which may open up opportunities to diversify the teaching profession in the future as well. At a national level, the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework (2020)* and the *Primary Curriculum Framework (2023a)* published by the NCCA, identify the potential for a more diverse and inclusive vision of the curriculum, with the key messages, principles and competencies identified centred around the inclusion of every child. There is scope within this document to advocate for a child-centred and world-minded approach to education which stresses the importance of values, attitudinal and skill development, and to explore this more fully through the role of the role of global citizenship education (GCE). GCE is a vehicle which can support pupils to understand what it means to be a global citizen in a changing world. Anti-racism and intercultural understanding are essential competencies of being an active global citizen. The NCCA acknowledges the changing nature of our society in several places (2020) and diversity and inclusive education are included as part of the eight overarching principles underpinning the curriculum vision (NCCA, 2023a).

In April 2021, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth sought submissions on a new *National Action Plan Against Racism*. Discourse around this plan is important because teachers and teacher educators should be regarded as key players in the task to support anti-racism educational change in Ireland. This is important to remember in the current context of a burgeoning GCE policy space, as many teachers and student teachers arrive at their engagement with GCE from an ethnocentric place, taking European ‘superiority’ for granted and believing that their viewpoint is the best (Bourn, 2014). Reflecting on complex global issues in an intercultural context, enables them to critically examine their own positionality and ethnocentrism in this regard. Intercultural

learning is key to starting a process of deconstructing the ethnocentrism which holds notions of superiority so firmly in place.

Diversifying teaching and interest convergence.

The previous sections have described the relevant existing and ongoing policy developments which have resonance in the context of the discussion about diversity in the teaching profession. This section suggests the theory of interest convergence, a tool of Critical Race Theory, could be a useful framework for understanding some of these recent shifts in policy. Derrick Bell (1980) coined the term interest convergence in an article for the *Harvard Law Review*⁸, to describe how advances for people of colour are prioritised only when they happen to serve, promote, or maintain white interests at the same time. He hypothesised that ‘white elites will tolerate or encourage racial advances for Blacks only when such advances also promote white self-interest’ (p. 523). Considering that racial segregation made it problematic for the U.S. to ‘reshape the post-war world in its own image’ (Dudziak, 1995, p. 110), Bell argued that this particular civil rights development served the United States Cold War agenda to be seen as a proponent of human rights on the world stage. In other words, that ‘there was something in it for them’ (Khalifa et al. 2013, p. 492).

Using a frame of interest convergence, also known as material determinism (Lewis & Shah, 2019), it is important to consider how the current turn to diversifying the teacher force may result in tangible benefits and support the self-interests of the cultural majority in an Irish context as well. Of late, Ireland has come under pressure to diversify teaching, given how the issue has emerged as somewhat of a policy priority for the EU and is further regarded as an issue of significant ‘international concern’ (Schleicher, 2014). We know from the furore around the 2009 PISA results (Conway, 2013) when Ireland dropped from 5th to 17th place (OECD, 2009), that policy makers tend to react strongly when education quality and standards in Ireland come into sharp focus. Ireland is often compared to other OECD countries in the context of the ethnic and cultural make-up of its teaching professions (Hyland, 2012). Moreover the OECD (2010) have recommended the creation of alternative pathways to ITE. In light of the renewed focus on global competence indicated in the PISA assessment above (OECD, 2018), and the regularity with which the competence of teachers is referenced in relation to global competitiveness (Schleicher, 2014; OECD, 2014; OECD, 2018), it is perhaps no wonder that this has emerged as a significant issue in recent years.

⁸ Writing about the landmark judicial decision to desegregate schools in ‘Brown v. Board of Education’, Bell (1980) challenged the dominant narrative that the Brown v Board decision was a watershed moment in US history representing moral and cultural shifts in relation to racism.

Globally competent individuals can examine local, global, and intercultural issues, understand and appreciate different perspectives and world views, interact successfully and respectfully with others, and take responsible action toward sustainability and collective well-being (OECD, 2018, p. 4).

In the current context, it has been surprising to see contradictory agendas at play, evidenced by how recently arrived Ukrainian teachers' credentials have been fast-tracked within the system (O'Brien, 2022), given the struggle other immigrant and internationally educated teachers have experienced when trying to register within the system up until this point (McDaid, 2022; McDaid & Walsh, 2016). Much like how the US were conscious of their post-war global reputation during the civil rights movement, it can be argued that Ireland has been predictably reactionary in how it responds to this issue of diversity within the teaching profession.

Turning again to PATH-funded projects, it has to be conceded that these have greatly benefitted white people in Ireland, albeit ones from disadvantaged backgrounds. Given that the eligibility criteria for this funding stream excluded prospective students from migrant backgrounds, this reveals quite a lot about the positioning of these funding incentives. According to Kim (2019) interest convergence is strongly connected to the concepts of materialism and capitalism. Delgado and Stefanić (2001) further highlight how it is very much linked with the allocation of tangible economic benefits and privileges, for example in relation to properties, schools, or jobs. Ladson-Billings (1998) contends that interest convergence as a topic, has been particularly important in the US context to understand the history of affirmative action, i.e. the type of policies which may superficially privilege Black interests, but whose principal beneficiaries have actually been white women. This also bears out in a UK context, with research clearly outlining how the main recipients of similar initiatives in British universities have also been white women (Bhopal, 2018; Gillborn, 2007).

As previously stated, Bell (1980) maintains that whites will only support initiatives and policy changes when the perceived costs are outweighed by the perceived benefits to be gained by the cultural majority. This idea of a 'racial remedy' (Bell, 1980), can be clearly seen in some of the public discourse around recent funding opportunities to diversify teaching. One such example is the Migrant Teacher Project which was launched by MIE in November 2017 and is co-financed by the European Commission under the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund. This project aims to increase the participation of Immigrant Internationally Educated Teachers (IIETs) in Irish primary and post-primary schools (McDaid, 2022).

At the inaugural graduation ceremony for teachers from the bridging programme as part of the Migrant Teacher Project in 2019, the then Minister for Education Joe McHugh shared the following:

The Migrant Teacher Project is a brilliant initiative. It is about integration and diversity. It will help with recruitment issues that some schools in some parts of the country are facing. It offers the opportunity to bring a new dimension to the teaching of languages in our schools, as well as other subjects, and it will undoubtedly bring a new, unique cultural benefit to the schools where these teachers will get jobs (DES, 2019).

The recruitment issues as mentioned above refer to a current hot topic issue in schools, who are experiencing a shortage of teachers and one of the most serious staffing crises in recent memory (O'Brien, 2022). Migrant teachers were suddenly regarded as 'good' migrants (Kitching, 2010) who could help solve a problem for Irish people. Statutory promotion of the project was that the existence of these migrants was fortuitous in that it would 'plug a gap' in the system, aligning with the needs and expectations of those in power, and reminiscent of how migrants filled low-paying jobs during the boom of the Celtic Tiger. This is something we have seen happen in an international context as well, where Schneider & Schmidt (2016) have found that the chances of immigrant teachers being hired are frequently enhanced where there is a shortage on the 'supply side'. It is perhaps also relevant to note that when oversupply of teachers became an issue in Canada, many of the supports and initiatives which had been in place to support the credentialling of immigrant teachers were abruptly discontinued (Schmidt & Janusch, 2016).

McHugh's suggestion about the teaching and learning of languages and the additive benefit that migrant teachers would bring to Irish schools is also significant. The advent of the new primary language curriculum in 2019 and the 2021 announcement of a Languages Connect pilot programme for pupils in more than 100 schools to learn foreign languages from third class (DE, 2021), ensures that this will be an interesting space to watch in the Irish context. Research from the US indicates that interest convergence around language education initiatives is already something of a phenomenon. Milner (2008) observed the convergence of interests between white school boards and non-English speakers in their districts. He reports the regularity with which the school boards can provide funding and resources for EAL students because of the perception that having multilingual learners in the student body will support the white students in learning another language, something that is perceived as being valuable and desirable in a globalised world. What is also striking about McHugh's positioning in the above quote is the declaration that the introduction of migrant teachers in

schools will result in a ‘new, unique cultural benefit’. Notwithstanding how contractual this rationale is, it is revealing that how the migrant teachers themselves might benefit or learn from their experience in Irish schools does not seem to warrant mentioning in this context, again giving cause for doubt for the altruistic motives of this policy turn.

In Ireland, it is clear to see that a combination of factors encompassing a changing curricular context, a teacher shortage, an unprecedented subbing crisis, and external EU pressures have simultaneously converged to make diversifying the teaching force something that enhances the ‘feel-good psychological interests of whites’ (Jackson, 2011, p. 438). Crucially, these are all sufficiently minor policies, thus ensuring that they will not threaten the dominant status quo and can be ‘remedied effectively without altering the status of whites’ (Bell, 1980, p. 522). As Jackson (2011) puts it, ‘when racial progress takes one step ahead, whites take several leaps’ (p. 438). The minimal presence of racial others in schools around the country may be perceived externally as significant in terms of policy development, however, it does little to challenge the positions of power that white teachers inevitably hold within the education system. In reality, these initiatives will not result in long-lasting or meaningful change to the status quo, instead they merely appease short-term economic interests and ultimately protect white privilege in education.

In sum, good policy requires a clear explanation of the problem and an equally clear explanation of how the policy solution will solve it (Gash & Roos, 2012). This section has argued that the recent policy turn to diversify the teaching profession can be regarded as both conceptually limited in addition to serving the self-seeking agendas on the part of policymakers. At this juncture it is helpful to take a step back and look at the arguments in favour of diversifying the teaching profession, to remember why this is a topic of significance in the first place.

The case for diversifying primary teaching

Benefits to minoritized students.

Strategies to diversify teaching are often based on assumptions that having teachers from minoritized ethnic backgrounds will benefit students who are also minoritized, for example in relation to the ever-widening gap in academic achievement and attainment levels between minoritized students and that of their privileged peers. Much is written in the literature around the ‘rigour gap’, the ‘achievement gap’, ‘segmented education’ (Schmidt & Schneider, 2016) or what Ladson-Billings (2006) terms an ‘education debt’. These terms refer to a variety of different ways that opportunity gaps for minoritized students are enacted within formal education systems.

While academic attainment disparities are beyond the scope of this research study, it is nonetheless necessary to remember the stark educational gaps which exist between students from a cultural majority, and students who may have diverse socio-economic, linguistic or cultural backgrounds. In an international context, the statistics speak for themselves. In the US, African American and Latino students consistently score lower on standardised tests such as the SAT's, in comparison to their European American and Asian American peers. In 2021 for example, more African American and Latino students failed to reach the SAT benchmarks for 'college readiness' than students from other ethnic backgrounds (College Board, 2021). Criticisms of standardised tests in relation to cultural barriers (FairTest, 2018) and links to segregationist practices in schools (Knoester & Au, 2017) further illustrate these inequalities. Latinx young adults remain underrepresented at four-year universities, and they are considerably less likely than their peers to earn a bachelor's degree by age 29 (Kolluri, 2020). In Canada, several studies have revealed significant gaps in the educational attainment of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians at all levels of education (Gillies in Aloo et al., 2019).

Differing academic achievement levels can also be seen in the UK, with pupils from minoritized ethnic backgrounds making significantly less progress in the school system than their white British peers. By the age of 16, attainment by disadvantaged young males in London is on average 12 months behind that of their more advantaged peers (Millard et al., 2018). The Greater London Authority's (GLA) Annual Education Report for 2021 shows that only 42% of Black Caribbean boys in London achieved expected standards in reading, writing and maths at the end of the school year in 2020, and they remain one of the largest under-performing groups in relation to attainment markers (at 17 percentage points behind the average for other pupils in London). For Black Caribbean children, academic attainment is consistently lower than for white British children, regardless of economic disadvantage (Cabinet Office, 2017). At third level in the UK, most students from ethnic minority backgrounds obtain poorer degree results than white students, even when controlling for prior attainment, age, gender and discipline (Cotton et al., 2016).

In Ireland, the achievement gap is not as pronounced as it is in other developed countries. In Irish schools, non-migrant students perform on average 10% better than students who come from a migrant background when it comes to reading (McGinnity et al., 2018). While this is slightly ahead of the OECD average, it is still an issue of concern, particularly for migrants from Eastern Europe and for pupils from African diaspora backgrounds with respect to numeracy (McGinnity et al., 2018). Recent data show that immigrant students who

do not speak English in the home have lower PISA reading scores at age 15 compared to their Irish counterparts (McGinnity et al., 2020). Moreover, students from migrant backgrounds are often concentrated in disadvantaged schools and due to less advantageous socio-economic situations, are less likely to have additional educational supports such as tutoring etc. (McGinnity et al., 2018).

Conversely, there is a distinct and alarming disparity in education outcomes for young Travellers in Ireland. Research relating to the attainment gap for Travellers reveals that Traveller pupils attending DEIS schools have very low scores in English and Maths standardised tests in comparison to the settled population (Kavanagh et al., 2017). At primary level, Traveller children are more likely than non-Traveller children to attend a designated disadvantaged school (DES, 2005; Smyth et al., 2015; Kavanagh et al., 2017). Travellers are much less likely to have completed the Leaving Certificate (8%) in comparison to 73% of their non-Traveller peers; and much more likely to have left school at an early age (Watson, et al., 2017). In the context of this study, it is crucial to remember that only 1% of Travellers aged 25-64 years have a college degree in comparison to 30% of the settled population (Watson et al., 2017). The gendered dimensions of the education gap must also be considered. Traveller women are more likely to have completed the Leaving Certificate than Traveller men, but remain very disadvantaged in educational terms, with 92% leaving school without having completed second level. Reasons for leaving school early include reported negative experiences of Traveller children in school in relation to racism, prejudice and discrimination. Traveller students, along with immigrant students and those with a disability, are significantly more likely to report being bullied at school (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2016). In addition, complexities in relation to attendance and how formal education can be viewed among some members of the Traveller community (Murray, 2012) also can contribute to high dropout rates. Pressure to start a family at a younger age can mean many young Travellers become conflicted about their commitment to formal education (Bloomer et al., 2014).

There is persuasive evidence from the international literature to suggest that having minoritized teachers can have a positive impact on both the learning outcomes and educational experiences of minoritized pupils (Kohli, 2021). In relation to attainment, seminal studies by Dee (2004, 2005), found that both Black and white kindergarten students who were randomly assigned to a same-race teacher had increased achievement in reading and mathematics test scores compared to their peers who were not taught by a same-race teacher. A study by Gershenson et al., (2018) also found that Black students who had a Black

teacher were more likely to perform better, graduate high-school and attend college. Recent research points to evidence of this phenomenon at university level as well. Llamas et al. (2019), in their longitudinal study, found that increasing faculty diversity may be particularly helpful in reducing academic disparities for students of colour and that ‘student-faculty racial/ethnic match’ had a positive impact on grades, retention and graduation rates (p. 7).

Notwithstanding the discussion around attainment, international literature also highlights that minoritized students have more favourable perceptions of minoritized teachers (Auerbach, 2007). In Canada, minority teachers have reported that their students were ‘excited’ and ‘thrilled’ to finally interact with a visible minority teacher (Aujila-Bhullar, 2016) and share jokes, cultural reference points or more serious issues. It has been argued that if students have better rapport with same-race teachers (Villegas & Irvine, 2010), they may be less likely to act up in class which will result in a less disruptive classroom environment. Ladson-Billings (1994) in her influential study of the practices of ‘successful’ teachers of Black students, highlights the connection that can develop between minoritized student and teacher. She argues that teachers who have culturally relevant practices encourage a community of learners and support students to feel part of a collective, which in turn develops academic excellence. By supporting their academic endeavours, teachers honour the humanity and dignity of their students and provide a sense of belonging which they crave (Ladson-Billings, 1994). As a result, minoritized teachers are more likely to be able to relate more easily with the young people, more likely to recognise their needs, and more likely to recognise their strengths.

Cherng and Halpin (2016) go so far as to suggest that more favourable student perceptions of teachers can translate into better academic outcomes such as motivation and interest. Minoritized teachers will often have had similar experiences to their students navigating a racialised education system and feel that they will better understand their students’ lived experiences and family expectations. In a US context, it is recommended that more Black teachers should be recruited because of the specific values-approach they take to teaching which supports them in understanding the impact of racism in their students’ lives. Duncan’s (2020) study of Black teachers’ perspectives on helping Black students navigate white supremacy, illustrates this perfectly. These teachers used emancipatory pedagogies, such as affirming their students, validating their knowledge, and forming safe spaces for them to speak about oppression. This helped raise student awareness of the ubiquity of racism and the inevitability that they would experience it, thus creating ‘real talk’ moments (Duncan, 2020, p.10) and developing student voices.

A common theme emerging from the literature is how many minoritized teachers arrive at their engagement with ITE possessing experiential knowledge about societal inequities and the inequitable nature of the formal education system (Brown, 2014). It can be argued that this sensitivity to the cultural needs of their students can make minoritized teachers well-positioned to act as role models or ‘mentors’ (Young & Young, 2020; Warren, 2020; Haque & Elliott, 2016) for young people. In fact, it is precisely this aspiration that is often a motivating factor for minoritized or Indigenous teacher candidates entering teacher education (Oloo & Kiramba, 2019), they see themselves as a bridge to wider society and their stewardship can empower a community of young learners. In Canada, Oloo et al. (2019) argue convincingly that Indigenous teachers can have an impact on the lives of non-Indigenous students as well, because the latter are then able to see them in positions of authority within an education context.

Brown (2014) outlines how in the case of many African American pre-service teachers, an aspect of their enthusiasm for teaching was the encouragement they received from family members and other teachers about ‘making a substantial difference’ in their communities. Similarly, in an early childhood context, diverse student practitioners placed a strong emphasis on serving as a role model to the children they would eventually teach (Guyton et al., 1996). Santoro (2007) explores how minoritized teachers use their cultural knowledge and experience as ‘other’ to develop deep understandings of ethnic minority and/or Indigenous students. She maintains that really ‘seeing’ and really knowing students includes understanding how their out-of-school lives shape them as learners and how their lived experience in school shapes who they are outside of school. Implicit in this is understanding the complexities of their racialised lives and being able to empathise with how race and racism impacts their experiences on a regular basis.

Magaldi et al. (2018) sum this up in the title of their article *‘I am here for a reason’*, which outlines how many minority teachers rely on their personal backgrounds to adopt an ‘insider’s perspective’ to connect with, and advocate for their students. Santoro (2009) reports that teachers in Australia who had experienced racism and marginalisation themselves, often were the strongest advocates for their minoritized students as a result. As one of the teacher participants in Duncan’s (2020) study put it, ‘My role is to develop the voice and encourage the voice. Your voice needs to be developed. That’s my job as a Black teacher’ (Duncan, 2020, p. 11). Evidence from the international literature overall reveals that minority teachers are motivated by a strong desire for social justice and use their shared cultural perspectives to become much more intentional in their educational approaches.

Benefits to minoritized teachers and the cultural majority.

The debate around diversifying teaching can be situated in the ‘equity of access’ perspective, focusing on the benefits to individuals from under-represented groups who may encounter barriers to progression into the teaching profession (Heinz et al., 2021). The ‘equity through access’ rationale may also be emphasised, i.e., the benefits of a diverse teaching profession for students, schools, and wider society (Heinz & Keane, 2018). This section looks at the perceived advantages to the minoritized teachers themselves, as well as society as a whole. To begin with, access to, and progress within, the education system serves as a significant indicator of integration. Using a ‘marker and means’ framework, Ager and Strang (2004) view education as one of the spheres of social connection which can be regarded like the ‘public face’ of integration. Education is viewed as one of the most significant ways to prepare people for becoming a citizen, particularly for people who may be new to a country. Indeed, Irish integration policy specifically references within its vision the hope that migrants ‘and particularly their children’, will benefit fully from the education system (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017). This is critical when the cyclical nature of educational disadvantage is considered and how ‘educational arrears are easily transmitted from one generation to the next’ (EU, 2004, p. 21). Integration literature at the level of the EU further places primacy on the issue of education: ‘Efforts in education are critical to preparing immigrants, and particularly their descendants, to be more successful and more active participants in society’ (EU, 2004, {CBP5}, p. 18).

While such a prescriptive approach to measuring integration can be easily problematised, this point is nonetheless useful to remember in the context of diversifying teaching. Rather than merely focusing on the potential additive approach to the experience of minoritized students, this argument positions the advantages within wider discourse around integration. If progress within the education system has such aspirational representations, it can then surely be concluded that becoming a teacher symbolises a significant achievement in this context. The presence of migrant teachers in the education workforce for example, can broaden the cultural base and understandings of schools in a way that ‘will enable them to build upon diversity positively, enriching and enhancing the life of all in the school’ (Kum, et al., 2010, p. 322). Warren (2020) elaborates on this concept in his study of Black male teachers of Black boys in the US and their contributions to improving school (and life) outcomes for their students. He believes that these teachers become positioned as a ‘portrait of successful Black manhood strategically meant to be emulated {by the students}’ (Warren, 2020, p. 381) and these notions of success became embedded in the identity of these teachers.

It is also recognised that minoritized teachers perceive benefits to themselves in terms of their professional integrity, agency and the high expectations they build for themselves. ‘Teachers of Color’ in the US have been reported to be more likely to view their role as agents of change, more likely to view teaching as a moral enterprise, aspire to become teachers in ‘Communities of Color’, and become more effective teachers of ‘Students of Color’ (Brown 2014). Minority teachers strive for socially just teaching practices, often bring viewpoints to their work that are unavailable from the dominant cultural majority (Santoro, 2016; Santoro & Forghani-Arani, 2015) and can contribute perspectives to curriculum and pedagogy that has the potential to positively influence the practice of their colleagues. Indigenous teachers in Santoro’s (2007) study shared how their own pedagogy was strongly inspired by their own experiences as learners. Her participants were influenced by knowledge about informal and experiential learning and the teaching that occurs between children, parents and elders in Indigenous communities, for example through a commitment to participatory and ‘hands-on’ approaches to learning and prioritising learning through ‘doing’ (p. 90).

Lindsay and Hart (2017) investigate whether exposure to ‘same-race’ teachers affects the rate at which Black students receive exclusionary discipline. Examples of exclusionary discipline in their study included office referrals, being removed from the classroom, out of school suspensions, in-school suspensions, and expulsion. They found consistent evidence that exposure to same-race teachers was associated with reduced rates of exclusionary discipline for Black students, suggesting that teacher discretion has a huge role to play in this area (Lindsay & Hart, 2017). It is important to remember that in addition to the social and emotional impact of punitive measures, higher incidences of exclusionary discipline can also have an enormous academic effect, as when students are removed from the classroom, their direct teaching time is reduced. The pervasiveness of expulsions and suspensions as disproportionate disciplinary reactions has been documented in a qualitative context as well, linking the direct impact on Black families to overwhelming stress and trauma (Powell & Coles, 2020).

As a result, Lindsay and Hart (2017) suggest that it could be useful to explore the distinct pedagogical and classroom-management strategies that Black teachers use which appear successful in lowering rates of exclusionary disciplinary practices. They argue that these strategies could potentially be shared with other teachers who may be struggling with similar classroom situations. The level of detail contained in the Lindsay and Hart (2017) study is not available in an Irish context, however research in relation to Traveller students

for example, reveal that they are more likely to receive lines or extra homework as punishment or be suspended than a settled student (Darmody et al., 2012).

Many experienced teachers in Ireland have had little (or no) training in intercultural education (Keane & Heinz, 2016) and most policy relating to intercultural education has been introduced in schools without any continuous professional development or in-service training. The overall lack of training has contributed to teachers feeling underprepared and lacking skills in this area (OECD, 2017). A more diverse workforce in a school could potentially be a good opportunity for peer dialogue and intercultural learning. This could be an interesting opportunity for professional development, where exposure to multiple perspectives and de-centring ethnocentrism in a naturally diverse and truly anti-racist environment, may enhance the quality of reflective practice from teachers.

The Continuum of Barriers to Primary Teaching in Ireland

Despite recent policy efforts to increase higher education participation in Ireland, there remains inadequate representation from groups such as lower socio-economic, minority ethnic and individuals with a disability (HEA, 2018; DE, 2023). Students from under-represented groups face a myriad of economic constraints, institutional constraints, and cultural constraints to becoming a teacher. This section further examines the multitude of barriers which can result in the exclusion of students or potential students from higher education, with specific emphasis on minoritized ethnic students and ITE programmes. Barriers will be presented using a continuum framework encompassing access and admissions, post-entry to ITE and transitions to teaching.

Pre-entry to ITE programmes.

When theorists talk about widening participation, it generally relates to the first point of contact and actually getting ‘access’ to higher education (Sartori & Nwanze, 2021). This can sometimes result in other significant issues such as retention, attainment and engagement becoming side-lined in the discussion. However, it is still important to start this section by looking at the pre-entry context to ITE. To begin with, there is a lack of meaningful outreach from ITE providers to ‘hard to reach’ populations as outreach is typically conceptualised as a top-down ‘parachute-in’ model which often ‘redoubles the privileged place of HEIs as resourced and skilled, with ‘non-traditional’ or under-represented communities positioned, by contrast, as under-privileged, under-resourced, un-skilled – always othered’ (Bhagat & O’Neill, 2011, p.50).

The rapidly increasing points requirements⁹ for many ITE courses at primary level often present one of the first stumbling blocks for minoritized students. The phenomenon of high points is relevant in the context of minoritized students, not simply in relation to access or potential attainment levels, but because of wider contextual issues. For example, migrant parents may feel less confident giving advice about formal education to their children as they are less familiar with the overall education system, having not gone through it themselves (Byrne & Smyth, 2010) and potentially are at a clear disadvantage in guiding their children's post-school pathways (Fass et al., 2019). Given how many student teachers have a close relative or parent involved in teaching (Keane & Heinz, 2016; Drudy et al., 2005; NCCA, 2021), this lack of 'insider knowledge' undoubtedly acts as a barrier to choosing the profession. In relation to potential students from the Irish Traveller population, parental influence can also be a factor here given the historically negative experiences of formal education that Traveller parents might have encountered (Quinlan, 2021). A Traveller child's attitude to school is formed in their family and community (Watson et al., 2017) and this can be enhanced by fears of losing Traveller identity within a formal education system (Healy & Binchy, 2005) and the risk of isolation from family and friends (Murray, 2012).

Another wider contextual issue for the points race is the deficit perceptions and low expectations some teachers have for their minoritized students (Rubie-Davies, 2020). There is compelling evidence from the literature to suggest that teachers' perceptions of students' academic merit are deeply influenced by their racial and ethnic background, with minoritized students sometimes perceived to be weaker students. In the US, teachers have higher expectations of white and Asian-American students and lower expectations of Black and Latino students (Cherng & Halpin, 2016). A 'rigour gap' emerges in which disadvantaged students are judged to require less rigorous curriculum than that afforded their privileged peers. Having low expectations of students can be extremely discouraging for the individuals involved and may even lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy (Rubie-Davis, 2015). It could be the case that the disadvantaged receive watered down lessons that limit students' academic growth, resulting in additional impoverished curriculum in subsequent lessons; conversely the advantaged receive challenging lessons that boost students' academic performance, leading to additional rigorous curriculum down the road (Zohar et al., 2001). Liou and Rojas (2020), in a year-long case study of high-school teachers in the US found that negative and low expectations among the teachers often reinforced ideologies associated with the racial

⁹ Please see Appendix D for further information about points requirements for ITE programmes.

contract and, in effect, perpetuated whiteness as the racial construct of college-readiness. On the other hand, those teachers who operated with a higher degree of ‘race consciousness’ reported more equitable and affirming pedagogical practices that emphasized high expectations and ‘education as a collective contract for the common good’ (Liou & Rojas, 2020, p. 712). In Ireland, Devine (2005) also found that teachers in Ireland had particularly negative attitudes to Roma students and students from African diaspora backgrounds, particular in relation to academic ability and expectations about behaviour. Traveller students have been victims of the ‘soft bigotry’ of low expectations in formal education in many ways, not least of which were segregated practices, whereby Travellers, right up until the 1990’s were routinely taught in all-Traveller classes, regardless of age (Irish Traveller Movement, 2017). It is extremely important to recognise how the prior educational experiences of minoritized student teachers, as well as that of their families, can impact on their emerging teacher identity.

The financial implications of attending university for minoritized students is increasingly under scrutiny in the UK, where research has found living costs are a more significant concern for BME students than tuition fees (UUK, 2018). Additionally, both current and prospective minoritized students are doubting the value for money presented by higher education (NUS, 2019). Minoritized students are often obliged to hold down part-time jobs while studying which can place an added burden on them during this time and act as a major deterrent to many otherwise well-suited candidates. This bears out in an Irish context as well, with rising costs associated with undertaking degrees and significant percentage (71%) of student teachers holding down part-time jobs while studying (USI, 2018). Research shows that students experiencing educational inequality as a result of poverty are five times less likely to gain access to university than their more privileged peers (Hannon et al., 2017). And teaching, similar to other ‘high status’ professions such as law and medicine, is more unequal than other career options (Keane & Heinz, 2016). For example, the recent decision to increase the H.Dip to a two-year Professional Master of Education programme effectively means that becoming a teacher now takes significant financial commitment, with fees typically in the region of €5,500¹⁰ per annum for programmes offered by the public ITE providers. This becomes even more cost-prohibitive for some migrant students, who may be subject to high non-EU fees. In ITE in Ireland, there are high personal costs associated with

¹⁰ Figure applies to the academic year 2022-2023 and are taken directly from the websites of DCU, MU, MIE and MIC.

periods of school placement as well, 45% of student teachers reporting spending between €31- €60 on resources and materials per week (USI, 2018). Non-traditional graduates do not have the same access to the social and cultural capital more readily available to more privileged students, for example in relation to extensive pre-school opportunities, grinds and tutoring or an array of extra-curricular activities. This is particularly relevant in that crucial period after graduation and before they start searching for employment (Finnegan et al., 2019).

Similarly, awareness of the wider financial context for early career teachers, can also contribute to minoritized young people not choosing the profession. In the US, teachers being underpaid and undervalued was mentioned frequently by minoritized ethnic students in interviews about reasons for not wanting to pursue teaching as a career (Marrun, et al., 2019). Comparatively low salaries associated with teaching, though not exclusively, can often contribute to teaching being perceived as low status with low rewards in some cultures. Gordon (2000) (in Brown, 2014), found that while teachers and the teaching profession was generally well regarded among many cultural communities, it was also the case that in some parts of the US it was recognised that teaching had a low status position. In particular, pre-service teachers from across a variety of Asian groups, including those from Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese and Korean heritage, received pressure from either family members or their wider community not to choose teaching as a profession (Gordon 2000; Nguyen, 2008).

Daunting workloads can also serve as a disincentive to choosing primary teaching. In Ireland it is certainly the case that the workload is very high (USI, 2018), and this can potentially be off-putting to prospective students who know they may face additional hardships down the line. There is also compelling evidence around the competition that minority teachers face in the job market as well which could impact on them choosing the career. Schmidt (2010) outlines the sense of frustration and despair many immigrant teachers in Canada experienced when trying to secure employment. This included longer periods of unemployment in comparison to white counterparts, with disproportionate numbers of them relying only on part-time or substitute work, contradictory hiring and salary standards and ongoing systemic discrimination (Schmidt, 2010, p. 249).

It is worth mentioning the existence of additional subject-specific barriers, which exist in an Irish context, namely Religious Education and Gaeilge (the Irish language). In particular, the denominational nature of primary education in general, and until recently, ITE itself should be referenced. The dominance of the Catholic patronage in primary teacher education (4/6 institutions until 2013) has arguably contributed to the lack of diversity in the

teaching profession. Heinz et al. (2018) found that over 90% of undergraduate primary entrants were Catholic, in comparison with 84% of the Irish population who identify as Catholic. While in theory, a student from any background could have studied primary teaching in the ITE institutions, a certificate in religious studies was needed to get a job in approximately 94% of schools in Ireland with Catholic patronage. However, even when most institutions rescinded their religious ethos to join secular universities, it has been reported that staff in some of the colleges continue to recommend that student primary teachers take the Certificate in Religious Studies (CRS) to aid their employment prospects (Humphreys, 2015).

In relation to Irish language requirements, little or no research has been done about how this potentially could act as a barrier to entry to ITE. Small-scale narrative research has revealed some concerns about the quality of Irish language teaching in schools that are designated disadvantaged in Ireland, problematic assumptions about students' language learning capabilities and largely negative experiences of students learning Irish in these contexts (O'Sullivan et al., 2019). As has already been noted, high standards remain in relation to the Irish language, with entry to primary ITE requiring a minimum of a H5 at Higher Level in 2018, and a H4 (between 60%-70%) from 2019 onwards. Moreover, there are some concerns that dispensations (often referred to as Irish exemptions) from learning Irish in schools may be depriving some migrant children of the opportunity to learn Irish which could contribute to alienation down the line (MacGréal & Rhatigan, 2009).

Post-entry to ITE programmes.

While access is undoubtedly a crucial component in this debate, there is a tendency to think that when minoritized students gain admission to ITE programmes it will act as a 'quick fix' to wider issues of diversity and representation. The problem of access can often be replaced with other issues which may involve a lack of cultural support groups, an ethnocentric teacher education curriculum and systemic discrimination experienced by minoritized students within the wider educational system. In fact, Brown (2014) argues that the overwhelming culture of whiteness and ethnocentrism of ITE programmes makes them inherently ill-equipped for students of colour and Kohli and Pizarro (2022) extend this to say these programmes are structured for minoritized teacher educators of Color to experience racial stress and harm.

This has resonance in the writings of hooks (2003):

Often individual Black people and/ or people of colour are in settings where we are the only colored people present. In such settings, unenlightened White folks often behave toward us as though we are the guests, and they are the hosts. They act as though our presence is less a function of our skill, aptitude, genius, and more the outcome of philanthropic charity (2003, p. 33).

Conversely, it is interesting to note that in Canada, there are designated Indigenous Teacher Education Programmes (ITEP) which aim to provide an alternative to the Westernised education system by implementing a holistic Indigenous learning model for Indigenous pre-service teacher candidates (Marom, 2018). Oloo et al. (2019) found that this was a very supportive environment for minoritized student teachers, with the small class sizes and cohort structures enabling students to bond and build closer personal connections. In addition, Indigenous students on these courses received significant support from the institution itself, as well as cultural support from Elders that affirmed their Indigenous heritage and contributions (Oloo et al., 2019). Kohli (2021) similarly outlines the rise in ‘Grow Your Own’ teacher education programmes in the US, whereby college students of Color and community workers are supported to become teachers in their own communities.

But these initiatives are the exceptions, and more often than not student teachers are studying within environments that do not value their contributions or provide safe spaces for their learning about teaching. Wilkins and Lall’s (2011) study clearly assembles the negative experiences of Black and minority ethnic students in ITE in the UK. These students reported concerns about social isolation, stereotypical attitudes among white peers and instances of overt racism, particularly in school placements. Similar was the experience of student teachers in Zaheerali’s (2015) study, who reported discriminatory characterisations based on religion, dress, or phenotype. Minoritized student teachers are at risk of marginalisation, where their contribution to the ITE institution or future school was solely defined by their ethnicity. Santoro’s (1997) study of Chinese-born and educated student teachers revealed how their supervisory teacher linked their performance with both their ethnicity, and their status as a speaker of English as an additional language. Periods of placement have been found to be problematic for minoritized teachers in the US as well. Souto-Manning (2022), using a lens of racial capitalism, found that despite their contributions to the preparation of teachers, the voices of cooperating teachers of colour remain marginalized and silenced in teacher education, and their labour is often unpaid, unsupported, and unvalued.

Brown (2014), writing in a US context, also problematises how the ‘dominant, disembodied and normalised culture of whiteness, white privilege and white hegemony

pervades contemporary teacher education' (p.326) and presents a formidable challenge to teach in a manner that is both critical and meaningful. Pre-service teachers may become disconnected from the process if they do not feel they are valued within the system. Tolbert and Eichelberger (2014) share a case study of a minoritized ethnic student teacher 'Serina' who initially went into teaching to facilitate social change in her marginalised community. However, over the course of her experience in ITE she became increasingly disconnected to her original purpose of becoming an agent of change. She reported being discouraged and excluded within the programme when she drew attention to the inequitable outcomes for minoritized students in teacher education. More significantly, she reported that staff and leadership within ITE espoused mixed messages about social justice. She felt silenced by peers and disciplined by staff when perceived to be 'rocking the boat' (Tolbert & Eichelberger, 2014, p. 1033).

The story of 'Serina' illustrates how many teacher education programmes do not value the voice or the experiences of their minoritized ethnic students, that the programmes can be often at best, not culturally affirming, and at worst, exclusionary. Stereotypical notions about minority identities can often be reinforced through interactions and the existence of such racial microaggressions can act as a significant barrier for completion of programmes. Chester Pierce, a Black psychologist first wrote about microaggressions in the 1970's and described them as offensive mechanisms that whiteness employs to degrade, abuse and humiliate. The concept of microaggressions has been significantly developed and expanded upon in recent years. 'Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color' (Sue et al., 2007). Kohli and Solórzano (2012) share how racial microaggressions can take on various forms, for example, the consistent (and even deliberate) mispronunciation of students' names, subtle verbal and non-verbal insults or assaults, (for example not looking a person in the eye) or layered insults based on ethnicity. They emphasise that in isolation the impact might not be as serious, however as a cumulative phenomenon the effect can be profound (p.447). In fact, it is precisely the cumulative negative impact of racial microaggressions that some minoritized students experienced over the course of their schooling that has discouraged them from even considering teaching as a profession (Marrun et al., 2019). It can be argued that it can be further appropriate to speak of such practices as 'micro-invalidations'; as a way of understanding remarks and actions that diminish, negate, or disbelieve (Yosso et al., 2009). While racial microinsults are slights to students' belonging,

ability, and innocence, microinvalidations often go further to negate racialised students' experiences through meritocratic and colourblind ideology (Riel, 2019). The mispronouncing of names (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012) and unsolicited comments on Black women's hair are often targets for both microaggressions and micro-invalidations in schools, whereby hair-shaming and hair-bias represent a significant source of trauma in education contexts (Mbilishaka & Apugo, 2020). These types of racial discriminations "are difficult to identify, quantify, and rectify because of their subtle, nebulous, and unnamed nature" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 272).

Critiques of microaggressions maintain that they have the potential to minimise racism, if they are perceived as being 'less than' or a more 'minor' version of racism (Torres-Harding et al., 2012). However it is important to remember their insidiousness, particularly given the cumulative effect of how racism is delivered in this way and as a result, need to be engaged with (Fleras, 2016). The 'impenetrable otherness' (Suleri, 1992) and prolonged and repeated exposure to microaggressions that the participants in this study experienced in relation to identity markers such as hair, skin colour and names presented in Chapters 5 and 6, will further progress this discussion in an Irish context.

The prevalence of racism in higher education is an additional factor which contributes to a racialised experience for minoritized students in ITE. Minority ethnic students in physical education teacher education in the UK reported problematic discourses and assumptions in relation to dress, stereotypes about skin colour and being used as a 'resource' in discussions about race in college (Flintoff, 2015). Guyton et al. (1996) noted that nearly all of the teacher candidates in their study experienced incidents they described as either prejudiced or racist occurring during their preparation programme. In the UK, (Basit et al., 2006) found that racism contributed to the reasons given by minority ethnic student teachers for withdrawing from their ITE programmes. Teacher education programmes need to bear this in mind when designing supports for minoritized students who choose teaching as a profession. Despite admirable intentions to diversify the teaching profession, Brown (2014) argues that many students of colour will still end up operating within a 'normative culture of whiteness' which is not responsive to their needs (p. 339). She argues that while ITE programmes may boast about their efforts to diversify their student population and bring in more minoritized teacher candidates, they ignore the need to transform the kinds of normative culture, knowledge and experiences that are valued, maintained, and offered to these individuals (Brown, 2014). This study builds upon observations from the literature in this regard, and reveals how minoritized ethnic young people in Ireland, even before entering ITE

programmes, are aware of overwhelming culture of whiteness that may await them in their future studies.

Transition to teaching.

The preceding sections outlined some of the barriers that minoritized ethnic students have faced at pre- and post-entry stages to ITE. Unfortunately, the picture is no brighter at a practicing teacher level, where diversity and difference are often regarded as deficiencies on the part of the minority teacher, and they experience racist and hostile school climates which push them out of the profession (Kohli, 2021). This section draws heavily on literature about minoritized teachers in the international context, as equivalent research in an Irish setting has not yet been carried out to any comprehensive degree.

Recruitment and retention.

Ingersoll et al.'s (2017) empirical study about the recruitment and retention of teachers over a 25-year period in the US, reveal that turnover rates among minority teachers have been significantly higher than among non-minority teachers. Kohli (2021) has also found that Teachers of Color are leaving the profession at disproportionate rates. While the number of minority teachers has increased, the type of schools in which they have been employed have had organisational issues which have resulted in the disproportionate loss of minority teachers. Kum et al. (2010) reports the extent to which refugee teachers in Scotland experience both explicit and nuanced forms of racism during their teaching career. The nuances might include cultural biases in relation to curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation as well as the stress of getting their qualifications recognised in the first place (Kum et al., 2010). Many internationally educated immigrant teachers have expressed frustration at the amount of bureaucracy involved in seeking entry to the teaching profession in Scotland (Kum et al., 2010) as well as in Ireland (McMahon, 2019). In the UK, many BME teachers felt isolated and lacking in management support with regards to incidences of racism and career progression (Haque & Elliott, 2016). Furthermore, Schmidt (2010) highlights the systemic discrimination that presents a major obstacle to immigrant teacher's participation in the Canadian education system, again in relation to acknowledgement of credentials and inadequate bridging supports for those trained in international contexts.

Additional expectations.

Aside from the qualifications issue, the literature broadly speaks to minoritized teachers as being overburdened and essentialised in the school system which often does not value their contributions. Santoro (2013) argues how minoritized teachers in Australia are constructed, first and foremost, as ethnic and racialised teacher-subjects, a positioning that

shapes the nature of their work and professional identities. In this way, they are never simply regarded as ‘just a teacher’ and are burdened with additional expectations in comparison to their white peers in relation to being a ‘cultural broker’ or ‘bridge builder’. Santoro believes that the work of ethnically and racially diverse teachers, and the creation of their professional selves are underpinned by naïve assumptions about their status as ‘cultural experts’ (2013, p. 8) or ‘professional ethnics’ (Blair & Maylor, 1993).

Aujila-Bhullar (2016) found that many of the minority teacher participants in her research were caught in the binary of feeling appreciated at times for their ‘cultural insight’ for example when working with minoritized parents, but at the same time being ostracized or discriminated against for the same abilities. Kohli (2021) similarly found that Teachers of Colour in the US were often lauded for their material impact on schools, for example in relation to raising test scores, and their positive behaviour management of students of Colour, but at the same time persistently overlooked, questioned, and critiqued for their humanistic value.

A similarly problematic phenomenon is when minoritized teachers become locked in a frame that positions them as necessary role models for minoritized students but does not necessarily consider them to be effective teachers for all students, which can have negative connotations for their self-worth and confidence. As examined earlier, minoritized teachers can act as significant role models to school students in systems that are dominated by whiteness. However, this ‘essentializing racial tokenism discourse’ (Kelly 2007 in Brown 2014) can reduce their contribution to school life to stereotypical roles or jobs in the school. It can place the teachers under unnecessary additional burdens. Carrington and Skelton (2003) query whether young people will indeed ever regard teachers as role models in the current climate of celebrity and entertainer idols. Lander and Zaheerali (2016) also effectively problematise this argument of the role model. They discuss that being an ethnic minority is not a sufficient condition for role model status, and it should relate more to the teacher’s own qualities and characteristics. They also question the assumption that students from a minoritized background will even identify in any meaningful way with their teacher in the first place (Lander & Zaheerali, 2016).

Further burdens placed on minority teachers include placing disproportionate responsibility on them to close the aforementioned ‘achievement gap’ between minoritized ethnic students and their white counterparts (Brown, 2014)., without similar expectations being placed on cultural majority teachers to become culturally responsive educators. Minority ethnic staff working in higher education in the UK further feel that their

professional competence is continually questioned and undermined by students, parents, and colleagues (Mahony & Weiner, 2019). Kohli (2021) shares how minoritized teachers in her study had to unlearn and resist the dominant structures in their school which questioned their place, made them feel othered and marginalised, and perceived them as a threat.

A survey of more than 1,000 BME teachers, conducted by the Runnymede Trust for the National Union of Teachers (NUT) in the UK, revealed 1 in 3 minority teachers had never applied for promotion and many felt they were given fewer challenging tasks because of their skin colour. BME teachers reported that they were expected to work with classes with the worst behaviour problems or run Black History Month, regardless of their actual ethnicity, as that was perceived to be their 'area of expertise' (Haque & Elliott, 2016). In relation to promotions, there was a widespread perception of an 'invisible glass-ceiling' and that senior leadership roles were inaccessible to BME teachers. In the UK, there are documented disparities in progression rates from one stage of the teacher career pipeline to the next between trainees and teachers from Asian, Black, mixed, and other ethnic minority backgrounds and their counterparts from white backgrounds (Worth et al., 2022). Findings from Wallace (2020), in his study of Black male teachers' negotiations of leadership and learning in London further suggest that there is a lot of pressure for Black male teachers to serve in racialised roles such as community liaisons and schoolwide disciplinarians, particularly for minoritized ethnic students. This in turn has constrained the long-term progress of Black male teachers in relation to promotion, for example in departmental or administrative leadership (Wallace, 2020).

Likewise, a great cause of stress for Indigenous teachers in Australia was the expectation from colleagues and their school leaders that they would take on the responsibility for all issues concerning Indigenous students and Indigenous education, which may limit options for other professional opportunities (Santoro, 2007). In Canada, participants in Marum's (2018) study felt that Indigenous ways of knowing and teaching were often marginalised or tokenised. They reported that their efforts were never seen as equal and that their experiential knowledge was not valued by colleagues. Aujila-Bhullar's (2016) research on minority women teachers in Canada revealed myriad instances of compromise in relation to how they represented their racial identities in school. The participants regarded their race as being outside to the mainstream culture of the school, they were regarded with 'suspicion' when they tried to implement new initiatives and felt the need to repress the use of their first language when working in professional contexts. While the ability to speak another language is typically seen as a benefit, these teachers had to

compromise on this and were hesitant to speak their native language with parents for fear of how it would be perceived (Aujila-Bhullar, 2016).

Minoritized teachers' self-perceptions and awareness of how other people view them is a common theme emerging from the literature. Agee (in Brown, 2014, p. 334) also noted the narrative of an African American female teacher, who despite having a commitment to the enactment of critical multiculturalism in the classroom, felt that if she enacted this with white pupils it might be viewed as biased or self-motivated. It is important to mention that in the context of the US, minority teachers are also overwhelmingly employed in public schools serving high-poverty, high-minority, and urban communities (Ingersoll et al., 2017).

Experiences of racism.

Even more alarming is how often minoritized teachers speak about the centrality of racism to their daily lives in school and how working within these contexts can be harmful and dispiriting (Lander & Zaheerali, 2016; Gist, 2014; Santoro, 2013; Schmidt, 2010; Kum et al., 2010). Minoritized teachers experience racial stress, racial harm, racial trauma, and racial battle fatigue at unprecedented rates (Kohli, 2021). A significant finding emerging from Schmidt's research is around the pervasiveness of discriminatory treatment toward immigrant teachers in Canada, shared by immigrant teachers themselves and confirmed by mentors and other staff members in the school. Examples included prejudicial treatment on the basis of dress, accent, age, and language proficiency (2010). Further 'othering' was evident through instances of perceived foreignness, with immigrant teachers repeatedly being asked whether they were on exchange programmes or when they were returning home (2010, p.245). Black and Asian teachers surveyed on behalf of the Runnymede Trust (Haque & Elliott, 2016) called for greater support from colleagues and senior management in handling incidents of racism. Despite integration often being referred to as a 'two-way street', the narratives of migrant teachers in Canada point to the onus being placed on them to 'fit in' (Schmidt, 2016, p. 584), rather than the education system assuming its fair share of the responsibility in diversifying the teaching profession. Black teachers in the UK, spoke about being labelled 'troublemakers' or being viewed as 'aggressive' if they challenged any decisions in their school (Haque & Elliott, 2016). And minority teachers in Canada identified getting little or no support from their colleagues when encountering institutional discrimination in the workplace (Aujila-Bhullar, 2016). Kohli (2021) relates how many teachers of colour are further triggered when they witness their students experiencing the racism that they too endured in their own education. The perpetuation of stereotypes within a school context can leave teachers feeling like a 'professional other' (Lander & Zaheerali, 2016). It is important to note

that it is also very challenging for minoritized teacher to find a job in the first place, and under-employment of immigrant teachers is rife in many countries (Cho, 2016; Schmidt, 2010; Schmidt & Schneider, 2016).

Concluding thoughts

The national international literature points to significant and ongoing dehumanising barriers which minoritized ethnic young people may face when pursuing a career in primary teaching. The lack of up to date and targeted literature in the Irish context points to a need for further research on this topic, in particular a need for research which foregrounds the perspectives and experiences of prospective minoritized pre-service teachers. It is anticipated that the focus on the narratives and testimonies of the young people themselves within this study will go some way to fill the gap about what we know about how minoritized young people feel about the enduring barriers to becoming a primary and extend our knowledge of this phenomenon in the Irish context. It is evident that a comprehensive and complex conceptual framework was needed to capture the multitude of ways that students, prospective student teachers and minoritized teachers within the system have experienced deficit constructions of their identity and capabilities. The next chapter outlines the range of concepts which underpin the research design and may help sharpen our understanding of the lack of diversity in the teaching profession.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

Introduction

Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005) have emphasised that researchers working in teacher education need to situate their research and wider discussions more firmly in theory. This chapter presents the central ideas, constructs, and connections that frame the research design, researcher interpretation and theoretical assumptions in this study. The aim of this chapter is to move beyond the descriptive, and to make visible the causal logic linking the key concepts reinforcing the research design in Chapter 4, and the theoretical coherence of the findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

Rationale for the conceptual framework

A conceptual framework, i.e. multiple concepts working together as opposed to one unifying theory, was chosen over a theoretical framework because I did not want to fold all the narratives, testimonies, pictures, and understandings of the diverse participants into one singular theory. I further felt a hybrid conceptual frame would allow for a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study by intentionally including methodology and research design under its umbrella, which is not always the case. A conceptual framework:

explains the path of a research and grounds it firmly in theoretical construct... and should resonate with every aspect of the research process from the definition of the problem, literature survey, methodology, presentation, and discussion of the findings as well as the conclusions that are drawn (Adom et al. 2018, p. 438).

A further commonly cited and accepted understanding of a conceptual framework is that it is a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that support and inform a research project (Miles & Huberman, 1994). A conceptual framework is the total, logical orientation and associations of anything and everything that forms the underlying thinking, structures, plans and practices and implementation of the research project. Thus, the conceptual framework can be regarded as the logical conceptualization of your entire research project (Kivunja, 2018, p. 47).

A note on interdisciplinarity

The theories utilised in this conceptual framework are derived from several discipline-based perspectives. Maxwell (2005) argues that the most productive conceptual frameworks are ones that bring in ideas from outside of the traditionally defined field of study. By and large, education studies can be viewed as a composite discipline (Smith, 2013) and teacher

education relies upon the intersection of the foundation disciplines of philosophy of education, sociology of education and educational psychology. Consequently, it makes sense that an interdisciplinary¹¹ focus would enhance this study as the issues related to addressing the lack of diversity in the teaching profession require multiple lenses for comprehension. A conceptual framework is an argument including different points of view and culminating in a series of reasons for adopting some points, and not others (Eisenhart, 1991). Therefore the conceptual framework for this study spans sociological understandings of critical race theory, the philosophical concept of epistemic injustice, and the notion of communion which derives from psychology. I chose CRT as a focal point as I felt it would add theoretical coherence to the lived experience of the participants. While CRT is a common framework used to understand the experience of racism and racialisation in a US context, it remains underutilised in an Irish context. Given the complexity of racism in Ireland, I hoped that understandings from CRT would shine a light on ways to understand it in the context of education. However, I further theorised that there were also specific and layered injustices that were happening in the lives of the young people that a singular CRT frame could not adequately capture by itself. As a result, I supplemented it with a theory which would encompass varied forms of epistemic injustices. Finally, the concept of communion was added to the conceptual framework specifically due to how instrumental research design was to the success of the project. As a result, I wanted to ensure that the frame could be expanded to encompass traceable connections between all aspects of the empirical inquiry, and communion was the thread that brought it all together. These varying dimensions will now be explored in greater detail.

Communion

Eisenhart (1991) maintains that a conceptual framework should be used as ‘a skeletal structure of justification, rather than a skeletal structure of explanation based on formal logic or accumulated experience’ (p. 209). Skeletal structures need to rely on abstractions to ensure research design aligns with theory, and the first component to this conceptual framework is the concept of communion. Communion entails seeking and sharing significant and profound connections, something that Bettez (2015) argues is virtually absent in discussions of research approaches and rationale. These connections could be to establish close and meaningful relationships with other humans, and they are also the connections that emerge

¹¹ Interdisciplinary research integrates ‘perspectives, information, data, techniques, tools, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines’ (National Academies of Science, 2005. p. 188) and ‘mutual integration of organising concepts, methodology, procedures, epistemology, terminology and data’ (OECD, 1972 p. 25).

between theory and practice. Bettez (2015) draws upon the work of Phelps (2000) in the context of Black liberation theology, to position communion as something integrally connected to a commitment to liberation. Communion can be therefore understood as the recognition of ‘the full humanity, dignity, and equality of Blacks and others who had been historically oppressed peoples’ (p. 674).

Communion emerged strongly as an aim of the research process for me, as a way of striving for social justice and foregrounding humanity, dignity, and respect. I wanted to centre human connections, interpersonal bonding and capture the complex richness of the human experience.

This call to communion resonates with our deepest desire for inclusion within the community of humankind as respected and capable human agents... Most marginalized and oppressed peoples passionately desire to be in union with one another and all of humankind and creation (Phelps, 2000, p. 695).

I wanted to use the research, to uncover greater understandings of the experiences of minoritized ethnic young people pursuing primary teaching. I drew upon Bettez (2015) conceptions of communion as ‘a commitment to meaningful connection through humanity, dignity, respect, and equity practices and values’ (p. 930). Reflecting on values, identity and being intentional about your aims and motivations is essential when it comes to seeking connections with others.

To build community requires vigilant awareness of the work we must continually do to undermine all the socialisation that leads us to behave in ways that perpetuate domination. Explanations of theory alone do not bring us to the practice of beloved community. When we take the theory, the explanations, and apply them concretely to our daily lives, to our experiences, we further and deepen the practice of anti-racism transformation (hooks, 2003, p. 36).

Communion was actualised in this study by giving due deference to values and relationality.

Values.

Kashdan and Ciarrochi (2013), argue that values, i.e, identifying your personal strivings and the motives that shape them, are central to a person’s sense of self; they operate as standards that guide thought and action:

We can define values in many ways, but generally we can think of them as verbal descriptions of what people are personally invested in, regard highly, and seek to uphold and defend (Kashdan & Ciarrochi, 2013, p. 12).

The review of methodological literature reveals the centrality of values to the research process. A motivation to enact a values-led research study influenced the underlying thinking, structures, strategies, and implementation of all aspects of the methodology, which will be

outlined in greater detail in the next chapter. In particular, the literature on practitioner research recommends extensive researcher reflection on the role of values:

The values we hold as educators are kernel not only to how we practice but also to the research process itself. They provide us with the basic structure for our expectations of ourselves, and also with the overarching principles towards which we strive in our practice. The values we hold as educators imbue every action and interaction of our day and colour the observations and perceptions we make. Once educators are aware of what values they hold, they can look to their everyday practice and check that they are working and living in the direction of those values (Sullivan et al., 2016, p.60).

As a teacher educator, I am committed to the process of reflecting on the values that are central to my practice. I am inspired and motivated by a commitment to the values of social justice, equity, human rights, anti-racism, open mindedness, care for the environment, respect for diversity and global solidarity. In the context of global education for example, Scheunpflug (2012) and Andreotti (2013) argue that it is our underlying personal values of empathy and passion which enable us to develop a critical evaluation of representations of global issues. Similarly, Bowden (2013) writes about ‘Bigger-than-Self issues’, by which he means many issues such as global poverty and sustainability that may feel too ‘big’ to deal with without a values framework (p.3). Beginning the conversation of diversifying teacher education certainly appears to be one such a ‘big’ issue in need of ‘critical evaluation’ and deserving of an intentional articulation of a values framework. This notion of empathy or feeling ‘with’ something comes from a deep place. Brookfield and Hess (2021) argue that it happens when you realise that although you may never experience fully what someone else is going through, or feeling, you can still be drawn into a compassionate response. In the same vein, solidarity, respect, and trust have also emerged as core research-enhancing values for me as well. Luttrell (2019) similarly references respect when she prioritises the importance of paying attention, not just to your own research agenda, but also to what research participants themselves might want from the research.

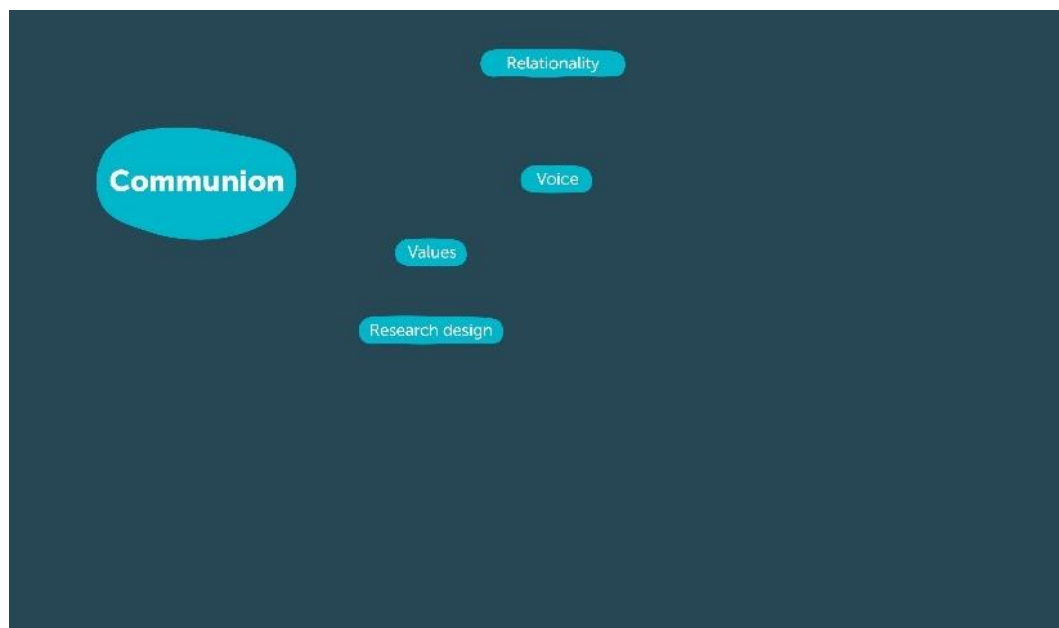
Care theory is one of the most prevalent frameworks for theorising relationships in the wider space of education (Murray et al., 2020). I did not want to regard this as an ‘add on’ to the research process, but rather something that underpinned many of the active decisions I made in the field. Care was not automatic. I worked hard at cultivating an emotional connectedness to the participants, and to think of care relationally within the context of communion. Receptive listening (Noddings, 2013) to other voices is at the heart of caring relations and can be a powerful strategy for learning. Noddings (2013) suggests that reflection and communication are ways for learning the other’s perspective and, therefore, to

promote a caring relationship. ‘The attempt to maintain a caring relation is an attempt to keep the doors of communication open . . . requires continuous reflection on part of the carers’ (p. xvii). Noddings (2013) helps us understand the nature of communication and especially dialogue, by emphasizing that the dialogue focuses on the other as a person, not just on the topic of the conversation. Bergmark (2019) maintains that actions are not motivated by reasons and principles – but instead by the needs of and the responsibility for others. The relationship with and the needs of the other are the motives for actions, not rules or virtues (Noddings, 2013). The desire to empathise and understand each other’s perspectives, rooted in dialogue, voice and communion, was central to this research process.

Relationality.

Striving to establish the research as a site of communion necessitated active and collaborative relationship building during all phases of the research. The concept of ethics of care implies a perspective on ethics as being both relational and situated (Bergmark, 2019). To enact care, I needed to know the participants well, actively checking their needs, motivations, and expectations of the research. Relationship-building created a safe space for the data collection. My values of care and respect led to forging relationships that were collegial and could flourish within the context of the research. Other traits such as being helpful, understanding, reliable, likable, empathetic, and friendly all supported an aspiration of communion (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007, p. 758). Wilson (2008) speaks about the concept of relational accountability in a community context. This involves foregrounding respect, reciprocity, and responsibility when it comes to putting the learning into action. A lot of time and effort was put into establishing trust and rapport with the participants and I tried to think relationally throughout the process. I strove for relationships that were open, honest, and friendly, which led to harmonious and free-flowing conversations and resulted in rich, deep data. For Noddings relation is ‘ontologically basic, and the caring relation is ethically (morally) basic. Every human life starts in relation, and it is through relations that a human individual emerges’ (Noddings 2013, p. 771). Drawing upon their work in Indigenous Studies, Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991), add the concept of ‘reverence’ in the context of the four r’s of respect, responsibility, relevance and reciprocity. These act as ethical guides for the researcher to work with minoritized groups.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework: Communion



Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Eisenhart (1991) qualifies that conceptual frameworks are structures that guide your research by relying on a formal theory, that is, ‘the framework is constructed using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomenon and relationships’ (p. 205). Critical race theory is one such established and coherent theory, in how it understands racialised existences and challenges the way that race, racism and racial power are constructed, represented, and maintained in modern societies. CRT places race at the centre of social analysis, discourse, and interactions. While the more official principles of CRT were introduced by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in the USA in the late 1980’s, its conceptual roots can be traced much earlier than this. Derrick Bell, a renowned civil rights lawyer, is often credited as the ‘Father of Critical Race Theory’ (Delgado, 1995). Bell’s own work was located within the field of critical legal studies (CLS), which emerged in the USA as a critique of traditional legal discourse at the time. Bell and many of his contemporaries were frustrated by what they perceived to be at worst, the outright failure of the civil rights movement in the USA, and at best, the slow rate of progress towards racial equality. Critical legal studies adopted the starting point that legal institutions in society were inherently racist and challenged the perception that ‘the civil rights struggle represents a long, steady, march toward social transformation’ (Crenshaw, 1988, p. 1334). CLS scholars problematised the fight for civil rights in the USA and focused their attention on societal challenges relating to assimilation, integration, and colour-blindness (Bell 1995; Crenshaw, 1988).

CRT thus emerged as ‘a form of opposition scholarship’ (Calmore, 1992: p. 2161) to the critical legal studies movement and in particular its perceived shortcomings understanding the prevalence of racism in traditional legal discourse. CRT grew from a sentiment that CLS was not moving fast enough in its attempts to critique, change or formalise societal and legal structures that specifically focused on race and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) and that the legal system is one of the prime means by which such a critical perspective is denied legitimacy and the status quo is defended (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xiv).

CRT, as a result, can be considered ‘both an outgrowth of, and a separate entity from’ critical legal studies (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 10). Some CRT scholars believe that while critical legal scholars may have been concerned with how the law itself helped to maintain societal inequity, it failed to address how the construct of race and the practice of racism operated in these processes (Brown, 2014) and that it was not theorising the central issues as effectively as it could. Gillborn (2007b) asserts that CRT is frequently unfairly misinterpreted as being dismissive towards the successes of the civil rights movement and this should be considered a misreading of CRT precepts.

Our opposition to traditional civil rights discourse is neither a criticism of the civil rights movement nor an attempt to diminish its significance... we draw much of our inspiration and sense of direction from that courageous, brilliantly conceived, spiritually inspired, and ultimately transformative mass action (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xiv).

Tenets of critical race theory.

Edward Said, (in Crenshaw, 1996), describes the concept of ‘antithetical knowledge’. This describes the production of oppositional accounts or alternative ways of viewing our social world which challenge majority viewpoints. Challenging dominant narratives and centring the experiences of people of colour is at the heart of CRT. CRT scholars have resisted coming up with a prescriptive list of bullet points and believe it is easier to talk about ‘basic insights’ into their positioning (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The conceptual elements of CRT are fluid, complex and constantly changing. Gillborn (2007b) suggests that that as CRT grows and adapts, some of the concepts which might have been regarded as definitively connected to CRT in nature, should be regarded as ‘tools’ rather than defining tenets.

At its core, CRT avails of interdisciplinary dialogue to make sense of a lot of its preoccupations, and indeed can be considered unavoidably interdisciplinary in this regard (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), further compounding its suitability for the conceptual framework for this study. Theorists in many fields, including feminism (King, 2020), Marxism (Bakan &

Dua, 2014), postmodernism (Schneider, 2004), and education (Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995), have drawn upon CRT perspectives to analyse discipline-specific issues of race and racism in society. CRT's intersectional analysis of racism has shone a light on how racism is inextricably linked with other forms of oppression and multiple layers of subordination, for example gender and class (Ríos-Vega, 2020).

Despite the reach of CRT and its application, there are some limitations which warrant mentioning at this juncture. Yosso (2005) has pointed out that in its infancy, CRT scholarship focused its critique on the slow pace of the civil rights movement and as a result the critiques were mainly focused on the Black experience in the United States. She maintains that Women and People of Color who felt their gendered, classed, sexual, immigrant and language experiences and histories were being silenced, challenged this tendency toward a Black/white binary (Yosso, 2005). Furthermore, Cole (2017), utilises a Marxist perspective to critique CRT for prioritising race over social class, and for its inability to explain new forms of racism, for example against white migrants from Eastern Europe. Similarly, McKinley Jones Brayboy (2006), highlights CRT's lack in relation to Tribal and Indigenous Peoples in the United States. He asserts that CRT does not address American Indians' liminality as both legal/political and racialized beings or indeed the experience of colonization in this context (McKinley Jones Brayboy, 2006). Notwithstanding limitations and parameters, CRT is a framework that can be used to examine, analyse and understand conceptualisations of race, racism and racialisation in modern societies. I will now thematize some of the most relevant tenets of CRT in relation to the debate about diversifying primary teaching in Ireland.

Racism as endemic in society.

One of the most fundamental principles of CRT relates to how racism is endemic in our society, and how it is ingrained in our societal structures. CRT begins by conceptualising racism as 'normal, not aberrant, in American society' (Delgado, 1995, p. xiv), similar to Bell's foundational premise about how racism is a permanent fixture of American life (1992). Categories of difference are socially constructed, and these can often lead to discrimination. Socially constructed notions of race have often been used to classify groups in society based on identity and to reinforce differential and hierarchical supremacy (Gilroy, 1998). However, even though race is understood as a social construct, this does not mean that it does not have a very tangible impact on the lived experiences of minoritized groups on a daily basis. CRT scholars conceptualize racism as systematic patterns and social hierarchies in which white

people benefit at the expense of other ethnic groups (Bell & Roberts, 2010). The ‘normality’ and routine nature of racism means that it often goes unnoticed by white people.

The creation of these conceptual categories is not designed to reify a binary but rather to suggest how, in a racialized society where whiteness is positioned as normative, everyone is ranked and categorized in relation to these points of opposition. These categories fundamentally sculpt the extant terrain of possibilities even when other possibilities exist (Ladson-Billings, 1990, p. 9).

In other words, racism operates as an invisible norm and white culture is the standard by which other groups are measured and judged. As already stated, CRT’s *raison d’être* is to focus on ‘the business-as-usual forms of racism’ that are ‘normal’ and ingrained in the fabric of US society, not the few exceptional cases of obvious discrimination ‘that do stand out’ (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. xvi). In this way, CRT acts as a tool to name racism and identify how racism persists in society. Subsequently, CRT can be understood as something that is activist in nature with an inherent commitment to eliminate racism and to promote social justice (D’Arcy, 2016). Bell (1995) goes further in his analysis by believing that a fundamental goal of CRT is that of resistance, with a hope that in time, ‘scholarly resistance will lay the groundwork for widescale resistance’ (1995, p. 900).

Given the US-centric nature of CRT and its origins, it is necessary to address at this juncture its potential resonance for, and application to, the Irish context. Fanning (2012) maintains that racism is not a new phenomenon in Ireland emerging at the time of Ireland’s migration turning point; moreover racism in the Irish context is quite complex (Lentin, 2001). Ireland has been described as ‘between two worlds’, in that the country is both a perpetrator of, and survivor of, racism (Lentin & McVeigh, 2002, p. 8). It is important to note that Kitching (2015) cautions against the transatlantic use of CRT to try and understand racism in the Irish context, in terms of an assumed white/ non-white framework to understand situated anti-racisms in this context. This is very relevant when considering the experiences of Travellers in Irish society for example, who continue to experience high levels of racism and prejudice (Watson et al., 2017).

In recent years, many Black-Irish young people have begun to speak out against the pervasiveness and insidiousness of racism in the Irish context and this was clear to see when the global Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests were replicated in Ireland. Ní Chonaill (2021) argues that a crucial consequence of the BLM movement in Ireland was the identifying and naming of this type of racism in Ireland, putting it on the agenda and calling for a long overdue official response from the State. As a result, while acknowledging that the Irish system is very different to the US context and that significant adaption is needed, the

prevalence of racism nonetheless remains central to situating the findings of this research study.

CRT centres stories.

CRT respects the potential of experiential knowledge to inform scholarship and theory. It acknowledges the unique perspectives and voices of people of colour as victims of racial oppression and values their storytelling as an authentic and legitimate way to convey knowledge (Khalifa et al., 2013). Ladson-Billings argues that the ahistorical and acontextual nature of ‘science’, renders the voices of the dispossessed and members of marginalised groups mute (1998, p. 13). As a response, CRT focuses on the power of listening to the voices, viewpoints, stories and experiential knowledge of people of colour.

In sum, CRT can be understood as a theoretical framework, an analytical lens (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), a methodological approach (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) as well as a form of activism (Evans-Winters & Twyman Hoff, 2011). CRT foregrounds narratives and experiences through a device known as counter-storytelling. It is this particular tool of CRT that I will focus on in Chapter 5 in order to give voice and credence to the lived experience of a group of minoritized young people interested in pursuing primary teaching as a career.

In constructing this conceptual framework, I was mindful of choosing concepts and theories that foregrounded the voices and lived experiences of those on the margins of teacher education. Moving on from CRT whose *raison d’être* is the privileging of seldom heard voices, the next theory which is integrated into this conceptual framework is that of epistemic injustice, which names the injustice done to those marginalised voices when they are not valued, respected or affirmed.

Figure 2 Conceptual Framework: Critical Race Theory



Epistemic injustice

Epistemic injustice, a term first coined by philosopher Miranda Fricker, with roots in feminist epistemology (particularly in relation to concepts of exclusion and silencing) outlines the injustices that accrue when a person is denied status as a knower. This could refer to your ability to give knowledge, or indeed to receive knowledge, but nonetheless you have been diminished as a giver of knowledge or people have been dismissive of you as a knower. Ultimately an epistemic injustice results in a kind of harm in which individuals or groups are wronged in their capacity as bearers of knowledge, or as 'knowers', or as epistemic agents (Fricker, 2007). Epistemic injustice happens when individuals are prevented from having their testimony enter the 'marketplace of ideas', and when an 'active epistemic agent (or subject)' is relegated 'to that of passive object, to be studied, observed, and in many cases, exploited' (LeBlanc & Kinsella, 2016, p. 66). Moreover, epistemic injustice can accrue when minoritized individuals find it challenging to make sense of the world and their place in it, because of frameworks constructed by dominant groups in society, whose perspective understanding is at best 'ill-fitting, and, at worst, render those individual's or group's experiences quite unintelligible from an insider's perspective' (Fricker, 2007, p. 149).

Dunne (2020) synthesises three ways that wrongs can be perpetuated in an epistemic fashion. Firstly, it can relate to suppressing a knower's testimony or making it difficult for a

potential knower to access what it is their interest to know. Secondly, they have the potential to impede effective inquiry and consequently distort shared meanings and understandings of how knowledge is constructed. And finally, these wrongs can be propagated through the adoption of harmful epistemic practices, at both individual and institutional levels (Dunne, 2020). Epistemic injustice is therefore at the centre of struggles for liberatory and transformative knowledge, to ‘decolonise’ development and education by challenging and transforming how knowledge is made (Khoo, 2015). Discriminatory epistemic injustice can be enacted in two different ways, hermeneutical injustice and testimonial injustice. Both injustices result in a subject receiving less than their fair share of an ‘epistemic good’ (Fricker, 2017). I will now introduce both these variations and they will be further examined in the context of the findings in Chapter 6.

Hermeneutical injustice.

Hermeneutical injustice occurs when the impact of a social structure renders a particular social group or individual powerless, and that person or group of people lack the resources or tools to be able to make sense of that powerlessness. Dunne (2020) describes this particular type of injustice as ‘when you are at a loss to find the words or thoughts to accurately express your feelings or experience as a situated knower due to a lacuna in conceptual resources available to you at that particular time’ (p.4). In this sense, the unfairness that is perpetuated is usually collectively structured and does not happen at an individual level; and structural harm can be more damaging and harder to rectify.

Hermeneutical marginalisation is always socially coerced. If you simply opt out of full participation in hermeneutical processes as a matter of choice ..., then you do not count as hermeneutically marginalised – you’ve opted out, but you could have opted in. Hermeneutical marginalisation is always a form of powerlessness, whether structural or one-off (Fricker, 2007, p. 153)

Horsthemke (2014) reminds us that for something to be an injustice, it must be harmful, but also wrongful. Dunne (2020) believes that this means correcting the problem rests on structural change, which can only be achieved through collective and empirically informed endeavours.

Fricker (2007) gives the example of a woman who was continuously bullied and hounded in the workplace and ended up having to leave her job as a result. But this was before the concept of ‘sexual harassment’ had come into accepted lexicon, and without the adequate language to explain this phenomenon, and not being supported to understand her situation, she became a victim of hermeneutical injustice as a result. Giladi (2018) advances Fricker’s example to illustrate the hermeneutical nature of this injustice. He argues that it

concerns the specific ways in which cognitive resources for interpreting one's experiences are maldistributed in accordance with unequal power relations in the context of gender, and reflective of women's social powerlessness at the time (Giladi, 2018). Fricker (2007) understands this as a gap in collective interpretative resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences and terms this 'cognitive disablement'; whereby victims of hermeneutical injustice, unable to understand what they experienced, are then unable to protest the wrong, let alone redress it. They are unable to comprehend this experience, and unable to get others to comprehend it either. Anderson (2017) argues that there are some situations in which it serves the interests of the socially powerful to maintain ignorance or a misinterpretation of certain social experiences. As a result, hermeneutical injustice can lead the repression of the voice and self-worth of minoritized people. The next type of epistemic injustice, that of testimonial injustice, concentrates on this idea of voice, which is a cross-cutting theme of the conceptual framework.

Testimonial injustice.

Testimonial injustice relates to the disvalue that occurs when people's testimony and stories are not believed or given the level of credit that they deserve. It arises when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word (Fricker, 2007). This can happen when someone in a position of power is sufficiently close-minded that they dismiss the possibility that they might learn something from someone who is marginalised and instead write them off as unreliable narrators of their own lives. The role of prejudice features prominently here; 'speakers' assertions are given less credibility when the 'hearer' has prejudged the group of which the speaker is a member; a prejudice, which to their mind reduces you to the status of a 'sub-knower' (Horsthemke, 2014). Prejudice and unconscious bias can permeate people's consciousness in many distinct ways and impact marginalised groups in a myriad of different ways.

Testimonial injustice draws heavily on the concept of a 'credibility deficit' (Fricker, 2007). Prejudice can lead people to underestimate/or overestimate others' credibility, which Dunne (2020) regards as a sometimes-neglected element in the epistemic injustice debate. This credibility deficit can be enacted in many ways, all of which accord the speaker insufficient integrity about their knowledge acquisition or production. Horsthemke (2014) lists incessant interruptions, incredulous or sceptical micro-aggressions, disbelieving stares, disinterested demeanours, and dismissive smiles as example of how this type of testimonial disbelief can be communicated. The credibility deficit can result in marginalised people being

dehumanised and hindered in their attainment of full human worth (Horsthemke, 2014); as Fricker (2007) describe, it can ‘inhibit the very formation of self’ (p. 55). Repeated incidents of testimonial injustice can result in the speaker staying quiet in situations where they should not, for fear of further marginalization (Dunne, 2020; McKinnon, 2016).

Systemic testimonial non-recognition permeates individuals’ or social groups’ psychology to the extent that an individual or a social group is made to self-blame for not being deemed worthy enough to be afforded credibility (Giladi, 2018). The damage accrued from testimonial injustice are multiple and complex and can change or accumulate over time, depending on context. Dunne (2020) shares that there are harms that a subject might be broadly aware of; there are harms they might not be aware of at a specific time; there are harms they might never be fully aware of. Giladi (2018) argues that testimonial injustice is particularly harrowing, because it denies someone the status of a rational enquirer, ‘thereby creating an asymmetrical cognitive environment in which that group or individual is not deemed one’s conversational peer’ (p. 145). Testimonial injustice can scaffold hermeneutical injustice by preventing the incorporation of multiple perspectives. ‘Impeding polyphonic perspectives in this way impoverishes the shared pool of hermeneutical resources that people draw on to make sense of, both their own socially situated experiences and, crucially, the experiences of others’ (Dunne, 2020, p. 4).

Ultimately, when you are harmed or excluded in your capacity as a knower, you are not regarded as fully human (Fricker, 2007; Dunne, 2020). The process of not being taken seriously or being disbelieved or dismissed can result in ‘feeling less than’, an alienating and draining experience which makes you doubt your own capacities and epistemic agency. Testimonial injustice blocks knowledge-seeking, knowledge construction and fresh perspectives on why we do not have a more diverse teaching force in Ireland. Kotzee (2017) suggests that we must evaluate whether teachers in the educational system give learners enough epistemic credit, and whether some learners testimonies are taken less seriously than they deserve to be taken. We may never know why more young people are not choosing primary teaching in greater numbers until we begin to afford credibility to the testimony of those on the margins of ITE.

This section provided an exploratory, rather than an analytical account of epistemic injustice and how the various forms pertain to the conceptual framework. Chapter 6 will apply the insights of epistemic injustice to better understand the experiences of the research participants on their journey towards becoming a teacher and how they have been downgraded in their status as an epistemic knower in this regard.

Figure 3 Conceptual Framework: Epistemic Injustice



Evolution of framework

It is important to note that the conceptual framework, which is presented here as descriptive and interlinking categories, was not a fixed, once-off design. While the order and sequence are tentatively presented here as congruent, this was not always the case, and the framework has been visited and re-visited many times. Inevitably there were detours in the conceptualisations and some early anticipated concepts did not emerge significantly enough from the analysis to warrant inclusion in the later iterations of the framework. As a result, the framework can be better understood as a post-data conceptual framework and regarded as emergent and exploratory. The following graphic provides a summative visual representation of the framework and how the interrelated concepts actively speak to each other in the context of this research.

Figure 4 Conceptual Framework for the study



In the graphic, the three main theories of the conceptual framework for this study; namely communion, CRT and epistemic injustice are foregrounded and arranged in circular shapes. The associated components of these theories are then presented in the same colour to illustrate connections, i.e. blue for communion, turquoise for CRT and plum for epistemic injustice.

Table 1 Overview of theories

Communion	Critical Race Theory	Epistemic Injustice
Relationality	Counter-stories	Hermeneutical injustice
Voice	Action	Testimonial injustice
Values	Racism as dehumanising	Testimonial silencing
Research Design	Racism as endemic	

As evidenced in the graphic, the theories and their associated concepts are tightly interwoven. Not only is there overall congruence between the three main theories, there are also linkages between their component threads as well. These linkages are further illustrated by particular groupings which are positioned in close proximity in the graphic.

1. Relationality/ Counter-stories/ Testimonial silencing/ voice

Relationality links to voice, counter-stories, and testimonial silencing in the way that the relationships we have with others are central to being knowers and being able to contribute to the construction of knowledge (Gerlach, 2018). Relationality emerges from communion in that relationships characterized by reciprocity and dialogue are created where trust and understanding are present, often developed within long-standing relationships and time spent together (Noddings, 2013). Similarly, the positioning of voice here is crucial, relating as it does to both the notion of communion and connecting with others, as well as being one of the fundamental aims of CRT. CRT advocates giving voice to marginalised groups which exposes and critiques normalised dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004).

2. Values/ Action/ Research Design

As outlined earlier, CRT can also be considered a form of activism in that it constitutes a movement whose framework can inspire minoritized people to articulate their oppression and tackle it at individual and collective levels (Evans-Winters & Twyman Hoff, 2011). Action is further central to many of the methodological choices which have been employed in this research design. Further details about the values-lead and action-focused approach of the research will be outlined in the forthcoming chapter but are also introduced here in a to aid the reader become familiar with the conceptual framework.

3. Racism as dehumanising/ hermeneutical injustice

Epistemic injustices can have a dehumanising effect on minoritized groups, as well as individuals ‘by delegitimising them as knowers – either in the eyes of society or the academy, or their own eyes’ (LeBlanc and Kinsella (2016) p.66). Victims of hermeneutical and racial injustice face inequality when they are positioned in a less privileged position than those that have the collective resources or hermeneutical tools available to them to comprehend the situation at a more cognitive level. This in turn impacts on their self-worth and compounds their marginalisation, with the ensuing cultural devaluation a preoccupation of CRT scholars (Solórzano & Yosso 2002, Bell, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

4. Racism as endemic/ testimonial injustice

Localised prejudices and the injustices they produce can be disastrous for people, especially if they are repeated to the extent that the injustice is persistent. This is relevant in the context of this study where racism and microaggressions were frequent features of the lives of the participants and can contribute to them feeling dismissed, invalidated, or

delegitimised. Oppressed people therefore experience yet another type of epistemic harm when their stories and testimonies are not taken seriously.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a visual and narrative account of the conceptual framework underpinning this research study, allowing for a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study. Through a lens of communion, CRT and epistemic injustice, this section provided traceable connections between all aspects of the empirical inquiry. The conceptual framework also introduced some of the beliefs, assumptions and expectations associated with the research design of this study. These will now be elaborated on in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Methodology

‘Setting the (back) stage’: Introduction

This chapter shares further information about the methodological motivations, rationale and assumptions behind the research process – what McCorkel and Myers (2003) call the ‘researcher’s backstage’. It provides a comprehensive overview of the methodology, from the initial constructive multi-phased research design to the tools utilised to capture and analyse the ‘messiness’ of qualitative research (Smyth & Santoro, 2014; McNiff, 2017). The aim of this chapter is to further contribute to empirical social inquiry into diversifying teaching by exploring complexities in research design, examining the multi-faceted nature of relationship-building, and illuminating the ethical considerations that inform decision-making in the field.

Research paradigm: Epistemological and ontological perspectives

This section outlines the approach to theory building and knowledge construction that was utilised within an inductive qualitative approach. The goal of working ‘with’ participants, rather than ‘on’ or ‘for’ permeates my research design. I tried to achieve this by adopting a critical humanist approach paradigm for the research, to examine how knowledge about the social world of minoritized ethnic young people and the intersecting site of ITE can be learnt, known, and constructed.

Critical humanism is located within the critical theory paradigm. This paradigm was deemed a good fit in the context of this research because of critical theory’s stance on epistemology, ontology and its focus on power, inequality, action, and social change. Critical humanism is essentially an approach to research which is focused on the minoritized human experience and emphasises the wider context of societal structures.

Critical humanism illuminates the subjugation and resistance of historically marginalized individuals and groups, attending to the influence of structures and institutions that underpin norms of Whiteness, cisnormativity, and heterosexuality (Ciszek et al. 2022, p. 1).

Critical humanism can be understood as a set of research practices, an analytic strategy (Anderson et al., 2010), as well as a framework for shining a light on cultural experiences and human connections. Plummer (2005) maintains:

Humans must be located in time and space: They are always stuffed full of their culture and history, and they must ‘nest’ in a universe of contexts. Human beings are both embodied, feeling animals and creatures with great symbolic potential. They engage in symbolic communication and are dialogic and intersubjective. There is no such thing as the solitary individual. Human lives are shaped by chance, fateful moments, epiphanies, and contingencies (p. 364).

Ontology deriving from critical theory sees reality as a set of power relations and our understandings of reality are produced through these tensions and processes (Paul, 2010). Critical humanism focuses on social relations in a similar way by focusing on power dynamics and Plummer (2021) argues that the discipline stems from the power imbalances and suffering of the world. From an epistemological perspective, both critical theory and critical humanism begin from the starting point that knowledge is both political and values-laden.

Among the stated goals of critical humanism is how it engages with the narrative reconstructions and conflicts over what it means to be human (Plummer, 2021). However, the critical theory tradition also undertakes research with a view to transforming things in our social world. The concept of radical change as a personal epistemology is therefore also incorporated into the research design, and the centrality of action to the study has already been outlined in the presentation of the conceptual framework in Chapter 3. Rossman and Rallis (2012) maintain that research, at its heart, should always be about learning and that learning, in this sense, is a ‘constructive process’ (p.33). Valuing the potential of this study within a radical frame provides great scope for transformative action, particularly as a way of envisioning the possibility of social change within ITE and to ensure that the research and philosophical approach retains an emphasis on practical ways to improve things. My desire to enact change in the world of teacher education and my commitment to social justice has informed the choice of this research paradigm and supported me to better connect my theory and practice or ‘praxis’. Theory building and critical reflection inform our practice and action; and our practice and action inform our theory building and critical reflection.

Maxwell (2005) is critical of how paradigms can often be invoked in research discussions, reminding us that sometimes it does not serve us to be so rigid in our positioning, and how it can be beneficial to reflect on fresh ways of looking at the social world. Therefore, it is necessary to engage with critiques of critical humanism, to ensure that I have evaluated its efficacy and suitability in this context. Some critiques of critical humanism point to a difficulty within this approach in relation to how it can get very wide and provide a non-qualified account of human identity. As a result, in positioning this research about diversifying teaching within this philosophical tradition, it is also necessary to reflect on how concepts of race and ethnicity are traditionally positioned in social discourse. Gunaratnam (2003) warns against an un-problematized reliance upon categorical approaches to race and ethnicity in qualitative research. This is because using rigid or categorical approaches to research can reify race and ethnicity as entities that individuals are born into,

rather than recognising race and ethnicity as ‘emergent processes of being and becoming’ (p. 19). This conceptual ‘fixing’ of race and ethnicity can place limitations on analysis because it can have the unintended effect of reproducing essentialist ways of thinking.

Research that relies on racial and ethnic categories as a starting point runs the risk of what Gunaratnam terms a ‘treacherous bind’ (2003, p. 30); as a way of describing the contradiction of our continued use and reliance upon racial and ethnic categories that can be complicit with racial typologies and thinking. Gilroy (1998) strongly argues that contemporary theorising about race and ethnicity is complicit in the reification of racial difference. He outlines the contradictions of anti-racist discourse and calls for a major evaluation of approaches for how we think about race.

Thus, in the research design, every effort was made to conceptualise identities as heterogeneous, fluid and actively produced across and within social contexts, yet also acknowledge the ways in which race and ethnicity continue to be implicated in patterns of very real inequalities (Flintoff & Webb, 2012). Gunaratnam advocates for ‘doubled’ research practice that is capable of working ‘both with and against lived experience, political relations and the production of knowledge’ (2003, p. 22). This involves moving outside of the abstract and connecting theory with lived experience in order to develop new ways of theorising difference that are neither ‘reified nor reductive’ (Gunaratnam, 2003, p. 23). This is important in the context of critical humanism because of how it centres the stories of minoritized individuals and values their contribution to the social world. In the very act of treating ethnic minority groups as a unit of analysis in the research, the researcher may be culpable of unconscious racism because they may actually create a difference associated with ethnicity that might not have occurred to the participants in the project (Troyna 1993, p. 112). Although the aim of the research was to look beyond categorizations, in order to explore the lived experience, the effects of ‘racial automatisms’ upon minority subjectivities could not be disregarded (Challinor, 2012). Ciszek et al. (2022) argue that critical humanism requires researchers to bear witness to, and acknowledge the worlds they are studying, and it requires them to look into experience, meaning, and human subjectivity. As a result, critical humanism has implications for how social research data is collected, analysed and reported. It was important to me that my paradigm, ontology, epistemology and methodology fitted together and connected well. Measures of how this paradigm was enacted on the ground will now be explored in the coming sections.

Sampling

Sampling approach.

The participant sample for this research project was limited to young people who are interested in becoming a primary teacher and who also self-identify as coming from a minoritized ethnic background. A non-probability approach to sampling was adopted, given that the intention was not to generalise a population but rather to obtain insights into their individual experiences (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). An initial approach of asynchronous purposive sampling through multiple initiation points, intensive information-sharing and the use of targeted gatekeepers was adopted to reduce selection bias. Utilizing gatekeepers is important for many reasons¹², but the literature points to their particular significance in relation to sensitive topics in social research (Punch, 2012). Gatekeepers were contacted through a range of personal and professional networks¹³ and non-personal recruitment methods, for example an information poster¹⁴ were utilised across community group partnerships, relevant social media platforms and targeted online forums.

The purposive sampling was then supplemented with snowball sampling, sometimes referred to as chain referral sampling (Bryman, 2012), or respondent-driven sampling (Goodman, 2011). This combination is often deemed appropriate for hard-to-reach (Cohen et al., 2011), vulnerable or ‘hidden populations’ (Sulaiman-Hill & Thompson, 2011, p. 3) as sampling frames for such populations do not exist in the same way as for other target groups and are often difficult to design and construct (Goodman, 2011). Snowball sampling involves accessing the social networks of existing participants and gatekeepers after they have been targeted, who then facilitate another introduction and so on. Recruitment should be conceptualized as a process (Turner & Almack, 2017). Whether this process is successful is contingent on several different factors, relationships and contexts aligning at the right time. Waters (2015) notes that it is not always the case that the ‘rolling snowballs will continually grow and pick up speed’ (p. 373). This was definitely the case for me, where in spite of extensive effort and planning, unanticipated complications to recruitment ensued and for a significant period of time, the snowball ‘failed to roll’ (Geddes et al., 2017, p. 347). It was at

¹² For further contextual information and reflections on how negotiated gatekeeping worked in the context of this research study, please see Appendix E.

¹³ Please see Appendix F and G for a full list of institutional as well as individual gatekeepers used during the initial recruitment phase of the research.

¹⁴ Please see Appendix H for a copy of the recruitment poster.

times exceptionally challenging¹⁵ to recruit young people for the study and this led to a significant loss of momentum in the sampling process.

Sample size.

Epistemological, methodological, and logistical factors were taken into account when determining the sample size for the project. Sandelowski (1993) recommends that qualitative sample sizes are large enough to allow the unfolding of ‘new and richly textured understanding’ of the topic, but small enough that the deep, case-oriented analysis is not lost. I aimed for this balance in my decision making and ultimately, the size of the sample was informed primarily by the research aims and objectives. Logistical and pragmatic considerations emerged as relevant when it came to deciding sample size sufficiency. Another factor influencing sample size (Baker & Edwards, 2012) is the heterogeneity of the population from which the sample is drawn. Kindsiko and Poltimae (2019) make the point that when interview numbers within studies begin to increase, this is often done at the expense of homogeneity across respondents. This was not something that I wanted to compromise on, as the specific sampling criteria of an interest in primary teaching was important to retain. Braun and Clarke (2021c) recommend that it could be useful to regard sampling as a pragmatic practice and Vasileiou et al. (2018) recommend instead including discussion around ‘data adequacy’ in the context of your specific study.

Participant profiles.

Sixteen participants, based across 9 counties in Ireland, shared their attitudes, opinions, experiences, desires, and emotions about becoming primary teachers in Ireland for this study. The sample was recruited from a wide range of backgrounds, and comprised migrants from South America and Eastern Europe, as well as Irish Travellers, Black-Irish young people, and members of several different other African diaspora communities, including some who are currently seeking asylum in Ireland¹⁶. I endeavoured to mitigate against ‘distorted and reduced modes of being’ (Taylor, 1992, p. 75) by allowing the young people to self-identify for the purposes of the research and to name their own (often hyphenated) identities.

Qualitative research design

A qualitative approach was chosen for this research design, to highlight transformative human experiences, to ‘see through the eyes of the people being studied’

¹⁵ Please see Appendix J for a personal reflection on the recruitment challenges encountered during the data collection stages of this research study.

¹⁶ Further profiling information about the participants is included in Appendix A.

(Bryman, 2012) and to provide multi-modal platforms to explore how these young people are narratively making sense of their journey to becoming a primary teacher. Qualitative research is research which generates knowledge grounded in human experience (Sandelowski, 2004). I wanted to collect rich and deep data, using narratives as sense-making devices and explore how the young people were constructing and understanding their identities in the context of primary teaching. The research aimed to foreground the experiences and perspectives of the respondents and privilege the social interactions that were a natural part of the research process. Two distinct and asynchronous phases of the research process were planned. Firstly, an exploratory phase utilising forms of visual methodology was conducted to generate baseline data on this under-researched topic. Secondly, a longer phase situated within a framework of critical participatory action research drew upon this baseline data to further explore the narratives of minoritized young people in relation to their primary teaching aspirations.

Critical Participatory Action Research.

Atkins and Duckworth (2019) argue that using more traditional or less participative methodologies runs the risk of replicating existing power relationships by excluding the participants from dialogue and active participation. An action research approach was immediately considered as a way of meaningfully collaborating with the young people involved in this study. Action research is an approach to research that has emerged over time from a broad range of fields but can be considered a signature pedagogy of educational doctoral research (Zambo, 2010; Noffke, 2009), because it can encourage students to challenge the status quo, take action, become an agent of educational change and develop ‘habits of hand as they blend their practical wisdom with theories and research skills’ (Zambo, 2010, p. 270). Since the 1980’s action research is long associated with the field of education (McNiff, 2014, 2017; Whitehead, 1996, 2008, 2017) and action research is further associated with having social justice as a central aim (Noffke, 2009). While practice in action research is often conceptualised at an individual level, for the purposes of this study, my practice played out at more of an institutional level – whereby theory was generated in the process of improving my overall practice as a teacher educator and within the wider structures and processes of ITE.

In addition to improving practice, other key features of action research, namely diagnosing a problem, suggesting actions for that problem, improving dialogue and collaborating with others to the extent their contributions are considered a resource, (McNiff, 2002; 2017) are also compatible with the aims of this research. According to Winter (1996) a

researcher and the participants collaborate when doing action research, not trying to reach consensus, but trying to 'create a plural structure, consisting of various accounts and various critiques of these accounts' (p. 23).

Action research challenges positivistic views of knowledge and focuses on values-led research which promotes positive social change for individuals and communities. There are many different forms of action research; with types of participatory action research demanding noticeably higher standards and levels of involvement from participants. To de-centre power relations, I adopted a critical participatory action research framework, where participants are proactively involved in designing, constructing, carrying out the research and shaping the direction of the project at significant junctures of the process. In this sense, values hinge on the action and the knowledge comes from the actions taken. Critical participatory action research, as an egalitarian and non-hierarchical research method, has the potential to help redress the imbalance that is often present in educational research, that tends to marginalise minoritized voices. The approach emphasises collectivity and shared experience, produces rigorous and potentially powerful results (Stoudt et al., 2012) and participants are positioned as co-researchers and active agents in the inquiry process. The researcher does not arrive at their engagement with the research process as an expert, but more as a learner and a listener. This idea has already been signalled in the conceptual framework, with its overall focus on communion and the related components of voice and values. According to McTaggart (1991), for true collaboration to occur, participants must be engaged in setting the agenda of the inquiry, participate in the collection and analysis of data, and have ownership over the research product. I was particularly motivated to ensure that the control that the young people were offered in this study was meaningful and authentic, and not just a tokenistic proposal which provides them with the illusion of decision making.

Stoudt et al. (2012) argue that adult-youth relationships are defined by power:

You can hear and see this quite literally in the actual furniture of multigenerational spaces, and the language of our interactions. Youth chairs face a teacher's desk in a classroom; young people are often spoken to as if they need correcting; and teenagers are derided for being too irresponsible, too impulsive, too easily influenced by peers, and too concerned with their own bodies (p.47).

Graziano (2008) argues that when research participants become empowered, it provides them with the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning. Without voice, dialogue, and agency, there is no empowerment (Ruiz, 1997) and participants must be

provided with scope for involvement that is inherently political. This approach to research is based on the ‘democratic notion that oppressed and marginalized people can transform their social realities through education, research, and action, while forwarding their own value system’ (Udas, 1998, p. 605). I wanted to recognise the participants as experts in interrogating the social, political and economic factors which frame their lived experience.

Power structures may be reinforced if researchers do not take measures to address the various hierarchies that emerge during the research (Stapleton & Mayock, 2022). This critical participatory action research approach was characterised by equitable participation of the young people in all aspects of the research, from research design, co-construction of questions, data collection to data analysis. Participants played a practical role in shaping many of the operational decisions over the course of the research study.

Having surveyed the literature on participatory action research frames, a critical approach was the most context-appropriate for me to ‘complicate and disrupt traditional understandings of expertise and ownership of knowledge (Kincheloe in Schmidt, 2015, p. 16). What makes research ‘participatory’ is not the sort of research methods used, but rather the depth of involvement participants have in the whole research process (Bagnoli & Clark, 2010). Authors speak about such an equitable approach being a useful tool to ‘redress’ power imbalances (Fassetta, 2015) implicit in educational research. However, I am mindful of the extent to which my power and privilege still permeated the research field, and as such I acknowledge that this frame merely minimised rather than redressed these outstanding considerations.

Data collection instruments

In participatory research, the use of several different methods for triangulation (Denzin, 1970) is recommended to generate a deeper, more authentic exploration of participants’ experiences (Stapleton & Mayock, 2022). The various research instruments used over the course of the research study are explored below.

Questioning.

Good qualitative questions are usually developed and refined in all stages of a reflexive and interactive inquiry journey (Agee, 2009). Due attention was given to the process of how the data collection questions¹⁷ would be conceptualised, generated, and developed and how the evolution of the questions was charted over time. In keeping with the framework of critical participatory action research, participants were invited to collaborate on

¹⁷ For an overview of the types of questions asked during data collection, please see Appendix M.

the formulation of research questions in the initial stages of their involvement. This was done by asking them what areas they would like to concentrate on, the offer of sharing themes and questions in advance, and asking the question ‘is there a question you think I should have asked’ at the end of the interview. Much of this was managed and negotiated over the course of the preliminary meetings prior to the formal interview. As part of the planning process, informal pilot interviews were set up with 3 young Muslim student teachers across two different ITE institutions to see if I was on the right track with my questions and hear what suggested questions they felt might be important to include.

Agee (2009) and Luttrell (2019) maintain that part of the process of developing questions in qualitative research is being both reflexive and reflective about how the questions will affect participants’ lives, how the questions will position the researcher in relation to participants, and how the researcher should attend to embedded assumptions. Reflexive notes and field log helped me excavate any assumptions I might have made about what the participants would like to focus on during the semi-structured interviews, as well as ensuring that the finalised questions retained a theoretical base. ‘Creating discovery-oriented questions can help a researcher use the process of developing and refining questions as a basis for a more rigorous and reflexive inquiry (Agee, 2009). I made sure to phrase the questions in such a way that did not invite yes/ no answers and instead availed of questioning that invited richer and more in-depth answers.

‘Illuminating lived experience’: PhotoVoice.

We now live in a visual, pictorial, and image-driven culture - photos are available, accessible, and commonplace, and especially significant in the social lives and current identity formation of young people (Gómez-Cruz & Lehmuskallio, 2016). Therefore, the inclusion of an innovative visual component to the research design was a compatible aspect to the overall empirical inquiry as photographs are a useful tool for reading our social worlds.

Visual research methods are gaining popularity in the social sciences, particularly in sociology and anthropology (Pauwels, 2012). Respondent-generated imagery is dominant in the literature, with many authors writing about the merits of researcher-recruited, respondent-generated photos. Photography itself is generally regarded as a democratic process (Sánchez, 2015) since the process of taking and developing photos is typically quite accessible to all.

In order to capture topics that are complex and multi-faceted, a researcher should look outside of traditional data collection options to reveal new ways of sharing life stories and personal narratives. The specific methodology I chose to employ is PhotoVoice, a method by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific

photographic technique (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang et al., 2000). PhotoVoice is an approach to data collection which marries self-directed photography with participatory action as a way for marginalised groups to enact social change. It has sometimes been called ‘autodriving’, (Heilsley & Levy in Lapenta, 2012, p. 206), ‘reflexive photography’ or ‘photonovella’ (Wang, 1993). PhotoVoice typically involves the respondents answering research questions by taking photographs of things in their lives.

By entrusting cameras into the hands of oppressed individuals to act as recorders of their own community, PhotoVoice enables participants to clarify for themselves and others, including policy makers, ‘what is worth remembering and what needs to be changed, what should remain as is’ (Graziano, 2005, p. 23). PhotoVoice is a non-didactic method which privileges democratic practices and pursuits (Sánchez, 2015) and as such Luttrell (2020) describes it as ‘collaborative seeing’.

PhotoVoice allows respondents to provide a visual testimony to research questions by taking multiple photographs of things in their life. They then narrow down the photographs to what they believe best represent their ideas and best reflect how they navigated the question. The researcher and participants then engage in dialogue about the selected photos in order for deeper understanding of their everyday worlds and the space they inhabit to emerge. PhotoVoice can be considered a useful tool in breaking the sometimes prescriptive and directive nature of verbal questioning in many forms of traditional research.

The theoretical underpinnings of PhotoVoice draw upon the principles of documentary photography, feminist theory, and Freirean approaches to critical education, all of which emphasise the empowerment of vulnerable populations. Freire’s approach stresses the importance of participants sharing and speaking from their own experiences, identifying connections, analysing, and exploring problems and their possible causes, and developing strategies for change (Wang et al., 2000). PhotoVoice sets out to capture the perspective of the person holding the camera and invites us to view their world through the same lens. The photo may only be a snapshot or capture a fraction of a second, but this fleeting moment can be a compelling introduction to the lived experience of the participants. Photos can communicate with us in a literal way, but also on an emotional level.

Photovoice challenges the established politics of representations by shifting control over the means for documenting lives from the powerful to the powerless, the expert to the lay-person, the professional to the client, the bureaucrat to the citizen, the observer to the observed (Graziano, 2005, p. 12).

Originally developed by Wang & Burris (1997) as an action research technique, the basic premise of the Photovoice methodology can be summarised through three main goals; to allow participants to photograph everyday phenomena that relate to a given question; to allow for group discussions about the photographs, giving special attention to issues that are of greatest concern; and to connect the ideas and concerns shared in the discussions with decision makers (Wang & Pies, 2004)

In this context, PhotoVoice acted as an exploratory baseline measurement where the young people used participant-generated photographs to illustrate their feelings and motivations about becoming a primary teacher. Wang & Burris (1997) envision PhotoVoice as a mechanism of providing a ‘voice, via camera, to members of communities not typically represented (p. 486). PhotoVoice also fosters participation, sets the stage for creativity, and provides the opportunity for self-reflection (Chio & Fandt, 2007). Images can reflect conceptual layers that words cannot always capture and can act as the beginning of a conversation. But in this context, photos can also be an answer to a question. For this study¹⁸, the participants were encouraged to reflect on two research questions and supply two photos (one for each one) as their answer.

1. Why do you want to become a primary teacher?
2. What are some of the challenges that you might face along the way?

The photos may represent things that are ‘invisible to the researcher but visible to the interviewee, triggering unforeseen meanings and interpretations’ (Schwartz in Lapenta, 2012, p. 202). Given that I do not come from a similar background to the participants, the photographs led to a ‘fusion of horizons’ (Lapenta, 2012, p. 202) in this regard. The eventual photos were visually striking and ranged from simple positioning to more layered symbolic representations.

Semi-structured interviews.

Informed by an equality-based approach, the research participants chose the main tool of data collection for the second phase of the research process. Options relating to semi-structured interviews, focus groups and personal journaling were presented to participants during the decision-making process. The rationale for these instruments is that they all

¹⁸ For further information about the PhotoVoice training and implementation carried out with the young people, please see Appendix K and Appendix L.

strongly supported a journey of narrative inquiry. It should be noted that the asynchronous approach to data collection, as well as significant delays to the data collection timeframe due to the Covid-19 pandemic, meant that the parameters of choice were somewhat hampered in this regard. In the end, twelve participants chose individual interviews, and 4 participants chose to come together for a focus group.

Interviews, for example, can sometimes be regarded as having the ‘illusion of simplicity’ (Denscombe, 2010, p. 174). However, in the context of this study, the stories of the minoritized young people were conceptualised as a journey, and in-depth, semi-structured interviews acted as an appropriate tool to chart their narratives on this journey. This approach allowed me to see how the respondents might put order on events or issues in their lives or make sense of their experiences. The interviews provided a space for the participants to share their beliefs, feelings, attitudes, perspectives, motivations, expectations and aspirations in relation to choosing primary teaching. The advantage of this approach was how natural it was to the respondent, as the impulse to tell stories is a very instinctive one. Culture can ‘speak itself’ through an individual’s story (Riessman, 1993, p. 5). This can be an important validation for so-called ‘hidden populations’.

Pugh (2013) argues that interviews, more than many other forms of data collection, allow researchers access to an emotional landscape that brings a broader, social dimension to individual motivation. In this research, the interviews were very positive experiences and allowed me to dig a little bit deeper and elicit emotional responses from the participants through a ‘conversation with a purpose’ (Bingham & Moore, 1931). The participants shared not just what they thought and felt about becoming a teacher, but why they felt like that and how it feels to feel like that.

The importance of relationality to the research design has already been outlined in Chapter 3. This concept was also central to planning effective interviews as well, as it is recommended that researchers should develop a good relationship and rapport prior to working with vulnerable groups on sensitive topics (Dempsey et al., 2016). Over time, I have become close with many of the respondents and have stayed in touch on a regular basis. Organising the PhotoVoice task as a baseline tool in the research therefore worked well in this regard, as it meant that I had met most participants a minimum of three times in advance of the formal interview and it helped conversation flow easily. I was struck by how forthcoming the young people were during the data collection, and how helpful and willing they were to participate.

All interviewing about social phenomena has the potential to be sensitive, however the nature of this research, dealing with as it does exclusion, aspirations, racism, and helplessness, certainly had the potential to evoke strong emotional reactions in the participants. But it is important to note here that interviews can have a positive emotional impact on the participant (Pascoe-Leahy, 2021). This emerged in my research as well as participants found their involvement in the research to be empowering, with some of them sharing that the process had encouraged them to reflect on things from different vantage points and they were proud of themselves for participating. For many of them, it revealed priorities that they were unaware of before, clarified their feelings, and affirmed their motivation to pursue teaching.

Focus groups.

Focus groups can be similarly conceptualised as a useful tool for exploring narratives with minoritized groups. Morgan (1997, p. 6) defines focus groups as ‘a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by a researcher. In essence, it is the researcher’s interest that provides the focus, whereas the data themselves come from the group interaction’. The focus groups differed from the semi-structured interviews in that an additional source of data came not just from the participants’ input, but also from their interaction amongst themselves and with me as the research as well. In this way, the data revealed an extra layer of collective information, rather than purely individual takes. King and Horrocks (2010) argue that data coming from focus groups can reveal the social and cultural context of people’s understandings and so may encourage recall or stimulate elaboration. I adhered to Krueger and Casey’s (2000) recommendations for running effective focus groups, in that participants shared common characteristics (all LC students) and were all known to each other.

A focus group allowed for the group dynamics and interactions between the young people to be foregrounded in the data. This added an additional layer to the data analysis, in that the young people may oppose or even develop a sense of solidarity from the group effects. According to Smithson (2000) ‘the problem of a dominant voice overriding other voices is supposedly dealt with by the technique of making focus groups homogenous in terms of age, experience, education and current occupational position’ (p.108). In focus groups ‘the participants interact with each other rather than with the interviewer, such that the views of the participant emerge’ (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 436). This means the focus group requires a specific technique of questioning in order to obtain knowledge about the subjects’ world. The researcher ‘organises the questions in each group according to a ‘funnel’ pattern

that begins with a fixed core set of questions and then proceeds to a variable set of specific issues' (Morgan, 1997, p. 143).

In terms of moderation, I structured the questions in accordance with some broad themes that had emerged from our initial conversations prior to the formal focus group. I strove to create a relaxed, comfortable, and safe space for discussion. Like the approach taken for the interviews, I tried to allow for comfortable silences and take an active, intentional, and empathetic listening stance, with due deference to the notion of voice as articulated in the conceptual framework. However, in terms of moderation style, I felt it was very important that I was not hesitant to make interventions in the discussion to either clarify something that had come up, to encourage the participant to delve a little bit deeper into their experience or to get an example to back up a point being made. I called upon participants directly at times, where the questions stemmed specifically from something that had come up in our preliminary meeting. My moderator style was friendly and supportive, and questions were open-ended. At no point did I have to prompt participants or ask additional questions to cover up silences.

Where appropriate, I also invited 'oppositional takes' on issues that came up, and this sparked further conversation and analysis from within the focus group participants. This worked well as it was a useful mitigator against a major criticism of focus groups, which is about whether the opinions that emerge from the data collection are how individuals actually feel, or whether they are symptomatic of the group's interaction. It has further been suggested that the group situation redresses the power of the researcher over participants, decreases researcher control, and encourages the free expression of ideas during informal interaction (Wilkinson 1998, Madriz in Bagnoli & Clark, 2010). The concept of communion, embedded in the conceptual framework, also influenced my moderator style. At times, when participants may have been going off on what I deemed as a tangent, I allowed them that space and to appreciate that the way they were responding to the question, or making connections, was important to their narrative sense-making.

For the focus group participants, they described the experience as cathartic, and revealed that this was the first time anyone working in education had asked them about their experience of racism. They revealed that the focus group was the first space that had been created for them to share their experience of living a racialised existence within an Irish school.

‘Mapping the messiness’: Data analysis

Thorne (2000) characterizes data analysis as one of the most complex phases within the qualitative research process, and yet the one that often receives the least thoughtful discussion in the literature. This section brings analytic issues to the fore, by focusing on the frameworks, tools and active decision-making that was part of the analysis process, mindful of the advice that the ‘data do not generate theory, only researchers do that’ (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 584). Thematic analysis (TA) was used as the foundational method of analysis during this study and data were gathered, coded, and interpreted according to prevailing practices in reflexive thematic analysis.

Reflexive thematic analysis.

Braun and Clarke (2020) maintain that thematic analysis is frequently misunderstood as a singular method with one set of procedures. But thematic analysis is a diverse form of practice and there are actually many different types, including coding reliability approaches, codebook approaches and reflexive approaches. Since their seminal article (Braun & Clarke, 2006) Braun and Clarke have both refined and expanded upon their thinking to mark out TA as a distinct approach, one that they now prefer to call reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

One of the ways that reflexive thematic analysis has evolved is in relation to the emphasis on interpretation. Braun and Clarke (2019) argue that TA should not be seen as a ‘recipe’ for people, moreover it is a reflective practice where the researcher’s role in knowledge production is at the heart of the approach. Throughout the process I tried to avoid approaching the analysis in a mechanistic way; I accepted it was not a linear process, and that constant reflection on data, theory, positionality, and transparency of insights was needed at all times. It was not about applying a ‘tick box’ approach to the steps of analysis, but an acknowledgement, that I as the researcher needed to engage reflexively with the analytic development of themes and findings. Data are also underpinned by theoretical assumptions and reflective engagement with the theory was vital during this time.

A significant clarification that is needed in the context of reflexive thematic analysis is that the resulting themes do not independently exist within the data or the codes, nor do they passively materialize from the coding process. They are not ‘waiting’ in the data to ‘emerge’ when the researcher ‘discovers’ them (Braun & Clarke, 2021b). ‘Themes are creative and interpretive stories about the data, produced at the intersection of the researcher’s theoretical assumptions, their analytic resources and skill, and the data themselves’ (Trainor & Bundon, 2020, p. 6).

The lack of literature on how thematic analysis is enacted, as well as the flexibility associated with the method can often be criticised. There is sometimes a perception that the flexibility can lead to inconsistency and a lack of coherence when developing themes (Holloway & Todres in Nowell et al., 2017). But Braun and Clarke (2021b) argue that the theoretical flexibility of reflexive TA should not be misunderstood as theoretical neutrality. And moreover, the flexibility associated with this mode of analysis actually assisted me in the identification and clustering of themes within data items and data sets. Braun and Clarke advocate for a ‘named and claimed’ thematic analysis (2006, p. 81) and so an intentional and systematic approach to describing patterns enriched the reporting process. This involved following the six discrete phases of thematic analysis as described by the authors. I used these as guidelines, rather than hard and fast rules, in keeping with the reflexive approach.

Table 2: Phases of Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Phase 1:	Familiarising yourself with the datasets
Phase 2:	Coding
Phase 3:	Generating initial themes
Phase 4:	Developing and reviewing themes
Phase 5:	Refining, defining, and naming themes
Phase 6:	Writing up
<i>(Braun & Clarke, 2021a, p. 35).</i>	

Coding and theme construction.

Wanting to avoid any ‘leaps’ in the data analysis, I documented the process in depth and tracked my thinking using the tools of coding and the method of constant comparison within an RTA approach. To begin with, the interviews and focus group were audio-recorded and immediately transcribed. Data were systematically reviewed and familiarity with the data was achieved through a rigorous reading and re-reading of the texts.

Broadly speaking, codes were assigned to units of meaning in the transcripts of the PhotoVoice interviews, the semi-structured interviews, and the focus group. Codes acted like labels, and were collapsed and refined, put into ‘big containers’ called nodes then examined for patterns. Patterns were then organised into central themes. Patterns became analytic outputs through an iterative process, using constant comparison as a way of keeping a close connection between the data and the meanings constructed through the codes¹⁹ and

¹⁹ For a copy of the coding frame, please see Appendix I.

categories. The aim was ‘to clarify what the categories that have emerged mean, as well as to identify sub-categories and relations among categories’ (Boulton & Hammersley, 1997, p. 253).

Good quality coding and themes result from dual processes of immersion or depth of engagement (Braun & Clarke, 2021b). Given that data collection was happening asynchronously during the research process, this allowed plenty of time to give to the analysis, allowing time and space for familiarity with the data and constant reflections on my assumptions. I manually coded the data on paper, allowing for wide margins on the interview and focus group transcripts. This resulted in deeper connection with the data and provided a useful visual point of reference for my initial interpretations. For the focus group transcription for example, I also made other notes about when participants agreed, where there was dissent, whether there were any silences (or not!) and pinpointed the times that participants had become upset. I also cross-referenced the transcripts with my field notes and reflective journal entries to remind myself about any observations I had made at the time in relation to other non-verbal cues or interactions. I applied Lareau’s (2021) recommendation of finding ‘vivid phrases’ in the transcripts that would be suitable quotations and also balanced ‘readability, accuracy, and succinctness’ in my approach to the editing of these quotes (Lareau, 2021, p. 217).

There were approximately 35 codes per interview in the first iteration and 38 codes for the focus groups. Adding in the photo data contributed to a significant number of additional codes and I tried to avoid over-coding in the preliminary stages as there were certainly some practical challenges associated with managing all the data. I started with 20 pre-defined codes to help with the analysis process, while also mindful of literature which cautions against starting with too many in case you are led by predetermined assumptions. (King in Nowell et al., 2017). At the end of the coding process there were 110 codes across the 29 transcripts. These were then collapsed into 20 main codes. Higher-level codes were highlighted separately so that they would stand out more. Clusters were printed out, cut up and moved around to make visualising the commonalities a little bit more manageable. Codes shifted and moved on a regular basis. Once codes had been merged, collapsed, and refined, I began to define and name the themes which were then underpinned by a ‘central organising concept’ (Braun et al., 2014) - essentially the key idea of each theme.

Analysis of visual data.

How one takes, reads, or shares a photo is never neutral, but always imbued with meaning (Sánchez, 2015). There are several popular acronym frameworks which are used as

discussion triggers for photo analysis, and I initially began by utilising the popular PHOTO acronym analysis approach.

Table 3: PHOTO acronym analysis framework

1	Describe your P icture
2	What is H appening in your picture?
3	Why did you take a picture O f this?
4	What does this picture T ell us about your life?
5	How can this picture provide O pportunities for us to improve life in regard to ...?
<i>Graziano, 2012</i>	

After a few of the PhotoVoice analysis sessions it became evident that many of the young people found the last two questions to be confusing and repetitive, echoing the findings of McIntyre's (1993) study which found the prescriptive nature of acronym discussion guides actually hindered the analysis process. I retained the initial questions as a stimulus for discussion and then encouraged the participants to speak more freely about their motivations for choosing their particular photo. Overall the participants responded very well to the PhotoVoice task, with many sharing that it helped them clarify their sentiments about teaching in advance of the formal interview.

No picture of course represents 'truth'. A photo simply reflects reality - a moment in time, bordered and framed, shot by one individual, and singled out by another (Blackman, 2007, p. 8).

An important consideration when planning for analysis was in relation to the visual data. How could I produce and communicate meaning in this regard and how did I ethically read and interpret the photographs? After all, Pink (2013) explains that meanings do not exist in the photographs independently but are attached to them as part of the analysis. Data analysis is conceptualized as an art, not a science; and creativity is central to the process, within a framework of rigour (Braun & Clarke, 2021b). It is standard within PhotoVoice discussion processes for the participants to be involved in the analysis (Hergenrather, 2009). This was an important way of protecting the voice of the participants in the research, as it was through their analysis and discussion of their priorities that they were able to emphasise topics and issues that the researcher may otherwise have viewed as irrelevant. The participants identified themes, issues, or theories that they wanted to talk about in the interview through their choice of photos. 'Such an approach avoids the distortion of fitting

data into a pre-determined paradigm; through it we hear and understand how people make meaning themselves, or construct what matters to them' (Wang, 1997, p. 382).

The participatory analysis of PhotoVoice involved three stages:

1. Selecting (choosing photographs that most accurately reflect participants' answers to the research questions)
2. Contextualising (telling stories about what the photographs mean);
3. 'Reading' (codifying the photographs so we can try and understand the story behind them)

Credibility of the data.

The concept of theoretical saturation is often linked to debates around data credibility; and is one of the most cited justifications for deciding sample size (Vasileiou et al., 2018) as well as the point at which data collection and analysis should cease. Theoretical saturation is regarded as the point when gathering additional data no longer leads to new information or theoretical insights. It is broadly understood as meaning information redundancy (Lincoln & Guba 1985), the point when not much else changes in the analysis or understanding of the social phenomenon in question. But regarding theoretical saturation as the 'gold standard' (Guest et al., 2006) for credible analysis needed to be problematised in this context and I resisted 'operationalising' saturation in this regard. Instead, my approach to credibility relied less on a set of pre-defined rules and standards, and more on 'fidelity to the spirit of qualitative work' (Sandelowski, 1993, p. 2).

Braun and Clarke (2021c) argue that the concept of data saturation is not consistent with the values and assumptions of reflexive thematic analysis. As outlined already, they instead encourage us to remember that meaning making is generated through the interpretation of the data, as opposed to through an 'excavation' of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021c). Problematising this also means exploring how codes are understood. If there is a particular number of interviews that need to be done, it suggests that codes are fixed and unchanging and something that 'reside' in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021c). Dey (1999) instead has suggested the phrase theoretical sufficiency as an alternative to saturation, to capture the notion that data collection stops when the researcher has reached a sufficient or adequate depth of understanding to build a theory. Nelson (2016)) similarly suggested alternative descriptions of conceptual density or conceptual depth. Rather than rely on problematic notions of saturation, in order to justify the legitimacy of my data, I used a variety of different factors. These included respondent validation and member checks, researcher triangulation, reflexivity, extended timeframes, analytic transparency, a focus on

depth and quality of data, a critical friend, piloting of the instrument questions, the use of field notes and audit trails, and exploring any rival explanations (Denscombe, 2010) that emerged in the literature²⁰.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintain that it is never possible for qualitative researchers to prove in any absolute way that they ‘got it right’. Consequently, they refined the concept of trustworthiness to include credibility and dependability. Similarly, ‘there is an inflexibility and an uncompromising harshness and rigidity implied in the term ‘rigour’ that threaten to take us too far from the artfulness, versatility, and sensitivity to meaning and context that mark qualitative works of distinction’ (Sandelowski, 1993, p. 1). For findings to be regarded as reliable, qualitative researchers must demonstrate that data analysis has been conducted in a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner through recording, systematizing, and disclosing the methods of analysis with enough detail to enable the reader to determine whether the process is credible (Nowell et al., 2017). I tracked and documented the data collection and analysis process as I went along and made visible my intentions and motivations. I regarded researcher subjectivity as a resource, rather than something that could be considered a threat to the credibility of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Dependability of data is also something to be considered here; that the findings that have come from the data are logical, clearly documented, and traceable. To this end, I also borrowed the notion of an ‘auditable decision trail’ (Nowell et al., 2017) and included regular accounts of active decision making through field notes and reflective journal entries. Even though it was time-intensive, it led to a useful volume of additional notes and points of reference for challenges that emerged during the data collection. Field notes were mined for sources of future questions, particularly for the later interviews. Field notes also covered post-interview debriefs and check ins with participants. Depth and quality of data is a further indicator of credibility. Good quality analysis depends on having good quality data (Connolly & Peltzer 2016 in Braun & Clarke, 2021b). The data from participants was rich, deep, layered and thought-provoking.

Ethical Considerations

The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house – Audre Lorde

Acknowledging the responsibilities I had as a researcher was central to the research design. Ethical approval was obtained from the DCU Research Ethics Committee (Ref # DCUREC/2017/041) for this project. When it unexpectedly emerged that a pivot to online

²⁰ Please see Appendix P for a credibility table.

data collection would also be needed as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic²¹, a subsequent amendment was also submitted to the DCU Ethics Committee. University guidelines in relation to academic integrity were also adhered to; aiming for ‘compliance with ethical and professional principles, standards, practises and a consistent system of values, that serves as guidance for making decisions and taking actions in education, research and scholarship’ (NAIN, 2021.p. 10).

However, ethical considerations for an empirical social inquiry such as this go much further than just procedural obligations²², and I was mindful that sustained reflection on ethics in practice would also be necessary to develop an ‘ethical radar’ (Skanfors, 2009). Ethical practice in research is never complete and always evolving. I strove to balance forging positive relationships with my participants with negotiating different roles and responsibilities in the process and was constantly vigilant about the complexities in the research design and changing context.

Power and research across difference.

Educational research should include an emancipatory element, in that research should be empowering to all participants (Bhavnani, 1990). However, the centrality of power relationships in educational research needs to be foregrounded because of the authority that the researcher has in relation to ‘the researched’ by defining the parameters of the study in the first place (Bhavnani, 1990). I am conscious of the fact that while a critical participatory action research approach was adopted for the second phase of the research, the research question, the sampling frame, and the initial baseline measurement had all been pre-determined prior to the young people’s engagement with the study. Fricker (2007) reminds us that in the social world, power can operate passively or actively.

Gunaratnam (2003) similarly refers to the ‘messy work’ of undertaking qualitative interviewing across difference and the problems of ‘distance’ and ‘difference’ within interracial data collection. The problems of doing research with minoritized communities are compounded by the social distance imposed by class and race relations when interviewers are white and middle class and those who are being interviewed are not. There is often an assumption that when minoritized voices are included in research, especially through direct speech extracts, that there is an automatic layer of ‘authenticity’ (Bhavnani, 1990, p. 146) to the findings. The voices of minoritized young people, which have never been centred in ITE

²¹ For an account of carrying out research during a global pandemic, please see Appendix N.

²² For a list of protocols adhered to during Zoom interviews, please see Appendix O.

research before, were key to the conceptual framework for this study. But to include these voices, without also looking at why these voices have been hitherto silenced, would potentially do a disservice to the participants. I was mindful of this dynamic at all stages of the research process and acknowledge that mere inclusion in research is not always the same as ‘giving a voice’ (Bhavnani, 1990, p. 141).

Literature on interracial interviewing (Gunaratnam, 2003) for example, argues that research participants are less willing to tell interviewers from another ethnic group what they ‘really’ think about their attitudes and opinions about racial topics. This is particularly relevant when data are being collected on a sensitive topic (Denscombe, 2010), for example in this context, narratives of racism, discrimination and inequality of access. Identifying potential acquiescence is also very relevant where power inequality is present, and where the respondent does not have prior experience of participating in formal research. Acquiescence may take the form of passive agreement; positive responses when participants are in doubt about the meaning of a question; or respondents just ‘telling you what they think you want to hear’. In the context of visual methodology, as in Fassetta’s (2015) study it may result in participants taking photos of things ‘they thought she would want to see’ and result in the ‘absent presences’ of the researcher (Kesby in Fassetta, 2015, p. 114).

Moreo (2012), in her work on migrant networks in Ireland, argues that the production of knowledge around migrants is usually carried out by ‘experts’, for example journalists, researchers, policy analysts (p.75) and rarely by the people who are being researched or talked about. She maintains that researchers’ and academics’ own involvement in the processes of speaking for minorities and the problematic issues around modalities of representation are rarely addressed (Moreo, 2012). There is often justifiable scepticism or resentment of academics from minoritized groups who have had historically bad experiences of being researched. Castleden et al. (2008) speak of bad practice in indigenous research relating to dubious consent and non-sharing of research findings with community groups. As a result, there can sometimes be expressed frustration about ‘being researched to death’ or research fatigue (National Aboriginal Health Organisation in Castleden et al., 2008). The researcher must be mindful of inadvertently reinforcing existing institutional inequality. ‘In other words, the idea of “giving a voice” must provide a simultaneous analysis of those who are potential hearers, and why they do not hear’ (Bhavnani, 1990, p. 152).

Researcher reflexivity.

Researcher reflexivity can be a delicate dance when multiple signifiers of difference are at play. Luttrell (2000) asserts that it is always a balancing act because on the one hand

we strive to listen and represent our participants on their own terms, but on the other hand we are obliged to recognise our crucial role in shaping those ethnographic encounters. So reflexivity should not be regarded as a tokenistic once-off practice. It is an ongoing process of guided introspection and should be considered an integral part of continuous research practice (Luttrell, 2019). As outlined in the positionality section in Chapter 1, power and privilege were key factors for me to reflect on during the process, and something that I had to be cognisant of at all stages of the research process, from research design to analysis and write-up. Braun and Clarke (2013) maintain that qualitative researchers engage in a subjective practice and researchers bring their 'own histories, values, assumptions, perspectives, politics, and mannerisms into research' (p. 36).

The idea of qualitative inquiry as a reflective process underscores the strengths of a qualitative approach (Agee, 2009). To achieve an ethically aware qualitative inquiry, I knew I would need specific tools to guide me in this process as being prepared for the research process is also an important component of acting ethically (Bell, 2005). In addition to 'outer' preparation for data collection, such as identifying and engaging with gatekeepers etc.; I also undertook 'inner' preparation, 'mental gymnastics' (Costley & Fulton, 2019) if you will, which further supported critical reflection on my positionality in the research. A tool which helped with mapping transparency and intentionality in the research process was the use of researcher reflective notes. Researchers often use journals to examine 'personal assumptions and goals' and clarify 'individual belief systems and subjectivities' (Ahern in Russell & Kelly, 2002, p. 2). I ensured I found the time and space within the operational plan to commit to reflective practice that looked beneath the surface of taken for granted assumptions and ensured that I resisted oversimplified and superficial approaches to my thinking process.

The problem of bias in qualitative research is regularly debated and there is a lack of agreement about how the researcher influence plays out in the material context of the research site. Denzin & Lincoln (1994) refer to this as 'the interpretive crisis' (p. 501). I made my experiences, opinions, thoughts, and feelings visible and acknowledged through the use of such reflective notes. Punch (2012) argues that the immediacy and emotional impact of the fieldwork can be lost without keeping field notes and so a regular commitment to the reflective journal²³ enabled me to work through elements of the theoretical lenses which I applied to the data and figured out how to best map them on the experiences of the young

²³ The reflective process was characterised by critical questioning, and I collated a range of targeted stimulus questions which would act as a self-reflexive lens for introspection. These questions can be viewed in Appendix Q.

people. I wrote down any observations about emotions, body language, feelings that might be relevant, and I kept track of tensions, contradictions, and theoretical connections. I initially made short notes in the field about my internal responses to the process and then expanded upon them in the immediate aftermath of an interview or conversation with a participant. I also aimed to include a running record of the process of analysis and how I was interpreting the data as I went along.

Reflexivity can be an important pedagogical tool when considering racism. However;

We must be on guard to ensure that a focus on Whiteness doesn't become one more excuse to re-centre dominant voices and to ignore the voices and testimony of those groups of people whose dreams, hopes, lives and very bodies are shattered by current relations of exploitation and domination (Apple, 1998: xi).

As a result, I have not included data from the reflective notes as a central part of the findings as I do not want to privilege my voice over that of the participants. However in order to shine a light on the research process and to provide clear examples of 'reflexivity in action' (Trainor & Bundon, 2020), a range of reflections from the field are included in the appendices.

Principled sensitivity.

Rigorous and critical reflexivity assisted me in enacting principled sensitivity at all stages of the research process. Ethical sensitivity as a behavioural concept has been described in the literature in several ways: a caring response, skill in identifying the ethical dimension of care, intuition regarding others' comfort and well-being, and a component of moral care (Weaver, 2007, p. 142). I was conscious of individuals who may have had negative experiences of education, and I was prepared to deal with the practical and emotional consequences of engaging with young people who do not have equity of access to ITE. I was aware of the after-effects of sharing sensitive stories and I always foregrounded respect for human dignity. I displayed compassion, gratitude and common-sense in my interactions with my respondents as ethical issues in educational research can often result from simple inattention, oversight or taking things for granted. I was empathetic to the likely impact or unintended consequences that my research may have on my participants and displayed awareness to the fact that discussion of topics such as racism or exclusion may trigger previously internalised feelings of stress, frustration, isolation (Siggins, 2015), helplessness or even cultural inferiority.

When participants became upset at any stage during the data collection, either in the preliminary meetings or during the interviews or focus groups, the interaction was

immediately stopped, and support was offered to the individual while they regained their composure. Unfortunately, this occurred on a regular basis. During the focus group for example, a participant became extremely upset sharing incidents of racist bullying when she was younger. I had anticipated this and as a result strove to cultivate the necessary facilitation skills which could display empathy and support. I sought to foster trust with my participants and care for their narratives. I ensured physical and emotional comfort within the space and prepared for the interviews by bringing along refreshments, drinks, and tissues. Venues for meetings and data collection were mutually discussed, agreed and accessible. I checked in with participants the following day to see if they were okay and I regarded the post-interview debrief as an essential part of the process. Ultimately, the overt focus on reflection and reflexivity within the research served me well. Ozanne and Fischer (2011) suggest that conducting research in sensitive contexts may instil a sense of duty and social justice in the researcher.

Informed consent.

The principles of informed consent; namely competence, voluntarism, full information, and comprehension (Cohen, et al., 2011), are the cornerstones of ethical behaviour in educational research. Participants were presented with the full picture of possible risks arising from participation in the research, in relation to stress or invasion of privacy during the process. The right to refuse to take part or to withdraw once the research has begun was safeguarded throughout the research by providing opportunities for consent to be ‘renewed’ on a regular basis. I was also mindful of the distinct responsibility that I had towards the gatekeepers involved in the research project. Gatekeepers may have to live with the consequences of the research project in a way that the researcher does not, and so the principles of informed consent were applied here too.

Ethical issues are brought into sharp focus when young people are involved in research. I was mindful of additional power dynamics that arise because of questioning across age difference. Not all participants were minors, but strict protocols were applied for those that were. As minors are not in a position to give informed consent, I approached assent in two stages. I sought informed consent²⁴ from the adult responsible for the young person, and then from the young person themselves.

A rigorous framework around confidentiality was adopted. Participant confidentiality was protected through the use of pseudonyms in the write up of the research. Participants

²⁴ Please see Appendices T and U for copies of the participant information sheet and the consent/ assent letters.

were given the opportunity to come up with their own pseudonym as an additional way of giving them control over their narrative. I was alert to the complexities of protecting anonymity in this context and was careful about how the inclusion of original data or narratives quotes were labelled. I did not include any unique information, which may inadvertently reveal the identity of a participant. The plain language statement outlined the parameters of the study and the researcher's commitment to anonymity and confidentiality in this regard. All transcripts, field notes and logs, any information relating to the study were securely stored on password-encrypted devices and only accessible to the researcher.

PhotoVoice, dealing as it does with the collection of visual research data, naturally involves an additional layer of ethical considerations in the context of the principle of informed consent. While participants signed informed consent forms for the project as a whole, separate consent forms²⁵ dealing with the use and reproduction of photographs were also generated. Research participants were also provided with clear guidelines about ethical behaviour and informed consent in relation to their own photos. They were advised that including other people in their photographs requires additional consent. They were told that while getting written permission may result in less spontaneous photos of subjects, they have an ethical responsibility to any potential subject included in photos. The act of taking photos can be a political act (Castleden et al., 2008) and can also be a sensitive and potentially intrusive activity. Accordingly, the initial training included a discussion around the ethics of including other people in their PhotoVoice outputs.

Considerations in relation to the authorship, ownership and embedded rights of photos are very complex and can vary depending on:

acquisition circumstances, prior assignment of primary and ancillary rights, age of the image, provenance, status of the previous owner and a number of other variables. Physical ownership, copyright and reproduction rights coexist in a continually shifting legal and technological environment' (Rowe, 2012, p. 708).

Most copyright laws assign ownership to the creator of the photograph (Rowe, 2012) and this is generally the case in Irish law as well. The consent forms and relevant photograph release forms were explicit about the rights of the both the researcher and the participant in relation to photos in both digital and printed form. Participants retained ownership and copyright of the photos, however researcher acted as guardian of the photos for the duration of the research study. A 'fair use' (Rowe, 2012) approach covered the right of the researcher to include photographs in the body of the finished dissertation, in the appendices of the

²⁵ Please see Appendix R for the photo release form and Appendix S for the photograph subject release form.

finished dissertation, and in any relevant conference presentation, articles, exhibition or publication as part of the dissemination. Any subsequent opportunities for dissemination which arise would have required additional and discrete consent from participants.

Participants' moral rights were also respected. This typically refers to the right of the photographer to prevent 'revision, alteration, or distortion of their work, regardless of who owns it' (Rowe, 2012, p. 713). Moral rights cover the right of the photographer to have their name (in this case pseudonym) associated with the reproduction of the photo, as well as control any changes or distortions to the photo. I guaranteed that no filters were applied to digital versions of their photos, and should I choose to crop a photo for the purposes of clarity, I committed to showing the full original version alongside the cropped version²⁶.

Credit lines to acknowledge the source of the image are universally required (Rowe, 2012) and in this case, the pseudonyms which have been attributed to the research participants were embedded on any photos used in the final dissertation text. These pseudonyms are linked to a table of biographical information about the photographer in order to provide a context to the photo. The young people were reminded that while they own the copyright of the photo, any personal use of the photo, for example on social media, may end up compromising their identity.

Literature suggests that regular renewal of informed consent is especially important, particularly for minoritized groups because of power dynamics embedded in traditional research practices (Gunaratnam, 2003). Enacting informed consent in practice²⁷ was labour and time intensive from a researcher perspective. On average, I had at least three full meetings²⁸ with participants prior to commencing with the PhotoVoice task. During these meetings I would revisit the principles of informed consent, namely their right to receive a transcript of our interactions for respondent validation (Denscombe, 2010) and reminders of their right to withdraw at any stage.

²⁶ To protect anonymity, two photos were pixelated by the researcher, and this is indicated in the text.

²⁷ A researcher reflection in Appendix V contains further insight into the informed consent process.

²⁸ The first was a general meeting to establish rapport; with introductions, conversation about motivations to become a teacher, the rationale for my research and our mutual interests in diversifying primary teaching. The second meeting focused more specifically on the phases of the research and the training for the PhotoVoice task, encompassing the logistics for taking the photos, sending the photos, the process for analysis and the ethical considerations should human subjects be involved. The third meeting was typically then to sign the consent forms. At certain points of the research, that third meeting took place online via Zoom, with participants either posting back a hard copy to me, scanning the full document, or taking a photo of their signature until we met in person for me to collect the hard copy.

The ‘professional, personal and political’: Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to provide nuanced and textured insight into a dynamic, qualitative research inquiry using real-world evidence about the experiences of minoritized ethnic young people pursuing a career in primary teaching. Noffke (1997) uses the frames of the professional, personal, and political to capture all the salient dimensions of action research and this has great resonance in this context. From a professional perspective, this research is value-laden, aims to make personal values congruent with practice and tries to enact meaningful change in teacher education. In relation to the personal, it was often a confronting process acknowledging my role and positionality within the process and how I may have benefitted from the process in relation to self-development, honing of skills and insights gained. Schmidt (2010) claims that there is a dearth of academic and scholarly work that brings immigrant teacher issues beyond the realm of the personal and into the political. From a political perspective, it was an invaluable reminder that all education is political, it is never neutral (Freire, 1970); and that centring voices and scaffolding democratic research practices are essential to enact social and educational change. The problems related to the lack of a diverse teaching profession do not operate in a political vacuum.

Chapter 5: Snapshots of teaching: Counter-stories of motivation, engagement, and exclusion.

Introduction

This chapter uses the CRT instrument of counter-storytelling to present storied understandings of why minoritized ethnic young people in Ireland are not choosing primary teaching in greater numbers. This chapter draws primarily upon data derived from the PhotoVoice task whereby the photo outputs themselves act as counter-stories to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions as to why there is not more diversity in the teaching profession in Ireland. The aim of the PhotoVoice task was to provide a vehicle for the participants through which they could share their educational realities in dignified and culturally appropriate ways. The resulting photo narratives honour their voices by centring their contributions and viewing the phenomenon through their eyes, an objective which is central to the overall aims of this research study. The findings in this chapter show how participants engaged in innovative, creative, and compelling forms of cultural self-portrayal which foreground their racial identities and racialised experiences. Through their photos, the participants constructed counter-stories that challenge majoritarian stories about motivations to become a teacher, familial support, Irish language requirements and what a teacher in Ireland is supposed to look like. An overview of how stock stories and counter-stories work will be introduced and then followed by the presentation of original counter-stories which emerged from this study.

Stock stories and counter-stories

One of the significant contributions of CRT to theory is the way it centres stories, and privileges voices that have been hitherto under-represented, under-valued or even silenced. CRT draws upon a series of innovative methodological tools to introduce stories which analyse racism and discrimination. Counter-storytelling, also known ‘oppositional storytelling’ (Delgado, 1995, p. xv), is one such device in the ‘conceptual toolbox’ (Gillborn, 2007) of CRT. Counter-storytelling is a method for ‘telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told’ (Solórzano & Yosso 2002, p. 26).

Dominant groups in society tell stock stories about marginalised groups. Counter-stories are positioned in direct opposition to these stock stories, ‘monovocal stories’ (Delgado, 1995), or ‘master narratives’ (Montecinos, 1995). Stock stories are essentially commonly held myths, assumptions or received wisdoms about a particular phenomenon in our social world. Wane (2008) identifies stock stories as ways of referring to, or constructing

knowledge about, a particular topic, practice, social activity, or institutional site in society. These stock stories often misrepresent the knowledge contributions of marginalised communities. CRT contests dominant narratives which ignore the stories of marginalised groups, undermines their cultural complexities, or approach such groups from a deficit perspective that ignores their experiential knowledge (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This experiential knowledge can come from a myriad of rich sources including storytelling, family history, biographies, scenarios, parables, chronicles, and narratives (Delgado, 1989).

Delgado (1989) posits that the counter-story can often provide a more rounded viewpoint of a certain situation, revealing new possibilities and understandings. Counter-stories can be used to ‘open a window into reality’ and contrast common negative discourse around particular minoritized groups (Delgado, 1989). Counter-stories ‘reveal the very bones and skeletons of domination, re-cast the workings of subordination and re-tell the history of how things came to be’ (Harris et al., 2001, p. 14).

Stock stories and official stories need to be challenged by more diverse or oppositional stories, stories that help illuminate how systems work and how institutions operate. But the stories of marginalised groups should not just be reduced to the description of simply telling stories, instead McKinley Jones Brayboy encourages us to think of them as a type of theory building (2006). Consequently, CRT respects the potential of experiential knowledge to inform scholarship and theory. I will now introduce four ‘stock stories’ related to the debate about diversifying teaching in Ireland in an attempt to challenge some commonly held assumptions about this topic.

Stock Story 1: ‘Minoritized young people don’t want to be teachers’.

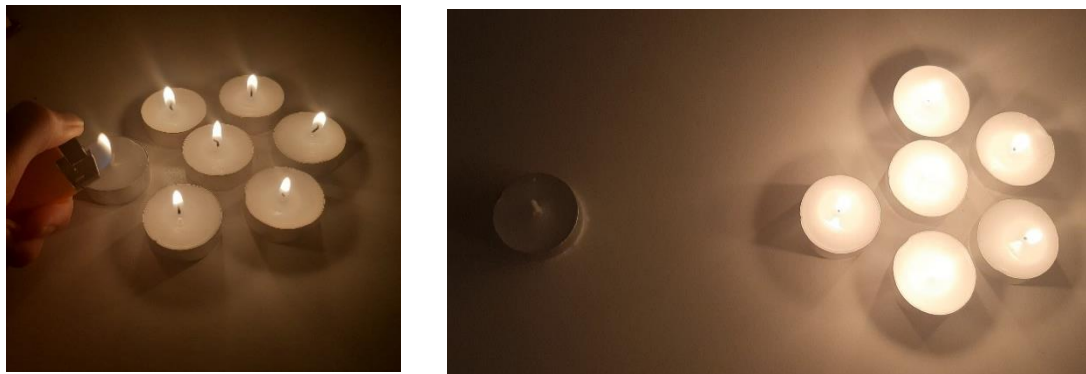
Research suggests that it is not that minoritized young people are applying to ITE programmes and not getting in, it is that they are not applying in the first place (Keane & Heinz, 2016). As a result there is a danger that this could be interpreted as a lack of interest in the profession of teaching on the part of minoritized young people in Ireland. It would be a mistake to conflate this lack of applications with a lack of interest, and this was a fallacy that the participants were keen to immediately take on through their first set of counter-stories.

Glenn (2020) maintains that teacher-researchers are given very few opportunities to think carefully about their practice or to discuss it with others. She argues that sufficient space is not provided for them to adequately reflect on their identity as practitioners, ‘to become familiar with the values that they hold, to identify the significance of their role in the world, nor to engage in dialogue with others about it’ (2020, p. 28). This is both true of novice and experienced teacher researchers, who have multiple and competing demands on

their time in a classroom context. Yet the findings in this study reveal that not only do the participants have an innate interest in becoming a teacher, they are also quite discerning about what is involved in the teaching profession.

What constitutes a good teacher is a perennial question. Marom and Ileva (2016) have identified two main categories/ themes in the debate about what constitutes a good teacher: that of the ‘reflective practitioner’ and the ‘competent craftsman’. In this counter-story, participants share their values, views, attributes, and competencies which allude to personal and professional dimensions of teaching under both these categories. We will start with a submission from Calixto, an Irish-Portuguese university student, who creatively captured through two connected²⁹ photos what she could bring to the classroom as a teacher.

Figure 5 Photo 1 & Photo 2 from Calixto



Calixto clarifies her first photo:

I was using the candles as an interpretation of children and me going and lighting the seventh candle was showing that I can spark up what's unique in them and that I can spark a fire in children and help them find what they love... With education, kids sometimes push away from it so much because they don't feel like they belong. They don't feel like their strengths are encouraged. I'd be able to help them feel like they're a part of it.

Calixto's second photo is closely linked to the first:

It's a picture of 7 candles with 6 lit all together and 1 left on the side that is extinguished, with no flame. The symbolism behind that is showing the isolation. A lot of children feel if they're not felt like they're part of a community. Like that photo represents the reason why I wouldn't have gone for it (*primary teaching*) because I never felt like I was part of it.

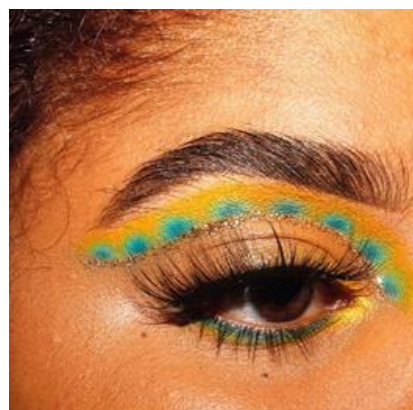
²⁹ While participants were given two questions for the PhotoVoice task and most submitted two separate photos for their answers, Calixto decided instead to present her photos as connected with a common theme.

In fact the importance of imagination and creativity as core competencies for teaching and cultivating creative learning environments for their future pupils was a recurring theme.

I think creativity is a form of communication and expression and freedom. I think that's just a major part of my ethos, or whatever, you know, like, just let children play, let children be, let children communicate... and express themselves (Christina).

Saywer (2004) claims that it is not possible to teach competently without being creative to some degree. Likewise, Craft (2005) emphasises that the teacher often needs to teach in creative ways to ensure creative learning. Feeling strongly about something and bringing passion into your teaching is also regarded as the hallmark of a 'good teacher' (Devine et al., 2013). In fact, Thomas and Hovdhagen (2022) argue that it is precisely this passion that contributes to the development of a very strong professional identity for student teachers from under-represented groups. Awareness of this was very visible in some of the other photo contributions of participants.

Figure 6 Photo 1 from Coretta and photo 1 from Melodi



Coretta and Melodi, both sixth-year students in secondary school, share their conceptions of creativity in differing ways, in an attempt to establish their connection to some of 'the other-than-theoretical knowledge that characterizes good teaching' (Breier & Ralph, 2009). Coretta, an Irish-Nigerian student shares a photo of her acting in an outdoor Shakespearean play and Melodi, an Angolan-Portuguese student, offers a photo of her emerging make-up skills, as a way of profiling her creative strengths as both a photographer and an artist. They both viewed the teaching profession as a space where more artful teaching was needed and hoped they could model creative skills for their future students and through guided exploration, help cultivate children's own creativity as well. They felt that schools

were very busy places, and carving out time being creative was essential as it is ‘an outlet for expression’ (Coretta).

Participants further demonstrated their interest in teaching throughout the data collection by referencing different pedagogical strategies and teaching frameworks. María (a postgraduate student from a Chilean-Irish background) and Ann (a young Traveller woman) both acknowledged the importance of teachers tailoring content and approaches to meet the individual needs of learners.

Well, definitely, I think if, like differentiation, like there was none of that in my classes anyways, like, they kind of go off the pace that they think that everyone should be at. And then if you fall below that, there was nothing there to help you kind of catch up, they just expected you to kind of do it yourself... Not everyone's going to be learning at the same pace because you know, all students learn differently (María).

That you are kind of approachable, compassionate, kind, helpful. Being able to break things down into the tiniest form and then build them back up again. Being able to explain things in different ways for different people, do you know that kind of way? What is a huge achievement for one child, might just be an everyday thing for another child. Celebrating the little things (Ann).

But their connection to teaching was not just illustrated by their familiarity with the specific mechanics of the craft. Teachers can be regarded as ‘knowledgeable and knowing persons’ (Connolly & Clandinen, 2006, p.381) and their experience, as well as this personal and professional knowledge can help shape the student-teacher relationship. Knowledge of other important pedagogical approaches, such as modelling, was also featured in the participant narratives.

Basically, in primary school, a lot of children don’t even have, like, a proper parental figure. So, they actually look up to teachers. And they actually, like, care about teachers as role models. So, if you're setting such a bad example for children, then that's also saying a word for them to even act the same way that you're acting, in the way you don't care about people, you don't develop any emotional connection with those students (Coretta).

The care the participants displayed for their future pupils echoes findings from recent research (Keane et al., 2020) with student teachers from lower socio-economic groups who expressed a strong desire to be a relatable and inclusive teacher, which they conceptualized as being approachable, caring, and supportive of all pupils. Pela, a Polish migrant sixth-year student, explored this through one of her photos, by setting up an elaborate photo shoot with a child that she knows, with the express intention of making him smile. She says making a child happy is a fundamental factor in being a good teacher.

Figure 7 Photo 1 from Pela³⁰



It's a picture of a small child, smiling, and it represents happiness. One of the things that motivate me and why I want to work with small kids is I want to make them happy and see them smiling. It makes me happy seeing them happy. I love kids and working with kids. It makes me happy and proud of them. Because they are so innocent, and the smallest thing can make them happy, and they appreciate small things.

The capacities for warmth and compassion and wanting the best for children are important aspects of being a 'good teacher' (Devine et al., 2013) and something that was especially valued by the school-going participants. When asked in the focus group about the traits of a good teacher, Promise, a sixth-year secondary student from an Irish-Nigerian background, was quick off the mark:

Well, you actually have to like children (*everyone laughs*). You have to like children, you can't just come here every day and just teach and leave. You have to actually be nice and treat us with some kind of respect (Promise).

Connected to this is the concept of care, which much has been written of in educational literature (Noddings, 2013). Participants demonstrated their connection to making care judgments in the context of teaching and learning, as evidenced by Panaishe, an asylum seeker from Zimbabwe, and Bashirah, a Black-Irish Muslim university student.

For me, I would say that we have a mandate (*to care*). It comes natural. Because you are in a class with the learner from when they are struggling and when they are doing well. So in a way, there is a natural instinct of being a carer, because you want to see them progress, you want to see them becoming better. If and when they fall, you are

³⁰ This photo has been pixelated by the researcher.

there to be a guide, to support them. And say, ‘it is okay to fall, but you need to pick yourself up and dust yourself and keep running’ (Panaishé).

I think being a well-rounded teacher, and not in terms of just like, you know, being able to, like, teach every subject really well. Like, you know, being good at physical education and maybe the music and stuff, but kind of being a teacher that actually cares about what goes on at home... And just kind of judging - is my class capable of actually learning today or should we do something to lift the spirits and get them feeling better (Bashirah).

Demonstrating her teaching instincts, Bashirah is inclined to consider all aspects of a particular situation, including its moral or ethical dimensions (Chiavaroli & Trumble, 2018, p. 1005). If a child’s basic needs are not being met, then their learning needs cannot be met either and she is duly mindful of a teacher’s pastoral responsibilities of a teacher in this regard.

A ‘good’ teacher is also a reflective practitioner (Devine et. al, 2013) and is committed to ‘active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends’ (Dewey, 1933, p. 9). Participants used the interviews to reflect on their knowledge and beliefs around teaching and effortlessly formulate their educational vision and values.

I think I am a humanist in a way. I have empathy, I relate to people’s situations, and I am very inclusive. I think you need to have some of those characteristics before you even have knowledge of the subject you are teaching. For that reason, I am very good with young people. I always been told so. And I find my engagement with young people very positive a lot of the times (Mampeela).

I am the opposite of competition in the class. I love that my class could be like a team. And I think that that is the most difficult thing to do. But that is the point that I would like to reach. I want all the kids to be involved in the class, participating, and feeling happy to come. To solve our problems through talking. I want them to be like, taking care of the other ones. I think that is the most important thing. Education is not a competition. We all have to get something from this (Matilde, and Argentinian migrant).

The participants were all very clear that teaching is more than just a job, and that you have to be suited to it and enjoy the activities involved and have an underlying ethical vision and value system.

Both Schön and Korthagen linked the concept of action to their models of reflection. Korthagen’s (1985) ALACT model is centred on the action, reflecting on the action, thinking of other ways for action and then trying out the actions. In Schön’s contributions (1983, 1987) on reflection, action is also foregrounded, and he introduces the terms reflection-in-

action and reflection-on-action. This focus on action can be seen in the way that many participants started to think about how their values might be enacted in their future practice.

Figure 8 Photo 1 from Kutenda, photo 1 from María, and photo 1 from Mampeela.



María shares with us the how important she thinks it is for a teacher to be a cheerleader, coach and mentor, an encouraging adult to whom children can look up to and respect. Kutenda, an asylum seeker from Zimbabwe also runs with the metaphor of coach, and prioritised how important it would be for a teacher to support teamwork and cooperation in the classroom. Mampeela³¹, a South African migrant working in Dublin, wants to support the children she will work with to ‘reach for the stars’, while at the same time acknowledging that her hope of becoming a teacher might be an ‘unreachable dream’ because it ‘seems to remain a stretch’.

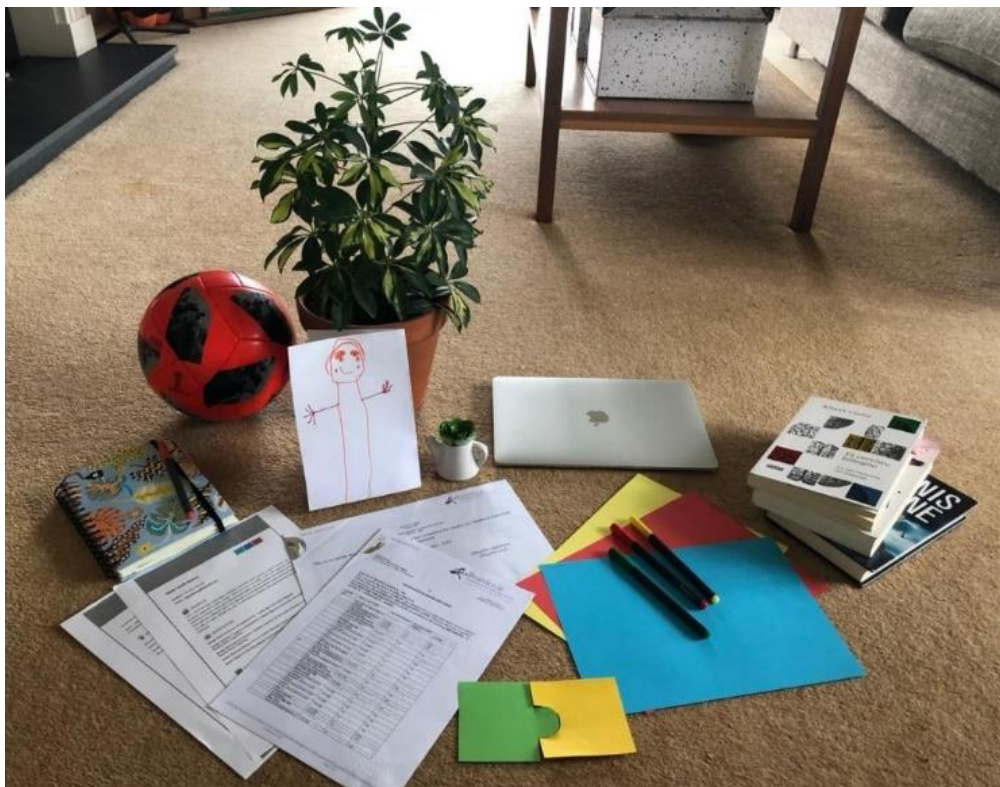
In general, teaching is regarded to have professional status, in part because of the rigorous training and licensing requirements, positive working conditions, an active professional association, relatively high compensation and high prestige (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2015). In Ireland, teaching as a profession is, for the most part, regarded well within society; teachers are considered to have good social status and are held in high esteem (Clarke & O’Doherty, 2020). Teacher education in Ireland requires specialised knowledge and a complex set of skills and ITE also retains high status (O’Doherty & Harford, 2018) and high regard (Keane, Heinz, Lynch, 2022). As a result, primary teaching remains a profession of choice, attracting highly qualified candidates who elect to teach (Clarke & O’Doherty, 2020). We can see from several previous photos that the research participants were motivated to display evidence of what could be termed here as credentialling, in that they want to prove

³¹ Mampeela could not find anything she was happy with to adequately capture her idea of ‘reaching for the stars’, so she drew a simple picture herself and took a photo of this instead.

that they have professional-level mastery of the necessary skills and competencies to be regarded as ‘good enough’ to be a teacher. Through their photos and narratives, they have demonstrated professional insight and knowledge, a love for children, their high expectations for them, and their desire to mentor them and support them to be the best that they can be.

The idea of credentialling is extremely evident in this next photo from Matilde, a young South American migrant who has lived in Ireland for two years. Matilde currently works in a creche but would prefer to work as a primary teacher. Matilde has had significant problems in navigating the bureaucracy involved in finding out how she might re-train as a primary teacher in Ireland. Matilde felt at every step of the way of her exploring her options, her perceived ‘deficits’ were highlighted by the system. As a result, she wanted to use her photo to mitigate against this and affirm her self-worth as an educator.

Figure 9 Photo 1 by Matilde



Matilde explains how she constructed her photo:

- The watering can is to water the plant and acts as a metaphor of how she would like to help the children in her future class grow, ‘and how they will grow with the right support’

- The books are to reflect the knowledge you need as a teacher ('as a teacher, you never stop learning') and the computer shows how you 'have to be flexible with learning, like the recent online experience'.
- The football represents teamwork and cooperation, as well as the significance of fun for children's development, 'let them play'.
- The colouring pages and pencils to reflect her own creativity.
- The previous diplomas, CPD certs and references evidence her professionalism.
- The journal is to show how organised she is.
- The jigsaw puzzle to represent importance of curiosity and problem-solving in the classroom.
- Finally in the middle of the photo is a drawing done by a child in her creche, because in Matilde's view, in education, the 'child should be at the heart of everything'.

In spite of her talents and instincts, Matilde has not been afforded legitimacy in an education context and has been denied opportunities to act on upon her existing talents and expertise. However, it is clear that Matilde demonstrates authority in her understanding of child development, psychology, and pedagogical approaches. She emphasises reasoning and judgement in the priority she affords to the importance of play and creativity. And even merely through the staging of her photo, Matilde has demonstrated insight into teaching through her representation of pedagogical content knowledge and professional development. This first stock story reveals great insights into the motivations and aspirations of the participants in this study, and findings illustrate a strong connection to the profession of teaching.

Stock Story 2: 'A teacher in Ireland looks a certain way'.

In Chapter 1, stark statistics about the lack of diversity in the teaching profession in Ireland were presented, outlining how as much as 99.7% of student teachers identify as both white and Irish (Keane & Heinz, 2016). Invariably, there can then be default expectations about how teachers in Ireland are viewed and perceived. This stock story looks at the theme of cultural self-portrayal and provides us with an opportunity to understand how the participants in this study conceive of their ethnic and racial identities. Storytelling can powerfully resist colour-blindness because it legitimizes epistemologies of a racially oppressive context (Khalifa et. al., 2013). Participants used their own stories to challenge the notion of what a teacher in Ireland is supposed to look like, by using their cameras to combat their hitherto invisibility (Luttrell, 2020) and centre their racialised identities in intentional

and compelling ways. This speaks to the primacy of their identities to their lived experience, an issue that is at the heart of the overall research question. The next photo here is by Bashirah, a Black-Irish Muslim university undergraduate student, who took this photo of her hands decorated with Henna on her way to an Eid party last summer.

Figure 10 Photo 1 by Bashirah



Bashirah shares the following description of her photo:

I felt like the picture was both my identities shown in such a simple way. I had my hands in the photo and obviously I'm Black, so I have darker hands. And the henna came out really, really, well on them. But then also the fact that I had my crescent moon and star ring on. I just felt it represented both the fact that I am Muslim and the fact that I am Black in such a simple way. Being Black and Muslim, it's a striking photo and it is maybe one of the most striking things about me! Most of the teachers that teach in Ireland are white. And most of them are Catholic or Christian as an identity, or they aren't religious at all. I am almost like a complete opposite of what teachers usually are.

Self-directed photography enables participants to decide how to represent their own worlds in their own voice and in this instance, Bashirah strategically foregrounds her 'fact of blackness' (Fanon, 2000) to relay a literally 'oppositional' take on what a teacher can look like. This photo asserts her physical presence in the debate about diversity in teaching and questions 'fixed truths' about what teachers in Ireland can look like (Joseph, 2020b, p. 12). hooks (2009) hypothesised that counter-storytelling should be understood as a political practice that creates 'new stories that challenge the status quo; ...give an alternative version of reality and can resonate with people who have been excluded from mainstream stories' (p.

113). Bashirah was eager to present just such an ‘alternative’ viewpoint through her photo narrative.

Damilola, a young Irish-Nigerian secondary school student, similarly chose an explicit signifier of her racial identity - a beautiful traditional Nigerian dress that she sometimes wears to family gatherings.

Figure 11 Photo 1 by Damilola



‘Grounded in the knowledge of self’ (Griffin, 2003, p. 209), Damilola regards her unique identity as a very positive attribute she can bring into her future teaching and as something she could use as a way of making cultural connections with the students in her class. She wants to convey how her roots and her background shape the person that she is today, and how she carries herself in life:

The reason I am the way the way I am, a lot of my personality comes from the fact that like, my parents are Nigerian. Because I love this, I love that. And I want you to know why I am the way I am (Damilola).

Liam, a young Traveller, who has recently finished school and lives in rural Ireland, takes a similar approach to Damilola in his first choice of photo – a traditional Traveller barrel top that he has in his garden as a way of representing his pride in his cultural identity:

Figure 12 Photo 1 by Liam



I took picture of the wagon because it's what sums up Traveller culture for me. The older generation they travelled every county in Ireland in one of those with 12 brothers or sisters and their mum and dad. My parents have that to show us, the life they had years ago on the side of the road, eating their dinner outside in a black pot. I am very proud of our unique culture.

Liam further uses this photo to mitigate against what he sees as the distinct lack of Traveller history and culture in the formal curriculum, because it 'was something I never saw when I was in school'. While neither Damilola nor Liam name it as such, it is evident the notion of culturally responsive pedagogy is high on their list of priorities of what it means to be a good teacher and something a minoritized teacher could excel at. Culturally responsive teaching is defined by Gay (2000), as teaching that uses 'the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them' (p. 29). Many participants shared the importance that culture plays in the learning process, and how it shapes the worldview of students. The participants felt that many of their own teachers lacked confidence to tackle racial issues in the classroom and that they tend to 'shy away from' difficult topics (Coretta).

hooks (2003) argues that teachers are often among the group most reluctant to acknowledge the extent to which 'white supremacist thinking informs every aspect of our culture, including the way we learn, the content of what we learn and the manner in which we are taught' (p. 25). The young people who participated in the research placed high value on a learning environment that honours and respects the unique cultural identities of their students, and they believe the real strength of a minoritized teacher would be the skills they would

bring to this area. When asked about the impact of a homogenous teaching force, Kutenda shared:

Generally speaking, I think it is a loss to the Irish society. It's a loss because I mean there's so much that you can gain from having a competent teacher who comes from a different society. It's a different dimension to how you teach, and how you see the world. Because I think what makes the next world... if it is perfect, it will be because of different views, it will not be perfect because we have dismantled other people's views and created one, it will be because of how we are able to integrate different dimensions or different perceptions (Kutenda).

Other school-going participants spoke animatedly about the lack of culturally responsive teaching evident in their school experience, and the surface level understanding some cultural majority teachers bring to pedagogy in this area. When asked about her teachers' efforts to infuse multiple perspectives into teaching and learning, Damilola shares:

They need to bring in more. Like what they have is a good start, but it's not enough. When they are doing Black History Month, you know, like Martin Luther King is not the only Black activist, guys! You need to broaden it out. Like no hate to him, but... there are so many more people that did stuff for Black people. There were other racial issues as well, not just in America.

Engagement with Black History Month is a relatively new phenomenon in Ireland, with very few of the participants saying their school participated in it. These observations of how Black History Month is celebrated in schools are borne out in the literature as well. Research has critiqued how Black History Month can reify or homogenise Black history, can often be quite US-centric, and is relegated to one month of the year instead of being something that is infused naturally throughout the curriculum (Bracey, 2016). CRT scholars point to further problems with such approaches in that historical events (e.g., slavery, school desegregation, the civil rights movement) are presented as long-ago, far-away problems that have been solved, while books that take up social issues (e.g. racism, prejudice, discrimination) are taught as examples of individual character flaws (Ladson-Billings, 2018). Doharty (2019) argues that the extent to which Black students experience racial micro-aggressions during lessons about Black History lessons, reveals wider institutional and ideological underpinnings that legitimate deficit understandings about Black people in school classrooms. While student engagement with culturally responsive pedagogy in a school setting was beyond the scope of this research, it was interesting nonetheless to see the response of the participants when they perceived teachers making efforts in this area. Pela, a young migrant living in Ireland for two years, remarked on the appreciation she has for when teachers make the effort to link content about Poland or draw upon her expertise in this area.

Even if I'm not listening in class and I hear Poland I'm like (makes gesture as if ears pricking up and laughs). In history the teacher is really nice. He asks me stuff. If we talk about a topic he's like do you know anything about the same thing in Poland? Or did something like that happen in Poland? I actually like it. Its like, 'oh my god, I'm important, someone is asking me a question'. So, yeah I like when we talk about Poland.

Connected to the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy is the idea already outlined in Chapter 2 of minoritized teachers acting as a role model or mentor and how they would be well-placed to display sensitivity to the cultural needs of their minoritized students (Young & Young, 2020; Warren, 2020; Haque & Elliott, 2016). This speaks directly to one of the sub-questions of this research, about how minoritized ethnic young people regard the profession of teaching.

It is often this exact aspiration that is a motivating factor for minoritized or Indigenous teacher candidates when deciding to pursue teacher education in the first place (Oloo & Kiramba, 2019; Brown, 2014, Santoro, 2007). Recent research in an Irish context revealed a desire among minoritized school students to see more ethnic diversity on their teaching staff (Rothen & McDaid, 2022). The findings of this research study tap into both these rationales when participants were asked why they would like to be part of a more diverse teaching force in the future.

I always wanted to be a teacher because I always wanted to help other people with work. Especially being a Traveller, with other Traveller children I want to show them that if I can do it, so can you. Help them with their work because I understand them. We have the same culture; we have the same ways of life... I want to show them they can be anything they want to be in life if they put their mind to it. Be a role model (Liam).

Well, anybody who is from a diverse background, who sees me as teacher will see that it's possible. That they're not outsiders. They can do just the same thing I could do. And for those who aren't from diverse backgrounds, they'll see that it's normal as well. And then by them seeing their teacher being foreign, maybe they won't bully their foreign colleagues (Calixto, a young person from a mixed heritage background).

A motivation to become the teacher she wished she had had during her time as a student, emerged very strongly for Christina, an Irish-Nigerian young woman during the PhotoVoice task. Her submission overleaf shows her holding a photograph of her younger self.

Figure 13 Photo 1 by Christina³²



The photo that she is holding was taken the month that she emigrated to Ireland from Nigeria at the age of 11. Christina has reflected on this time in her life extensively and has traced back her desire to become a teacher to this exact point.

When I think of the inspiration behind wanting to be a teacher and working with children, I realised that it started at that age. And I always reference that version of me, the child going through a transition. This was a time in my life when people made it known to me at every opportunity that I was different. I was needing a lot of tools and a lot of support and sort of... adult love. I kind of needed one to one support from an adult who would understand.

Devine (2005) highlights the significance of how teachers position themselves as white, sedentary, Irish middle-class professionals, 'resulting in feelings of affiliation and sensitivity to those who most appropriated this norm' (p. 64). Subsequently, Brown (2014) argues that students of colour need to see and interact with teachers that come from a similar background. Christina really wanted to draw upon this concept of visibility in her submission, both in terms of her past student identity and her future teacher identity. Taylor (1992) argues there is an urgent demand for the recognition of identity. He describes identity as being partly shaped by its recognition or its absence, or even its misrecognition by others.

....and so, a person can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being (1992, p. 75).

³² This photo, while not submitted in a blurred state, has been edited as such by the researcher, with Christina's consent.

None of the participants who attended school in Ireland had had a minoritized teacher during their time in primary or secondary school. Subsequently, two of the Black participants reported very strong emotional reactions when they first had a Black educator during their undergraduate degree, again highlighting the significance of representation and visibility. Christina shared how she went home and cried after seeing a Black lecturer in college for the first time because it was such a profound moment for her.

Because of the ‘Oh I really want to be a teacher’, because of my desire, growing up at maybe 11 or 12, I wanted to see a Black person. Not that I verbalised it. But I guess I would have really loved that. But moving on, I kind of just took it out of my mind that it wasn't a possibility, you know? So when I did go into a class, and there was a Black man in front of the board, and he started to talk... I wasn't prepared. And I just, I didn't know what to do it myself. So it's just like, yes, that was a shock.

Who gets to teach sends out compelling symbolic messages to members of the learning community about whose knowledge is valued and whose visibility matters. Bashirah's first encounter with a Black lecturer in university left a similarly strong impression on her.

That was an interesting experience! I don't know, it was one of those feelings, like you feel a little bit excited. And for them not to know that you're this excited about them is really, really interesting. So we had this lecturer... he was Nigerian as well. So, it was a really nice like, feeling like you know, and it's nice to know that they do like exist, and they do teach like other teachers as well, like their race has nothing to do with it. We were just buzzing to go into his class every single week.

Those participants who had completed their undergraduate degree spoke about university being a much more diverse place than their primary or secondary school experience. However, ITE courses tend to differ from other university courses in this regard (Keane & Heinz, 2016). Given the overwhelming white space of ITE in Ireland, it is perhaps unsurprising that some of the respondents have already reflected on what it might be like to be a student in this context in the future. On this point a submission from Ann, a young Traveller woman is presented.

Figure 14 Photo 2 by Ann



Ann says:

In my photo there's three coffee sachets and one tea sachet. They are all Bewley's. So they are all the same, but one is a little bit different. I kind of thought, they are Bewley's, so we're all people, we all might be students for example. But I'm kind of there in the middle, I think I've usually been the only Traveller in my class. So it's kind of like the odd one out.

Given the tiny numbers of minoritized students currently enrolled in ITE, combined with both the extent to which whiteness is embedded in the policies and practice of teacher education (Brown, 2014), and the negative experiences of Traveller students in third level (McDonagh & Fonseca, 2022), it is perhaps unsurprising that Ann could envision being 'the odd one out' in an ITE setting where most people look a similar way. This fear is compounded by the unambiguous statistics about Traveller attainment and experience in formal education settings which have already been outlined in Chapter 2³³, in that young Travellers have a substantially higher risk of dropping out of education early and face severe difficulty in labour market entry (Watson et al., 2017).

CRT views the school curriculum as a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a white supremacist master script (Ladson-Billings, 1998). This script privileges certain voices and certain cultural banks of knowledge over others. For both Ann and Liam, this

³³ In terms of attainment, only 8% of Travellers complete the Leaving Certificate in comparison to 73% of non-Travellers and only 1% of Travellers have a college degree (Watson et al., 2017). Recent data around third level participation by Travellers reveals there are currently just 61 Travellers enrolled in higher education (DHFE, 2022).

played out in terms of the lack of visibility of Traveller culture, values, traditions, and history in the formal curriculum³⁴, which they both mentioned during their interviews. The invisibility of Traveller contributions to Irish culture and history in the curriculum and the often problematic content of what is there (Bryan, 2007), contributes to the isolation and exclusion experienced by Travellers (Boyle et al., 2018; Quinlan, 2021). This isolation is creatively captured in Ann's photo.

Invisibility also happens when one does not see people because one 'knows' them through some fabricated preconception of group formation (Goldberg, 2002). In this case, the lack of diversity in the primary teaching profession (re)-produces a specific form of invisibility whereby minoritized pupils exist only through the representational practices of inclusion/ exclusion. Taylor uses the analogy of feminists who have argued that women in patriarchal societies have been induced to adopt a depreciatory image of themselves and have internalised a picture of their own inferiority to the extent they are 'condemned to suffer the pain of low self-esteem' (1992, p. 75). Without feeling a connection to the teaching staff, the institutional structures, the curriculum, or the teaching materials, i.e. like Ann feeling like the 'odd one out', it could be very easy for minoritized students to feel the impact of this kind of invisibility. While it could be argued that this is over-simplistic, it is important not to underestimate the extent to which minoritized students sometimes dissociate and internalise their identity (Derrington, 2007) when they do not 'see' themselves in the visible structures of the school.

The photos introduced so far in this chapter presented participants with an opportunity for 'countervisuality' (Luttrell, 2020), in that they used their submissions to provide alternatives to the dominant story of what a teacher in Ireland and to further highlight the potential contributions minoritized teachers could make to Irish education. But another layer to these counter-stories also emerged during the analysis. It is interesting to note that while so many of the participants profiled their ethnic identity for the question about what would make them a good teacher, there was a marked duality to the photos in that many participants offered similar identity photos for the second question about what they felt some of the challenges might be on their journey to becoming a teacher. This research study is concerned with the complexity of barriers which exist for those interested in entering the teaching

³⁴ In a positive development, the NCCA (2020) have recently completed an audit into representation of Traveller history and culture in the formal curriculum and have produced a report outlining scope for integration within the new curriculum (NCCA, 2023b). Moreover, the Traveller History and Culture Bill (2018) is currently before Dáil Éireann at the third stage.

profession. It is noteworthy that while being proud of their ethnic identity, and acknowledging the value that this would bring to the teaching profession, participants also recognised that ‘not looking the same as other teachers’ (Melodi) could have an adverse effect on their future prospects as well.

For Damilola’s second shot, she chose this close-up of her braids, as she says she cannot help but feel that her hair might be a source of discrimination if she were to work in a primary school in the future.

Figure 15 Photo 2 by Damilola



Because say you’re like in primary school or like secondary school, and you’re writing notes, and you’re looking at the board, and your teacher is there with her blonde hair in a ponytail or a man, he has it trimmed nice. But then I feel like people would be a bit... to look up and see a man with dreads or something, or to look up and see a woman with blue braids... and be surprised.... And I feel like it just needs to be like normalized (Damilola).

As a young Black secondary school student, with an interest in primary teaching, Damilola finds it hard to envision a scenario where a teacher with similar hair to her might be in a classroom, because she has never seen it before and therefore has no point of reference for it. Coretta, another young Black-Irish secondary school student also weighed in on the prevalence of hair discrimination and how it can be surveilled and policed in a school setting:

So there's just like misconceptions or whatever. I don't know who started this, but like if you have like natural hair that it's like ‘unkempt’, even though like that's just how my hair looks. It's not that it's unkempt, it's what it looks like (Coretta).

Damilola goes on to share that when she thinks about potentially being the only Black teacher in a staffroom, she can envision regular questioning about her hair, not to mention her accent,

her language, her lunch, all manner of things, which she has already experienced microaggressions about as a secondary school student.

You get to the staff room, and it's all the 'good morning' and the side looks, and the side eyes. And you sit by yourself, and you can tell that they're all talking about you or asking you those stupid condescending questions like 'Oh, do you eat this where you're from?' Just shut up, like oh my god! (Damilola).

The desire not to have to endure questioning about her hair was also evident in Christina's inputs, and she described herself as feeling 'resentful to white people' when it did happen, and that it was 'exhausting' to be constantly subjected to commentary about her hair.

Marom (2018) maintains that since teachers are public figures, they are often prompted about things like dress code and other general responsibilities in their front-facing role, but she reminds us that what is considered professional, is not neutral. And Brown (2014) goes as far as to say that these standards are defined by whiteness. Coretta and Damilola, are already keenly aware of these potential future requirements for 'fitting in' as teachers and have reflected on what it means for them at this moment in time, not to mention what it may mean for how they may carry themselves in their future careers.

Liam does a similar flip to Damilola with his second photo relating to the challenges that he might encounter as a young Traveller pursuing primary teaching. Highlighting the significance of the current well-being crisis for Traveller men as a potential barrier to the profession, Liam chose to take a photo of a family horse because of the comfort that horses give to men struggling with their mental health. He says Traveller men find them 'very therapeutic'.

Figure 16 Photo 2 by Liam



I see this photo connected to the issue of teaching because some Travellers when they went to school, teachers put them in the back of class with a colouring book. They drilled it into their brain that they are not good enough and that would never amount to anything. That they would never chase their dreams. Travellers take that as a given, they hear it so much. When people know you are a Traveller they know you are never going to amount to anything. Mental health is a huge issue in the Travelling community.

It is clear that constructing and negotiating teacher identity is already on the minds of these prospective young teachers, and the dichotomies they create through their photos is very striking. Santoro (2013) contends that teachers become who they are by ‘taking up subject positions made available to them and by being positioned within the range of discourses to which they have membership’ (p.4). The counter-stories challenging this second stock story are very significant. By the nature of how the system works, we do not know who is not applying to teacher education. We only know the demographics of those that have applied and or have been successful in gaining a place. As a result, these counter-stories shed light on some of these forgotten potential candidates, and on some of the barriers which contribute to them feeling reticent about applying in the first place.

Stock Story 3: ‘The Irish language is the main barrier’.

While Irish language competency is certainly a barrier for some prospective applicants to ITE, there are many layers and intricacies to this issue. And while it can be tempting to believe that Irish language requirements for ITE³⁵ are to ‘blame’ for the lack of diversity in primary teaching, the assumption of this issue as the predominant barrier is largely unproven in the existing literature. Hyland (2012) acknowledges that the teaching profession in Ireland is less culturally and ethnically diverse than in other OECD countries and points to religious traditions and Irish-language requirements as the reason. The Migrant Integration Strategy also indicates that the current lack of migrant representation in teaching is down to Irish language entry criteria to ITE (2017, p. 40). But no evidence is provided for these sweeping claims. There has been some small-scale research done on the experience of learning Irish as a minoritized student (O’Sullivan et al., 2019), and on the ‘unfairness’ of Irish language requirements for ethnic minority people already qualified as teachers in their country of origin (Machowska-Kosiack & Barry, 2022). Writing in a historical context,

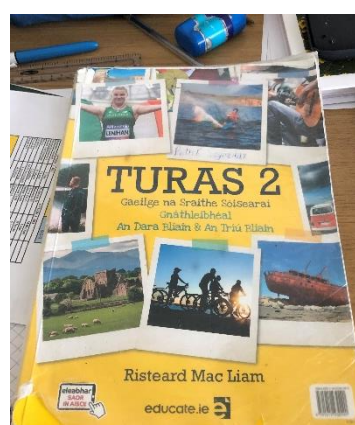
³⁵ Since 2017, candidates applying to initial teacher education programmes require a H4 in Leaving Certificate Irish. For the professional masters in primary education programme, applicants are required to achieve 65% in the Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (TEG) oral exam.

McDaid and Walsh (2016) argue that the requirement³⁶ for competency in the Irish language was often employed as a ‘sieve through which only desired teachers may pass’ (p. 154).

However there is no research in the Irish context which specifically targets the reality of Irish language requirements on the motivations of prospective minoritized applicants to ITE. This study contributes some nuance in this regard.

For prospective applicants to ITE who can meet all other entry requirements apart from the Irish language criteria, consequently Irish language competency becomes a default stumbling block at that juncture. The two photos below illustrate how this was the case for both Mampeela, a migrant living in Ireland, and María, a young woman from a mixed heritage background.

Figure 17 Photo 2 by Mampeela & Photo 2 by María



While both women were initially interested in pursuing primary teaching, the fact that they had not studied Irish in school meant they felt it would take them too long to attain the necessary standard for entry into ITE.

Mampeela describes her photo:

This is a picture of an Irish dictionary. It is sticking out amidst the other books just like the Irish language sticks out for you if you are a teacher of a migrant background and will be seen as the first barrier. I wanted to show that something so small, visually, could represent a large problem facing so many people.

³⁶ While most primary schools (92%) (DES, 2022) in Ireland are English-medium schools (DES, 2019), Irish is a compulsory subject and is taught by the class teacher. Furthermore, student teachers are expected not only to be able to teach Irish as a subject in the primary school curriculum, but also to be sufficiently competent ‘to teach the range of primary school curricular subjects through the medium of Irish’ (DES, 2000), with curriculum, content and language integrated learning (CLIL) the preferred policy approach at primary level (NCCA, 2019).

María makes it known that this too is a central issue for her:

Well, the book is just kind of sitting there on my brother's desk. I just took a picture of it for that question about what stopped me from being a primary teacher. I suppose Irish is the main thing... If Irish wasn't something you needed, I would have definitely done primary teaching, but I always struggled with Irish.

Both of these photos clearly point to the Irish language being a significant, if not the sole, barrier for both Mampeela and María, and as a result they have now chosen to pursue other careers in early childhood education and secondary teaching respectively.

Despite this, Mampeela and María, were very positive about learning the Irish language in keeping with existing observations that many young migrants do not tend to demonstrate the same 'hang ups' about learning the language that many native Irish young people have (MacGréal & Rhatigan, 2009). All of the participants in this study spoke multiple languages, the minimum any of them spoke was three, and two participants spoke seven different languages each³⁷. For the respondents who had not studied Irish in school, the prospect of learning another language was not necessarily the issue, in fact, all respondents expressed an active interest in learning it, were such opportunities free and accessible to them.

I think I would like to try. I know it is really hard. My friends say it is hard. They learn Irish their whole life and they still don't know it! So I know it is really hard, but I would really like to try (Pela).

However, what many of the participants instead chose to discuss was the lack of social, economic, or cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) they had for acquiring Irish language competence in the first place or raising the standard of the Irish they already had to the required level. Some of the issues discussed included the lack of clear information available about exactly what competency was required at either the ITE entry or exit stage, the lack of accessible knowledge about where to find additional supports, and the lack of opportunities available to them that did not cost money. This echoes the experiences of internationally educated teachers in Schmidt and McDaid's (2015) study, whereby respondents invested tremendous time and personal resources to access appropriate and high quality private classes to learn Irish. Matilde represents this barrier very clearly in her second photo through a visual representation of some of the stumbling blocks to being a teacher.

³⁷ Please see Appendix A for further profiling information about the participants, including language proficiencies.

Figure 18 Photo 2 by Matilde



You need Irish to be a primary teacher. The piggy bank represents that it is very expensive to study Irish because you have to pay to learn it (Matilde).

The financial implications of learning Irish were commented on in interview as well:

A lot of the time people that come from other countries, then their parents may not have the best jobs. And so it's harder, like, even just for grinds and stuff like that, like, they may not have the money for that, because I know, it wasn't really an option for me growing up to do the grinds in Irish. (Maria).

It's actually scary like. Like we go to a public school... and even after all your studying and everything, it actually depends on how much money you have like, grinds, everything... And some people may not be able to afford this, like we don't have the same chances as everybody else (Promise).

This idea of the 'same chance' as everybody else is very significant in a CRT context, which theorizes that race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in educational systems. For the participants who had studied Irish during their formal education, this resulted in feelings of internalised inferiority that had a further knock-on effect on their confidence levels when learning Irish. Despite their plurilingualism, their positive attitude to language learning and their obvious language learning capabilities, negative experiences of learning Irish in school were common themes in the interviews.

Like in senior infants, I just gave up and accepted the fact that I'm never going to speak it. It was like a belief I inherited straightaway. So then I just never even tried. If I did try, I'd be way below the level of other people. So it was just a constant, you know, constant reminder that I wasn't good enough to do it (Calixto).

This echoes other small-scale research carried out with minoritized pre-service teacher candidates learning Irish in preparation for ITE. Many students in O'Sullivan et al.'s research (2019), similarly regarded themselves as 'bad' or 'incapable' at Irish at the start of their engagement with it. But their passion for the language was developed through an experiential

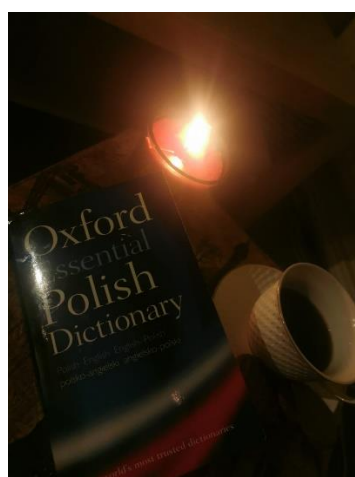
and communicative approach that focused on Irish as a living, vibrant and relevant language (O’Sullivan et al., 2019) through trips to the Gaeltacht and an emphasis on oral language development. In this vein, it is less about the existence of Irish as a specific criterion which acts as a barrier, and more about the types of approaches to the teaching and learning of Irish that young people are experiencing as a student.

Katya, a young Ukrainian-Irish secondary student who speaks five languages, really struggled to put her finger on why Irish was more challenging for her to learn than the other languages she is fluent in.

I don't know. I actually don't know. I try and like my friends are telling me like, ‘why don't you like it? It's easy!’ and I'm like, well, it might be easy for you, but then it's not easy for me, you know, I don't know how my brain works. I don't know.... It's been one of my least favourite subjects in school. Just because... I don't know why... I just don't like the language at all. I have done German for three years. And I am more confident in German than I am in Irish... To be honest I think it could be the teaching.

There are additional compulsory ITE entry level requirements that relate to subjects other than Irish. Maths, as well as English are two other curricular subjects where certain levels of proficiency are needed to be a primary teacher (Teaching Council, 2020). And for prospective candidates for whom English is an additional language, this can also be an issue. Pela, a young Polish migrant studying for the Leaving Cert, spoke about her self-consciousness at her spoken English and whether she would ever be perceived as being good enough to be a teacher as a result. For her second photo in relation to potential barriers, she submitted a photo of a Polish-English dictionary on her bedside locker, because she often looks up words late at night of things she did not understand during the day.

Figure 19 Photo 2 by Pela



This photo shows a Polish-English dictionary on a table with a candle and a cup of coffee. I wanted it to look nice and set it up nicely and show off the dictionary in a fancy way! It represents language barrier. Like the first thing is that I don't do Irish. If I want to do primary I will have to do extra course. Another obvious barrier is that I don't speak English really fluent and perfect. It makes me stressed sometimes when I want to show my opinion and I don't know how to say.

Panaishé, an asylum seeker from an African country, also shared some of her concerns about her English language competency, more specifically her accent, and how she might be perceived as a teacher in Ireland as a result.

Can I be honest? There are some people who are Irish when it's English they are speaking, but with the pronunciation you might like, miss what they're trying to say. And I feel like probably they're speaking faster. So that there can be a language barrier in the sense that I'm gonna choose to probably... Can I say then accents? How I pronounce things as well. And yeah, you can imagine if you are in a class, what will happen? It means if I'm going there every day, the learner lives without gaining knowledge if they don't understand me. Even me, I live in that class, not knowing what the learner is trying to say if I don't understand them.

Language, and related linguistic factors, can certainly reinforce power dynamics in education settings. As with other identity markers such as ethnicity or socio-economic status or gender, language is a key component in the production of inequality and the stratified reproduction of knowledge (Kubota & Lin 2009). Panaishé goes on to explore how she believes that her plurilingualism is something that is often regarded as a deficit in an education context, rather than something that could potentially add value in a classroom setting. She does this through her PhotoVoice contribution, of her and some of her friends profiling some of the multiple languages they speak, in an additive, rather than deficit way.

Figure 20 Photo 2 by Panaishé



Finally then, some photos which may not on first glance be about language, ended up coming back to this issue as well. This next photo from Bashirah, was taken of a random street during a recent family holiday in Lagos, in order to capture the busyness, as well as the calmness of Lagos, which she regards as her second home.

Figure 21 Photo 2 by Bashirah



I definitely wanted it to be that people, and especially Black people, should know that it is possible to be a teacher and to be Nigerian. And that it is possible for a Black person to become fluent in Irish and that it is possible for them to learn it. And it shouldn't be a barrier to anyone. But I can see how it might be, just because we didn't have parents who were fluent or able to pass on the language and practice with us.

This is the point that participants spoke much more at length about, the perceived lack of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) they had as a result of not having parents or family members who speak the Irish language. They felt at a disadvantage navigating the system because they did not have the additional support for enhancing their Irish at home, or help with homework for example, as their parents had not gone through the Irish educational system.

I would have loved to know Irish. But Travellers don't know the Irish language to be honest. My parents didn't grow up talking Irish, they had no clue whatsoever. So I had no help with my homework and stuff. So I had to get exempt (Liam).

María had a very similar take on this topic:

Like my family, obviously, don't speak Irish, like my mom and dad and us are all immigrants from Chile, so they came here barely speaking English. So having their children do Irish in school, it's a lot different from Irish-born children, because they would have their parents to help them and stuff. But just even if like their parents weren't that good at Irish, they would recognise a lot of the words. So just, it's a lot harder, I think, for immigrants, or children of immigrants to learn Irish.

Rolón-Dow (2011) argues that a particularly useful application of counter-stories in education is to capture narratives that run counter to prevailing stock stories that advance ideas of racial neutrality, merit-based systems, and equal opportunity. Participants certainly

captured this point when it came to exposing the discrepancy of supports and information that are available to minoritized students in this area. Counter-stories are therefore important in working against mainstream discourses that typically obscure the experiences of students of colour and make white privilege seem natural and normal in everyday life (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) and this study affirms the fact that Irish language requirements, and wider linguistic concerns are very much a part of this debate about diversifying the teaching population in Ireland.

Stock Story 4: ‘Their families don’t want them to be teachers’.

Another stock story that is often propagated relates to misconceptions about the level of support that some minoritized young people may have from their family when it comes to choosing teaching as a future career. There can be stereotypical and anecdotal views within education communities that certain migrant communities do not regard teaching as high status for example, or similarly unsubstantiated viewpoints about how Traveller families do not value formal education.

Identity is a narrative of the self, it is the story we tell about the self in order to know who we are (Hall, 1996). It also refers to the story we tell to claim and reveal who we are, and as such can be thought of as a useful resource (Hall 2010). Many of the participants shared much about who they are and how their families have shaped their identities, values, and outlooks. Indeed there were many narratives which rejected this stock story of lack of familial support, with participants reporting that if anything, it is the care and pride of their families that motivate them to pursue their dream of teaching, often in the face of great adversity and challenges.

The first photo below comes from Ann, a young Traveller woman who included a photo of her parents’ hands, with their wedding rings visible, as a way of paying tribute to them.

Figure 22 Photo 1 by Ann



I want to make my parents proud. They've instilled a good hard work ethic in me. And I want to follow it on. They never finished school, they never did their Junior Cert so I would like to follow on and not just do the Junior or Leaving but finish college as well. They've given me a lot of support. Dad drove me up to open days and opportunities. Ma drops me up to the bus every morning. They've helped me with bits of money when I was really stuck and waiting on the grant. They helped me out when they could.

Ann spoke at length about the support that she gets from her parents by virtue of who they are as people, and how through their approach, their values, and their capabilities, they have modelled for her the type of teacher she would like to become in her 'narrative of self'.

My father is very hard-working. When he worked, he always had my brother with him, things like that, he'd be a really good person to do an apprenticeship with, he's a good mentor. He is very good at giving instructions and can kind of break things down in a very simple way. My Ma is very empathetic and she's very helpful. I would like to bring that support and guidance into my teaching (Ann).

Liam also shared how grateful he was to his parents who supported him through a stressful Leaving Certificate process.

I was the first one in my family to do it. And no one really understood how important the Leaving Cert was because they weren't taught it. But my mother always kept me in school and told me to stick my head down... They are very supportive. They just want me to do something that they could never do when they were my age.

The support evident from Liam and Ann's parents is by no means an anomalous counter-story. Recent research into the experience of Traveller parents reports high levels of aspiration for formal education, with parents desiring a good education for their children and wanting to do whatever necessary to support them to achieve that (Quinlan, 2021; Madden, 2021). These felt 'isolated' and 'overlooked' in school themselves and as a result were passionate about wanting something different for their children (Quinlan, 2021). So while the

anecdotal discourse in education may revolve around Traveller lack of engagement with formal education, there is compelling narrative evidence which challenges this in an Irish context. When given the space and opportunity, marginalised groups can often express their stories in their own words and the views expressed are usually different to dominant discourse (Joseph, 2020b).

Counter-storytelling is ‘a means of exposing and critiquing normalised dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes hence giving voice to marginalised groups’ (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004, p. 27). Delgado (1989) believes that for ‘outgroups’, i.e. those whose lived experiences have been marginalized, counter-stories create ‘cohesion, shared understandings, and meanings’ (p. 2412). Subordinated groups have always told stories - they are seen as a way of survival and liberation (D’Arcy, 2016). Stories provide the necessary context for understanding, feeling, and interpreting (Ladson-Billings, 1998) and centre instead the autobiographical narratives of marginalised groups. Coming from a migrant background and having migrant parents, for example, was a big part of the autobiographical experiences for the girls who participated in the focus group. It is through stories that ‘we learn about the world, passed down from generation to generation through the family and cultural groups to which we belong’ (Bell, 2010, p. 16). Their family’s heritage background was profiled quite a lot in both the discussions as well as the photo task, as evidenced by this simple, yet evocative image from Coretta of her mother.

Figure 23 Photo 2 by Coretta



Many participants spoke about the value that their migrant parents ascribe to formal education, how they have worked so hard to sacrifice a lot for their family and how in turn they want to make them proud. While some participants relayed that their parents had

concerns about them going into the ‘white space’ (Brown, 2014) of teacher education, ultimately they all shared how they just want them to pursue something that makes them happy.

Bashirah shares how her parents view her teaching aspirations:

I'm hoping to go into the (professional masters) next year as well. And like, that's something that they want me to do for sure. And yeah, it's great seeing them tell their friends, you know, my daughter wants to be a teacher. Because not a lot of Black people, well barely any anyway want to be teachers. So it's something huge for them.

While it is true that the status of teaching varies from country to country, the findings from the research indicate that this is not necessarily a deciding factor for minoritized young people when deciding on teaching as their chosen career. Some of the participants from African diaspora backgrounds shared the experience of teachers in their countries of origin.

Lately, I would say it is has been difficult in South Africa because so many graduates are not employed. Basically when I see ads all the time, newspaper articles all the time saying there is a shortage of jobs and there are so many looking for work (Mampeela).

Of late now, it has been reduced to nothing. If I can tell you that a teacher in Zimbabwe, with a degree, now earns the equivalent of maybe 40 euros a month. So with that kind of environment, teachers are now regarded as a as nobody, yet they are really changing people's lives. But they are not well taken care of. Pay is very low (Panaishé).

Counter-stories are deliberate, and purposeful. Typically, it is people who are in positions of power that get to tell the stories, but the counter-story is necessarily and strategically positioned outside of this. In this sense, stories can form a collective. Strength and empowerment can result in a way that is more than if it was just individuals. Stories embody empowerment in this sense, the empowerment of knowing who we are and where we come from.

Countering cultural de-valuation

Despite its use in communicating views rarely evidenced in educational research, Joseph (2019) argues that an inherent weakness in storytelling is the fact that stories are socially constructed. These constructions can therefore mean that it is sometimes limited versions of reality or lived experiences that are presented. Nonetheless, even bearing this in mind, the literature in favour of counter-stories is very compelling. One such point which directly challenges the social construction critique is the way that counter-stories can mitigate cultural de-valuation and deficit views that minoritized groups may internalise about

themselves. A factor contributing to the demoralization of marginalized groups is self-condemnation (Delgado, 1989). Participants in this study regularly viewed themselves in deficit terms – in relation to their linguistic ability, their cultural heritage, or their skin colour. They have shared numerous stories about feeling ‘less than’, or ‘not good enough’ in a wider education context, more of which will be shared in Chapter 6. This was a regular theme that emerged in Kutenda’s interview:

I think that this is the one thing about Black people, you have always got to prove yourself. I think that's the one thing that...and you have to shine above the rest. Because there's always a stereotype about us that we are inadequate or incompetent... So, you cannot be average, you definitely have to do a lot better than everyone else.

Stock stories, by their nature can reify or essentialise entire groups. Montecinos (1995) instead chooses to describe these as majoritarian stories which fulfil the role of a master narrative – i.e. how the dominant cultural group may create and maintain systems, institutions and knowledge that perpetuate their hierarchical position. The majority culture scripts these stories ‘with the conviction that they are not stories at all, but the truth’ (Delgado, 1993, p. 670). A master narrative will disregard the cultural complexities of lived experiences. It will engender not only stereotyping but also result in representations in which fellow members of a group represented cannot even recognise themselves (D’Arcy, 2016). Delgado believes that the cultural majority justify their privilege and power through the use of stock stories, and Ladson-Billings (1998) emphasises that this is precisely how oppression becomes rationalised, resulting in very little self-examination by the oppressor.

The use of a counter-story can potentially mitigate some of these problems in that they can result in reflection and encourage people to challenge themselves and their beliefs. and causes people to reflect and challenges themselves in terms of what they believe. Consequently, counter-storytelling can facilitate the building of a community among racially and linguistically disenfranchised groups by showing that they are not alone, and they can learn from the lived experiences of others (Wu, 2017). There is potential for healing as individuals find solace in hearing stories of others and find similarities between the stories they hear and their own situations (Delgado, 1989). Resistance stories ‘draw from a cultural/historical repository of narratives by and about people and groups who have challenged racism and injustice; stories that we can learn from and build on to challenge stock stories that we encounter today’ (Bell 2010, 61). Bell (1995) suggested that while people might not take heed of his arguments or theory, they were actually often likely to ‘suspend their beliefs, listen to the story, and then compare their views . . . with those

expressed in the story' (p. 902). So, while counter-stories may scaffold solidarity and create bonds among minoritized groups, they also have a way of presenting views about social reality in a way that may be more palatable to cultural majorities. Aldous Bergerson (2003) argues that white people may be more willing and more able to 'hear' the alternative perspectives as a result. Joseph (2020b) describes this as the 'voice of colour thesis', in that because of their history with experience with oppression, minoritized participants are in a position to communicate new understandings to white people that we would be unlikely to know otherwise. Delgado (1989) reminds us that members of the cultural majority should listen to all sorts of stories in order to enrich their own reality. Deliberately exposing oneself to counter-stories can 'enable the listener and the teller to build a world richer than either could make alone (Delgado, 1989, p. 2439).

Stories can therefore be culturally restorative and tangibly beneficial for minoritized groups. They can lessen feelings of inferiority and invisibility. In the context of this research, a common refrain from participants was their interest and gratitude in being provided with a platform to share their stories, with the younger respondents especially relaying that this was the first time anyone had asked them these questions, and the first opportunity they'd been given to share their interest in teaching.

Conclusion

At the heart of counter-storytelling is the idea of giving voice to the untold story. Stories have the potential to act as an important tool that challenge problematic stock stories or official narratives of events. It is important to remember that ultimately, humans are 'storying' beings who tell stories to make sense of their lived experiences and their place in the world. Telling stories, listening to stories, and seeing from different perspectives are essential to dig a little deeper and usurp majoritarian assumptions as to why certain things are the way they are. Up until now, no counter-stories of minoritized ethnic young people interested in primary teaching in Ireland have been documented in any meaningful way. Further stories arising from oppression and exclusion will now be presented in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6: Diversity in primary teaching: through the lens of injustice(s)

Introduction

The process of storytelling can be linked not only to identity-construction and concepts of empowerment, but also the process of healing (Bell, 2010). Tate (1997) explains that CRT scholars were partially drawn to storytelling because of the historical resonance of how ‘people of color have used storytelling to heal wounds caused by racial discrimination’ (1997, p. 221). Delgado (1989) suggests that ‘members of outgroups can use stories in two basic ways: first, as means of psychic self-preservation; and second, as means of lessening their own sub-ordination’ (1989, p. 2436). Stock stories that can be propagated in society can often diminish certain cultural banks of knowledge or misrepresent the knowledge contributions of marginalised communities. This chapter builds upon racialised experiences developed through the counter-stories in Chapter 5 and explores in more depth some of the racial injustices that the participants in this study are trying to ‘heal’ from. This chapter uses the final theory from the conceptual framework, that of epistemic injustice to introduce findings in relation to how these injustices have epistemically discredited participants to the point where some of them have given up on their teaching dream. The findings in this chapter expose the participants’ negative experiences of teaching and learning as well as racism(s) as a ‘permanent fixture’ (Bell, 1992) in their lives. Findings are categorised under headings of epistemic injustice, hermeneutical injustice, and testimonial injustice.

Epistemic injustice

As outlined in the conceptual framework, the theory of epistemic injustice refers to ‘a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower’ (Fricker 2007, p. 1). This section explores the consequences of when such stories are ignored, misrepresented, or invalidated. Epistemic injustice can manifest itself in an education context when racial inequalities influence knowledge production and consumption (Kubota, 2020), as evidenced in Chapter 5 in the examination of what is both present in, and absent from, the primary school curriculum. The participants have gone further than this in their personal reflections and analysis and have shared multiple incidents of when their sense of self and experiential knowledge were discredited in education situations and how schools became places of silencing and isolation. The ‘distinctive class of wrongs’ (Fricker, 2007) that were endured in learning settings emerged as a common theme in the data and these stories ran the gamut of exclusion, marginalisation, invalidation, and cruelty.

In primary school, especially in my class, for a few years I was the only Black person. And I remember when I started Junior Infants.... like nobody wanted to talk to me. And I was actually so sad. And then for like, a whole year I had to eat lunch with one of the teachers, because I had no friends outside (Promise).

I didn't have like, other students that were like, racist to me. It was just teachers. For me, it was always teachers. It was always the teachers that were fricking racist, it was so confusing (Damilola).

Participants directly connected these adverse experiences of schooling to why they feel there are so few minoritized teachers as part of the profession in Ireland. They have identified that experiences of literal and symbolic incidents of exclusion means that in spite of being drawn to the profession of teaching, the participants have reflected deeply on how returning to a school environment may affect them. Calixto attributes these negative experiences as why a lot of minoritized young people may lack self-belief and self-efficacy to pursue an ITE programme:

They do not believe they are good enough. They don't believe they could. The emotional toll of taking on that journey, never mind the fact that number one, getting there would be something. But then even going to college to try and get there, they're not going to really be around diversity, it's going to be all the same kind of person who they might have had trouble with when they were children (Calixto).

This idea of having had problems with students in schools and this having a formative effect on minoritized young people was elaborated on by Melodi as well:

I think people that aren't white would be scared to be teachers in a way, because of the students. Because a lot of the students, like their parents might not like Black people, and so because of their parents they might think, 'oh no, Black people'. And then there are a lot of white kids who do bully Black kids, so they are obviously going to end up bullying a teacher as well (Melodi).

Ann maintains that in the context of the Traveller educational attainment, this sense of self-efficacy is further compounded by intergenerational negative experiences of school:

Well because they had a very hard time in school. They didn't like school. Because they didn't like their teachers... I know the Traveller only classes are done away with now, so that's not really a factor now. But their parents might have had it, or their Grandparents were in the Traveller classes and things like that (Ann).

As a result, the participants did not always view school as a 'safe space', and they believed the negative experiences they had as a student would inevitably be brought into their future professional working life. This can have impact on their professional identity development as Horsthemke (2014) contends that in white patriarchal societies, these 'epistemic humiliations' (p. 518) carry the power to destroy a would-be knower's confidence

to engage in the trustful conversations that characterise well-functioning epistemic communities

Kutenda has also reflected on this issue of confidence:

And also teaching is a job where you've got to stand in front of people. What those people think about you is very important in terms of how you teach... They've probably had negative experiences. Probably, they know that no one would listen... If you have never seen a Black person address white people, and then you find one. I think the first time you see it; you'll be mesmerized. How does he do it? So, they themselves don't have the courage and the confidence to say... I can actually be able to do this, you know?

While he doesn't name it directly here, Kutenda's use of language conjures up notions of superiority and inferiority that are undoubtedly linked to racism. Experiencing racism with such regularity can have a cumulative impact on how minoritized people view themselves, and the scope for self-actualisation. The psychological ramifications of racism have been introduced in the literature review and are well-documented in the literature (Essed, 1991; Fanning & Michael, 2017; Fanon, 2000). CRT shows how racism is a fundamental, enduring, relentless, central and a recurring feature of the lives of minoritized ethnic people. Pela has been told that 'Polish people are stealing our jobs', Katya has been told to 'go back to her country' and Liam and Ann have both been called the 'k word'. Both racism and epistemic injustice can dehumanise people (Fricker, 2007) as illustrated in this story from Damilola below.

During the summer, I was out with my cousins. And there was this little kid, may I add, this little white Irish kid. And she was like half my size, I'd say around 7 or 8. And she was like, 'Hey, I'm gonna throw these rocks and you are going to fetch them like my dog'. And I was like, 'Whaaaat?' I was like, 'we are not dogs'. And she was like, 'but yis are though'. And then I took my cousins away because they're young....I tried to make the whole situation so that my cousins wouldn't actually feel bad about it. But then they said that they experience racism, like, once a week. They were like, 'it doesn't surprise us anymore, it is what it is' (Damilola).

Incessant incidents of racism can leave people feeling mentally, physically and emotionally drained (Fleras, 2016; Haque & Elliot, 2016), its regularity in the lives of minoritized young people means it is constantly on their mind as they navigate new terrain. Bashirah has recently worked a substitute teacher in a local primary school; this forced extensive self-reflection for her about what it might mean to be the only Black teacher on the staff.

So that is something that I was worried about going in there and just because, you know, even in any school, just because are they used to being around Black people?

Can I actually be myself or do I have to be like, a watered-down version of me or a less ghetto version of me? (Bashirah).

This description of a ‘watered-down version’ of herself is very compelling. CRT scholars maintain that whiteness can often be regarded as the ‘norm’ or the neutral starting point for discussions about race in society. Even in a substitute teacher context Bashirah is aware how racism manifests in society and naturally privileges some groups, while simultaneously disadvantaging others. Epistemic racism is an aspect of systemic racism wherein the knowledge claims, ways of knowing and ‘knowers’ themselves are constructed as invalid, or less credible (Beagan et. al, 2022). Bashirah’s experience up until now of being invalidated in a school environment has impacted on her perceptions of self to the point she feels she would have to ‘water herself down’ in a white space such as a staffroom. Christina can also relate to this sense of internalised shame, and wonders whether her expertise could be discredited in a future career as a teacher.

Honestly, one thing I feel is that I wouldn’t be able to kind of speak in my accent, like my default accent. I know that sounds weird. But even when I’m in white spaces, I tend to change my accent. And I think that would have made me uncomfortable, you know, because I would feel like I’m being fake with the children... Like I had to just present in a way like I would have to emulate the other Irish teachers. I think there would always be a thing in my head (Christina).

Christina cannot help but feel she would have automatically done something wrong, simply by being her authentic self and speaking in her ‘default accent’, due to the commonly held perception of whiteness is the de facto starting point for an Irish teacher. In this sense she feels potentially undermined and is anticipating professional rejection on the basis of her accent.

Similar to accents or language, names are also something where notions of self-identity and conceptions of self are interlinked. Experiencing racial microaggressions based on their name was yet another way participants relentlessly shared examples of being invalidated by others. Kohli and Solórzano (2012) argue that for students of colour, a mispronunciation of their name is one of the many ways in which their cultural heritage is devalued and disrespected in a school setting. Pela identified how people laughing at her name or insisting on calling her the English-sounding version of her name has contributed to feeling a little bit alienated from her own identity.

At the beginning I was like ‘hmmm’ (*frustrated sound*); it was kind of annoying, because it was like I had lost my actual name. And I wasn’t used to it. So if someone

was calling me by the English version, so by the English pronouncing version, I didn't like, recognise it was me. Coz I only knew the Polish version, you know what I mean? (Pela).

Despite being proud of their given names, in this study, a nominative disconnect also occurred when some participants found themselves in the unusual situation of having a different name in school to the one their families called them at home, with this self 're-naming' coming in part because of consistent problems they had had with people trying to say it properly.

That used to happen to me in primary school, on the roll, I used to have my full name, and some teacher would try and pronounce it, and some teachers would say 'yeah, I'm just gonna skip this'. So, when I got to secondary school, I told my Dad I didn't want my full name on the forms anymore, because I just didn't want to have to go through that again (Promise).

This study is concerned with generating further understanding about why more minoritized young people are not choosing teaching. Findings from the research clearly revealed that enduring these regular and subtle experiences with racism in an education context, had a lasting impact on the self-perceptions and worldviews of the participants (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). Names have deep cultural and familial connections for many, and how their name might impact their future teaching prospects was something that participants spoke at length about during the interviews and the focus groups. Ann's described her surname as giving her a sense of herself and the community to which she belongs. She spoke about her 'very obviously Traveller name' and whether this may even prevent her getting an interview for a teaching job in the future. Katya says her surname is 'just so long' and feels it will undoubtedly be an issue for her in the context of the student-teacher relationship:

We were actually having a conversation today how all of our teachers are white and Irish. And that, it's just crazy to think we personally don't know why. Like, if it's just because they don't want to be teachers, or they're again, like, just scared of like, you know, seeing their surname said wrong. That's for me personally, that's a big deal for me... It really puts me off teaching (Katya).

Given that names are linked to a sense of yourself, a fundamental part of your individuality, it is perhaps unsurprising that the epistemic wrongs done to them in the context of their identity and cultural knowledge, has had a tangible impact on how they view teachers and teaching.

Other microaggressions can also cut to the very core of your identity and humanity, with some participants describing how they were even delegitimised as a member of their

own ethnic community. Reminiscent of Kitching's (2010) examination of how education systems, media narratives and other frameworks of the state jointly construct a paternalistic narrative of 'good' and 'bad' migrants, Ann and Liam are regularly praised for what 'good' Travellers they are.

I have heard about how I don't look like a Traveller. That I don't look like one, I don't act like one, I don't dress like one...I mean, what does a Traveller look like? What do they dress like? What do they act like? If I don't act like one, what do they act like? (Ann).

This particular microaggression happens 'all the time' to Liam as well and he has a similar take on it to Ann.

They say to me 'it's very rare to see Travellers doing what you do - you're not like a Traveller' and stuff like that. To be honest, I don't really pass any heed in it. I don't know what a Traveller is, if you get me. I often get told I don't look like a Traveller. But like what does a Traveller look like? (Liam)

Epistemic injustice can also result in delegitimization when learners are homogenised and their distinct identity is not respected. Mampeela, who studied early childhood education, relayed a story of how she was mistaken for the only other Black woman in her class.

I remember one time, one lecturer was talking about inclusion and working with young people... and then he was meant to give me something - he forgets. There were two African women in my class, and he calls that African woman, and he gives her something that belongs to me, thinking that it was me! I was like 'we had just spoke about these things' (inclusion). And then the other lady, she just politely says 'that's not mine, that's Mampeela's'. And then came to give it to me and was like 'I'm sorry'. But I was like there are only two African women in the class, we even look different. Even our skin tones are different (Mampeela).

At the heart of Fricker's thesis of epistemic injustice is the right of citizens to contribute to knowledge and also have their knowledge contributions taken up fairly, becoming both receivers and givers of knowledge in hospitable situations of mutual esteem and trust (Walker & Boni, 2020). This is something that was denied to Mampeela in her capacity as a knower. In a knowledge context, participants further shared about the low academic expectations that teachers often had for them in school. When a teacher does not see their student as a capable learner, they then may become disadvantaged by the resulting reduced knowledge opportunities (Rubie-Davies, 2020).

With spelling, not to brag, but I'm very good with like writing, and I think it's always been that I'm great with spelling. I'm one of those people that are like 'hold up, why are you spelling that wrong?' (*laughs*). So whenever I would do things like that, they (*teachers*) would be like, 'oh, your English is very good, you write very well'. So they're, like, shocked. I quickly learned to just be like, 'yeah, I mean, we were

colonised by the English'. But it was a thing that I would notice. It was just a shock, you know? 'Wow, you can spell that?' Oh, you know, cause even till today, like people do say 'oh, you write very well', but they don't mean it as a compliment. More like 'how'?

Christina above shares her experiences as a 'receiver' of knowledge, while Matilde reveals the other side of the coin as a potential 'giver' of knowledge. Matilde was unusual among the research participants in that she was already in receipt of an educational qualification. In Latin America, there is a degree in early childhood education which qualifies one to teach children up until the age of five. However, with the different system here in Ireland, this has led to Matilde feeling her prior knowledge and experience is not valued and her professional identity has been invisibilised.

I work in a creche. I consider myself a teacher, but I have been talking to my colleagues and they tell me you are not considered a teacher here... I work in a creche, but I not fulfilled there. I am in a fight to become the teacher I know I am (Matilde).

In this instance, the epistemic wrong that Matilde experiences impacts the essence of her professional self. Giladi (2018) argues that the failure to properly afford somebody the epistemic respect they merit is an act of injustice because it deprives individuals of a progressive social environment in which the epistemic respect afforded to them plays a significant role in fostering their self-confidence as rational enquirers. Being both a giver and a receiver of knowledge is important for self-actualisation, which in this context can be illustrated in the way that so many of the participants have subsequently decided against teaching, because they just cannot see a clear pathway for themselves in the future. By adopting a passive or inactive approach to the lack of diversity in the teaching profession, we are curtailing the dreams and ambitions of minoritized ethnic young people in relation to how knowledge is facilitated, shared, and constructed. Their negative experiences in school impacted on their ability to give knowledge, but also to receive knowledge. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that Fricker now prefers the term 'discriminatory epistemic injustice' (2017, p. 53).

Hermeneutical injustice

CRT shines a light on the different layers of discrimination in society, and how it can be manifested at both individual and institutional levels (Gillborn, 2008). It encourages us to move past an understanding of racism as prejudice that happens at an inter-personal level, and instead acknowledge racism(s) as permeating through societal practices and structures (Bell & Roberts, 2010). The next type of injustice further illuminates this institutional piece

and reveals some of the deeper systemic inequalities that the participants have experienced in their pursuit of a teaching career. Victims of hermeneutical injustice are positioned in a less privileged position than those that have the collective resources or hermeneutical tools available to them to comprehend the situation at a more cognitive level (Fricker, 2007). People in positions of power maintain their power by keeping the less powerful in a state of oppression and subjection, thus reducing them to a position of powerlessness (Young, 2014). Hermeneutical injustice refers to the powerlessness one might feel when they are rendered helpless by the structures of society. Fricker (2007) has hypothesized hermeneutical injustice as occurring when ‘a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences’ (p.1).

Numerous narratives and testimonies so far have centred around personal and professional instances of racism and marginalisation. But crucially, the institutional piece was of equal concern to some participants, many of whom shared how stressful and frustrating it was trying to navigate the system as an outsider. Evidence of the existence of institutional racism in Irish education can be found in the way that that Irish/ majority culture young people have more advanced insider knowledge of the curriculum and educational structures (Kitching & Curtin, 2012). The exasperation of being outsider while trying to figure out how the system works, and how to access ITE was a common construct in the findings.

If you want to become a teacher, as a Black or Muslim person you've got to go out and find out and talk to people and figure it out yourself really. Yeah, there's not really anyone around you that can really tell you. You're just kind of like learning as you go (Bashirah).

Matilde is a member of a Facebook group of migrants interested in becoming a teacher in Ireland and confirms how this is a common complaint for others in this online community.

And they say, ‘oh my god, what is happening with this country?’ A lot of people are saying ‘I have a degree in this, this, this’... it seems like that for Ireland, it is not enough. And everybody is talking about the Irish. ‘Where do we do the course?’ ‘What is the exam?’ And they are always talking about these type of exams. And papers. And documents that you need to get translated. And laws. And that kind of things. If you want to work here you have to learn about how it works. It’s not clear how it works (Matilde).

Pela feels the same about how difficult it is as a minoritized person to understand all the various routes and pathways that might be open to her. She would like ‘a Polish person who knows everything and will just explain it to me!’ Oppression in this sense can be considered a structural concept (Young, 2014) in that repeated incidents of marginalization

and hermeneutical injustice can mean that the injustices are embedded into the system. (2020) has questioned whether structural biases perpetrate more harm, than individual localized epistemic injustices. This is because institutional, hermeneutical injustice occurs when a significant area of one's social experience is obscured from collective understanding due to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource (Dunne, 2020). Fricker (2007) conceptualizes hermeneutical injustice as a structural large-scale phenomenon that happens at the level of an entire culture and Kutenda's recent experience of trying to register with the Teaching Council is a good example of this. Kutenda hopes that a Teaching Council number will enable him to work as an unqualified substitute teacher in Irish schools but he points out that the bureaucratic burden placed on him does not respect his status as an asylum seeker. When asked about the most pressing barriers that exist for him, Kutenda identifies it as how much is involved in official requirements from the Teaching Council.

That's where the real problem is, because when I look at the myriad of things that they require, especially for an asylum seeker, it means eventually that I have to go back. It's almost like I have to contact people in Africa, where I ran away from to say, 'can you give me a reference for this?' I mean, it just makes me vulnerable again, because it means revisiting places of trauma, or contacting people that I don't trust and so on. And almost nobody can come here with all those things, then definitely it means you're actually not fleeing (Kutenda).

Experiencing this level of helplessness in turn leads victims to compound their oppression and they are unable to comprehend their experience in this context. When Kutenda speaks about 'going back' in this sense, it is a metaphor for having to revisit the distress he experienced in his country of origin. Both he and Panaishe, have identified how 'retraumatising' people is a fundamental tenet of the system of direct provision, as described in Chapter 1 (Arnold, 2012; Mbugua, 2010; Sheridan, 2022). Findings about the institutional barriers that exist to teaching for minoritized candidates were very evident in this study.

Yes, there has to be a way of figuring out whether people can teach or can't teach. But I don't think it has to be such a punishing system. It almost tries to work towards getting rid of people from actually teaching (Kutenda).

Kutenda perceives that the bureaucracy and the structures in place are designed to keep people out of teaching, rather than welcome them in. Panaishe also described the system as being set up to 'automatically block others' and it is something that Matilde has highlighted as well.

The website is not clear, it is so difficult. I will do some changes in the website so everyone can understand. I think if they want people to be included, they have to be more like... flexible. Or clear. Or trying to show me that you want to include me. Because it seems like they are hiding some information, and you have to find out,

maybe if you reach the information, you are the winner, you know what I mean? Like a treasure hunt! It is not easy (Matilde).

Certain social groups often face inequality in their hermeneutical participation (Fricker, 2007). When people are oppressed or dominated, they feel powerless to effect any change in their circumstances, which is a further feature of hermeneutical injustice. Most minoritized people in society lack significant power and control over decision-making in this sense and have to accept that significant decisions are made on their behalf by others. The powerless are those over whom power is exercised without their exercising it; and they must take orders but rarely have the right to give them (Young, 2014). In a hermeneutical sense, minoritized prospective teachers lack the status of other teaching professionals in Ireland, and they lack the authority and cognitive resources to change anything about the inaccessible system.

Much has been written in sociology about the role of the state in deciding who is deemed desirable in terms of access to Irish society. Lentin (2007), drawing upon Goldberg's theory of the racial state, concludes that the leading actor in creating anti-immigrant sentiment in Ireland has actually been the state itself. Goldberg's central thesis is that all modern nation states are 'racial states', which are defined in terms of their power to both include and exclude as a way of constructing homogeneity. He argues that governments have a vested interest in the creation of a homogenous group and that 'race is integral to the conceptual, philosophical and material emergence of modern nation state formation, and to its ongoing management' (Goldberg, 2002, p.17). Accordingly, institutional racism can be embedded in the structures of a system and is practiced through these processes in a routine way. In this instance, the complexity and inaccessibility of the education system has become normalised and accepted in the eyes of minoritized potential teacher candidates, to the extent that many internationally educated immigrant teachers, or indeed migrants interested in studying teaching, become frustrated and walk away from the system. This can be regarded as a hermeneutical injustice in that the 'intelligibility of communicators is unfairly constrained or undermined when their meaning-making capacities encounter unfair obstacles' (Medina, 2017b, p. 41) and represents the so called 'interpretative gap' referenced by Fricker (2007).

When asked about the system itself some participants were resigned to whether meaningful change would ever actually be possible.

I don't think it's fair. It's closed off. But it's kind of, I don't think it was set up that way, it's just the way it has always been. It's easier to keep going the way it's been than to turn around and say 'oh look we need to work at the changes' (Ann).

Annoyance with bureaucracy and being on the losing end of a hierarchical education system can lead to the repression of voice and have a big impact on self-worth within a hermeneutical context. Giladi (2018) argues that given how epistemic injustice can cause a victim to be alienated from their own rationality, there is compelling reason to think that non-recognition in this context amounts to discursive abuse and deprives them of the epistemic respect needed to 'enable and foster their self-confidence as rational enquirers (Giladi, 2018, p. 141).

Not being able to make sense of your situation and social experiences is a tenet of hermeneutical injustice. This was evidenced in many instances in the research when participants displayed strong emotional reactions to the lack of diversity in primary teaching and regularly reported feeling 'confused' (Calixto), 'frustrated' (Promise), 'resentful' (Christina), 'furious, very angry' (Matilde), about what they have experienced while considering this career option. It's hard to argue with Katya when she says: 'I've never seen like a Black teacher or like, a different race. And if you actually think about it, it's actually crazy' (Katya). Christina, who has subsequently decided it is unlikely she will ever pursue a job in primary teaching ('the dream died') shared how this realisation made her feel.

I'm just gonna be honest with you. For a long time, I was bitter. Like, I was really upset at Ireland (laughs). Yeah, I think it was something, I know it sounds dramatic, but that they took away from me. And when I left (*Offaly*) I just left feeling like, I had no choice, and I didn't belong. So even for the longest time, I never wanted to go home, you know (Christina).

Meaning making and meaning sharing are crucial aspects of a dignified human life (Medina, 2017b). Powerful emotional responses were part of the hermeneutical processes of the participants. This can be seen in how Melodi shares her response to the racist bullying she experienced by one boy in particular.

And then because he was kind of popular in a way, all the other boys would kind of like follow him as well. And I remember one day I was walking home, and it was like one of the worst days of my life. I was walking home after school and like, my gosh, I'm already crying (*offered a break and support*). I'm okay. I was walking home and two of them just started calling me like so many animal names. It was so bad. And I just hated it so much. Like, even up until today. Like it doesn't affect me too much, and then I start to think about his reasons behind it. What was it? Like, why? Why, you know? Calling you animal names, and making you feel less than everyone else (Melodi).

Melodi's inability to make sense of the motivations of her bully can be regarded as a lack of access to what Fricker (2016) terms as the 'shared pool' of hermeneutical resources. These are 'meanings that just about anyone can draw upon and expect those meanings to be understood across social space by just about anyone else' (Fricker, 2016, p. 163). The hermeneutical harm experienced by Melodi across repeated incidents have had a significant impact on her confidence and self-worth.

Notions of self-worth are also tied to issues of representation and role models, both of which have been discussed at length in previous sections. Giladi (2018) believes that wider discussions on epistemic injustice can be enriched by bringing recognition theory into the conversation, as social normative standards are constructed out of the moral grammar of recognition attributions. In a hermeneutical context, participants addressed the fact that they were denied the opportunity to see teachers who looked like them, and in turn their negative experiences may deny potentially future pupils from having them as their teacher. This can be viewed as a less extreme form of 'epistemic oppression' (Dotson, 2014) as it impacts on your ability to influence knowledge production. At its most serious it can even constitute 'epistemic death' (Medina, 2017a, p. 51), which in the context of this research captures the 'annihilation of self' (Dunne, 2020) whereby self-worth, voice, autonomy and agency can be seriously impacted.

I think for me it also about creating African role models. Most of the people in this (*direct provision*) centre are working as healthcare assistants, they work in the restaurants, or as security guards. There is nothing wrong with those jobs. They are very good jobs. But I think it also creates a sort of stereotype about us, that these are the jobs that we can actually do. And then we cannot become anything else (Kutenda).

Kutenda cuts to the heart of why this is an important point in the debate about diversifying teaching and the aims of this research study. When a minoritized person is not represented, or they are 'misrecognised', they are denied the status of a full partner in social interactions, 'as a consequence of institutionalised patterns of cultural value that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem' (Fraser, 2000, p. 113-114). This was such an issue for Promise when she was a child, that she actually believed that Black people must not be allowed to be a teacher in Ireland, as why else would it be possible that she had gone her whole life without seeing one or hearing about one.

When you only see white people as teachers, you don't think that you can be a teacher yourself. Like even when you're watching TV, and you only see white actors, you won't think that you could also be an actor (Promise).

The impact of hermeneutical injustice can have a detrimental effect on one's status within collective meaning-questioning, meaning-generating, and meaning-sharing practices (Dunne, 2020). This is definitely the case when it comes to understanding the role that racism and microaggressions play in their lived experience. The participants had a lot of interesting ways to describe this phenomenon of 'covert racism' (Marum, 2018).

Like, I would say like, we can't deny that it is there you know, there's passive racism there's 'racism on the sly' as I call it, you know, like they say things that you know, 'that's kind of racist' but like, it's not so for that you are able to pinpoint it as racist, if that makes sense, you know? (Bashirah).

In epistemic terms, hermeneutical injustice can lead to the radical suppression of one's voice, interpretative capacities, and critical faculties (Dunne, 2020). Epistemic oppression in this sense denies knowers the opportunity to contribute to knowledge, access the shared tools of social interpretation, not to mention develop the necessary tools to redress instances of injustice. As a result, this can impact on the credibility and authority that others attribute to a minoritized person's lived experience. This is relevant in the context of this research, as racist experiences in school and discriminatory institutional processes have damaged their self-worth and their ability to make sense of how they might be able to be a teacher in the future. To become credible knowers, these minoritized young people need to be afforded credibility and must have their knowledge accepted as being true and valid. This idea will be looked at now in greater depth.

Testimonial injustice

There are several components to testimonial injustice which will now be interpreted in this section, namely when testimony is not believed or given the credit it deserves, when knowers become silenced as a result, and when people in power dismiss the possibility that they might learn from others (Fricker, 2007). Consequently, testimonial injustice can be classified as instances where marginalised groups become further disenfranchised, dismissed, undermined, or diminished by others who enjoy more privileged epistemic positions in society. This can be very relevant in an education context for example, where learners often lack the epistemic credibility of their 'epistemically privileged counterparts' (Leblanc & Kinsella, 2016) and can be treated differently by those in authority. This section will present findings in relation to participants testimonies of racism and how they impact on their motivation to become a teacher. These testimonies link strongly with many of the cross-cutting themes in the conceptual framework for this study, namely voice, stories, racism as endemic and centring the experiences of the minoritized in this context.

Schools can be understood as major sites of socialisation that maintain existing societal hierarchal relationships of power and privilege (Apple, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 2018; Zeichner, 2006) and resultingly can be viewed as contributing to the lived experience of racial oppression for many minoritized students. This is relevant in the context of this debate as so many teachers are drawn from the majority culture and do not always have heightened awareness of how racism can manifest itself in a classroom context.

Personally, I hated school, like the part of school I really hated was primary school. Because since the very start of primary school, I've always been bullied. I ended up being bullied by one of the teachers as well. She was like, she had put other foreigners on one table. And like, the rest of the tables are just white Irish people. And there was like three white Irish tables versus one foreign table. And then she ended up like... the students were calling us sore losers. And she was like, 'oh, yeah, you are', and all this other stuff (Melodi).

We know from the literature review that young people from migrant backgrounds are likely to experience identity-based bullying in a school context (UNESCO, 2019) and Melodi herself has been subjected to what Essed (1991) would describe as 'everyday racism', in that she has experienced racism from students inside of school, young people outside of school and as well at an institutional level from both the teachers and school policies. Everyday racism involves repetitive instances of covert and overt prejudice and discrimination as part of your everyday living (Essed, 1991). The testimonial element is added then in this instance due to the fact that Melodi was not believed about the extent of the issue and the school took no action in this regard. As Zeichner suggests, oppressive power relations and inequalities are embedded within schools and other learning environments and our actions maintain and/or disrupt the status quo in schooling and society (Zeichner, 2006). In this instance, the school, as an institution, chose to maintain a system where experiential knowledge of racism and testimony about racism is routinely discredited.

As outlined several times, participants are very heightened to the microaggressions they can experience in school.

Let's say all of us, in school, if we were hanging out in a group, like people would say we were loud. But if it was a group of white girls, that were making more noise than us, they would not say anything (Promise).

But there's like loads of issues, you know, with Black people being too loud, and even Black people walking in a gang. And like teachers, you know, with the whole, 'oh, why are you guys in a gang?' And it's like, 'why is it a gang?' And why is it not a group? But we wouldn't even realise that, because we're so used to it, like, we're so used to a teacher saying something like that. And so, you know, it's normal almost (Bashirah).

Testimonial injustice involves devaluing a knower while imposing stereotypes (Beagan et al, 2022) and this is very prevalent in the above incidents. The teachers are relying on stereotypical assumptions about Black people being loud or gang members and discredit the speakers accordingly. Since doubting testimony is so commonplace, it has had the consequence of many participants feeling that it is normal not to be 'believed', and they are diminished and invalidated when reporting incidents of racism or racist bullying.

I think that if you're getting bullied in school by a white person, and I bring up racism, and then they will be like, 'how do you know it is racism?' 'How do you know it's not just bullying?' Like bullying is any better than racism (Promise).

This 'idea of not being taken seriously' is at the heart of testimonial injustice, given that the 'Speaker' is afforded insufficient credibility on the part of the 'Hearer', due to prejudice held by the 'Hearer' (Fricker, 2007). But what is important to reiterate here is how white teachers have often resisted, or been defensive (Picower, 2009), about the impact of racism on students in their schools. Evans-Winters & Twyman Hoff (2011) maintain that racism is normal and deeply entrenched in the social fabric of teacher education preparation programmes and higher education. White student teachers are typically not provided with space or tools to explore their whiteness and how that whiteness might manifest itself in a multicultural classroom environment (Picower, 2009). Racism affects relationships, choices, and practices inside and outside of the academy; and, it is recycled and re-consumed in school practices and beliefs, co-constructing a new generation of raced subjects (Goldberg, 1993). Testimonial injustice also then happens at an institutional level, when nothing is done about the problems being reported through the testimony.

One thing I also hate about the teachers, is that my mom would literally go into the school, literally two times a week, talking about how these boys are always bullying me, and they wouldn't do anything about it. Sometimes they would call their parents, but the parents would come, and the parents wouldn't even care. They'd just be like 'well he's not hitting her, he's not hurting her physically, so it's not that big of a deal' (Melodi).

In this instance there is a clear case of how Melodi and her mother's credibility was diminished by the structures of the school, and their testimonies as minoritized bodies silenced. Fricker's interest resides specifically with 'identity power' and the harms it produces through the manifestation of 'identity prejudices' (Horsthemke, 2014, p. 135). Fricker (2007) confirms that testimonial injustice draws heavily on the idea of the 'credibility deficit' which arises from prejudice about someone's social identity, but Dunne (2020) reminds us not to let this detract from the significance of credibility excess either. A

credibility excess (Medina, 2013) is when excessive levels of credibility and ‘epistemic trust’ are afforded to groups in positions of power and to their ability to transmit knowledge. This can lead to testimonial silencing. Coretta shares a story about a teacher who was constantly saying ‘questionable’ things about Black people in her class and subsequently tried to ‘silence’ her and her friends reaction to this racism.

So when you are saying something that obviously doesn’t make sense, or something that you obviously didn’t put a lot of thought into, we’re gonna look at you like you’re an idiot, because you sound like an idiot. So then one time we’re walking to lunch, and she stopped us outside the hallway, she was like, ‘You guys are making me feel insecure. When you guys always looking at each other when I speak in class’ (Coretta).

This is a clear example of testimonial silencing, whereby somebody in a position of power suppresses the voice of the ‘Speaker’ and doubts their entitlement to interpret their own social situation. This way of silencing victims obstructs the ‘flow of knowledge... and the flow of evidence, doubts, fresh ideas, the epistemic friction of discordant reasons, and any other epistemic inputs conducive to knowledge (Dunne, 2020).

Many participants, as a result, have learnt that it is easier to stay silent when living life as a minoritized person in Ireland.

My experience at work has taught me that I have to be completely quiet, because if I open my mouth, the perception is that you are arrogant, or you are pompous or you think you know better. So, I stay quiet to fit in. At work, I definitely have to make sure that I am submissive, I am quiet, I do not talk at all (Kutenda).

The outcome of testimonial silencing is that different types of knowledge and expertise is lost to others and that the hearer refutes that there is anything that can be learnt from the speaker. This is a crucial issue in the context of diversifying teaching as it means that potentially useful cultural knowledge and pedagogical approaches will be missed out on in the classroom (Santoro, 2016; Santoro & Forghani-Arani, 2015). Both Mampeela, and Kutenda, members of African diaspora communities in Ireland, shared how they felt there was a normative and political lack to how the Black experience is explored in the classroom, specifically when it comes to representations of Africa. Working in an early-childhood setting, Mampeela shared numerous stories about how colleagues would relay stereotypical information about Africa with the children without even thinking to ask her for advice about content or approach.

These remarks that were made all the time to the kids during Africa Week. And then she was reading this story... it was like an alien kind of a story about Africa to me (*laughs*). I have some knowledge about it! I was standing there, and she is saying ‘oh they carry things on their head, that is very silly, I don’t know why they do that’. And

I'm just thinking maybe you could ask the person beside you who would know why?! (Mampeela).

Kutenda puts it succinctly when he states, 'I think the African story can be better told by African teachers. There is something to learn from us. So much to learn'. The minoritized participants in this study were very clear that they had something to contribute when it comes to the profession of teaching. They identified numerous normative and political lacks in how certain topics are approached in education contexts, and how their own knowledge and expertise, instead of being valued, was instead side-lined and delegitimised. This study explores the experiences of minoritized ethnic prospective teachers, and this is at the heart of their experiences, how their experiential knowledge and sense of self is constantly being diminished. Dunne (2020) reminds us that testimonial injustice is not merely the product of innocent error, but that it involves 'a kind of intellectual carelessness or epistemic arrogance and also a damaging, immoral attitude to others in their capacity as potential knowers' (Dunne, 2020, p. 4).

Conclusion

This chapter utilised Fricker's (2007) thesis of epistemic justice to illuminate and try and understand some of the lesser-known injustices that minoritized ethnic young people encounter when interested in pursuing a career in primary teaching. Findings reveal that a disturbing combination of epistemic, hermeneutical, and testimonial injustice have discredited a group of prospective young teachers as 'knowers' and potentially disempowered them from choosing the profession in the future. Although many epistemic injustices happen at an individual level, the varying types outlined in this chapter do not merely represent individual harms. Instead, they are experienced at a collective level and play out in the structures and processes of the education system itself. Challenging these prejudices and injustices will necessitate 'collective social political change' (Fricker, 2016, p. 8). The conclusion chapter will outline some of the collective actions and recommendations which will be needed to move this issue forward.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter begins with a summary of the overall research study and returns to the research sub-questions as a way of highlighting the main contributions and resulting implications for future research, policy, and practice. Some limitations of the research design are identified and acknowledged. The dissertation concludes with a personal reflection which synthesises my ‘current best thinking’ (McNiff, 2013) about future directions for ITE on this topic. The reflection also outlines a range of actions I have committed to as a result of this research study.

Study summary

This study was designed to explore and foreground the perspectives, narratives, and experiences of minoritized ethnic young people in Ireland who were at various stages of considering a career in primary teaching. The overall research question asked, ‘what are the experiences of minoritized ethnic young people interested in pursuing a career in primary teaching in Ireland’? It was the first study of its kind, in that it sought to address a gap in the national literature about listening to the voices and narratives of minoritized ethnic young people currently on the margins of teacher education in Ireland.

16 young people, from a range of minoritized ethnic backgrounds, were recruited using a hybrid approach of negotiated gatekeeping in conjunction with purposive and snowball sampling methods. Critical participatory action research, grounded in a framework of critical humanism, informed the methodological direction for the study. Data were collected through a triangulation of creative visual methods (PhotoVoice), semi-structured interviews and focus groups. This dissertation includes a comprehensive account of the reflexive thematic analysis approach taken to theme construction and the reflective and ethical considerations which influenced active decision making in the research field. Additionally, rigorous approaches to reflexivity took cognisance of unequal power dynamics and effective strategies for conducting research across difference were shared.

The conceptual framework for this study included a diverse selection of theories from a range of subject disciplines. Theories underpinning the research design and implementation span sociological understandings of critical race theory, the philosophical concept of epistemic injustice, and the notion of communion which derives from psychology. Listening to the motivations, perspectives, aspirations, and narratives of minoritized ethnic young people interested has led to significant storied insights into how they feel about the lack of

diversity in the teaching profession. Photo counter-stories, which honour the narratives of the research participants, were positioned in direct opposition to several stock stories often misunderstood as reasons why minoritized ethnic young people in Ireland are not choosing primary teaching in greater numbers. Furthermore, concepts of epistemic injustice, hermeneutical injustice and testimonial injustice were applied to the participants' understandings of a range of racial injustices that have consequently shaped how they feel about teaching and possibly embarking on a future career within the formal education sector.

Table 4: Summary of findings

Summary of findings
Research participants engaged in innovative and creative forms of cultural self-portrayal which foregrounded their ethnic and racial identities in revealing and compelling ways.
Participant's ethnic identities were paradoxically something that they regarded as both a positive attribute that would make them a good teacher, and simultaneously something that could act as a barrier for them gaining access to the teaching profession.
Participants constructed counter-stories that challenged majoritarian stories about motivations to become a teacher, familial support, Irish language requirements and what a teacher in Ireland is perceived to look like.
Participants demonstrated strong knowledge of, and connection to, the profession of primary teaching and revealed robust values in relation to the type of teacher and role model they would like to be in the future.
Racism(s) and racialised existences are a permanent fixture in the lived experiences of the research participants.
Participants displayed heightened awareness of primary schools and ITE institutions as 'white spaces', and what this may mean for them in the future as a minoritized educator.
Epistemic humiliations and unjust experiences in teaching and learning contexts has led to the experiential knowledge of the participants becoming delegitimised.
Hermeneutical injustices resulting in a lack of self-belief, self-worth and confidence contributes to their hesitancy to choose a career in teaching, in spite of their innate interest and suitability.
Testimonial injustices and instances of testimonial silencing have diminished the participants credibility and have resulted in a loss of knowledge and expertise to the wider education community.

Contribution of study

In this section, I return to the sub-questions that underpinned the research, as a way of situating the contributions of the study to future teacher education research, policy, and practice. The experiences of minoritized ethnic prospective candidates to ITE is a new and underdeveloped research study in the Irish context. Through the provision of a shared common language (Berman, 2013), the conceptual framework for this study has supported a

range of theoretical, empirical, methodological, and policy-oriented contributions which will now be discussed in greater depth.

What are the real and perceived barriers to initial teacher education in Ireland for young people from minoritized ethnic backgrounds?

The research on barriers to teacher education for students from under-represented groups in the international context has revealed a range of issues which act as a disincentive for minoritized ethnic young people to choose a career in primary teaching. This study extended understandings in this regard by introducing the idea of the ‘continuum of barriers’, to encompass the complexity of barriers that exist at both the pre-entry and post-entry to ITE, as well as the particular challenges that a minoritized newly qualified teacher (NQT) may face as they transition into a teaching career.

The study highlights the importance of going beyond initial issues of access to ITE to consider the myriad of supports that minoritized pre-service candidates will need during their time in ITE as well as throughout their primary teaching career. The study also makes a valuable contribution to knowledge in the Irish context by adding experiences of racism as a barrier at the pre-entry level of choosing teaching. At a theoretical level, this research study has encouraged us to regard this continuum of barriers to teacher education experienced by minoritized ethnic young people as an injustice. It has identified and named epistemic, hermeneutical, and testimonial injustices associated with the process of becoming a teacher for those that are racialized within the education system. The following recommendations have emerged from the findings relating to this sub-question.

Table 5: Recommendations arising from sub-question 1

Recommendations	
Research	In an Irish context, further qualitative research is needed at the ‘transition to teach’ stage of the continuum, as well as the experiences of minoritized teachers already working within the formal education system.
Policy	ITE policy in relation to Irish language requirements should shift focus from pre-entry levels to competency levels at exit stage. More free resources and supports should be made available to prospective preservice teacher candidates who are beginning or recommencing their Irish language-learning journey.
Practice	Primary school leaders should examine how Irish language exemptions are negotiated at a practice and an institutional level in their professional contexts.

How do young people from minoritized ethnic backgrounds respond to prevailing societal assumptions as to why there is a lack of diversity in the primary teaching profession in Ireland?

While there have been some notable pieces of work in the area (Joseph 2019, 2020a, 2020b, 2021; Darby, 2020; Kitching, 2015; Sheridan, 2020), CRT remains underutilised in an Irish education context³⁸. CRT offers educational researchers a compelling way to view racism in education by centring issues of race and using theory to challenge dominant views in both research and practice. The tool of counter-storytelling in particular, facilitates oppositional takes on commonly held assumptions, grand narratives, and majoritarian stories from society. By applying a CRT lens, and by centring the stories of those prospective candidates locked out of teacher education, this study has extended our understanding of how CRT can be applied to the Irish formal education context and has reminded us of the importance of multiple perspectives in this regard. The insights of CRT in the context of this study adopt a familiar starting point, whereby race and racism are acknowledged as a normalised and everyday element of the lived experience of young people interested in pursuing primary teaching. This dissertation has provided a critical perspective on the enduring inequalities experienced by minoritized young people within an overwhelmingly white system, and how this may impact on their motivation to pursue teaching as a career, in spite of their keen interest in the profession. As a result of narratives in this study, teacher educators should ‘expect and prepare’ (Kohli & Pizarro, 2021) for racism in ITE programmes.

The interdisciplinary lens of this study has further resulted in significant theoretical contributions. Epistemological pluralism recognizes that, in any given research context, there may be several valuable ways of knowing, and that accommodating this plurality can lead to more successful integrated study (Miller et. al, 2008). I felt that the orientation towards a range of traditions (i.e. sociology, philosophy, and psychology) would result in a more integrated ‘logical masterplan’ (Kivunja, 2018) for this research study. A narrow system of interpretation would have been ill-equipped to capture the multiplicities and complexities of this social phenomenon. The conceptual insights in this dissertation have ‘borrowed’ understandings from numerous traditions and applied them to a relatively underdeveloped area of research, revealing new priorities for education stakeholders to reflect upon.

³⁸ Further information about CRT studies in an Irish context is available in Appendix C.

Table 6: Recommendations arising from sub-question 2

Recommendations	
Research	Future research needs to build upon the existing body of work that utilises various and adaptive forms of CRT in the Irish context and be cognisant of the scope that exists for powerful insights within this framework.
Policy	Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives in ITE institutions should be mindful of the endemic and pervasive nature of racism in the lives of their students. ITE institutions should continue to develop meaningful EDI policies which challenge racism and support minoritized students in the system.
Practice	Teacher representative bodies such as the INTO and the Teaching Council should be more proactive about identifying and naming racism as a significant issue that impacts their members and adapt their supporting documentation accordingly.

How do young people from minoritized ethnic backgrounds in Ireland regard the profession of primary teaching and what are their motivations to teach?

Existing research suggests that it is not that minoritized ethnic young people are applying to ITE and not getting in, it is that they are not choosing ITE programmes in the first place (Keane & Heinz, 2016). But prior to this study, we could not say with any certainty why this was the case or point to any research which proactively created opportunities for the voices within this population gap to be heard. In this vein, the choice of PhotoVoice as an innovative and creative data collection tool, was particularly significant in terms of its methodological contributions. As a method which privileges ‘native image production’ (Worth & Adair, 1975) and ‘cultural self-portrayal’ (Pauwels, 1996b), it was instrumental in reading the social worlds of the participants in this study.

In particular, the PhotoVoice task created a platform for the participants to share their conceptions of teaching, motivations to teach and their ‘story’ of pursuing teaching. This has implications in the context of teacher education as it gives those working in the field more insight into how to become ‘story-ready’, develop story relationships in a responsible manner, treat story knowledge with reverence, and strengthen storied impact in practice (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). In spite of their current ‘outsider’ status in teacher education, through their photos participants displayed a strong connection to the profession of teaching. This could be seen through the reflective capabilities they brought to their narratives, their knowledge of educational theory, their articulation of their professional values, their ethic of care, their knowledge of the mechanics of teaching and the overall passion they displayed when talking about all things teaching and learning.

Montecinos (1995) argues that it is important to put human faces to the experiences of marginalised groups (p. 293). This was a motivating factor for me in choosing the methodology of PhotoVoice in the first place, and the subsequent framing of the photos themselves as counter-stories. The intention here is to humanise the data, and in spite of the anonymity, to put a name, a voice and a face to the young people, their stories, and their dreams. While no actual names, voices or faces have been revealed, these young people have shared rich and meaningful insights into their current thinking about becoming a teacher, which it is hoped will communicate a more pressing urgency for change in ITE in Ireland. The idea of connecting this research to the practice of teacher education will be further explored in the personal reflection.

Table 7: Recommendations arising from sub-question 3

Recommendations	
Research	Future research with minoritized students and teachers should capitalise on creative and participatory methods which mitigate against inevitable power dynamics within research processes. There is a need for further research which explores the intersectionality of prospective preservice teachers.
Policy	Given the current teacher supply and retention crises, the State should continue to fund PATH education initiatives and develop a range of other supporting incentives to encourage a wider range of candidates into teacher education programmes.
Practice	Teachers and teacher educators need to be more proactive about encouraging and attracting minoritized ethnic young people into the profession of teaching, through targeted and innovative interventions.

Limitations of study

There are inevitably limitations in the design and parameters of this study which should be borne in mind at this juncture. As a small-scale qualitative study utilising a broadly action research-oriented approach, the study (by design) prohibited generalizability. For most qualitative studies, ‘generalizations to other individuals, settings, and times are not desired. For these researchers, the working hypotheses are only time-and context-bound’ (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 65). That said, it does warrant mentioning possible constraints in this vein which more directly relate to the research respondents. The study involved a relatively small sample of self-selecting participants. By virtue of the fact that they agreed to participate in the research, at no personal benefit to themselves, it has to be acknowledged that they were highly motivated to share their emotive views on this topic. They had all reflected at length about their journey to becoming a teacher and showed great insight into the challenges they had experienced along the way. Therefore it could be argued that these views would not be

representative of a different cohort of minoritized ethnic young people with similar aspirations to be a teacher. There are inevitably other young people out there who are possibly even more disconnected or alienated from their teaching dream and who elected not to take part in the research as a result.

In addition to their motivation and outlook, the intersectionality of the research participants must also be addressed. The scope of this study meant that while rich, deep data was collected in relation to the participants ethnic and racial identity, this targeted focus arguably came at the expense of greater understanding of other aspects of their individuality. An emphasis on intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), particularly in relation to gender, language, religion, social class, age, sexuality, or disability, may have yielded equally powerful knowledge about the resonance of intersecting identities to this debate.

As it was, intersectionality was not explored to any meaningful extent during the data collection. While some of the female participants briefly alluded to gendered dimensions of their school experience, they chose not to focus on it to the same extent as they did the racial prejudice and discrimination that was much more a part of their lived experience. Similarly, the under-representation of males in teaching did not come up in conversations with Liam and Kutenda, as they chose to focus on more pressing frustrations for them in their pursuit of a primary teaching career. Heinz et al., (2021) argue that despite recent research around other types of diversity in teaching, gender is still somewhat of an anomaly in teacher diversity research.

It is important to note, that during conversations with the participants about race and racism, there was evidence of what Luttrell terms their ‘narrative urgency to tell it like it was’ (2000, p. 502) and it was clear their primary motivation was to focus on this element of their identity instead. In the words of Bashirah, ‘Sometimes I am so busy being Black, that I forget I am Muslim as well’. Nonetheless, intersecting identities could be a rich area for further exploration, and it is hoped that this study may serve as a useful base for future inquiry and awareness in this area.

Personal reflection

This research study has undoubtedly had a transformative impact on my personal and professional development, as a researcher, a teacher educator, and an activist. As someone who works hard at reflective practice but finds it does not always come easy, I would like to begin this reflection by borrowing an evocative metaphor from one of the participants. Katya, a young migrant studying in Ireland, chose to take two interconnected photos for her

PhotoVoice task which described the journey to becoming a teacher using a literal representation of building blocks:

Figure 24: Photos 1 & 2 from Katya



She says:

How I would describe it, you can see like, there's different levels in life. And it's like building blocks, I was focusing on more of the positive side where you're building stuff up, and then you're knocking down every single goal that you're achieving along the way.... Where I got the idea is, I remember my teacher was telling me that our lives are kind of like, we're on mountains. And once you're in primary school, you start at the bottom, and then you're in second class, and then once you're in sixth class you're on top of the mountain. But then once you get into secondary school, you're at the bottom of the mountain again and you're working your way up. And that's how I kind of looked at it and that's what drew me to take the picture. There are different levels. It's like a journey, I really like how you are going up and down, up and down...

I cannot think of a more accurate representation of my experience of this research project. There were so many ups and downs and twists and turns on this journey. From the initial trials of recruitment and finding the young people in the first place, to the unexpected challenges associated with carrying out research during a global pandemic. Building in rigorous reflexivity to the design was crucial, but was quite discomforting and confronting at times, as I struggled with the self-confidence to know if I was doing the right thing and approaching the work in an appropriate manner. The mountain-top highs came in the form of investing time in relationship building with the participants, getting to know them so well and feeling proud of the trust they placed in me to share their vibrancy, voices, and perspectives on this under-researched topic.

Stuart Hall once commented that he was less interested in theory than in praxis-oriented ways of theorising the world (Hall, 1986). This has caused me to reflect on the importance of praxis in the context of teacher education, where the theory, reflection and action all come together (Freire, 1970). What has this research provoked for me? What is next? What blocks will I now build upon in my practice? What blocks will I knock down in the process?

Ríos-Vega (2020) argues, that within education, counter-storytelling can serve as a pedagogical tool that allows educators to better understand the experiences of their students of colour through deliberate and mindful listening techniques. I have already found this to be the case, and the skills I cultivated during the research have enhanced my ability to listen to the stories of my own racialised students in ITE, whose very existence is often undermined and delegitimised by institutional and structural processes of inequality. As a result of the research, I am less self-conscious about facilitating these difficult conversations with my own students, and I am less reticent about bringing them to the attention of university leaders. I find myself feeling braver, more action-focused and keenly motivated to continue this work and not allow stock stories about the lack of diversity in teaching to remain unchallenged in teacher education.

An integral part of the conceptual framework for me was the concept of action, and the importance of connecting this research to my practice as a teacher educator. This is even more relevant in the context of teacher education, due to the apparent disconnect between educational research and practice and how it is perceived that research in the context of teacher education impacts practices in primary schools to such a limited extent (Rycroft-Smith, 2021). Publication of research alone is not sufficient; dissemination must be carried out in a variety of contexts.

Lewin (1951), the acknowledged founder of action research, always insisted that research which resulted in nothing more than writing was not sufficient (1951). An extract from a migrant's open letter to the academy acts as a stark reminder of the need for tangible outputs from research:

Academics should collaborate immigrants' perspectives into their work more often. All research should be a living result and not just kept on the library shelves without being utilised, it's just dead work, we need to use it for action. Academics is not just a job it is a social responsibility (Anti-Racism Network Public Journal, 2013, p. 12).

Given the research design choices of critical participatory action research, PhotoVoice, all of which centre action as a response, as well as the primacy of action within

the conceptual framework, articulating a possible list of actions as a result of the research was essential for me. The desire for change often emerges when a group identifies a ‘felt concern’ or a ‘legitimation deficit’ (McTaggart, in Udas, 2014, p. 6), and this was clearly illustrated through the presentation of findings. The following table represents a range of actions I am committed to as a result of the research, to become an agent of change in the short, medium, and long-term.

Table 8: Actions emerging from the research

	Action	Details
1.	<i>Differentiated dissemination strategies</i>	
1.1	Photo exhibition	To ‘publicly honour’ the contributions of the participants (Luttrell, 2020)
1.2	Presentation at conferences	Contribute to existing knowledge in the academy
1.3	Teacher and teacher educator CPD opportunities	Ensure that findings are made accessible in a variety of different practitioner contexts
1.4	Social media and blog posts	To reach a wide audience of stakeholders
2.	<i>Differentiated research and publications</i>	
2.1	Peer-reviewed journals	Contribute to existing knowledge in the academy
2.2	Practitioner journals and magazines	Target alternative publications with practitioner readership (e.g. INTO publications)
2.3	‘Gairm’ Teaching Resource	In partnership with the DICE Project, this cross-curricular resource for primary schools designed to get children thinking about the teaching profession will be available later in 2023
2.4	Infographic about teaching in Ireland	Presenting the various pathways to becoming a teacher in plain language form
2.5	Infographic about Irish language learning pathways	Collating information about resources/ courses/ programmes which support Irish language learning
2.6	Summary of dissertation	A one-page summary and overview of findings emerging from this research to support people for whom English is not a first language
2.7	Ongoing research	Commitment to self-study on my teacher education practice
3.	<i>Outreach and initiatives</i>	
3.1	Continue working with secondary school in context of career guidance	School-university partnerships in relation to Transition Year work experience placements, taster sessions for minoritized post-primary students
3.2	Peer mentoring programmes	Establish peer mentoring initiatives for minoritized students within my own department
3.3	Peer tutoring	Provide a range of peer learning and informal Irish language learning opportunities in ITE
4.	<i>Lobbying and advocacy</i>³⁹	
4.1	Connect with the Teaching Council	To share findings around system accessibility and teacher retention
4.2	Connect with the INTO	To share findings about the racism(s) experienced by minoritized student teachers on placement and by minoritized teachers within the system
4.3	Link with other relevant professional bodies	To share relevant findings with PDST, NCCA, NIPT, IPPN etc.
4.4	Initial teacher education institutions in Ireland	Continue to advocate for minoritized student teachers experiencing racism within the system. To begin conversations about the need to re-think entry/ exit requirements for Irish language competency. Create speaking and employment opportunities for minoritized teacher educators.

³⁹ Meetings and collaborations with many of these named organisations have already been organised and confirmed.

Conclusion

Recent opportunities for statutory funding and policy development have resulted in the issue of the lack of diversity in the teaching profession becoming a growing issue of interest of late. But research on the topic is still largely underdeveloped, particularly when it comes to foregrounding the voices of the young people on the margins of this debate. This study has shed light on the narratives and aspirations of minoritized young people interested in pursuing primary teaching in Ireland and brought ‘contextual contours’ (Ladson-Billings 1998) to the discussion about future responses to this problem. The aim of the research was to generate knowledge which advances further understanding about the perspectives and experiences of minoritized young people as prospective candidates to ITE. This study has revealed that there is currently a cohort of creative, talented, and motivated young people who would like to be primary teachers and would potentially be great primary teachers, but who instead find themselves unjustly positioned outside of the system and instead experiencing what Freire would call ‘the deferred dreams’ (Freire, 1970) that come with living a racialised existence.

The title of this dissertation is therefore ‘Deferred, denied, and dying dreams: The experiences of minoritized ethnic prospective pre-service teacher candidates in Ireland’. The reason for this is because I was struck over the course of the research how many of the participants referred to pursuing primary teaching as a ‘dream’. They regarded it as something that was aspirational, and at times, something that seemed quite far out of reach and would elude them. In this context, I have added ‘denied’ and ‘dying’, to Freire’s concept of the ‘deferred’. This is because, as a result of the myriad of barriers and layered complexities encountered in pursuit of their teaching dream, many of them are already defeated, and have instead pursued other education-related careers in the interim. Their self-worth has been diminished, their ‘dream was crushed’ and their ‘spark has been extinguished’⁴⁰. Those working in ITE need to become mindful of these stories, listen to the voices of minoritized young people in this regard, and ensure that ITE is more supportive of these dreams in the future.

It is imperative that we maintain hope even when the harshness of reality may suggest the opposite. On this level, the struggle for hope means the denunciation, in no uncertain terms, of all abuses, schemes, and omissions. As we denounce them, we awaken in others and ourselves the need, and also the taste, for hope (Freire, 1997, p. 106).

⁴⁰ These are quotes from Coretta and Calixto respectively.

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Appendix A: Profile of participants

Participant	Profile
Bashirah	Bashirah is a Black-Irish and Muslim young woman. She migrated to Ireland from Nigeria with her family at a young age. Bashirah speaks Irish, English, French and Yoruba. She had just completed her undergraduate degree when she participated in the research and was exploring options for postgraduate study.
Melodi	Melodi was a sixth year student in post-primary school when she participated in the research. She comes from an Angolan-Portuguese background and her parents were migrants to Ireland. She lives with her family in Leinster.
Panaishé	Panaishé came to Ireland as an international protection applicant the year before she participated in the research. She worked as a journalist in Zimbabwe prior to seeking asylum in Ireland. She currently lives in a direct provision centre in the midlands in Ireland and speaks 6 languages.
Damilola	Damilola was a fifth year student in post-primary school at the time of the data collection. She is a first generation Irish-Nigerian, and her parents migrated to Ireland in the early 2000's. She lives with her family in Co. Louth.
Pela	Pela was a fifth year student in a post-primary school in Dublin when she participated in the research. Pela is from Poland originally and moved to Ireland two years previously. She lives with her mother in Dublin. She speaks Polish and English.
Mampeela	Mampeela is a Black South African migrant who had been living in Ireland for several years when she participated in the data collection. She has several years experience working in the Early Childhood Education sector. She speaks 6 languages fluently and can converse in several others.
Liam	Liam is an Irish Traveller living in Munster. He was 20 years of age at the time of the data collection and was the first in his family to complete the Leaving Certificate. He completed his Junior Certificate in Irish and is now re-learning the language in the hope of applying for an ITE programme in the future.
Matilde	Matilde is an Argentinian migrant working in Dublin. She had been in Ireland for 2 years at the time of the data collection. She has an undergraduate degree and postgraduate diploma in Early Childhood Education. Matilde speaks Spanish, English and German.
Katya	Katya was a sixth-year student completing her Leaving Certificate in a Kildare school when she participated in the research. She migrated to Ireland from Ukraine with her parents as a young child and identifies as Ukrainian-Irish. She speaks 4 languages - Ukrainian, Russian, English and Irish. Katya has since commenced an undergraduate degree in an Irish university.
Promise	Promise was a fifth-year student in a post-primary school in Leinster when I first met her and a sixth year student when she participated in the data collection. Her parents migrated to Ireland from Nigeria, and she describes herself as Irish-Nigerian.
Kutenda	Kutenda came to Ireland from Zimbabwe as an international protection applicant. He lived in several direct provision centres in Mayo and Dublin

	before settling in Donegal. He has several years experience working in the Youth and Community Sector. Kutenda speaks 7 different languages.
Ann	Ann is an Irish Traveller from the midlands in Ireland. She was in her second year of a post-Leaving Certificate course and was 20 at the time of the data collection. Ann speaks English and Irish and studied French at Leaving Certificate level.
Calixto	Calixto is an Irish-Portuguese young woman who migrated to Ireland with her parents as a young child and now lives in the West of Ireland. She has an undergraduate degree and a keen interest in inclusive education. She was exploring postgraduate study options at the time of her participation in the research.
María	María emigrated from Chile to Ireland with her parents as a child. She lives in Leinster and was in the second year of a postgraduate degree when she participated in the research. She speaks Spanish, English and did Irish for the Leaving Certificate as well.
Coretta	Coretta is a first generation Irish-Nigerian, whose parents migrated to Ireland before she was born. Coretta was a 6 th year student in a post-primary school in Leinster when she participated in the research. She lives with her family in Co. Louth.

Country of origin/ Ethnic identity	
1	Irish Traveller (n=2)
2	Irish Portuguese (n=1)
3	Irish Chilean (n=1)
4	Irish Nigerian (n=6)
5	Angolan Portuguese (n=1)
6	Argentinian (n=1)
7	South African (n=1)
8	Zimbabwean (n=2)
9	Polish (n=1)
10	Ukrainian Irish (n=1)

Counties participants reside in	
1	Donegal (n=1)
2	Dublin (n=3)
3	Galway (n=1)
4	Kildare (n=2)
5	Offaly (n=2)
6	Longford (n=1)
7	Louth (n=4)
8	Mayo (n=1)
9	Tipperary (n=1)

Languages spoken by participants	
1	Irish (n=11)
2	English (n=16)
3	Spanish (n=6)
4	French (n=6)
5	German (n=4)
6	Russian (n=1)
7	Ukrainian (n=1)
8	Polish (n=1)
9	Shona/ SiShona (n=2)
10	Xhosa (n=1)
11	IsiZulu (n=2)
12	IsiNdebele (n=3)
13	Kalanga (n=1)
14	Swati (n=1)
15	Portuguese (n=2)
16	Sesotho (n=1)
17	Yoruba (n=3)
18	SeTswana (n=1)
19	Afrikaans (n=1)
20	TshiVenda (n=1)

Appendix B: Researcher Identity Memo

My positionalities are multiple and intersecting and must be attended to in critically reflexive ways. A starting point is to acknowledge the extent to which I have succeeded in, and profited from, the formal education system. As a white, middle-class, settled woman from a family of educators, I continue to benefit from systemic, systematic, and institutional processes which reproduce and sustain racial inequality in this country. My membership of these groups has the potential to limit my understanding of the lived experience of the research participants. Conscious attention was given to this privilege throughout all stages of the research process to be mindful of how I live on the ‘high end of the unequal distribution of materials, resources, rewards, knowledge, and opportunities’ (Stoudt et al., 2012, p. 179). I have chosen particular frameworks, theories and methodologies which I hope make explicit my ‘enactment of privilege’ (ibid, p. 179) and to critically examine the role that my ethnicity, personal beliefs and values, socio-economic background, personality, and cultural identity play in the research process.

As a teacher educator in Maynooth University, and as a doctoral student in Dublin City University, my positionality is shaped by the production and transmission of knowledge that I have experienced in both these institutions. I further acknowledge how whiteness has come to be entrenched as the de facto way of assessing what it means to be human (Brookfield & Hess, 2021) in both these institutions. Membership of a particular professional community can predispose us to view the world through a unique lens and I would like to reform, not reinforce the status quo. I began the process by scrutinising my own positionality and the ideas, values, tools, and practices that I brought to the research site - what Tucker (1999) terms as ‘looking at ourselves looking’. I committed to reflect on how existing institutional rhetoric, ethos or values might be represented in question-posing and how these viewpoints might be used to construct meaning in the analysis. I drew upon the thinking of Okely (2007) who describes how fieldwork can be ‘embodied’ as well as Gunaratnam (2003), who argues for a radical reflexivity in research that involves rigorous attention to explicating the ways in which research participants and researchers are socially situated, while at the same time tracing how research is entangled with wider social and historical contexts.

Given O’Brien’s (2009) finding about the existence of institutional racism in teacher education in Ireland, and the need for a form of deep engagement with anti-racism issues in the education of student teachers, I came at the research from an anti-racist and ally

perspective, using the concept of ‘bearing witness’ as a cornerstone of my approach. I strove to listen actively and intently and with empathy to the testimonies of my participants and to facilitate their storytelling in an authentic and credible ways. I was conscious of ‘making space, rather than taking space’ and the concept of coalition (Dabiri, 2021, p. 251). I was also keenly aware of my own positionality because of how comparatively easy it is for me to shine a light on the lack of diversity in teaching. Unlike a minoritized researcher, I will never be regarded as self-serving or be seen as trying to promote a particular agenda. I am further unlikely to have my credentials questioned (Bonila-Silva & Zuberi, 2008). My whiteness protects me from racist behaviour and damaging stereotypes and brings with it a freedom that must be acknowledged in this context. Ultimately, I was heartened by the scholarship of bell hooks (2003) in this regard, who argues that if we fail to acknowledge the value and significance of individual anti-racist white people, we not only diminish the work they have done to transform their thinking and behaviour, but we prevent others from learning from their example.

Appendix C: Approach to Literature Review

For Chapter 2, a non-systematic review of the literature was performed, drawing upon the SALSA framework (Booth et al., 2016) of ‘search, appraisal, synthesis, and analysis’. A database search of journals, e-books and policy documents was conducted and then supplemented with a ‘backwards snowballing’ approach of following up on relevant in-text citations within those references (Van Wee & Bannister, 2016). I availed of a range of search strings, using a combination of different language and terminology depending on geographical variations.

Table 9: Literature review search strings (PICOS model)

Population	Diverse teachers/ minority teachers/ student teachers/ preservice teachers/ teachers of color/ BME teachers/ BAME teachers/ racialised teachers/ Black teachers/ teachers with migration background/ internationally educated teachers/ ethnic and racial minority teachers, teachers of immigrant origin, indigenous teachers.
Intervention	Strategies to diversify teaching profession/ policy initiatives/ statutory funding for diversifying teaching, critical race theory, critical race theory in Ireland (n=5).
Comparison	International field; with particular focus on the English speaking contexts of UK, US, Canada, and Australia.
Outcome	Diverse teachers, minority teachers in schools/ indigenous teacher education, grow your own teacher programmes.
Setting	Initial teacher education, preservice teaching programmes, primary schools, elementary schools.

Appendix D: Further information about points for ITE programmes

Table 10: Entrance points for Bachelor of Education Level 8 Degree Programmes in Ireland (2019-2022).

Teacher Education Institution	2019	2020	2021	2022
Dublin City University (DCU)	462	488	518	506
Marino Institute of Education (MIE)	453	484	508	496
Mary Immaculate College (MIC)	473	495	522	509
Maynooth University (MU)	499	507	564	540

If we are to take a more in-depth look at the programme with the highest points for example, we see that in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education in MU, Leaving Certificate entry points ranged from 499-564 in the last four years. This means that the points for primary teaching are now the highest of any course in Maynooth University (MU, 2021). Many pre-service teacher candidates not only achieve these high points, but evidence from state-funded programmes indicates that many of them have achieved far in excess of this level as well (Sahlberg, 2012). As typical entrants into ITE programmes are achieving on average 528 points (median across the four institutions), this positions them as well above the typical CAO applicant, given that the average in 2021 for example, was 400 points (CAO, 2021). Points for primary teaching fall within the top ten per cent of all university programmes in the country (CAO, 2021). The high points speak to the restricted number of places on primary ITE programmes, and this has resulted in very high standards being set for entry into those courses, meaning entrants are often the most academically able (Keane & Heinz, 2015).

Appendix E: Further context and reflections on working with gatekeepers

In educational research, while the site of the research may be discussed in the context of the findings, the actual process of gaining access to the site is not always given similar levels of detail. Rugkasa & Canvin (2011) believe that the rarity with which qualitative researchers publish details about their recruitment processes should be cause for concern. As a result, I decided to include this appendix in order to provide comprehensive detail about the function of the gatekeeper as the first agent of contact in the field and how they can often ‘facilitate, constrain or transform the research process and the production of the data’ (Sanghera & Thapar-Björkert, 2008, p. 558). Gatekeepers are not static entities, and it has been encouraging to see the recent literature that takes a much more multi-layered approach to conceptualizing relationships with gatekeepers in social research (Turner & Almack, 2017; Waters, 2015; Crowhurst, 2013). In this instance, there were many complexities involved in cultivating relationships with gatekeepers, and it ended up being much more of a layered, than a linear process.

The multifaceted process of working with gatekeepers is elaborated on by Turner and Almack (2017), who found that participant recruitment in their research was experienced as a series of ‘overlapping challenges’, which they characterized as turning like ‘wheels within wheels’ (p. 486). Their process of gaining access to the young people in their research involved simultaneous negotiations and building of relationships in lots of different contexts. Each ‘wheel’ to them represented a series of dynamic, interpersonal relationships with a variety of different social actors that were integral to their research process (Turner & Almack, 2017). Heath et al. (2007) outline further areas of concern when working with gatekeepers in the context of sensitive social research. Firstly, there can be issues around denial of consent because of ‘over-protectiveness and paternalism’ (Heath et al., 2007, p. 410) on the part of the gatekeeper, and the lack of control that the researcher has about how access to prospective sites is mediated. Protective gatekeeping was evident when working with both NGO’s and schools during the recruitment process. The following email extract has been reproduced with the permission of a would-be gatekeeper working for an Irish NGO.

Your research project sounds really interesting – and yes we really need to address the diversification of primary teaching. As far as I’m aware none of the young people I work with are looking to further a career in primary school teaching. Furthermore, many of the young people have been interviewed over the years for various pieces of research and media, with a focus on the issues that present with being undocumented

in the state. They have expressed to me that they no longer wish to tell their story as it re-traumatizes the situation for them and brings up distressing memories. It also reminds them of the barriers they face, which as you can imagine, is painful to live with. Thank you so much for reaching out to me, I hope you understand where we're coming from. For the record, I acknowledge that your ethical and legal considerations in the attached document are of an extremely high standard, and I appreciate that the best interests of young people in this study are a key priority (*NGO representative, personal correspondence, reproduced with permission, August 2020*).

There were other reasons for the inaccessibility of the target demographic. Waters (2015) argues that snowball sampling is likely to work most effectively when there is a tangible network of social relations or ties between individuals. This was not the case in this research, where the respondents were geographically spread across many different counties. Furthermore, Tyldum (2012) argues that groups with low human and social capital are less likely to volunteer to participate in research, if participation entails no direct personal benefits for them. Moreover, it warrants mentioning that the sample was automatically constructed as 'vulnerable' by the ethics committee in DCU during the ethical approval phase. This is arguably justifiable given the status of some participants, for example two of them who did not have leave to remain in the state. However, this perceived vulnerability does not do justice to the agency of the cohort as a whole, all of whom are bright, talented, creative, and resilient.

Crowhurst (2013) cautions against a mechanistic interpretation of gatekeepers, in that they are not just something you should think about having to get past in order to progress the research. In this research, the gatekeepers played multiple roles, with their functions being fluid, not fixed. I did not view the gatekeepers as being an obstacle to my getting past the gate, and I tried to conceive of it more as working with them to open up the gate. In addition to being willing 'allies' (Bryman, 2008), they also acted as 'safety nets' (Notko, 2013) to support participants. Most of the gatekeepers were pre-known to me to varying degrees and many are from minoritized backgrounds themselves. In this respect, I was conscious of what Emejulu and Bassel (2020) term as 'the politics of exhaustion', to characterise the labour and emotion-intensive nature of the activism, solidarity and activism work carried out by women of colour. I was mindful of the fact that some of them may have to live with the consequences of the research, and that the principle of informed consent should be equally important in my interactions with them as well. Gatekeepers were a valuable resource for me. They were embedded in the research process and influenced the outcomes. I was heartened by their

enthusiasm, commitment, and belief in the project. In many ways, they acted as an ‘advocate’ for the research, they ‘vouched’ for me, and this affirmed my own motivation to carry on during periods of enforced inactivity and guilt. Ultimately, I could not have done this research without them.

Additional reflexive notes

Relationship-building is key to the gatekeeping process. During the sampling, I have been trying to make sure I am approachable and accessible to the gatekeepers, not to mention potential participants. The ability to maintain and develop collaborative relationships with gatekeepers requires a host of ‘people’ skills (Turner & Almack, 2017). At all times, I endeavoured to ensure that integrity, respect and good-naturedness were central components to the interpersonal relationship I cultivate with gatekeepers and respondents. Good communication skills, an agreeable disposition and a time-investment in ‘rapport’ have also crucial to the progression of my research aims. Reinharz (1997) maintains that ‘we both bring the self to the field and create the self in the field’ (p.3). Discovering who I was as a researcher has been a big part of the process for me.

Titley, Reflexive note, August 15th, 2020.

Many of the gatekeepers that I am working with, particularly Irish Travellers, have had a negative experience of the formal education system in Ireland, due to cyclical educational disadvantage (Watson et al., 2017). It also emerged during initial contact with some of the Muslim gatekeepers that the perceived low status of primary teaching in Ireland could potentially be an issue for some Muslim parents. These were all issues I had to be mindful of during initial contact with certain groups. Trust then emerged in a very real way at the start of the Covid-19 crisis which resulted in the closure of the universities and a directive to cease data collection. The prevailing public health advice was to physically distance and remain at home. I did not consider moving the research online at this stage because of my own inexperience at facilitating online data collection, in addition to advice from the literature which privileges the importance of face-to-face meetings in establishing trusting relationships (Corbie-Smith, et al., 2002). During the Covid-19 closure, I was keenly aware of adding a ‘fourth job’ (Emejulu & Bassel, (2020) of unpaid labour to the existing heavy workload of my respondents and gatekeepers.

(Titley, Reflexive note, October 10th, 2020).

I am conscious of the fact that doing research on minoritized groups does not automatically make me an ally and that researchers have regularly been complicit in contributing to, rather than dismantling inequality and social injustice. I want to make sure that I don't let the gatekeepers down, and that the faith they have placed in me to facilitate introductions will not be wasted. I want them to be confident about how I will behave and what they can expect of me.

(Titley, reflexive note, February 3rd, 2020).

Appendix F: Institutional gatekeepers⁴¹

1. Africa Centre (AC)
2. African Professional Network of Ireland (APNI)
3. African Scholars Association of Ireland (ASAI)
4. Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI)
5. Balbriggan Integration Forum
6. Black and Irish
7. College Connect (MEND)
8. Educate Together (ET)
9. English Language Secondary Teacher's Association (ELSTA)
10. Education Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)
11. Exchange House
12. Galway City Council (Intercultural Forum)
13. Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI)
14. Institute of Anti-Racism and Black Studies (IABS)
15. Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)
16. Irish Refugee Council (IRC)
17. Irish Traveller Movement (ITM)
18. Languages Connect
19. Migrant Rights Centre (MRC)
20. Mother Tongues Ireland (MTI)
21. Muslim Primary Education Board (MPEB)
22. Muslim Women Together (D15)
23. National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)
24. National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)
25. Roots in Africa and Ireland (RIAI Network)
26. Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU Migrant and International Workers section)
27. Student unions and student societies in DCU, UCD, UL, TCD, MU, NUIG and Athlone IT

⁴¹ I worked with approximately 12 post-primary schools throughout the recruitment phase of the data collection as well. These schools are not named or described in this appendix in order to protect the confidentiality of the gatekeepers involved. Neither have I included the list of organisations that were contacted, but did not reply to the invitation to participate in the research.

28. Tipperary Rural Traveller Project (TRTP)
29. Traveller Interagency Network Cork
30. Turn to Teaching (MU)
31. Union of Students in Ireland (USI)

Appendix G: Individual gatekeepers

	Individual Gatekeeper	Details of interaction
1	Migrant representative of prominent NGO	Several meetings/ facilitated introductions
2	Academic in a Munster University	Email communication and facilitated introductions
3	Migrant academic in a Dublin University	Introduction to personal contact
4	Migrant academic in a Dublin University	Introduction to professional contact, targeted contact details shared
5	Migrant academic in a Dublin University	Dissemination of poster to professional network
6	Migrant EAL teacher in primary school	Targeted introduction to school contact (Connaught)
7	Retired academic in a Leinster University	Introduction to four post-primary school Principals
8	Migrant academic in a Munster Higher Education Institution	Shared among professional migrant network (possibly school introduction did not materialise)
9	Consultant working in anti-racism	Correspondence re: approach and possible direction, shared details on social media
10	Minoritized students in teacher education	Several meetings, discussion of project, introduction to personal contacts/ piloted research questions
11	Retired EAL post-primary teacher	Targeted introduction to three stakeholders
12	Former direct provision resident now working in community development	Meeting and follow up correspondence. Introduction to personal contact
13	Education officer in a direct provision centre	Posters disseminated in direct provision centre (no uptake)
14	Migrant working for government body	Unknown action
15	Migrant freelance facilitator	Dissemination among personal and community contacts
16	Teacher educator Munster	Disseminated among community contacts
17	Migrant PhD student Dublin	Disseminated among personal contacts
18	Migrant PhD student Munster	Facilitated introduction to academic
19	Migrant PhD student Connaught	Disseminated among personal contacts
20	Refugee on NGO board	Meetings/ advice/ disseminated among personal and professional networks
21	Migrant language teacher	Disseminated among personal contacts and (European) migrant networks
22	Anti-racist activist	Linked with two targeted colleagues, action to be confirmed
23	Board member of patron organisation	No action, possible follow ups did not materialise
24	Contact teacher in a Heritage Language School	Online meeting and dissemination among personal networks and contacts
25	Contact teacher in a Heritage Language School	Online meeting – no follow up materialised

26	University Access Office Representative	Dissemination to targeted group of potential students
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Appendix H: Recruitment poster

Are you interested
in becoming a
primary teacher?

Do you self-identify as coming from an ethnic
minority in Ireland?



PLEASE CONTACT AOIFE FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
ABOUT THIS INTERESTING PROJECT OPPORTUNITY.

Email: aoife.titley2@mail.dcu.ie

Phone: 086 6052581

Appendix I: Coding frame

Pre-defined codes		
Great quote	Asylum seeker experience	Irish language
Racism in society	Refugee experience	Benefits to diverse pupils
Racism in school	Migrant experience	Benefits to society
Microaggressions	School experiences	Benefits to diverse teachers
Teacher expectations	Complexity of identity	Benefits to diverse pupils
Desire to be a role model	Motivation to be a teacher	Family opinions
Barriers to ITE	Supports needed	

Constructed codes	
Reflection on participating in the research	Anti-Traveller prejudice
Experience of PhotoVoice task	Traveller identity
Denial of racism (labelled as bullying)	Traveller history
Microaggressions - general	Traveller culture
Microaggressions - hair	Direct provision
Microaggressions - hijab	Parent's migrant experience
Microaggressions – food	Own migrant experience
Microaggressions - accent	Status of teaching in Ireland
Microaggressions - language	Status of teaching in country of origin
Microaggressions - dress/ clothes	Positive experience of school
Policing yourself	Negative experience of school
Code-switching	Feeling like you're on your own
Self-consciousness	Feeling different in school
Islamophobia	Feeling different outside of school
Racial slurs	Feeling disadvantaged because of minoritized status
Working with guidance counsellors	
Irish language in general	Teacher high expectations
Irish language as hard	Teacher low expectations
Experience of learning Irish	School anecdote
Irish language requirements for ITE	What pupils are missing out on
English language proficiency	What society is missing out on
Other linguistic ability	What diverse teachers are missing out on
Lack of role models	Love of kids/ love working with kids
Concept of representation/ recognition	Skills/ traits of a good teacher
Envisioning future staffrooms	Importance of creativity
Envisioning future classrooms	Communication skills
Working with parents in the future	Barriers in general
Motivation to make family proud	Economic barrier
Support of family	Religion as barrier
Family apprehension at pursuing teaching	Information as barrier
Bureaucracy	Linguistic barrier
The Teaching Council	Activism/ change
Foundation/ access courses for teaching	Affirmation of identity
Different pathways to teaching	Culturally responsive pedagogy
Supports needed	Critical race theory observations

Awareness of teaching mechanics	Counter-storytelling example
Awareness of good pedagogy	Evidence of communion
Awareness of duty of care of teacher	Deficit perceptions of self
Articulation of teacher values	Having to work harder than white people
Covid pandemic	Relationships with white people
Feeling stressed/ frustrated with existing system	Government policy for migrants
	Reflective practice
Injustice/ unfairness	Ruling out teaching as a possibility
Epistemic injustice	Respondent recommendations
Hermeneutical injustice	Miscellaneous but significant statement
Testimonial injustice	Strong emotional reaction in interview

Appendix J: Reflections on recruitment challenges

One of the immediate sampling challenges is that the young people I hoped to work with were considered what the literature regards as a ‘hard to reach’ or ‘hidden population’ (Bryant, 2014; Goodman, 2011; Sulaiman-Hill & Thompson, 2011). In keeping with the reflective aims of the research, I often found myself problematizing these terms. I have never been comfortable with the description of ‘hard to reach’. While it is certainly true in this instance, I feel the focus is not where it should be. This term apportiones the responsibility for ‘being found’ to the young people themselves. Whereas it is my contention that it is I as a researcher who has failed to find them. And of course, at a broader level, it is also ITE that has failed to reach them. They are not hard to reach in and of themselves, it is only because I am making them the subjects of my research. I prefer thinking of them as ‘hardly reached’ or ‘seldom reached’. Or indeed ‘hard-reached’, in that it is taking a lot of time and effort to get the first few people to sign up.

(Titley, reflexive note, November 30th, 2019).

Because of my background as a teacher and an educational researcher, I felt that I would have natural success recruiting through schools. However, I am getting very disheartened about my dealings with the schools. It is so labour-intensive constantly chasing them, and it is resulting in minimal recruitment proportionate to the time invested in communication and relationship-building. Principals are such integral gatekeepers, and there are so many layers to this process. Even if I get a chance to meet or talk to a Principal, and take the time to outline the rationale for the research and what is involved, they tend to delegate to someone else in the school then, like a Guidance Counsellor or an EAL (English as an additional language) teacher, which results in further delays to the process. And then that teacher might just shut the whole thing down, for example, giving short responses, just stating that there was no student in the school that matched that sampling criteria. I have to ‘take their word for it’. In other instances, I have been ‘post-poned’ until after a busy period, for example coming up to holidays, exam period, whole-school inspection, or a particular sporting event etc. Teachers often alluded to the concept of ‘research fatigue’ (Clark, 2008) in their school, citing the fact that research requests to their Boards of Management had noticeably increased in recent years and they were becoming more discerning about what access they granted. This bears out in terms of recent policy developments from the Teaching

Council, who have now mandated that student primary teachers undertake some sort of practitioner research on their extended placement (Teaching Council, 2020). The ethical approvals for all of these research projects, in addition to practicing teachers undertaking post-graduate study for professional development, has potentially resulted in a reduced appetite for empirical research among school communities. I can't help but wonder what this means in the context of future practitioner research in education settings, or at a wider level, what it means for ongoing school-university partnerships.

(Titley, reflexive note, February 12th, 2020).

When you use snowball sampling, there is significant time and effort involved in trust-building and cultivating relationships (Geddes et al., 2017). Even when everything goes well in the interaction between researcher and gatekeeper there is no guarantee that the referrals will result in respondents, and this is true for me nearly on a weekly basis at the moment. A key conceptual element of trust is that it can never be complete (Edwards, 2013). There is always a sense of a 'leap of faith' between parties and confidence in the unknown. Edwards (2013) encourages us to look beyond conventional conceptualisations of trust which are focused on expectations of behaviour, and to regard trust as part of the personal relations that occur in social contexts. In the same vein that I hoped they were able to trust that I would behave in an ethical manner, I also had to trust that they would be there to support the young people at all stages of the research. Turner and Almack (2017) remind us that if the routes 'in' to access young people are difficult, then this also raises questions about the routes 'out' for young people and the access to support they have afterwards. I sometimes feel paralysed by all the complexities involved in cultivating these important relationships.

(Titley, reflexive note, October 2nd, 2020).

I am not your data

I am not your data, nor am I your vote bank,
I am not your project, or any exotic museum object,
I am not the soul waiting to be harvested,
Nor am I the lab where your theories are tested,
I am not your cannon fodder, or the invisible worker,
or your entertainment at India habitat center,
I am not your field, your crowd, your history,
your help, your guilt, medallions of your victory,
I refuse, reject, resist your labels,
your judgments, documents, definitions,
your models, leaders and patrons,
because they deny me my existence, my vision, my space,
your words, maps, figures, indicators,
they all create illusions and put you on pedestal,
from where you look down upon me,
So I draw my own picture, and invent my own grammar,
I make my own tools to fight my own battle,
For me, my people, my world, and my Adivasi self!
~Abhay Xaxa

I saw the above poem online a couple of weeks ago and I've been thinking about it a lot since. I have concerns about the inevitability that I might reinforce, rather than deconstruct inequalities through my research. I'm worried I won't find a way to do justice to the narratives. I'm worried that I am setting the agenda too much. I'm worried that I will retraumatize the participants if I probe too much about topics such as racism. I know a lot of minoritized groups have had a very negative experience of education, not to mention academic research and there can be justifiable scepticism there. To be honest, I've seen a lot of bad practice recently even in my own institution. CRT speaks about racism as a 'permanent fixture'. I know from initial chats how pervasive it is in their lives. So much of anti-racism work and research in the intercultural sphere seems to require Black people sharing their negative experiences and trauma. I just don't want to make sure I know where

the line is when it comes to questioning and probing. I am finding the research very personally confronting right now. The theoretical connotations, the ever-shifting parameters, and the fear of doing the ‘wrong’ thing, can mean that sometimes you are paralysed into inaction. I think you can reflect yourself into oblivion, to the point that you can get nothing done, and I’ve definitely been a culprit of this in the last while.

(Titley, reflexive note, November 16th, 2020).

I remember reading an article about informed consent where the researchers felt both pleased and disappointed when a potential respondent declined to take part (Heath et al., 2007). I can definitely empathize with this. I feel relieved that I am communicating the informed consent to such an extent that people do not feel coerced to take part. And that they have had to time to really think it through, weigh up the various factors and come to their own decision. But I also feel disappointed that someone who could have been perfect for the research has slipped through the cracks. Ana texted me today to say she was not going to go ahead with the research. I feel so disillusioned, and unprepared for the emotionally charged nature of the fieldwork. I have met her twice for coffee and given her very clear overview for the research. But I wonder am I being overly negative in my explanation of what is entailed in the project. I just am so aware of the fact that some potential participants might feel they cannot say no to me in case I am lecturing them in the future. But I think I am giving them too many ways out. Because there is obviously something I am doing wrong that is not sealing the deal. I know I want to make sure that I am protecting them, but I think it is coming at the expense of progress.

(Titley, reflexive note, January 27th, 2020).

Appendix K: PhotoVoice training and implementation

The process of informed consent clearly outlined the expectations of involvement for participants. For the PhotoVoice component, participants took part in preliminary meetings which included a training element on the PhotoVoice process. Drawing on the methods of Royce (2004), a presentation and one-page document were developed to introduce the rationale for the research and also guide the young people through the steps of the project. This included a description of what PhotoVoice is, how the process would work, the expectations of the young people in terms of describing and discussing their photos and the ethical responsibilities they have in taking photographs in the first place. Some mechanical elements in relation to photography were also covered in the training, such as technical information relating to silhouettes, framing, cropping and the use of filters.

Having reflected on the various literature recommendations about the type of cameras to be used (PhotoVoice, 2007), for convenience and expediency, participants were asked to take the photos on their phones.

Stimulus questions for this discussion included:

- What is an acceptable way to approach someone to take their picture?
- Should someone take pictures of other people without their knowledge?
- What kind of responsibility does using a camera confer?
- What would you not want to be photographed doing?
- What might some of the implications of being in a photograph be?

(Adapted from Photovoice, 2005)

The following documents were provided to participants at the first session.

- Hard copy of presentation
- Overview of timeframe and discussion meetings
- Consent forms for PhotoVoice subjects

Having reflected on the various literature recommendations about the type of cameras to be used (PhotoVoice, 2007), for convenience and expediency, participants were asked to take the photos on their phones. Participants were offered the option of emailing the photos, uploading them via USB, or printing out in advance of the second meeting.

Appendix L: PhotoVoice task description

(One page explanation provided to participants at the start of the PhotoVoice process)

What is PhotoVoice?

PhotoVoice is a visual alternative to traditional research methods. It involves the researcher (*me*) asking you a research question and the respondent (*you*) providing your answer through a photograph. It is hoped that by asking you to take a photo, you will think a bit more about the question in advance and this will lead to a more in-depth discussion. It is also hoped that the photographs will act as a more authentic representation of your experience.

What are the research questions?

I would appreciate if you would reflect on the following two questions:

1. Why do I want to become a primary teacher? (*or why would I make a good primary teacher?*)
2. What is a potential barrier or challenge to me becoming a primary teacher?

How many photos can I take?

You can take as many as you like! Anytime something occurs to you about the research question, just snap a photo! You can then narrow it down to 2 or 3 for each question and we can discuss them further at our next meeting.

Can I take a photo of anything?

Yes. But please bear in mind that if your photo includes a human you will have to get them to sign a consent form (provided). And if you include yourself in the photo, please be aware it might compromise your anonymity down the line. It should be a new photo, as in something that you take specifically for participation in this project. However, if there is an older photo that you think represents your potential answer well, you can always try and re-create it in some way!

What happens after I take the photos?

You can email them to me at aoife.titley2@mail.dcu.ie. We will then have a meeting and I will ask you a series of short questions about why you took the photo and what you think it represents. If you like, I can send you these questions in advance.

Reminder of confidentiality

At no stage will anyone be told who took what picture and your photo will not be linked back to you in any way. In the findings of the research project, your photo will be attributed to a pseudonym (*fake name*).



Appendix M: Interview schedule

Introduction/ Personal Profile/ Warm up questions

- How would you like to be described for the purposes of the research? Nationality/ ethnic identity etc.
- Would you like to choose your own pseudonym? (fake name). Or would you like me to choose it for you?
- How many languages do you speak?
- Reminders of anonymity and confidentiality and recording

Questions about the research process

- What did you think about the PhotoVoice task? (did you enjoy it, think it was unusual etc.)
- How did you go about doing the task?

Personal experience of living in Ireland

- How would you describe your personal experience in Ireland so far?
- How do you think Ireland views (your ethnic group)?
- Do you think you have ever experienced racism, discrimination, exclusion in Irish society?

Experience in School

- Have you ever had a teacher who wasn't Irish?
- Have you ever had a teacher who wasn't White?
- Was there anyone from a diverse background employed in another job in the school? (caretaker, secretary, SNA etc.)
- What is your experience of working with guidance counsellors? Do you feel you were informed about the various options you have to becoming a primary teacher?
- Did you ever attend a university open day about primary teaching? Do you plan on attending one this year?
- Did you study Irish? How were the exemptions managed in your school? Did they explain what you might be missing out on by not studying Irish?
- Have you ever had an Intercultural Day in your school? Did you think your school respects your identity? Do you feel the voices of migrants are heard in your school?
- Assimilationist policies within school – was your identity celebrated or did they just want you to be the same?
- What specific issues/ challenges or problems do you think you faced in school coming from a diverse background?
- What is your experience of the Leaving cert process?

Teaching in general

- When did you decide you wanted to be a primary teacher?
- Why do you want to be a primary teacher?
- Describe what you think is involved in being a primary teacher.

- What do your family think of teaching?
- Are they supportive of you becoming a teacher?
- Is anyone else in your family involved in working in education?
- What are some of the barriers to becoming a primary teacher for you do you think?
- If you started teaching in a school, what challenges do you think you might face as a teacher coming from a diverse background?
- Do you think you might feel pressure to be a role model?
- In what way might some children benefit from having a teacher from a diverse background?
- Why is it a good idea to diversify the teaching profession?
- What are the benefits to teachers themselves?
- Why do you think there are not more young people from minoritized ethnic backgrounds choosing teaching?
- Are you a member of a particular religion? How would you feel about teaching in a denominational school?
- What supports would you like to see in place to help you become a primary teacher?
- Do you have any specific career goals you are working towards? Or like to achieve in the future?

Finish

- Is there any question you think I should have asked you?

Appendix N: Conducting research during a global pandemic

Some researchers have argued that informed consent is somewhat of an unworkable process (Heath et al., 2007) because you can rarely be sure the full extent of what participation might entail in the early stages of the research or predict in advance everything that could possibly happen. This was certainly true in my context, when at a crucial juncture in the data collection process, the realities of the research changed overnight as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Hitherto unimaginable interruptions to ‘normal life’ led to unprecedented disruption to the research design, as well as to personal and professional challenges for both me and the respondents. As a result of university directives in March 2020, the pause button was pressed on face-to-face data collection, planned meetings with potential respondents and gatekeepers were immediately postponed and sampling initiation points, for example with schools, were cancelled outright.

At a professional level, the pandemic led to a challenging and unsettling period for teacher education (Murray et. al., 2020). As a teacher educator, my normal duties of teaching, research and service became more complicated and labour-intensive. Research undertaken by Maynooth University (MU, 2020) indicated that the volume of emails for staff was up by over 20% and the pandemic led to increased work, particularly outside of normal working hours. In person interaction and active methodologies are a big part of my education values system, so online emergency remote teaching during this time also posed certain challenges, as it did for many educators in the field (T&L, 2020; Aontas, 2020). Maintaining positive relationships with students and good professional relationships with colleagues was a particular focus for teacher educators during this time (Murray et.al, 2020) and I put a lot of effort into balancing an ethic of care for my students with an attempt to model innovative and flexible pedagogy in an online space.

At a personal level, the pandemic led to decreased productivity and a loss of momentum in the research due to general anxiety about the pandemic, not having access to a suitable workspace at home and becoming overwhelmed by increased levels of caring responsibilities which were typical for many other female academics (Dolan & Lawless, 2020). For the respondents, things were even more stark. At a national level, it is clear that the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities in relation to ethnicity, gender and class in Ireland and that lines of disadvantage were re-drawn or deepened during this time (T&L, 2020; Darmody et. al., 2020). This played out in the micro of the research as

well. There was a clear digital divide that existed across different schools in Ireland in relation to engagement with education (Dempsey & Burke, 2020) and this was very relevant for the participants who were still secondary students and struggled during this time. Minorities were both personally and institutionally more vulnerable to the worst impact of the virus and did not always have the economic privilege to self-isolate or quarantine when necessary. Interviews were re-scheduled numerous times, as respondents dealt with the effects of a Covid diagnosis, caring for family members with Covid, dealing with Covid-related bereavements or balancing the pressures of their frontline jobs. It is important to note that Travellers for example were disproportionately hit by the pandemic, with incidents of Covid-19 infection exceeding twice that of the wider population (Pavee Point, 2021). Two participants, quite far along in the research process, regrettably withdrew from the research during this time.

Temporary move to online data collection

After an initial period of reflection, a decision was made to move to a socially distant data collection method, in this case, the audio-visual interface Zoom. Zoom has been used extensively for research purposes already (Archibald et. al, 2019) but its popularity increased substantially during the pandemic (Lobe et al., 2020) and it was the preferred platform recommended to students by DCU. The move to Zoom interviews took a lot of planning and preparation including assessing the security of the platform and the adaptations that were needed to core principles of informed consent and anonymity-pseudonymity. My duty of care to the participants involved ensuring that their logistical needs were met in relation to having a computer, speakers, webcam, and reliable Wi-Fi in advance of the scheduled interview. Additional pre-interview sessions needed to be arranged to ensure participants felt confident with the technology and no unforeseen issues arose. As outlined in the methods chapter, a range of Zoom protocols were developed for these online interviews.

Despite these measures, some respondents reported a lack of a sufficiently private meeting space, or a distracting home environment as a reason for being unable to participate in an online interview. Overcrowding for example, has emerged as a driver of stress and anxiety during the pandemic and particularly affects vulnerable groups, for example Travellers and asylum seekers (Darmody et.al, 2020). This was very relevant for two of my participants who were living in direct provision. As a result, several interviews were

postponed yet again until national public health advice allowed inter-county travel and a return to face-to-face interviews was enabled.

Appendix O: Protocols for conducting online interviews via Zoom

Having consulted existing guidelines and recommendations for DCU students conducting online research, I have developed the following targeted protocols for my research project. An adapted version of these protocols has been included in the plain language statement for participants.

- The video-conference application Zoom will be the preferred platform for online semi-structured interviews with participants. I will use my official DCU-licensed student version Zoom account as opposed to any other personal or work accounts I might have.
- In the subject line of Zoom link (*section entitled ‘meeting topic’*), I will clearly label the session as ‘Research Interview’, in order to distinguish it from other instances where I might have met the participants on Zoom (e.g. informal introduction meetings, finalising consent process, questions about the PhotoVoice task, check-ins etc.).
- Prior to scheduling the interview, I will change the security settings in order to ensure that a passcode is required to enter the meeting and that participants are initially directed to the Waiting Room before admission into the meeting. This will prevent access to the Zoom meeting room before I arrive, while also preventing unintended access to the Zoom meeting room by others. The chat/ messaging function on Zoom will not be used during the interview.
- The interview will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for participants and when they feel they will have sufficient privacy and be free from interruptions. The interview will be scheduled to last between 50 minutes and 80 minutes, depending on the depth of detail provided by the participant.
- While the interview is semi-structured and as a result, the questions are not standardised, the interview schedule will remain the same as for the face to face interviews.
- For participants for whom English is not a first language, I will be mindful of the extra complexities that this might present and put in place a range of factors to support them. This will include an opportunity at the start of the interview (prior to recording), to share how they feel about doing the interview in English and to see if there is anything I can do as the interviewer to help them in this regard. This could include speaking slower, avoiding jargonistic or technical language, providing additional answer time, offering a synonym for a word if required or taking a break if

they need it. All respondents will be offered the interview questions/ themes in advance to further support their participation.

- Audio recording of the interview using a voice recorder will be clearly signposted to participants after the warm-up pleasantries and re-iteration of informed consent at the start of the interview. The dictaphone audio recording will be the sole record of the interview. Video recording will not be used because of the sensitivity of some of the interview content and the vulnerable status of some of the research participants. As in normal practice, I will clearly communicate with participants when the interview is over, and when the recording is stopped.
- As the researcher, I will transcribe the interview verbatim, and this transcription will not be shared with any external stakeholder.
- I will acknowledge that the scope for technical difficulties/ privacy issues is higher for participants coming from disadvantaged or minoritized backgrounds and I will have contingency plans in place for any technical difficulties which might arise. This could include scheduling additional time within the arranged meeting period to account for delays, offering the option of turning off camera to see if this improves connectivity, offering to postpone or reschedule the interview for another time or exploring other possibilities in consultation with the participant and their wishes. 'Dry runs' of the technology will be offered in advance of the formal interview time as well, for participants that might be unfamiliar with the platform.
- If, for unforeseen reasons, a participant becomes upset, unwell, or distressed during the interview, the interaction will be immediately stopped, and support will be offered to the individual. The online context will necessitate a range of differentiated supports. The participant will be offered the option of taking a break, turning off their camera, rescheduling the interview, or indeed deciding not to participate in a further interview and to withdraw consent at that stage. I have cultivated very positive relationships with gatekeepers so far in the research process and this will be even more crucial in this context as they will be able to direct participants to culturally appropriate supports. I have had numerous preliminary conversations with all my participants, and this has supported me in anticipating some potentially sensitive lines of questioning.
- In accordance with the values outlined in my original proposal and methods chapter, as part of my duty of care to participants, I will check in with them to debrief the day

after the interview and ask if they are generally happy with the conduct and content of the interview and what they shared.

- In keeping with protocols observed for the face to face interviews, any respondent who participates in an online interview will also be offered a full transcript after the interview. Participants will be invited to make any additional comments or amendments via email, and these will be included at the end of the transcript of the audio recording.

Appendix P: Credibility and trustworthiness table

Establishing trustworthiness in research (<i>adapted from Nowell et al., 2017</i>)		
Criteria	Description	Evidence from my project
Credibility	When readers are confronted with the details of the research, they can recognise it.	Member checks, follow-up calls and communication to participants, data collection triangulation. Extensive and meticulous planning and preparation prior to data collection. Exemplary organisation and storage of data. Development of coding framework.
Transferability	How generalizable the inquiry was.	Not as relevant in the context of this study, however it is hoped that the resulting rich, thick data will support future research in this area.
Dependability	Research process was traceable and clearly documented.	Designed and completed audit trails. Deep and prolonged engagement with data and conceptual framework, as a way of ensuring the theory and practice ‘spoke’ to each other. Records kept of field notes kept. Coding framework designed, records of how codes and themes were discarded and collapsed into each other were maintained.
Confirmability	Researcher interpretations and findings are clearly derived from the data.	Clear demonstration of how the findings were arrived at were included through providing intentional descriptions of research rationale and motivations throughout the methods chapter. Regular meetings with a critical friend supported the evolution of my theoretical arguments. Notes about development of sub-themes were maintained in an excel spreadsheet and concepts were initially mapped into a PowerPoint document.
Audit trail	Provision of the evidence of the decision and choices that were made.	Clear rationale provided in the narrative, methods chapter, choice of research design and data analysis. Maintenance of raw data, field notes, records of telephone conversations in between formal data collection were also kept. Full transcripts were completed.
Reflexivity	Self-critical account of the research process.	Commitment to regular reflexive notes and reflective practice was enacted. Participants were provided a voice within the research process and had an active say in decision-making. Values statement and researcher identity memo were developed. Significant time invested in code development and theme construction.

Appendix Q: Stimulus questions for research reflexivity

Stimulus Questions for Reflexive Notes	
Question	Inspired by
Whose research is this?	Feminist thought and scholarship
Research for whom?	
Research in whose interests?	
What is my motivation for undertaking this research?	Participatory action research methodology
Am I qualified?	
What do I know about my own capacities as a listener, a speaker, and a thinker?	
What do I feel towards this community that I did not feel before?	Post-colonial and Foucauldian analyses of power
How can I produce knowledge about different experiences given the power I hold as the designer of the research? Am I taking space away from someone else who would be better placed to carry out this research?	
How can I best make connections between the research questions, the narratives of the migrant young people, and the politics of initial teacher education?	
Given that I can never truly understand the lived experiences of young minoritized young people excluded from ITE, how can I remain curious, yet respectful throughout the research?	
How can white scholars study those who have been historically subordinated without further producing sociological accounts distorted by the political economy of race, class and gender?	Anderson, 1993, p. 41
Practical considerations	
How can I as a researcher disseminate my findings in a respectful way, but ways that ultimately benefit the participants?	
How can I develop meaningful and respectful relationships with participants?	
Who am I to the participants? Who do I want to be? Who should I be?	
Could there be any harm to my respondents? Am I intruding on their lives?	
From Atkins and Duckworth (2019)	
How has my personal history been the catalyst to my interest in this topic?	
Do I have a personal insider position and truth about the topic I am researching?	
Will my research be impacted by self-serving bias?	
Where voice is being represented in the findings, whose voice is being heard?	
For field notes	
What did I learn today?	
What might cause my commitment to wane to this topic?	
Who benefits from this research? What do I have to gain personally? How does this influence me?	
Why do I want to research this?	
How can I make these findings accessible to the wider population down the line?	

Appendix R: Photograph release form

PHOTOGRAPH RELEASE FORM	
Statement	Agree ☒
I consent to submit my 'PhotoVoice' photos to Aoife Titley for use as part of her doctoral research project.	
I have received appropriate consent from human subjects in the photographs where applicable (<i>supplemental release forms attached if relevant</i>).	
I understand that while I retain the physical and digital ownership and copyright of the photos, I consent to their potential reproduction in any or all of the following circumstances: - Inclusion as an image in the body of the text of Aoife Titley's dissertation - Inclusion as an appendix to the text in Aoife Titley's dissertation - Inclusion as part of any relevant updates or presentations to Aoife Titley's academic supervision team - Inclusion in any academic conference presentations as part of the dissemination of findings - Inclusion in any resulting publications which draw on dissertation findings - Where the researcher has not edited or used filters on the original photo - Where any cropped images are placed side by side by the original image in the body of the text	
I understand that additional and separate consent will be required from me for any reproduction of these photos which has not been specified above.	

Signed: _____

In the presence of: _____

(Aoife Titley, Researcher)

Date: _____

Appendix S: Photo subject release form

SUBJECT PHOTOGRAPH RELEASE FORM	
Statement	Agree ☒
I consent to appear in this photo taken by _____	
I have received appropriate information about Aoife Titley's research project from _____ who is a participant in the project.	
I understand that the image I am in may be reproduced in the following ways: - Inclusion as an image in the body of the text of Aoife Titley's dissertation - Inclusion as an appendix to the text in Aoife Titley's dissertation - Inclusion as part of any relevant updates or presentations to Aoife Titley's academic supervision team - Inclusion in any academic conference presentations as part of the dissemination of findings - Inclusion in any resulting publications which draw on dissertation findings - Where the researcher has not edited or used filters on the original photo - Where any cropped images are placed side by side by the original image in the body of the text	
I understand that additional and separate consent will be required from me for any reproduction of these photos which has not been specified above.	
Researcher contact details: Aoife Titley Ph: 086 6052581/ Email: aoife.titley2@mail.dcu.ie	

Signed: _____

In the presence of: _____

(_____, Participant in Aoife Titley's research project)

Date: _____

Appendix T: Plain language statement

Participant Information Sheet

‘The real and perceived barriers to initial teacher education for young people from minoritized ethnic backgrounds’

1. Introduction to the Research and Researcher

Introduction to Researcher	My name is Aoife Titley, and I am a doctoral student in Dublin City University studying teacher education. I am interested in understanding why more young people from minoritized ethnic backgrounds are not becoming primary teachers in Ireland. I would like to ask young people from diverse backgrounds who are interested in pursuing primary teaching as a career why they think this is the case.
Working title	‘The real and perceived barriers to initial teacher education for young people from minoritized ethnic backgrounds’.
Invitation	I would be very grateful if you would consider becoming a participant in my research. Before you decide whether you would like to take part, I would appreciate if you would read the following information about the project and what would be involved in your participation. Please feel free to get in touch with me if you have questions about any aspect of the research process.

2. Participation details

Aims of the research	The purpose of this research is to give a group of young people from minoritized ethnic backgrounds interested in becoming primary teachers the opportunity to share their stories, ideas and experiences.
What will my participation involve?	There are two parts to this research project: 1. Phase 1 PhotoVoice: answering research questions through photographs 2. Phase 2 Follow up participation: the group decides what is the best way to continue the research in the second phase If you agree to consent to participate in the study you will be asked to take a series of photos and meet me and a group of other young people to discuss your explanation of the photos. After this meeting, a group discussion will take place about what other ways you would like to continue with the research. This might involve a follow up interview, focus group, taking notes in a journal, or some other method as directed by you and other members of the group. The meetings will take place at a time, date and venue that is suitable and accessible for you.
Who else will be involved?	It is hoped that approximately 16 young people from minoritized backgrounds will participate in the research and if you choose to

	participate, you will be given several opportunities to meet with them and talk about your ideas as a group.
What will happen to my inputs?	Any interviews or discussions will be recorded and transcribed. I can send you a copy of the transcript if you so wish. I will have access to this information, and it will only be shared with my supervisor. It will be stored securely to make sure that your identity is protected. All raw and processed data will be securely stored by me for the duration of the study, separate from computers (e.g. on a USB). The USB and all documents will be kept under lock. The data collected from you and the other young people will be analysed and then the results will be written up as findings as part of a written dissertation submitted to Dublin City University. My supervisors, markers, and the external examiners will see the finished product. Elements of the findings may also be presented at conferences or published in academic journals.
Consent	Participation in the research is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any stage of the research, even if you have already started. Participants who are over the age of 18 will be asked to sign a consent form which will provide you with a summary of all your rights as a participant. Participants who are under the age of 18 will sign an assent form with a summary of all of your rights as a participant, which will be supplemented with the signed consent of a parent or guardian.
Anonymity and confidentiality	Every effort will be made to ensure that your privacy is respected and your anonymity is protected throughout this research project. You will not be named in any of the documents relating to my research project and you will be provided with a pseudonym in the transcriptions of the research and in the body of the text. Any photo you have taken which is included in the dissertation will be attributed to your pseudonym. Any information retained at the end of the project will be archived securely and will be disposed of after a period of five years.
Legal limitations	Confidentiality of the information provided to the researcher cannot always be guaranteed. Information can only be protected within the limitations of the law, i.e. it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information request or mandated reporting by some professions.
Potential benefits	One of the possible benefits to participation is that you may learn more about the process of being a primary teacher and learn more about how initial teacher education (sometimes called teacher training) works. Also, some of the information that you provide may be helpful in making initial teacher education more accessible to minoritized young people in the future.
Potential risks	It is not anticipated that there will be any significant risks to your participation. However, you should be aware that there is the potential for sensitive issues to be brought up during the questioning/ discussion process. If this happens and you feel uncomfortable answering particular questions or discussing certain topics, we will stop the conversation immediately and you have the right to withdraw from the process whenever you like.

3. Contact details

Declaration	The information contained above is to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate. I have read the University's current research ethics guidelines and accept responsibility for the conduct of the procedures set out in the attached documentation. I have declared in this form any perceived, potential or actual conflict of interest. I have the appropriate qualifications, experience and skills to conduct the research and to deal with any emergencies and contingencies related to the research that may arise.
Researcher	Aoife Titley Email: aoife.titley2@mail.dcu.ie Phone: 086 6052581
Supervisor	Dr. Audrey Bryan DCU Drumcondra Campus Email: audrey.bryan@dcu.ie
DCU Research Ethics Committee	Phone: (01) 700 8000 Email: rec@dcu.ie <i>Ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee</i> (Reference no: DCUREC/2017/041)

Appendix U: Informed consent and assent forms

Informed Consent Form (over 18's)

‘The real and perceived barriers to initial teacher education for young people from minoritized ethnic backgrounds’

Statement	Agree ✓
I agree to participate in research being conducted by Aoife Titley for the purposes of her doctoral thesis	
The nature and aims of the study have been explained to me	
I have read the Participant Information Sheet which accompanies this form	
The possible risks and possible benefits to participation have been explained to me	
I am participating voluntarily	
I know that I can withdraw from the research at any stage of the process and that there will no penalties or repercussions for me	
I understand that my answers and engagement with the research project will be confidential and that any of my responses or research outputs (for example photos) will be represented anonymously in the write up of findings	
I understand that confidentiality of the information provided to the researcher cannot always be guaranteed. I understand that information can only be protected within the limitations of the law, i.e. it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information request or mandated reporting by some professions.	
The researcher has answered my questions	

I consent to participate in the above study:

Signed: _____

In the presence of: _____ (Aoife Titley, Researcher)

Date: _____



Informed Consent Form (Parents and Guardians)	
<i>'The real and perceived barriers to initial teacher education for young people from minoritized ethnic backgrounds'</i>	
Statement	Agree ✓
I agree to participate in research being conducted by Aoife Titley for the purposes of her doctoral thesis	
The nature and aims of the study have been explained to me	
I have read the Participant Information Sheet	
The possible risks and possible benefits to participation have been explained to me	
I am participating voluntarily	
I know that I can withdraw from the research at any stage of the process and that there will no penalties or repercussions for me	
I understand that my answers and engagement with the research project will be confidential and that any of my responses or research outputs (<i>for example photos</i>) will be represented anonymously in the write up of findings	
The researcher has answered my questions	

I assent to participate in the above study:

Signed: _____

I consent to my child participating in the above study:

Signed: _____

In the presence of: _____

(Aoife Titley, Researcher)

Date: _____

Appendix V: Reflections on informed consent in practice

One area of informed consent which warrants further attention is how the operational plan for the research is communicated to participants, particularly ones from marginalized communities or respondents for whom English is not a first language. It is important to note that none of my research participants had taken part in academic research before. Ensuring that the participants understood how academic research works was very important to me. Many of the respondents have indicated to me that the plain language statement and consent forms are unduly laborious, and ended up being a hindrance, rather than a help, when they were deciding to participate. This has led me to reflect and question dominant discourses about ethical research practice in this kind of context (Matson, 2019). The DCU Ethics Committee recommended the inclusion of additional consent forms for the PhotoVoice task as part of the ethical review process. As a result, some participants ended up having to sign up to five separate consent forms.

I sometimes wonder about the efficacy of the information sheet and the informed consent forms, considering how off-putting the participants seem to be finding them. In initial interactions with the participants, they are always so positive about getting involved and seem to be drawn to the PhotoVoice component in particular. However, they seem to be very intimidated by the paperwork, it seems to make the whole exercise a lot more serious for them. It's almost like in their minds it turns from a fun task representing their narrative creatively, to a formal and bureaucratic chore. They have said that the additional layer of paperwork made them think that the research was a much bigger deal than they originally anticipated. I suppose I just have to believe in the process, take comfort in the fact that their interests are being protected by these measures and trust my own instincts in relation to what an ethic of care looks like (Noddings, 2013). I would never compromise what is involved in informed consent, but if I was doing it again I think I would pre-empt their concerns a bit better.

(Titley, reflective note, 24th February, 2020).

I feel like I am playing multiple roles in this research. With both the gatekeepers and the young people, I am an insider in teacher education, but an outsider in their world. I am trying to strike the balance between building a professional researcher identity while still trying to interact in an outgoing and pleasant manner. I am trying to be a good researcher. I am trying to facilitate their stories. I am trying to equip them with information. I am trying

not to overwhelm them with details at the start while also trying to make sure they have all the details they need to sign up. I am trying to be empathetic and supportive, without making it seem that I want them to share negative experiences for my benefit.

(Titley, reflexive note, December 11th, 2019).

I sometimes feel very excited about how the research is going about what the data is telling me, and that I am finally gaining momentum after so many setbacks. But then I feel guilty because the data only exists because the participants have had negative things happen to them. Lofland & Lofland (1995) call this an ethical hangover, and that you need to be constantly vigilant about the power and privilege that comes with being the facilitator of these stories, particularly in sensitive research where the topics might evoke strong emotions from the participants. If researchers avoided sensitive topics, we would lose access to one of our most profound spheres of human meaning (Pascoe-Leahy, 2021). But ultimately, protecting the participants is always more important than good data. I have found the debriefing process, and staying in regular touch with the participants is helping a bit in this regard.

(Titley, reflexive note, 14th April, 2021).