An analysis of Junior Cycle English teachers' understandings and experiences of intercultural education using a critical literacy framework

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Education is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed:

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Donie and Rosario O' Brien. They encouraged my brother Donal and I, in all that we have sought to accomplish, and instilled in us qualities of kindness, respect, and a commitment to hard work.

My late father passed away a few months before I embarked on my doctoral journey. He took great pleasure in seeing me reach various educational milestones, and I know he would be proud to see my published thesis. Through his example, I have learned the importance of self- belief. His wisdom and wit and interest in the world continue to inspire me.

A love of literature which my mother passed to me, is at the heart of this study. She valued the gift of education, greatly, reminding my brother and I that she had won a scholarship, which made it possible for her to attend secondary school at a time in Ireland, when education was the preserve of the children of the well to do. In 1950, when she sat her Leaving Certificate, aged sixteen, she had to do so in the boys' school in her town as she was the only girl to sit the exam in her school that year.

I admire my mother for the challenges of class and gender she overcame with great dignity, both as a schoolgirl, and in her working life. She was one of countless women in Ireland forced to resign from their civil service positions, due to the Marriage Bar. Now in her ninetieth year, my mother still recalls the tears she cried on having to resign from her beloved career as a librarian on getting married.

I thank her for her determination that her daughter would have educational and career opportunities not available to her and I acknowledge the myriad ways she informs my educational vision.

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I am very grateful to the ten teachers who participated in the research during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite all of the pressures on teachers and schools at this time. I hope that the completed study does justice to their effort and commitment.

I wish to express gratitude to the principal, management team, and the Board of Management of my school, for their ongoing support and belief in the value of this research.

I wish to acknowledge the teachers and students with whom I work and from whom I learn so much every day.

I also wish to thank my former colleagues in two schools in India: St. George's College, in Uttarakhand and Loreto Day School, Sealdah, Kolkata, with whom I discovered the importance of intercultural education at the beginning of my teaching career.

A special mention to my lovely friend Prof. Shefali Moitra of Jadavpur University who took me into her home as a 'stranger' on my first visit to Kolkata, and who generously shared her passion for Bengali literature and film and Rabindranath with me. My visit to Visva-Bharati, the university founded by Tagore at Santiniketan, set me on a path that has led to this research.

I could not have undertaken this study without the love and support of my wonderful family. I am beyond grateful to my husband, Niall and our three lovely boys. I am also certain that our beloved baby son Fiachra has watched over and guided me, especially on the more challenging days.

Thank you, Niall, Daithí, Ferdia, and Senan for your unwavering patience with me as I set up office at the kitchen table. Thank you for the cups of tea, for listening to random paragraphs, and for helping to remove technical gremlins that at times almost proved my undoing.

Above all, thank you for being by my side.

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List of Abbreviations

BLM: Black Lives Matter

CBA: Class Based Assessment

CL: Critical Literacy

CPD: Continuous Professional Development

CRT: Critical Race Theory

DCU: Dublin City University

DE: Department of Education

DES: Department of Education and Science

ICOS: Irish Council of International Students

IES: Intercultural Education Strategy

INAR: Irish Network Against Racism

JC: Junior Cycle

NCCA: National Council Curriculum Assessment

PCT: Post Colonial Theory

TD: Teachta Dála

UN: United Nations

UNCERD: United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Racism and Discrimination

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

WHO: World Health Organisation

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Abstract

An analysis of Junior Cycle English teachers' understandings and experiences of intercultural education using a critical literacy framework. Ursula Murphy.

This critical and reflexive qualitative study examines a particular group of English teachers' understandings and experiences of 'intercultural education' in the context of the Junior Cycle English classroom. It investigates how pedagogy, centred on analysis of literature and film, informs intercultural education. Ten semi-structured interviews with teachers from a range of different school types were employed to gather data.

A theoretical framework composed of concepts drawn from Critical Literacy (Freire, 1967,1970), and supported by concepts drawn from Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1992; Delagado and Stefancic, 2001; Crenshaw, 2011; Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995), and Post-Colonial Theory (Bhabha, 1990, 1994; Said, 1978, 1994; Spivak, 1988), constituted the critical lens informing examination of teachers' selection of, and pedagogy related to literature and film. The data was coded manually, and the critical lens was then applied to the coded data.

Critical analysis reveals divergence among teachers' conceptualisations and experiences of intercultural education in the context of their English teaching. Half of the study participants express perspectives that align with well-meaning though superficial understandings. They foreground celebration of diversity, and while they emphasise their commitment to the well-being of all students, their expressed understanding of the intercultural features a limited and therefore problematic gap in knowledge regarding both the nature of racism as well as appropriate pedagogic responses to it.
The other half of the participants conceptualise and enact more critical forms of intercultural education in their classroom exploration of literature and film that bear the hallmark of active anti-racism and commitment to social justice.

The spectrum of understandings, and the dissonances in classroom experience of the intercultural identified, indicates the need for a re-imagining of the status of the intercultural in the context of Junior Cycle English teaching. The study findings point to the role of various educational stakeholders in establishing a critically informed vision to guide the development of intercultural education in Ireland, in terms of curriculum and pedagogy, and the initial and ongoing education of teachers.

The study makes suggestions as to how the critical framework employed in the research can inform the development of a transformative intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English teaching.

Given the dearth of Irish studies that engage the relationship between English teaching and intercultural education, several areas for further research are suggested.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time…'

Four Quartets 'Little Gidding', T.S. Eliot (1941)

This study explores a particular group of English teachers' understandings and experiences of 'intercultural education' in the context of the Junior Cycle English classroom, employing a critical lens to inform examination of their selection of literary and film texts, as well as pedagogy related to the latter. The research occupies a space that straddles the aesthetic and the political, acknowledging the inherently political nature of the work of the teacher (Dadds, 2001). A qualitative study informed by a critical lens was deemed the most appropriate methodology by which to examine the ways in which teacher selection of literature and film for exploration informs intercultural engagement in the Junior Cycle English classroom.

The qualitative and interpretive design of the study responds to the contention of Aoki (2005), and Snyder et al. (1992), who conceive of curriculum as lived experience and the generation of personal meaning arising from dynamic classroom interactions. The study seeks to probe the extent to which intercultural issues such as representation and racism

emerging in classroom texts are connected by the teacher to the everyday lives of students in the world.

Cresswell and Creswell (2018) maintain that qualitative researchers seek an in-depth description of a phenomenon. My decision to employ the probing semi-structured interview acknowledges the pivotal role of teacher knowledge and values in informing intercultural engagement. Data was gathered via ten semi-structured interviews with English teachers who have experience of teaching Junior Cycle English in ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse schools. The research methodology is presented in Chapter 4.

Given that the present study seeks to turn the spotlight on Junior Cycle English teaching, it is interesting to note that in a 2010 interview, Professor Geneva Gay has said that it is her belief that "the most progress in embedding and incorporating multicultural education has been in the practice of literacy" (Atwater, 2010, p. 160). Considering Gay's optimism about the scope of literacy pedagogy to embed multiculturalism in education, the current study aspires to illuminate the intercultural perspectives of English teachers in the Irish context, positioning their conceptualisations and experiences of English along a spectrum ranging from liberal to critical approaches (Gorski, 2008).

I wish to make it clear, that the study's employment of the term 'intercultural' does not presuppose that an intercultural approach on the ground is necessarily critical in the way it responds to questions of representation or racism. Walsh (2009) cautions against the employment of what he terms 'functional interculturality' as a strategy that meets neoliberal exigencies by paying lip-service to inclusion.

1.2 The Value of a Critical Lens?

From the outset, it is necessary to provide clarity about how engagement with scholarship pertaining to Critical Literacy (Freire, 1967, 1970), and extended by concepts drawn from Anti-Racist Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1999, 2005), Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), and Post-Colonial Theory (Bhabha, 1990, 1994; Said, 1978, 1994, 2001; Spivak, 1998), informs my critical approach to the research.. This lens aligns with my belief in the transformational potential of the Junior Cycle English classroom as a site of social justice (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002).

It is important here to clarify how social justice is understood specifically in the context of this study. Following Moller (2002), I wish to emphasise that at the core of social justice are democratic principles take seek the promotion of equality for all. Social justice holds a vision for society that is democratic and egalitarian, regardless of social class, gender, sexual orientation or ethnicity. It is grounded in human rights and therefore applies to all (Ruck et al., 2014, Turiel et al., 2016). In this study's context, the dimension of social justice which is foregrounded is educational responses to ethnic and cultural diversity with the study's focus on how pedagogy related to literature and film responds to ethnic and cultural diversity in the Junior Cycle English classroom.

My aim for the study is that it might help to guide future developments in Junior Cycle English, both at classroom level, and in English teacher education. It became clear, therefore, that the most appropriate type of research to excavate English teacher perspectives would be a critical qualitative study in which research 'truth' would be co-constructed in the dynamic between research participants and myself (Crotty, 2015; Merriam 1998). The framework employed will be outlined in detail in Chapter Two but

before proceeding, it is important to demonstrate how a critical lens aligns with a critical orientation to intercultural education in the Junior Cycle English classroom.

Informed by engagement with literature that criticises liberal approaches to cultural and ethnic diversity (Walsh, 2009), I set out to examine the extent to which Junior Cycle English teachers' pedagogy responds to the challenges and opportunities presented by ethnic and cultural diversity in the classroom. The study questions whether students are being provided with intellectual tools necessary to recognise and interrogate stereotype and racism. It also asks whether the Junior Cycle English classroom is a space that disrupts or perhaps sustains the invidious process of 'othering'.

Dasli and Díaz (2017) make a case for the nurturing of students as critical intercultural beings capable of actively engaging in dialogue that transcends boundaries- real and imagined. This dialogue not only celebrates difference, but also critiques inequalities, and in so doing, contributes to a culturally and ideologically richer, fairer, less alienated, and more democratic society (2017, p. i). It is in this spirit that the current research has been undertaken. Similarly, May and Sleeter (2010), advocate the integration of anti-racist education, critical race theory, and critical pedagogy with multiculturalism, to interrogate and challenge the institutionalisation of oppression within education itself.

Liberal approaches to intercultural education, on the other hand, centre more on celebration of diversity (Srivastava, 2007). While critical theorists contend that schools should move beyond intercultural celebration, to "provide culturally diverse opportunities for subjects like racism, terrorism and anti-discrimination to be taught" (Race, 2015, p.11), there is much disagreement as to the ways in which such education should be realised.

The research questions and aims are presented in the following sections.

1.3 Research Questions

Considering international studies, and more especially Irish scholarship that has highlighted serious inadequacies in the form of intercultural education promoted in national guidelines (Bryan, 2009), the research questions are articulated as follows:

1. What are English teachers' understandings and experiences of intercultural education in the context of the Junior Cycle English classroom?
2. How does pedagogy centred on exploration of fiction and film inform intercultural education in the Junior Cycle English classroom?
3. How can a critically informed analysis of pedagogy that is related to literature and film exploration guide developments in intercultural education policy and practice in the context of Junior Cycle English?

It is also important that I acknowledge the extent to which my values as researcher permeate and impact every aspect of the study (Bryman, 2016), and embrace the identity of 'critical' researcher seeking to advance an agenda for reform (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Crotty, 1998). It also acknowledges myriad issues related to linguistic and cultural differences, as well as "challenges, conflicts and complexities" (Hines, 2007, p. 125).

While the study employs a critical stance, this criticality did not overpower the perspectives of the study participants. Teacher conceptualisations of the intercultural were put into conversation with the study's critical framework with the aim of developing insights about the current state of play, as well as guiding future

developments in English teaching practice, initial teacher education, and ongoing professional development.

1.4 Research Aims

The research questions rest on four pillars of enquiry designed to facilitate a rich and in-depth range of participant views and experiences:

(i) To provide an opportunity to Junior Cycle English teachers to reflect upon and describe their understandings of intercultural education in the context of the Junior Cycle English classroom.

(ii) To elicit teacher perspectives on the ways in which the Junior Cycle English curriculum is conducive to the nurturing of intercultural education and what forms it is taking.

(iii) To develop an understanding of the extent to which English teachers' descriptions of their pedagogic experiences of intercultural education constitute 'soft' or 'critical' approaches.

(iv) To examine how the application of a Critical Literacy framework (Freire, 1967, 1970), informed by Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), and Post-Colonial Theory (Bhabha, 1990, 1994; Said, 1978, 1994, 2001; Spivak, 1988), can inform the intercultural vision and practice of Junior Cycle English teaching in socially just ways.

These pillars encapsulate the central aim of the research which is to position current practice in relation to classroom analysis of fiction and film along an intercultural spectrum. At one end, teachers' descriptions may reflect inclusive and celebratory responses to ethnic and cultural diversity. At the other more 'critical' end, teachers may be grappling with issues of representation, stereotype, and racism, and providing students

with the analytical tools that empower interrogation of that which they encounter in the English classroom and in the world.

1.5 Key Terms

This chapter addresses the contested nature of the term 'intercultural education' and the terminological interplay between the 'multicultural' and the 'intercultural', before providing an overview of intercultural education as policy in the Irish context. Scholarly critique of Ireland's official response to ethnic and cultural diversity and the social and political context in which the questions are framed, will also be analysed, as well as the Junior Cycle English curricular context in which teachers are making pedagogic choices. An outline of my professional experience as teacher-researcher and the rationale for the study will also be presented.

As a contested term, it is necessary to consider the relationship of the 'intercultural' to the 'multicultural', before attention is directed to intercultural education as policy in Ireland and its critique.

1.5.1 Multiculturalism

In its *Guidelines on Intercultural Education*, UNESCO distinguishes between the 'multicultural' and the 'intercultural'. The multicultural is described in terms of "the culturally diverse nature of human society", referring to "elements of ethnic or national culture and also linguistic, religious and socio-economic diversity" (UNESCO 2006, p.17). Interculturality refers to "equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect" (ibid.).

1.5.2 Multicultural Education

Banks (1993) defines multicultural education as "a total school reform effort designed to increase educational equity for a range of cultural, ethnic and economic groups (p.6), but Dervin and Tournebise (2013), draw attention to 'the apparent lack of concern for justice' in normative multicultural education (p. 541).

The absence of a social justice agenda manifests in less critical forms of multiculturalism, referred to variously as '3-D: dance, dress and dining' (Srivastava, 2007); or 'heroes and holidays' (Lee et al., 1997). 'Celebratory' approaches are seen to represent non-critical responses to diversity, rooted in differences and inequities. They are deemed an add-on approach to the curriculum and are critiqued by scholars who demand a move beyond 'eating the other', to processes that seek anti-oppression transformation (Banks, 1994, 1997, 1998; Kumashiro, 2001, 2004; Nieto, 1994, 2012; Schoorman & Bogotch, 2010).

Critical scholars challenge educators to reorient the curriculum so that experiences in the classroom connect to the lived experience of the student (Kincheloe, 2001). The current study seeks to discover whether what is happening at the level of the Junior Cycle English classroom aligns with the social justice agenda, or whether teacher responses to ethnic and cultural diversity must be characterised as the "3-D" approach, a mix of both, or somewhere in-between.

Importantly, Schick and St. Denis (2005) argue that the continued prevalence of 'window dressing' forms of multiculturalism in schools is attributable not only to the fact that it is easy to do, but that it also subverts the need to challenge the persistence of dominant White and Western viewpoints. Srivastava (2007) concludes that the centering of such dominant perspectives with the consequent relegating to the periphery of 'other' stories

and experiences, has the oppressive effect of filtering the voice of the other, resulting in a reinforcement rather than a transformation of racialised identities and relations of power (p. 292).

In response to such failures, denials and silences, critical race theorists such as Gloria Ladson Billings (2004), call for a more critical approach to education, to argue against the ways dominant ideologies appropriate multicultural discourse (p.52).

The current study responds to her challenge by investigating to what extent literary and cinematic pedagogy facilitates critical interrogation of texts.

1.5.3 Interculturalism

The aim of intercultural education is understood to "go beyond passive co-existence to achieve a developing and sustainable way of living together in culturally diverse societies" (Hadjisoteriou et al.,2015, p.222). This is a view shared by Deardoff, 2009; Gundara, 2000; and Perry and Southwell, 2011.

Stokke and Lybaek (2018) point out that interculturalism as a theoretical concept is used widely in education and refers to:

> …culturally sensitive practices which affirm diversity and emphasize attitudes of openness and respect towards the other....and a critical attitude to one's own cultural background (p.73).

Another more practical reason that I have employed the term 'intercultural', is the fact that discourse pertaining to the 'intercultural' is already well established in the Irish post-primary context.

It should be noted, however, that the word 'intercultural' is not included in either the Junior Cycle Framework (NCCA 2015a), or the Junior Cycle English Specification (NCCA, 2015b). These are the curricular documents that frame the study of English in the first three years of Irish post-primary education.

Having examined these key terms, attention will now shift to intercultural policy.

1.6 Intercultural Education Policy in the Irish Context

Interculturalism centred on respect and celebration of diversity is the Irish national policy response to diversity in school (NCCA, 2005). The NCCA document, *Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School* (2005), expresses the statutory understanding of the intercultural in the Irish education system. It presents itself as one of the Irish government's key responses to "the existence of racism and discriminatory attitudes in Ireland" (NCCA, 2005, p.17).

It identifies two aspects to intercultural education, one which "respects, celebrates and recognises the normality of diversity in all parts of human life", and the other which "promotes equality and human rights" (2005, p. i).

The most recent iteration of the Irish government's approach to intercultural education is the Intercultural Education Strategy (2010). It instructs schools to "welcome diversity and appreciate the opportunities it affords" (p.59). While such pronouncements appear laudable, Bryan (2009, p.298), has demonstrated that intercultural policy in the Irish context works to "mask relationships of power" thereby constituting a block to social justice.

1.6.1 Junior Cycle and Intercultural Education

Framework for Junior Cycle (NCCA, 2015a) is the blueprint for education in the first three years of post-primary education in Ireland. While it does not make explicit reference to the 'intercultural', it is explicit in its description of Junior Cycle as a "learning experience for our young people that is appropriate to the needs of the twenty-first century" (2015a, p.2). Words and phrases such as "inclusion', 'emotional and social wellbeing', 'collective wellbeing of school, community and society', 'equality of opportunity, participation and outcomes for all', and 'connects with life outside the school' feature (2015a, p.11).

In addition, one of the twenty-four statements of learning underpinning the *Framework* declares that the student "appreciates and respects how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and culture in which she/he lives" (2015a, p.12). The current study seeks to investigate the ways in which teachers' conceptualisations and experiences of intercultural education relate to the apparently laudable pronouncements of the *Junior Cycle Framework,* and whether a liberal (Srivastava, 2007), or more critical intercultural education **(**Kumashiro, 2001, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2004), is being advanced in the Junior Cycle English classroom.

While there is ample evidence in the Junior Cycle Framework, of the foregrounding of themes that resonate with intercultural education, there is nothing to suggest any demand on the teacher to embrace a critical and justice-based pedagogy.

The next section provides an overview of scholarship that has problematised national intercultural policy in Ireland.

1.6.2 Critique of Intercultural Policy and Practice in the Irish Context

Through her analysis of national anti-racism policy documents and curricular materials, Bryan (2008), concludes that "the implementation of intercultural education in schools fulfils a political function of providing an educational palliative to minorities while pre-empting resistance…" (p.49). The current study both acknowledges and aspires to respond to the serious shortcomings in provisions for intercultural engagement and anti-racist education in Ireland identified in previous research.

Bryan (2008) further problematises official Irish intercultural policy. She points out that it is underpinned by the misleading assertion that Ireland's intercultural policy is a response to increasing diversity in Irish society and the particularly rapid pace of change in recent years, particularly since the era of the Celtic Tiger. This linking of an increase in diversity with a rise in racism, abnormalises diversity, by suggesting that Ireland's natural state is one of racial, ethnic, and cultural homogeneity (Bryan, 2008, p.51).

There is also much critique of intercultural policy in the international context. Contemporary intercultural education practices have been dismissed as being no more than an 'add-on' in the U. S. (Sleeter, 2017, p.158), U.K. (Bhopal & Rhamie, 2014, p. 309) and Australia (Mills & Ballantyne, 2010, p.447). Gorski contends that:

> Any framework for intercultural education that does not have as its central and overriding premise a commitment to the establishment and maintenance of an equitable and just world can be seen as a tool, however well intentioned, of an educational colonization in which inequity and injustice are reproduced under the guise of interculturalism (2008, p.517).

Considering previous studies, I wished to establish whether teacher descriptions of the intercultural constituted the mere 'add on'. I wished to establish whether any of the

research participants shared the hostility of some White teachers to embrace the goals of intercultural education (Sleeter, 2017), or were of the view that attempts to tackle injustice are an attack on their whiteness (Picower, 2009, p. 205). I also sought to investigate the extent to which critical forms of intercultural education were being enacted in the classrooms of the study participants (Nieto, 2012).

It is now necessary to understand the curricular context in which pedagogic decision-making unfolds. The next two sections feature a brief description of the Junior Cycle English Specification and associated reading lists which prescribe engagement with literature and film in the first three years of post-primary school in Ireland.

1.7 Junior Cycle English Specification

Specification for Junior Cycle English (NCCA, 2015b) is the document that prescribes the curriculum in English.

The rationale behind the *Specification* is presented in terms of the promotion among students of "their personal growth and effective participation in society" (2015b, p.5).

Respect for the "students' competence in their home language together with their literacy practices outside of school is highlighted. This acknowledges the potentially culturally and linguistically diverse nature of the contemporary classroom, and the reference to competence in the home language represents some shift away from emphasis on English language deficit which may be an issue for the migrant student. Language acquisition is also deemed essential to the students' "contributions to political, social and cultural life as thoughtful and active citizens" (p.6).

The only explicit allusion to diversity in the Rationale comes in the form of a reference to appreciation of "literature from different cultures" (p.6). While this acknowledges the importance of diverse traditions in a general sense, it offers no guidance in selecting material reflective of diverse authors and themes, and represents therefore, a superficial nod to diversity.

The English classroom is described "as a place of talk and discussion" (p.11). While it is clear, that opportunities for dynamic student to student engagement abound, the 'intercultural' nature of the Junior Cycle English classroom is not explicitly addressed.

The phrase "engage critically with texts in a wide range of forms, to understand and respond to their content" (p.7) might, it could be argued, give leeway to the teacher committed to facilitating in his or her students the development of critical powers of interrogation. However, the very general nature of the statements of learning, negates any obligation on the part of the teacher to adopt an actively intercultural agenda, let alone a critical one. The explicit reference that is made to student encounters with diversity, relates to appreciation of the "significance of diversity", but how the teacher chooses to respond pedagogically to this 'significance' is very much dependent on his or her political and educational vision (p. 8).

One of the key aims of the *Specification* is that students develop "an informed appreciation of literature through personal encounters with a variety of literary texts" (p.7). It is clear, however, that how the phrase 'variety of literary texts' is interpreted, is very much in the gift of the individual teacher within the parameters of selection facilitated by the reading lists, and so it is to the lists that our attention will now shift.

1.7.1 Junior Cycle English Prescribed Reading

In the introductory section to the *Specification*, we read that "Junior Cycle is inclusive of all students and contributes to equality of opportunity, participation and outcome for all" (2015b, p.5). This suggests that the lists of recommended texts and films from first to third year might also be sufficiently culturally diverse to provide teachers with the opportunity to select material for classroom exploration that reflects the diverse nature of the students in front of them.

Therefore, it is necessary to probe the reading lists in detail, as I have already noted the reference to the importance of "the ability to appreciate literature from different cultures" (p. 6). How well this sentiment is supported through the recommendation of appropriate literature and film must be examined.

The first Junior Cycle English Text List was issued in 2014. Subsequent lists have been issued for 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and the most recent list covers 2024, 2025, 2026 (NCCA/Curriculum Online).

The guide for first year novels is an indicative list. The lists that cover second and third years feature prescribed texts from which teachers must select two novels, two drama texts (one of which may be an extract) a film, biography, travel text or documentary. Students are also required to explore poetry and short stories over the course of the three years.

There is not space here to examine in-depth the composite list of 82 novelists, playwrights, directors, and documentary makers that feature on the reading list (some repeatedly) in the period up to 2026. I wish to provide some sense, however, of just how intercultural the prescribed list from which teachers make their selections really is.

A significant lack of cultural diversity characterises the list of 82 predominantly White writers and directors, with the exception, of a handful of male and female writers of colour, including Chinua Achebe, Inua Ellams, Akhil Sharma, Elizabeth Acevedo, Malorie Blackman, Edugyan Esi, Haifaa Al-Mansour, and Nyoni Rungano.

The most recent iteration of the reading list (up to 2026), however, provides the teacher with a commitment to engage intercultural themes in books and films written/directed by authors of colour with the opportunity to do so, whether by exploring the clash of tradition and modernity in pre-colonial Nigeria, the solace discovered in poetry by a Dominican girl living in Harlem, the experience of a young Zambian girl accused of being a witch, or the passionate longing of a rebellious young Saudi girl to win a Koran reciting competition at school so that she can purchase the bicycle of her dreams.

For teachers wishing to explore the experience of migration, there are some possible options available. Sarah Crossan's *The Weight of Water* (2011) examines the contemporary experience of a young immigrant girl newly arrived in the UK, whereas Ruta Sepetys' *Between Shades of Gray* (2011) explores the forced migration of a Lithuanian family to a Siberian labour camp during the Stalinist regime, and *In America* directed by Jim Sheridan (2002), considers the theme from the perspective of an illegal Irish family in the U.S.

Novels and films written and directed by White authors and directors, but which feature non-White culture, are also represented in the list. Jane Mitchell's *Chalkline* (2009), examines the experience of a boy soldier in Kashmir, and Andy Mulligan depicts the experience of young Bengali rag pickers in his *Trash* (2014). Director Niki Caro describes the coming of age of a young Maori girl negotiating the tension between contemporary life and traditional Maori culture in *Whalerider* (2002).

The latest iteration of the reading list also features two texts that subvert stereotypical and racist representations of Blackness. Lin-Manuel Miranda's musical *Hamilton* (2015) featuring song and rap, tells the story of one of America's founding fathers Alexander Hamilton and features a non-White cast thereby challenging perceptions of the founding of America, by placing the spotlight on women and people of colour.

In this sense, it subverts the idea that American history is the history of White people. Focusing on Hamilton, the immigrant, and featuring numerous allusions to slavery, the musical through contemporary rap and Hip-hop, reminds the audience that contemporaneous to the discourse of American freedom and democracy, was the institution of Black slavery. A drama such as this would provide opportunities to the English teacher committed to an anti-racist agenda, to explore issues around representation and depiction of the past, particularly in the context of America's contested and problematic history. Furthermore, exploration of such a drama and its production, might prompt reflection and debate on contemporary issues of race and representation in the Irish context.

Another text, the novel *Washington Black* by Canadian author Esi Eduyan published in 2018, tackles Black history in an unconventional way, making the eleven-year-old slave boy on a nineteenth century Barbadian sugar cane plantation, the main protagonist. The novel disrupts the conventional nineteenth century canonical novel which treats of travel and adventure from the perspective of the White explorer. This story dissects the 'White saviour' myth and has the potential to allow for a rich interrogation of literary depictions of Blackness.

On examination of the lists, it becomes clear that there is scope for the teacher who is committed to the development of a truly inclusive intercultural Junior Cycle English

classroom to choose material that will engage intercultural themes and issues. The impetus, however, to develop practice in ways conducive to the promotion of a socially just education, lies with the individual.

There is no reference to issues of race and racism in the *Framework for Junior Cycle* (2015a), or in the *Specification* (2015b). These issues are, however, present in some of the novels and films which feature on the prescribed lists, and while there is opportunity for the teacher to engage themes of racism and representation in his or her classroom, it is the responsibility of the individual to educate him/herself in the pertinent issues and appropriate pedagogy.

Controversial texts (novels and films) such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960*),* and *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937)*,* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (dir. Zeitlin, 2012), that engage issues of race and racism feature on some of the reading lists, but there is not a single resource or suggestion made that might guide teachers in their exploration of difficult (and particularly difficult for students of colour) and important material.

Having outlined the policy and curricular framework in which Junior Cycle English teachers make vital decisions about whose stories are told, and in what ways, it is now necessary to shift focus to the broader socio-political context of the study.

1.8 Societal Context of the Research

Irish society has always been characterised by the presence of diverse communities: Irish Travellers, different Protestant denominations, Black Irish and Jews (Bryan, 2009; Darmody et al., 2012). While Ireland has historically been a "country of emigration" (Mc Ginnity & Kingston, 2017, p.255), the Celtic Tiger era of rapid economic growth from the mid 1990's to 2007, led to a rapid rise in inward migration resulting in an increase in

ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity (Bryan & Bracken, 2011; Coolahan, Hussey & Kilfeather, 2012, NCCA 2005).

Hull and Stornaiuolo (2010) argue that our century requires an education that supports "capacities for dialogue and the respectful imagining of others across aesthetic, cultural, historic and ideological difference" (p.86), and it is in this spirit, motivated by personal and professional experience, that I embarked upon the research.

1.9 Political Context of the Research

The more recent political and educational Irish context for the study relates to public discourse featuring intercultural issues, particularly the growing demand among third level and school students to decolonise university and school curricula internationally, and in Ireland. Decolonisation of the curriculum involves interrogation of its whiteness and the dominance of Eurocentric thought, as well as critical analysis of how colonial forms of knowledge have shaped both what we know, and what we recognise **(**Arshad, 2020). It is against the backdrop of calls for a radical re-imagining of that which we teach and how we teach it, that the present study was undertaken.

Decolonisation of reading lists is not about cancelling the knowledge or literature or histories that have been produced in colonial nations, but rather situating those texts that do not originate in the West, against the context of imperialism (Keval, 2019). This allows for consideration of why certain narratives have been marginalised and de-centred. This process allows for a repositioning of that which gets to occupy the centre.

Calls to overhaul university curricula have a long history (Morreira et al., 2020). The contemporary surge of interest in ending the domination of Western epistemological traditions, histories, and figures, however, has been inspired by, and connected to other

contemporary student-led movements including Rhodes Must Fall (2015), and Gladstone Must Fall, at the University of Liverpool (Bhambra et al., 2018; Race et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the global reaction to the death of George Floyd in the summer of 2020, and the subsequent growth of the international activist movement *Black Lives Matter*, has brought the issue of race to the forefront of public discourse. Demands in education for a radical rethink of university and school literature reading lists to identify alternative literatures previously marginalised by omission, have also escalated (Arshad, 2020).

At the same time, in the Irish context, the prescribed literature/film lists for Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate English were coming under increasing scrutiny for diversity and representation (NCCA, 2023). It was for these reasons, as well as the fact that there is no research that engages specifically the views of English teachers on their experience of intercultural, that an investigation of teacher perspectives on the intercultural potential of the Junior Cycle English classroom is timely.

I will now describe how my experience as English teacher in ethnically and culturally diverse contexts has been a powerful motivator in this research.

1.10 Professional Experience of the Researcher as Teacher

Currently, I teach English and History in a Catholic girls' post-primary school with an ethnically, religiously, and culturally diverse student cohort, in the North-East of Ireland. The necessity of an intercultural education underpinned by a real commitment to social justice is impressed upon me in the course of my work as teacher with students from diverse backgrounds. Our students include Irish Travellers, students in direct provision including some who have experienced conflict in Syria, Afghanistan, and more recently

Ukraine, as well as students born in Ireland with close family connections to countries all over the world, many of whom have an affluent background.

This experience prompts me to investigate the intercultural dimension of English teaching more systematically, to examine the extent to which we acknowledge and respond in curricular terms, to the reality of the multiple and shifting cultural identities of the students we teach (Alexander, 1996; Hall, 2000).

My teaching career began in the north of India, at a boys' boarding school in the foothills of the Garhwal Himalaya, at a time in the early 1990's, when the region was experiencing civic unrest resulting from the destruction of the Babri mosque on a site in Ayodhya, believed by Hindus to be the birthplace of Rama. My experience as a young teacher at that time, demonstrated to me, the creative potential of school to foster peaceful understanding and dialogue among Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Buddhist, and Christian boys educated together and finding common ground in a shared love of soccer, drama or art. This experience has had a formative effect on my professional identity as teacher. The school's nurturing of positive intercultural relationships at a time of heightened communal tension, showed me, the power of everyday conversations, as a first step towards the establishment of rapport with the potential to develop into more meaningful dialogue across differences.

Becoming a teacher away from the comfort of the familiar, and from the vantage point of the outsider, was both exhilarating and difficult at times. Forced for the first time in my life to contend with the feeling of being 'other', I had to rely on strangers for guidance and help, hoping that I would be accepted into an inner coterie of Indian and Tibetan teachers, many of whom had been teaching in the hills for years. I was both literally and metaphorically what Maxine Greene describes, as the "teacher as stranger" (1973).

It is my view that those of us fortunate to live in a part of the world that is relatively stable, (and I am old enough to remember the way the Northern Ireland Troubles impacted this island), cannot afford to be complacent about our collective responsibility as educators to promote social justice. I acknowledge the extent to which my early career experience of the intercultural dimension of teaching informs both my approach in the classroom and as researcher (Sefotho, 2015).

In this study, I have actively embraced the stranger's perspective so that the taken for granted, and that which I already know from my experience in the culturally diverse English classroom, is placed under the spotlight, turned over, and considered from a range of different teacher perspectives.

1.11 Rationale for the Study

The 2016 census reveals that Irish Travellers represent .7% of the population and the 535,475 non-Irish nationals living in Ireland in April 2016, came from 200 different countries. This is a 1.6% decrease on the 2011 figure ((Census 2016: Profile 7 *Migration and Diversity*), and these figures do not include the growing number of second and third generation of Irish born children of migrants (Fahey et al, 2019). Census 2022 (delayed for a year due to Covid-19), reveals an increase in the population of non-nationals living in Ireland to 631, 785 people (12% of the population (CSO 2022) More than 750.000 people speak a language other than English or Irish at home (Profile 5 on Diversity, Migration, Ethnicity, Irish Travellers, CSO, 2022).

In her foreword to the *Attitudes to Diversity in Ireland study* (Mc Ginnity et al., 2018), then Chief Commissioner of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Emily Logan remarks that "the relatively high levels of discriminatory attitudes detailed in this

study are a matter for concern". More recently, the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR 2023 iReport.ie) has revealed that 600 racist incidents were reported in 2022, a figure which represents an increase on the 2021 figure of 404 reports (INAR 2022, iReport.ie).

INAR, a network of anti-racism civil society organisations which aims collectively to highlight and address the issue of racism in Ireland, has been gathering data on racism in Ireland since 2013. It takes as its definition of racism that established by the UN International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination:

> …any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin which has the purpose of modifying or impairing the recognition, the enjoyment or exercise on an equal footing of human rights or fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life constitutes racial discrimination (CERD, 1969, Article 1, pg.2)

It is against a growing increase in racism in Ireland that the current research was undertaken, and, as teacher-researcher, I concur with the position of critical race scholars who argue that school has a vital role to play in active anti-racism, and the promotion of positive intercultural relations grounded in social justice (Ladson-Billings, 2004).

While previous studies such as those alluded to above have examined the issue of Ireland's response to this growing diversity, there are no examples of research that have examined specifically the response of Junior Cycle English pedagogy in Ireland to multiculturalism. Indeed, there is a paucity of in-depth studies of English teaching in general, whether at Junior or Senior level, in the Irish post-primary school. This project (albeit, in a modest way) aspires to address this significant lacuna.

1.12 Summary and Outline of Chapters

This chapter has set out the main themes with which the study is concerned. It outlines issues regarding the concept of intercultural education, characterised as it is by conflicting discourses and agendas, and maps out the range of issues that constitutes the research problem. An important issue with which the study grapples, results from a gap in the literature pertaining to English teachers' perspectives regarding the relationship between their pedagogy and the type of intercultural education that is experienced in the classroom. Another issue relates to teacher views on the role of positionality and the extent to which it informs choice of material and pedagogic responses to it.

In addition to mapping out the curricular and socio-political context in which the study's research questions are framed, the opening chapter also provided an overview of the study indicating the type of qualitative research informed by a critical lens that is undertaken, the research questions addressed, and the study's aims. The chapter also describes my personal and professional interest in this area.

This introductory chapter provides the reader with an outline of the scope and purpose of the study as well as presenting a brief outline of how the study was conducted.

The theoretical and empirical framework underpinning the research will be presented in the second and third chapters. Chapter Four will outline the particular methodology employed. Following reflexive thematic coding and analysis of the interview transcripts guided by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013, 2019), the themes that were identified will be analysed and discussed in Chapter Five and Chapter 6 in such a way as to allow the voices of the research participants to be heard so that the reader of the study may experience as fully as possible the range of English teacher perspectives and experiences that were expressed.

The study seeks to situate teacher conceptualisations and experiences of intercultural education on a spectrum ranging from a liberal to a more radical agenda, and in doing so, aspires to make recommendations that will help support teachers committed to a socially just orientation in their English pedagogy. A discussion of the research findings will feature in the final chapter, and it is here that recommendations as to future policy, practice, and research pertaining to intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English teaching, will be made.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to explicate the study's theoretical framework which comprises critical theories selected to facilitate critical examination of a particular group of English teachers' understandings and experiences of 'intercultural education'. Choo (2017) contends that literature classrooms are insulated from the real world, and that literary engagement in the English classroom, tends to be "fixated on aesthetic appreciation of texts rather than on their ethical implications" (p. 335). This research seeks to interrogate that view by illuminating Junior Cycle English teachers' conceptualisations and experiences of intercultural education and to explore the factors informing their selection of literature, and literary pedagogy. At the outset, it is necessary to examine scholarship relating to conceptualisations of the intercultural.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Kauda (2012) describes theory in terms of the provision of language, concepts, and assumptions:

> ...that help researchers to make sense of the phenomenon that they seek to investigate…and to connect the issues they are investigating to the existing body of knowledge (p. 64).

The function of the early sections of this chapter is to explore conceptualisations of the intercultural ranging from the liberal to the critical in the literature (Børhaug & Weyringer, 2019). The chapter then describes the Critical Literacy framework underpinning the research (Freire 1967,1970), supported by concepts drawn from Anti-

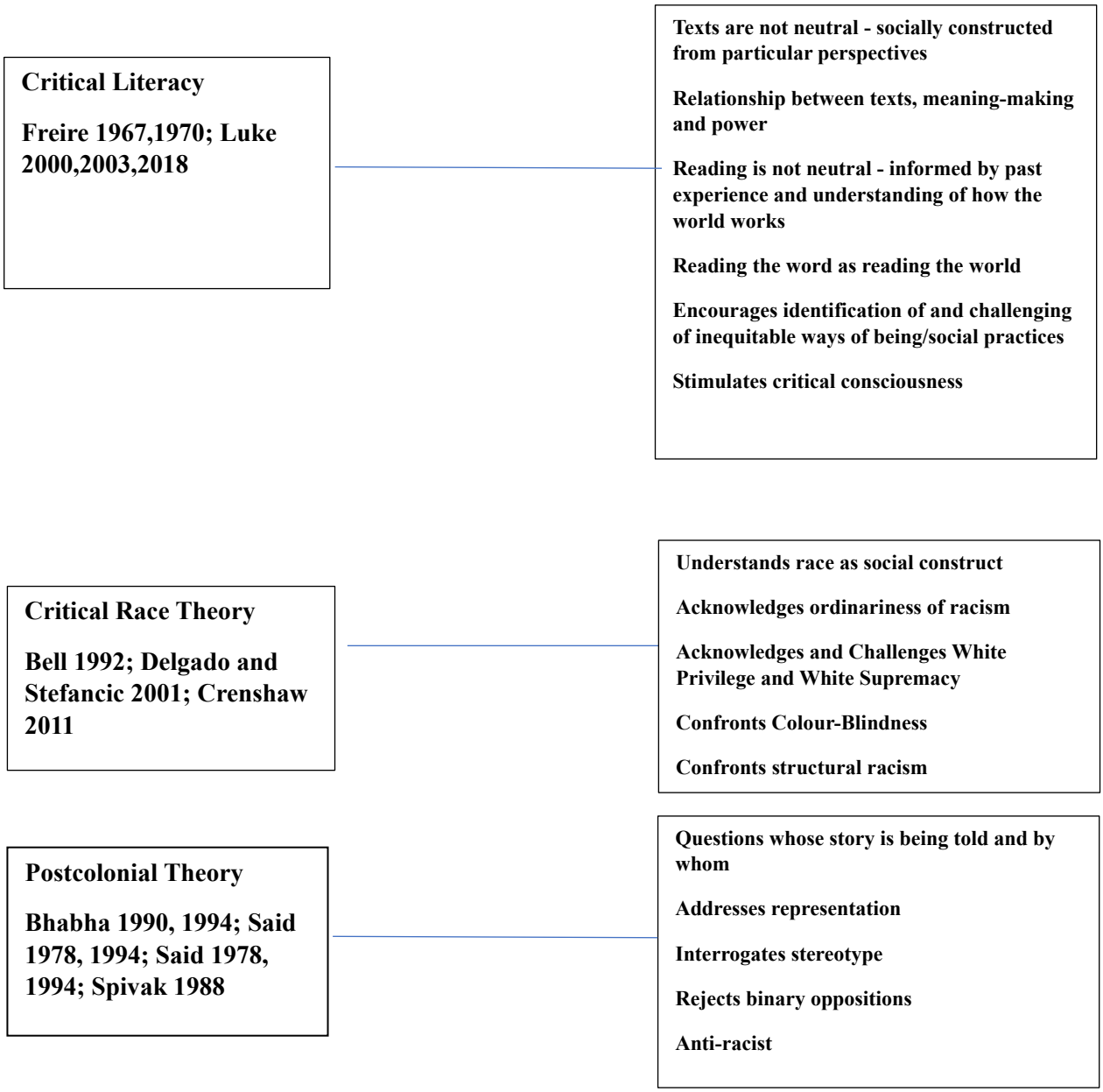
Racist Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1999, 2005), Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) and Post-Colonial Theory (Bhabha, 1990, 1994; Said, 1978, 1994, 2001; Spivak, 1988) so that insights about intercultural education and Junior Cycle English teaching gained in the course of the teacher interviews, may be related to existing critical scholarship in the field. The theoretical framework outlined here, establishes the critical lens which is employed with an emphasis on literacy pedagogy, racism, and representation. These issues are vital to examining Junior Cycle English teachers' conceptualisations and experiences of the intercultural in their selection of, and pedagogic responses to literature and film. At every stage of the study, the framework informed but did not overwhelm the design of questions posed during teacher interviews or the data analysis.

At the outset, I wish to explicate the relationship which pertains between the study's conceptual and theoretical frameworks. This is important as some scholars regard the conceptual and theoretical framework as synonymous (Maxwell, 2013; Robson and McCartan 2016; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Others point to a necessary and clear distinction (Miles et al., 2014; Ravitch and Riggan, 2017, Burkholder et al., 2019). I concur with the latter school of thought. Marshall and Rossman (2016) describe the conceptual framework's importance in terms of demonstrating how researching a specific group of individuals in a qualitative study can provide insights into a wider phenomenon. In the case of this study that wider phenomenon is the relationship between intercultural education and Junior Cycle English teaching. Marshall and Rossman (2016) posit the need to link research questions to theoretical constructs and policy or curricular issues to "illuminate how the particulars of a study can "illuminate larger issues and therefore hold potential significance for the field" (2016, p.6).

In the opening chapter, I presented an overview of the policy and curricular context in which the research is situated as well as the broader societal and political dimensions of a study examining intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English. My description of the ways this multifaceted context combined with my professional experience to build the study's rationale as well as its critical thrust lays the foundation of the study's conceptual framework. The thesis reflects the unifying weight of this overarching conceptual framework in the way I have sought to ensure sound alignment among the research questions, data collection and analysis and rigour throughout the research process. The study's conceptual framework comprises my personal and professional experience (reflected in a reflexive response to the research), scholarship pertaining to intercultural education policy and practice, and the theoretical framework central to the study. The theoretical framework which is a core constituent of my conceptual framework will be presented following a discussion of different conceptualisations of the intercultural.

See Fig. 1 for an overview of the theoretical framework

Fig. 1 Overview of Theoretical Framework



2.3 Search Strategy

Guided by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016), I conducted a literature review to address issues pertinent to the primary research questions under investigation. In striving to achieve a comprehensive and transparent review, an audit trail (Schwandt & Halpern, 1988) detailing the procedures undertaken is now presented. Several searches, including combinations of the keywords *Intercultural Education, Race and Racism, Critical Literacy, Critical Race Theory,* and *Post-colonial Theory* were conducted. As there is a vast amount of material available on each topic, I applied a timeframe filter in each search. The searches were confined to peer-reviewed and full-text online books and articles because of limited access to DCU libraries due to COVID-19 restrictions in the early phase of the research.

Firstly, I entered keywords in the Academic Search Complete and Education Research Complete databases. The search was confined to articles from January 1987 to January 2021 and then extended to 2023. I chose this publication time frame as I wanted to locate a broad range of literature relevant to the research questions under investigation that would unearth material from which to select the most pertinent to the current study. Seminal works outside the timeframe are also featured in the review. This broad time frame was selected to afford me a comprehensive range of material from which to select articles most likely to provide insights into the range of possible understandings of the concept 'intercultural education' within the context of the English classroom.

I read abstracts in both searches to determine the texts' usefulness in addressing the research questions. I also read the bibliography of each article /book deemed relevant to discover references to additional relevant scholarship. This proved an effective, if not entirely systematic means conducive to discovering a rich store of important books and

articles (the publication date frequently fell outside the original time-frame filter). To begin, we must consider different conceptualisations of the intercultural that emerge in the literature to contextualise the teacher conceptualisations and experiences that emerged in the research.

2.4 Interculturality and Conceptualisations of Cultural Identity

Bennett (1993) proposes a developmental model of intercultural sensitivity in which the individual ideally moves from a position of ethno-centrism to ethno-relativism. This approach aligns with that of Fennes and Hapgood (1997). Such a stance, however, is not characterised by an actively engaged anti-racism. Instead, it describes openness and celebration as necessary for empathic intercultural engagement. Similarly, Kymlicka (2003) describes the intercultural citizen as one having a "positive personal attitude towards diversity" (p.157) and suggests that interculturality is necessary for a harmonious society but also intrinsically valuable for individuals as it encourages a broadening of perspectives.

While both positions appear laudable, in this understanding of the 'intercultural', both the individual identity and the culture itself are essentialised (Hofstede,1997). This brings with it the possibility of an imposed and misleading homogeneity that assumes that all members associated with a particular cultural group are equally committed to a particular vision of that culture. Erel (2010) describes such an approach as a 'rucksack view', whereby culture is seen as a 'thing' to be carried around. Torres and Tarozzi (2020) also caution that intercultural education has "ethnicised culture as a form of reductionism" (p.13). They advocate instead, an openness to tensions and ambiguities, so that the complex and negotiated nature of identity is appreciated. This approach speaks to an understanding of culture as dynamic, acknowledging the myriad ways in which people

actively shape their worldview and, in the process, develop a unique understanding of their own and others' identities and cultures (Brubaker, 2002). These authors caution that cultural groupings cannot be treated as given and unchanging. A post-structural understanding of identity acknowledges the un-finalisability of human subjectivity (Davies, 1997; Weedon, 2004) and advocates for the adoption of an intersectional understanding of identity hybridity in which people may straddle multiple cultural allegiances in the classroom context (Bardhan, 2012). In this regard, intersectionality theory holds that gender, 'race' and class are structural positionings that intersect to shape individual subjectivity and cannot, therefore, be understood in isolation (Crenshaw, 1991).

Butler (1995, 1999) also reminds us that people internalise identities by assuming and performing them. A recognition of how identity may be internalised, highlights the potentially powerful influence of the discourses employed in education. As Foucault has argued, discourses 'Form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). Paula Moya (2002) also defines identity as 'non-essential' and evolving from the dialectic between how subjects of consciousness identify themselves and how others identify them. This view of identity implies a need to guard against the prejudicial assigning of stereotypical cultural differences (Sarangi,1994). Such a view demands an approach to intercultural education that acknowledges "alliances as contextual, shifting and multidimensional" in interactions across differences (Pattisapu & Calafell, 2012, p.55).

Recognising the complexity and messiness of intersectionality, the current study seeks to address the relationship between intercultural education and English teaching. The issue of 'race' and racism was a recurrent theme in the teacher interviews and given the profound implications of racism for both individual students and wider society, this is a

key aspect of intercultural education which the study examines. Before considering the theme of 'race', we must first consider some of the criticisms that are levelled against what has been described as soft interculturality (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

2.5 Intercultural Education: from the 'soft' to the 'critical'

Børhaug and Weyringer (2019) suggest that "a fundamental purpose of intercultural education is to develop critical and empathic reflection on social justice" (p.1) but that the existence of different understandings and manifestations of intercultural education complicates the field.

At the liberal end of the spectrum, is what has been termed the '3 Ss Multiculturalism'- saris, samosas, and steel bands, which addresses issues of interculturality in terms of positive interaction (Race, 2015, p. 29). Alleyne (2002) and Alenuma-Nimoh (2016) characterise this approach as the easy option of celebrating cultural differences, thereby overlooking, or deliberately avoiding, structural issues of inequality affecting minorities. There is also a view that much of what passes for multicultural education in schools today tends towards the celebration of diversity model (Gorski, 2006). Such approaches constitute a conservative orientation rather than one which aspires to create a more equitable school and curriculum through a process of radical restructuring. The current study seeks to interrogate the validity of this claim in the context of the Junior Cycle English classroom.

2.6 Criticism of 'soft' interculturality

Approaches attempting to change individual hearts and minds while failing to account for the ubiquitous reality of structural inequities are characteristic of a liberal approach to intercultural education (Nieto, 2000; Vavitsas & Nikolau, 2021; Vavrus, 2002). Another

issue is the tendency to soften the principles of intercultural education so as not to alienate those who are privileged, and perhaps, resistant to a critical pedagogical stance (Ladson-Billings, 2003, Mc Kenzie & Scheurich, 2004). Furthermore, Hill (2012), Sleeter (2014) and Chaplin (2019), have shown how the liberal discourse of tolerance that is so prevalent has the power to undo the potentially transformative influence of a more critical pedagogy. The current research seeks to investigate the transformative potential of the Junior Cycle English curriculum to actively challenge racism where it is encountered in the classroom. It also seeks to examine the extent to which the curriculum might manifest structural racism by accepting the taken for granted regarding textual selection.

Amosa & Gorski (2008) remind us that non-critical pedagogy is often the work of "well-intentioned teachers, teacher educators, activists and professional development specialists" (p.169). However well-intentioned, celebration of cultural diversity does not equate with social justice education which although fraught with confusion and contested (Gewitz, 1998; North, 2006; Torres, 1998), does interrogate the role played by social structures in the oppression experienced by some groups (McDonald & Zeicher, 2009; Torres & Noguera, 2008). On the contrary, educators committed to social justice foreground the need to prioritise equality issues rather than cultural diversity (Gorski, 2006; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). The extent to which Junior Cycle English teachers conceptualise the intercultural dimension of their work in the classroom, in terms of social justice, is vital to the study.

2.7 Critical Intercultural Education

Scholars have been explicit about the need for intercultural education to reformulate itself so that it might contribute in some way to formulating a more just world (Coulby,

2011; Vavitsas & Nikolau, 2021). Sobré-Denton (2017) has criticised what in her view is the fact that much of what passes for intercultural education frequently upholds and accentuates existing political and social hierarchies. Other scholars question the role of intercultural education at a time of rising xenophobia and neo-fascism in the world. They foreground its role in highlighting structural injustice (Holmes & Corbett, 2022; Jolly & DiGiusto, 2014; Olonisakin & Adebayo, 2021) and emphasise the need for intercultural pedagogy to actively investigate the barriers that prevent the development of empathy and anti-nationalistic thinking.

Adopting a critical orientation to intercultural education can be challenging when considering a particular approach that understands culture as a product or commodity (Halualani, 2011, Sobré-Denton (2017). Adopting a much more critical approach to interculturality than that advocated by Bennett (1993) or Kymlicka (2003), Burbules (1997), Gregoriou (2013), and Kromidas (2011) argue that engagement with interculturality can enable us to dismantle static and restrictive understandings of difference so that we move beyond deficit thinking around diversity and begin to examine the mono-cultural norms within education. Such an approach embraces a more hybridised and post-colonial stance and is timely given developments such as #blacklivesmatter and the rise of social media activism (Sobré-Denton, 2015).

Critical scholarship, therefore, argues the need for intercultural education to move beyond interpersonal dialogue to embrace discussion of White privilege and an uncovering of how ethnicity implicates power as a systemic issue rather than an individual one (Barrett, 2013; Levey, 2012). Palaiologou and Gorski (2017) also make the case for a type of intercultural education that seeks to subvert hegemony that positions some groups as ‘other’, while categorising the already privileged as ‘normal’.

In the next section we will see how this position aligns with Freirean critical literacy, a pedagogy committed to examining how the classroom can become a site of consciousness-raising with the aim of 'empowering social transformation' (Freire, 2000). The decision to draw on critical literacy as the kernel of the study's theoretical framework arises from the theoretical and practical synergy between critical intercultural education and critical literacy as the latter seeks to challenge various "oppressive relations of power" (Cummins & Griffin, 2012, p.87). It encourages students to recognise the importance of language and narrative in the formation of race, power, and social hierarchies (Jowallah, 2015) and thereby upholds the critical rights-based thrust of the former in the realm of the intercultural.

2.8 Understanding Critical Literacy

Critical literacy seeks to highlight a text's implicit ideologies by probing issues of power, normativity and representation as well as creating opportunities for equity (Behrman, 2006; Borsheim-Black et al., 2014). Lankshear and McLaren describe critical literacy in terms of:

> …conceptions of reading and writing that enable human subjects to understand and engage the politics of daily life in the quest for a more truly democratic social order (1993, p. xix).

As Ciardello (2004) puts it, critical literacy helps the learner to develop a critical awareness of how texts represent certain points of view, while sometimes silencing others. It prompts readers to move past a superficial understanding of text to identify underlying ideologies, or belief systems, inherent in any given word or image (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Boatright, 2010). Power dynamics at play in a text are interrogated whereby students challenge both the perspective of the author of the text and

consider how they are being positioned as reader (Smith, 2015). In this way, they become active agents of their own reading experiences as they examine how texts work and whose voice is represented, and embrace active position-taking, relating that which they experience textually to their own lives and to society (Janks, 2019; Luke, 2000).

By comprehending the political, social, and economic environments in which texts are written and presented, one may begin to identify their hidden ideologies (Bishop, 2014). Luke (2012) describes it as an approach to literacy teaching that aims to foster "students' ability to critique "dominant ideologies, cultures, economies, institutions and political systems" (p.5). Due to critical literacy's assertion that language and texts are never neutral, students are called on to interrogate language use (Janks, 2010). Language is viewed as either perpetuating relations of domination or promoting resistant reading which involves interrogating "how power, history and ideology are inscribed in texts" (Wolfe, 2010, p.371).

While critical literacy always involves critique and transformation, it is practiced in myriad ways, and resists limitation to formulaic method (Janks, 2001; Mc Daniels, 2004). Its key tenets, however, involve a textual approach that involves disruption of the commonplace, interrogation of multiple viewpoints, and addressing of socio-political issues to promote social justice (Lewison et al., 2002). Critical literacy theorists also note that students cannot simply become critical. Instead, teachers must be attentive to student responses during literary exploration so that the goals of critical literacy may be nurtured and realised over time. In this way, literacy becomes an emancipatory practice that seeks to rupture and transform relations of domination (Freire and Macedo, 1987).

From the intercultural perspective, which is the kernel of this study, this disruption must involve the naming and challenging of injustice such as racism (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

It also empowers students to become aware of whose stories are absent from the curriculum (Bean & Moni, 2003; Janks &Ivanic, 1992; Jordao, 1999). Mc Laughlin and De Voogd describe critical literacy as a process involving "learning, understanding and changing over time" (2004, p.55). It represents a site of contestation, at its most productive in "locally negotiated practices" (Comber, 2001, p.272). Luke (2000) also asserts that it is "dangerous to generalise any educational approach from one national/regional and cultural context to another" (p.449).

2.8.1 Origins of Critical Literacy

Critical literacy is grounded in the critical pedagogy of twentieth century Brazilian educator, Paolo Freire. He believed that those who are critically literate can understand not only how meaning is socially constructed, but also the sociopolitical context in which texts are created and embedded (Freire & Macedo, 1987). At its simplest level, literacy refers to the reading and writing of text (Luke, 2012, p.5), Freire extends this conceptualisation by moving beyond a superficial understanding of literacy in terms of comprehension of signs and symbols, to a conceptualisation of dialogue and active participation in communication (Endres, 2001).

It demands reflection upon the role that language and texts play in the construction of self and society. It is an activist practice that involves interrogation of the ways in which people can be empowered or disempowered and about whose knowledge and stories are included in curricula (Provenzo, 2005). It developed out of Freire's work to empower impoverished Brazilian peasants against oppression and coercion (2013/1967, 1970) and upholds the transformative potential of education, teaching students that their reality can be changed through their excavation of unequal power relations within society and how these relations are manifested in the classroom.

In Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire seeks to dismantle this power imbalance and replace it with a radical power-sharing dynamic. Freire envisioned literacy in emancipatory terms where "literate individuals are able to function independently and flexibly in society" (Gregory & Cahill, 2009, p.7). Freire advocated therefore engagement in critical reflection about social and political life, a reading of the world as well as the word (Endres, 2001, p.401)

Critical literacy theorists advance the view that literacy is more complex than the simple act of reading and writing (Bishop, 2014). Lankshear and McLaren (1993) argue that a traditional understanding of literacy in terms of comprehension aligns ideologically with a normative socio-political consciousness that is inherently exploitative. In South Africa, for example, critical literacy has been employed in the struggle against apartheid. According to Janks (2003), it has been used to:

> increase students' awareness of the way language was used to oppress the Black majority, to deny education, to construct others, to position readers, to hide the truth … and to legitimise oppression. (Janks, 2010, p.2)

By contrast, they argue for reading and writing grounded in social consciousness. However, they are careful to point out the difference between political indoctrination and developing a critical consciousness or what Freire called "conscientization" (Freire, 1970).

2.8.2 Critical Literacy-Some Issues of Concern

Despite the critical literacy emphasis on democracy and emancipation, many scholars continue to articulate the context of hierarchical formal schooling as a factor hindering the possibility of its true enactment (Bishop, 2014; Comber & Nixon, 2009). Borsheim & Petrone (2006) also point out that students grounded in critical literacy practice "are

likely to ask questions that some people prefer they not ask" (p.8). Other scholars suggest that even when students confronted socio-political and ideological issues, they frequently only acted if supported (Phelps, 2010). Another concern expressed by some educators, is the fact that a critical literacy approach to literature exploration may, as Felski (2015) cautions, "cut" the reader off from "being touched by the genuine strangeness and otherness of the work of art" (p.39) if he or she engages with a text in a way that is solely preoccupied with a 'reading against'. Bishop (2014) shares this concern, pointing out that:

> …when students are disciplined into such rigid affective orientations toward texts, resisting or suspecting them…we foreclose on the imaginative possibilities of literature in mandating the ferreting out of the wrong in what our students read (p.305).

Similarly, Gallop (2000) warns of the limiting danger of fighting prejudice with prejudice if students approach a book "armed with a mental checklist" of what might be wrong with it. Despite these misgivings, the socially just foundation of a critical literacy approach makes it an appropriate lens to guide this investigation of intercultural education during literary/cinematic engagement in the Junior Cycle English classroom.

2.8.3 Critical Literacy and the Intercultural

Critical literacy is a vital theoretical pillar in the study because of its alignment with the key tenets of critical multicultural theory. We have seen how a critical orientation to the intercultural seeks to promote social justice by identifying how power and privilege shape our realities within education and society (Palaiologou and Gorski, 2017). It exposes structural inequities for the purpose of redistributing power equitably through society by confronting biases of race, gender, and class so that educational outcomes for

all are improved, and not just the dominant and privileged majority (Gregoriou, 2013). Guilherme (2017) argues that although Freire never used the word 'intercultural' as the word was not in common usage at his time of writing, "his theory of ethics is embedded in an ontology of the intercultural emerging from his dialectical vision of critical reflection, dialogue…and empowerment" (p.422). In Freire's own words:

> My progressive perspective has an implied ethical position, an almost instinctive inclination toward justice and a visceral rejection of injustice and discrimination along the lines of race, class, gender, violence, and exploitation (Freire, 1996, p.85).

Freire's conceptual framework is grounded in the global South. He 'displaced' education from its imported colonising past and made it accessible to those who had been silenced and invisible, probing the relationship between various social, geographical, and power-related layers in society. It aligns with critical interculturality in its rootedness in expression of multiple perspectives and cultural realities and its vision of justice for all (Guilherme, 2017, p. 427).

Critical literacy provides students with the tools to identify and acknowledge the unfair privileging of one discourse or set of narratives because of skin colour or ethnicity (Delpit, 1992). It enables educators working from a diversity perspective, direct attention to how language is used to create or legitimise social identities (Mc Daniel, 2006). Students are encouraged to understand the situated nature of authorship and reflect on the 'constructed-ness' of the text so that the reality it presents is understood as a single depiction created by an author (Behrman, 2006; Gregory & Cahill, 2009). Janks reminds us that when students are given access to diverse discourses, they are provided with the opportunity to reflect on "taken for granted ways of saying, doing, thinking and valuing" (2000, p.177). This is a position shared by Foss (2002) who maintains that when students

engage in textual interpretation from the viewpoint of the world and not just a Euro-centric one, they may begin to reflect on how diverse individuals might read the same text. Dypedahl and Bøhn (2020) acknowledge the complexity of intercultural competence in the realm of literary engagement and argue that English teachers are ideally placed to embed the intercultural in the literature classroom as they prepare "learners for meeting a multitude of mindsets and communication styles both locally and globally" (p.91).

Furthermore, as espoused by Freire, Critical Literacy challenges narratives built into standard curricula, whereby 'othering' of one culture or group leads to marginalisation where one group may be labelled either exotic or deficient or completely overlooked (Burbules,1997). As this critical approach to literacy strives to amplify voices that have been de-legitimised, it was a vital lens in the context of data collection as it prompted me to be vigilant to the myriad ways in which marginalised culture may be subjugated in the Junior Cycle English classroom. It also foregrounds the nature of knowledge as process and challenges me as teacher-researcher to consider the extent to which teachers are affirming students' ethnic and racial background and equipping them with the tools needed to identify and critique causes of social inequality. The justice-based values underpinning Critical Literacy align with the actively anti-racist agenda of Critical Race Theory in its disruption of tokenistic attempts at inclusion (Gorski, 2006).

Attention will now be directed to another important element in the study's theoretical framework. A critical approach to intercultural education advances a justice-based agenda to unearth inequalities in education. Sleeter (2012) reminds us that critical education incorporates critical race theory and takes as its opening premise the view that 'racism is normal, not aberrant' (Delgado, 1995, p. xiv) The next section will focus on the racial

aspect of intercultural education partly as a response to Wayne Au's (2014) call to educators to examine painful and systemic racism and the realities of cultural oppression.

2.9 The Problematic Concept of Race

Race as a concept is highly contested and Nobel laureate Toni Morrison (2017) suggests that "one purpose of scientific racism is to identify an outsider in order to define oneself" (p.6). While the biological construction of race has been shown to be both ideologically loaded and bearing little scientific merit (Todorov, 2000; Zuberi & Bashi, 1997), there persists, nonetheless, the idea that race can be applied to outward signs of "social visibility" such as physiognomy (Myrdal, 2000, p.96). Importantly, Leonardo (2005) reminds us there are no non-racialised societies, and no non-racialised class relationships. Racism, therefore, is not the product of individual bias or prejudice but is more insidiously embedded in policy and institutions (Delgado, 1995; Matsuda et al. 1993).

For this reason, the current study must grapple with the problematic idea of race as a matter of both social structure and cultural representation (Omi & Winant, 1994, p.9). These authors point out that "most oppression does not seem like oppression to the perpetrator (Lawrence, 1987) and Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argue that the "voices of people of color" must be heard in discussions of education (p.58). Given the ethnic composition of English teachers in the Irish context, it was not possible to engage the perspectives of people of colour in this investigation. I was mindful, however, of the extent to which unquestioning acceptance of the status quo might perpetuate the silent and unjust realities of structural racism within the Irish educational context. To this end, difficult questions about English pedagogy and race were posed during the research interviews.

In this regard, the importance of storytelling as a means of naming and describing the lived experience of racism, takes on a greater urgency. Stories that express the impact of racism have the effect of revealing oppression to the perpetrator because dominant groups tend to rationalise their power through the telling of stories that construct reality to maintain the unequal status quo (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Crenshaw, 2011; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Taylor et al., 2023, West et al., 2021 also call out the pervasiveness of colour blindness in education, demanding acknowledgment and confronting of racism. During the research interviews, teachers were invited to reflect on their engagement with the theme of racism as they engage in literary and cinematic exploration and on the potential of the Junior Cycle English classroom to be a space where stereotype and racial prejudice are confronted.

Following Warmington (2009), I choose not to place 'scare quotes' around the word *race* but I do wish to draw attention to "its socially constructed, illusory, unscientific character" ((p.281). Warmington cautions against a default position that involves the placing of quotes around "race" without fully engaging with why it is that a concept that is so unscientific is so powerfully real in its implications (and for our purposes that implies within the context of education). Fanon suggests that "as long as the Black man is among his own, he will have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts to experience his being through others" (2000/1952, p.257). He argues that in race discourse, blackness is viewed in relation to whiteness and so Black people become the racialised 'Other'. Race then becomes a social fact (Winant, 2004). In the United States, it is Winant's view that "one simply is one's race" (p.185), a concept engaged in categorising individuals according to physical characteristics that are not predetermined by biology (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998). Such categorisation places Whites in a superior

position and Song (2007) argues that without such a racial hierarchy, it would not have been possible to subjugate conquered peoples.

The need to address race issues in the classroom has never been greater. Lynch et al., (2017) argue that social movements such as *BlackLivesMatter* highlight how far we are from obliterating racial oppression and the privilege conveyed by whiteness. The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a stark light on racial inequality and has placed a disproportionate burden on Black and other racial minority groups in the Americas and in Europe. The George Floyd murder that sparked a global protest movement has also reminded us of the need to engage with critical race theory while bearing in mind how multiple social categorisations such as race and gender interact to confer interlocking oppressions and privileges (Crenshaw, 1989; Yaya et al., 2020). Our attention will now turn to the issue of White privilege, one of the main tenets of this theory.

2.9.1 White Privilege

Toni Morrison employs a compelling list of adjectives to capture the invisibility of whiteness, describing it as "mute, meaningless, unfathomable, pointless, frozen, veiled, curtained, dreaded, senseless, implacable" (1993, p.59). The point she is making is that the power and privilege associated with whiteness is hidden in twenty-first century Western societies and that whiteness implies the absence of ethnicity, which Haymes (1996) alludes to as a nothingness that is transformed into a 'transcendental consciousness'. It is vital for a study dealing with intercultural education in an Irish context to address whiteness. bell hooks (1989), describes how the word *racism* ceased to express for her the exploitation of Black people and other people of colour in North American society. She writes "I began to understand that the most useful term was white

supremacy" (p.112). It is important to emphasise the difference between whiteness and white people.

Leonardo (2002) describes whiteness as a racial discourse, whereas the term 'White people' refers to a socially constructed identity based on skin colour. White people do not necessarily reinforce whiteness but critical scholarship on whiteness is a critique of the power of white identifications and interests (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Gillborn (2005) also holds that one of the defining characteristics of whiteness is a process of 'naturalization' so that white becomes the norm from which other 'races' stand apart and in relation to which they are defined" (p.489). In this way, the process of Othering arises from the refusal of 'whiteness' to be defined in terms of racial experience. Giroux (1997) suggests that critical scholarship on 'whiteness' aspires to unveil the rhetorical, political, and social mechanisms through which whiteness is invented (1997, p.102) so that the taken for granted is brought into focus and interrogated. This agenda of 'bringing into focus' is central to the current study which seeks to ascertain Junior Cycle English teachers' views about interculturality in the Irish context. Gillborn (2006) addresses White racial hegemony in contemporary 'western' society, pointing out that:

> …most white people would probably be surprised by the idea of 'White World'; they see only the 'world'. Its whiteness is invisible to them because of the racialized nature of politics, policing, education, and every other sphere of public life is so deeply ingrained that it has become normalized- unremarked and taken for granted (p.319).

The current study engages teacher perspectives on positionality during the semi-structured interviews.

Critical Race Theory maintains that colour blindness makes no sense in a society in which people because of membership of a particular group are treated differently (Crenshaw et al., 1995). If colour blindness facilitates an ignoring of the racial construction of whiteness and its associated privilege, then it will remain the normative standard and blackness will remain marginal and other (Taylor, 1998, p3). The issue of 'White privilege' that has been described by McIntosh (1988), has been criticised by other theorists who maintain that the concept of privilege, real though it is, has the effect of masking or obscuring the presence of domination. Such a view suggests that a preoccupation with the concept of White privilege detracts from the reality that individuals can be agents of action. As Leonardo (2004) puts it, "the study of white privilege begins to take on an image of domination without agents" (p.138), thereby minimising the responsibility of the individual to consider his or her positionality or related implications. The extent to which teachers conceive of the Junior Cycle English classroom as a site conducive to transformative change whereby individuals can actively embrace new attitudes and standpoints, is central to this research.

2.9.2 Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory is a radical development in social theory, emerging in the U.S. as an analytical framework for addressing the endemic presence of racism within society (Crenshaw, 2011; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Taylor et al., 2023), and was created by legal scholars Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw and Richard Delgado (Warmington, 2020). With roots in U.S. legal scholarship, in work that "challenges the ways in which race and racial power are constructed and represented in American legal culture and more generally in American society as a whole" (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xiii), it foregrounds the impact of racial stratification on hierarchical arrangements in society that result in

limitations for some and benefits for others (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Critical race theory also understands the power dynamics associated with whiteness that involves dominance and subjugation (Frankenberg, 1993). Importantly, it resists colour-blind, race neutral and apolitical perspectives (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) and demands an exposure of meaningless slogan approaches regarding racism in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Parker & Lynn, 2002). It also demands of educators that they are unequivocal in their naming and challenging of the race inequality and racism that is a central feature of the education system. This research responds to the invitation of Ladson-Billings and Donnor (2008) when they seek to mobilise "scholars of color and others who share commitments to equity, social justice and human liberation" (p.61).

The role of voice is vital to critical race theory as applied to education and demands that we ask questions about whose stories are being told and how they are being told in the context of the English classroom. One of the central tenets of CRT includes "recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color" (Matsuda et al., 1993, p.6). Similarly, Calmore (1995) argues that CRT tends "toward a very personal expression that allows our experiences and lessons, learned as people of color, to convey the knowledge we possess in a way that is empowering to us" (p.321). The current research in an Irish context where the teacher cohort is almost entirely White, provides the teacher participants with a platform to reflect on issues of positionality and voice and representation.

In keeping with critical race theory, Gillborn (2005) suggests that racism is not some aberration within the system but that it is a fundamental characteristic of it. As he says, "It is in this sense that education policy is an act of white supremacy" (2005, p. 497).

Leonardo (2014) argues that the methodological focus of Critical Race Theory falls on counter-story telling to talk back to White narratives of understanding (p. 86). This entails an examination of how, in a classroom context, racism operates in subtle ways to shape our identity whether as marginalised or privileged (Fiske, 1993). In *Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education,* Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) use race as a tool to understand school inequity in the U.S. concluding that "these inequalities are a logical and predictable result of a racialized society in which discussions of race and racism continue to be muted and marginalized" (p.47). They draw on the work of geneticist Cavalli-Sforza who has shown that while human populations may be known as ethnic groups or 'races', this delineation cannot be "rigorous and useful because human beings group themselves in a bewildering array of sets, some of them overlapping, all of them in a state of flux" (1991, p.104).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) emphasise the way that race has remained un-theorised in education and propose that inequity in education must consider the role of White supremacy and racism. When applied to education, therefore, critical race theory foregrounds the need for justice rather than a multicultural paradigm infused with the ideology of neoliberalism (Mc Carthy, 1994; Olneck, 1993). This foregrounds the role of education in promoting an actively anti-racist agenda. In the context of our investigation of English teacher understandings and experiences of intercultural education, it is important that the issue of racism is addressed. Critical Race Theory scholars advocate engagement with the issue of racism, challenging educators to engage in conscientious dialogue to disrupt racelessness in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Ladson-Billings (1997) believes that a problematic feature of critical pedagogy has been its failure to address the question of race adequately. She proposes that critical race

theory might provide a rubric for ‘culturally responsive pedagogy whereby that which Nobel laureate Toni Morrison calls “unspeakable things unspoken”, might be addressed in the classroom context. This implies teacher readiness to address uncomfortable discussion around interculturality, particularly as this relates to issues of race and racism. Ladson-Billings and Tate have refined their ideas in subsequent work (Ladson-Billings, 1998,1999, 2005 and Tate, 1997, 1999). It must be pointed out that Critical Race Theory offers a perspective rather than a prescribed set of propositions; more a range of interrelated beliefs about the significance of race/racism and how it operates in contemporary Western society (Gillborn, 2006)

2.9.3 Critique of Critical Race Theory

CRT is not without its critics (Cole 2009). In the U.S context, it has come under increasing attack from the right in its response to the summer of 2020’s mass mobilisation against police brutality and anti-blackness which prompted a national reckoning with the issue of race (Schwartz & Pendharkar, 2022).

Critics of CRT suggest that it is divisive and therefore counter- productive (Cole, 2009). In September 2020, former President Trump issued an executive order banning what was branded ‘divisive concepts’, a term marshalled frequently in anti-CRT initiatives (CRT Forward Tracking Project UCLA). The School of Law at UCLA established its CRT Forward Tracking Project to document all instances of government anti ‘anti-racism measures in the US. From September 2020 to December 31, 2022, it has recorded 560 instances of legislation, executive orders, and state as well as local school board policies, the majority of which seek to regulate curriculum and classroom lessons that allude to issues of race and sexual identity.

The ban on what are referred to as 'divisive concepts' preclude teachers in fourteen states from describing colour-blindness as racism or highlighting the ubiquity of subconscious bias. It has also led to an increasing number of book challenges (Harris & Alter, 2022). Anti-racist scholars and educators frequently find themselves working "against discourses of derision" (Warmington 2020, p.200). Furthermore, Taylor (1998) has predicted that the impact of critical race theory is "limited not by the weakness of its constructs but by the degree that many whites will not accept its assumptions (p.124). Consequently, he anticipates critique from both left and right. In the context of the present study, it is worth bearing in mind Morrison's point that since "no one is born a racist…one learns Othering not by lecture or instruction but by example" (2017, p.6). This view raises interesting questions for approaches to Junior Cycle English pedagogy and the current study will investigate how English teaching may interrupt or contribute to the process of othering. In the next section, this research will consider CRT in the Irish context.

2.9.4 Critical Race Theory and Ireland

There is a need to challenge the misappropriation of radical anti-racism in education (Kitching, 2013; Oughton, 2010; Reay, 2004) whereby a watered-down version of interculturalism that does not seek to confront the injustices of structural racism takes hold. The issue of race is challenging in an Irish context, Kitching (2013) reminds us that the invention of Irishness as a 'comparatively white' racial discourse in nineteenth century Ireland occurs partly through the expansion of schooling as a colonial state apparatus. According to Rutherford (2013), the dominance of the Catholic hierarchy supported the relative whitening of Irish children in Ireland when compared to supposedly 'savage' child-subjects of the Empire elsewhere. Irishness, however as a

racial discourse fell into the category ‘not-quite-white’ (Mac an Ghaill, 2002) and the Irish experience of racialisation leads O’Neill and Lloyd (2009) to wonder why a people so versed in the effects of racial oppression did not show greater solidarity with their fellow oppressed. The theme of teacher awareness of racism and its impact in the English classroom will be pursued during teacher interviews. Kitching (2013) has described the liberal anti-racist discourse that relates to Irish Travellers and immigration as a form of ‘pop anti-racism’. Such an approach is influenced by the tendency to categorise racism as an individual rather than a systemic phenomenon, an anachronism associated with a different geographical setting or historical context (Dudziak, 2004; Lentin, 2010). Ladson-Billings (1995) and Gillborn (2008) argue that the application of Critical Race Theory to education is a means whereby this type of falsification can be disrupted.

Giroux (1997) also alerts us to the need to interrogate initiatives that purport to advance a social justice agenda, reminding us of the insidious nature of neo-liberal ideology, characterised as it is by ‘an absence of questioning; its surrender to what is seen as the implacable and irreversible logic of social reality” (p.428). Neoliberalism positions discrimination as an individual problem rather than a structural one (Watson, 2013; Watson &Thompson, 2015). It thereby promotes a symbolic anti-racism that neither addresses nor challenges White supremacy. In this way, anti-racism becomes reduced to a “politics of representation/presence/multiculturalism or is seen as irrelevant in the context of a so-called postrace/postfeminist society” (Mohanty, 2013, p.972). Such a soft and deflecting approach involves the employment of ‘political correctness’ and a superficial ‘diversity’ agenda, condemning overt racism to frame racism as aberration (Melamed, 2006). As a result, it fails to understand or interrogate the “processes that create and perpetuate racism” (Niemonen, 2007, p.159).

By contrast, radical anti-racist education seeks to transform existing power structures through analysing power relations (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1996). Case and Ngo (2017) argue that truly anti-racist approaches in education must be underpinned by a framework conducive to the analysis of power with a 'race'-centred lens. As Obiakor (2015) asserts in reference to the American context:

> …when you are White in the United States and a member of the dominant society and culture, your "Whiteness" can become a loaded weapon because of your power and privilege. Though you might not have directly hurt anyone or created this phenomenon, it will be difficult to deny its existence (2015, p.22)

Recent research suggests that Ireland has become increasingly hostile and intolerant towards immigrants (Lentin & McVeigh, 2002). In the *Speak Out Against Racism* Report of 2023, the Irish Council for International Students (ICOS), for example, found that of 428 international students who participated in the research, 2 in 5 had either personal experience or witnessed racism in Ireland (Hearne & Rodrigues, 2021). Figures published by An Garda Síochána for 2022 capture a 29% increase in reported hate crimes and related incidents from the previous year (An Garda Síochána, 2023). *iReport* is a human rights monitoring tool takes the form of half-yearly and thematic observatories on racist incidents in Ireland established by the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR). It too has reported an increase in hate related criminal offences and incidents reported in Ireland. According to its latest figures for 2022, such reports increased to 413 in 2022 from the previous year (INAR, 2022). These figures relate to reported individual incidents and do not address the more insidious reality of structural racisms.

In its 2019 report to the UN, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission assessed Ireland's performance since 2011 in combatting racial discrimination. The Commission

highlights significant issues of concern including the need for legislation to address hate speech effectively, and deficiencies in response to the needs of minority communities in criminal justice and policing, the labour market, the health sector, and education. (IHREC2019).

Given the prevalence of overt as well as structural racism in contemporary Ireland, it is important to ask what an anti-racist pedagogy might look like in an Irish context and whether Junior Cycle English teachers feel it has a role in the context of their work. This is another issue addressed in the study.

2.9.5 Anti-Racist Pedagogy

Anti-racist pedagogy is a paradigm within Critical Theory, but it is not a unified practice (Schick, 2010). It adopts a critical orientation to inequality (Cherland & Harper, 2007; Kincheloe, 2008; Kumashiro, 2004) This orientation acknowledges that educational discourses are not neutral but embedded within and reproduced through social institutions that normalise White racism. It explains and seeks to disrupt the persistence of racism in education by employing praxis to promote social justice (Blakeney, 2005). For Dei (2000), anti-racism "explicitly names the issues of race and social difference as issues of power and equity rather than as matters of cultural and ethnic variety" (ibid. p.27). Anti-racist pedagogy supports the view that systemic racism is embedded within the capitalist system, a direct and deliberate outcome of colonial exploitation (Elliott & Fleras 1992; Massey, 1991). Another concern related to anti-racist education is the possibility that anti-racist initiatives may produce negligible results, or worse, unintended but negative outcomes in the classroom (Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994).

There is a need, therefore, to address positionality and recognition of where students and teachers are situated in the matrix of domination (Collins, 2000). Anti-racism encourages multicentricity, allowing for multiple ways of knowing the world, and it promotes an enquiry agenda in teaching (Hess, 2015). It also demands a recognition of the presence and implications of White privilege in society, and for our purposes, in the classroom context. Anti-racist pedagogy does not shy away from uncomfortable knowledge in the classroom and confronts historical constructs that facilitated inequalities in the hope of creating a better future (Kailin, 2002). It enables teachers to pursue what Singleton & Linton (2006) describe as "courageous conversations". It also aligns with Freirean 'conscientization' whereby transformation is achieved through reflective praxis (Freire, 2000) and understanding of the perspectives of others is promoted.

In keeping with Freire's critical pedagogy, anti-racist education recognises how people are marginalised through hierarchies of socially constructed identifications (Thompson, 2002). Anti-racist educators seek to redress the inequities inherent in education through a politicisation of curriculum and instruction (Francis, 1984; Short & Carrington, 1992) Anti-racist education is explicit in its challenging of prejudice through an examination of both the contemporary manifestations of racism in society and their historical antecedents (Tator & Henry, 1991).

In the Irish context of a teacher cohort that is predominantly White (there is no statutory record of teacher ethnicity in Ireland), the issue of race in education is particularly significant. Adrienne Rich reminds us of the urgency with which the student needs to feel present and acknowledged in the type of world that is presented and described when she writes:

> ….when those who have power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see or hear you, whether you are dark-skinned, old, disabled, female or speak with a different accent or dialect than theirs, when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing…… (Rich, 1986, p.199).

One theoretical development in pedagogy that seeks to guard against such an experience of student alienation and aspires to respond to the cultural diversity of students so that all have educational opportunities to thrive, is culturally relevant pedagogy. It was developed to address the gap in achievement between white and non-white students in the U.S. It is a pedagogy that acknowledges and confronts the socio-political contexts of education (Ladson-Billings, 1994). It provides a framework that proposes the establishment of high expectations for student achievement, the enactment of cultural competence, and the manifestation of socio-political commitment towards equity. Culturally relevant pedagogy in an Irish context engages the English teacher committed to a socially just approach to intercultural education to interrogate his or her selection of class texts/films and teaching methodologies. Ten years on in 2005, Ladson-Billings was still warning against the 'uncritical' use of storytelling and urging us to consider the idea of White supremacy. I have borne her cautioning in mind during this exploration of intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English.

2.10 The Politics of Literacy Education

Critics wary of the possible manipulation of education in the service of the political argue against the "subordination of education to political ends regardless of the educational consequences" (Pearce, 1986, p. 136). Similarly, Troyna and Carrington (1990) have highlighted the risk of indoctrination or propaganda. Kincheloe (2008), on the other

hand, points out that neither classrooms nor curricula are neutral sites "waiting to be shaped by education professionals" and that every dimension of schooling and practice is inevitably carried out in "politically contested space" (p.20). Similarly, it is the position of Vibert and Shields (2003) that schools are in the business of reproducing the status quo and "the appearance of shared power and decision-making is maintained, provided students and teachers make the right choices" (p.233). The current research seeks to probe curricular selections and omissions made by Junior Cycle English teacher participants in the study to discover what forms of intercultural education are facilitated in their classrooms.

The study acknowledges, therefore, the unavoidably political nature of education, particularly, the highly political nature of literacy education where decisions to include or omit stories and voices are made. Specifically addressing the political nature of literacy, Anderson (1988) and Dumas (2010) remind us that at the time in the United States of state sanctioned slavery, White slave owners would beat their Black 'property' for attempting to learn how to read. Gearon (2019) also reminds us of the potentially dangerous political nature of education, and its potential to indoctrinate, pointing out that "all totalitarian movements of the twentieth century saw the arts as critical to shaping political systems" (p.400). German folktales, for example, were commandeered to inspire unwavering nationalism in Nazi Germany (Kamenetsky,1984). In the Soviet context, the writer's role was clearly delineated as one whose mission was to elevate the collective. Andrei Zhdanov lent his name to the ideological aesthetic doctrine of Stalinism with writers, composers and artists directed to be "engineers of the human soul" (Figes, 2003; Garrard & Garrard,1990).

Acknowledging the long history of the use and abuse of literacy education, Gearon is wary of the linking of literary exploration in the classroom with any 'ready-made interpretation' and he argues that "however seemingly benign, the argument for a specific and narrow literary-political-aesthetic" is problematic (2019, p. 401). I will explore the literary and cinematic pedagogy issue in detail in the next chapter. Alluding to the American context and drawing on the history of school segregation and subsequent desegregation, Dumas (2016) highlights what he describes as the prevalence of anti-blackness in education policy whereby "the Black is constructed as always already problem" (p.16). This categorisation of Blackness in terms of deficit will also be a theme to be investigated in the study.

The following sections outline two key concepts vital to Post-Colonial Theory, the other theoretical arm of our framework, namely stereotype and representation. Firstly, we will consider the relevance of Post-Colonial Theory to the current investigation.

2.11 Interculturality and Post-Colonial Theory

As this research is a study which seeks to develop insights about the ways in which teacher selection of, and pedagogic responses to literature and film, inform intercultural education, it is vital to engage theory that addresses issues of stereotype and representation.

Post-colonial theory emerged in U.S. and U.K. academies in the 1980's, as part of a new politicised field of humanistic enquiry including critical race theory (Gandhi, 1998; Loomba, 2005). The theory relates to reading and writing in previously colonised countries or literature written in colonising countries dealing with the colonised. In the context of this study, it focuses our gaze on the coloniser's distortion of the experience and realities of colonised peoples and its inscribing of inferiority and otherness on them.

Bleszynska (2008), Coulby (2006), and Gundara (2008, 2014) suggest that critical intercultural education challenges ethnocentricity, the 'West vs. Rest' mentality and enables the student to develop the capacity to reflect critically with empathy on how we can live together in multicultural societies that are complex and hybrid in their cultural composition (Gorski, 2008, 2009). The aspects of Post-Colonial Theory most beneficial to our investigation are its focus on issues of stereotype and representation. These key tenets demand that we confront the legacy of imperialism and its forms of (mis) representation of the colonised world in the questions we ask of the stories and histories that we read.

Post-colonial theory, which interrogates essentialist readings of nationality that designate a status of subordination to Third World nations, invites us to reject essentialism of culture associated with a Eurocentric take on the world (Bhabha, 1990, 1994; Said, 1978, 1994). These theorists reject a Manichean distortion of the world into essentialising and reductive dichotomies that have had a destructively totalising effect on peoples of the global South so that the imagined 'West' is synonymous with science, logic, progress, order, and the 'Orient' by contrast is constructed as exotic, childlike, sensual, chaotic, irrational (Fanon, 1961). Post-colonial theory addresses the material, physical and psychological violence perpetrated by the imperial project. It holds that binary oppositions inflicted on the colonised must be overcome through naming and resistance in the form of 'writing back'. The seminal text associated with the field is Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) in which he lambasts Western representation of the East through the discourse of Orientalism, the means by which, "the Orient is taught, researched, administered, and pronounced upon in certain discrete ways" (p.202). He criticises a discourse which essentialises in the most demeaning and grossly non-factual ways "such essential aspects of the Orient as the Oriental character, Oriental despotism, Oriental

sensuality, and the like" (p.203). Said holds that cultures are hybrid and heterogenous and so "interrelated and interdependent as to beggar any unitary or simply delineated description of their individuality" (Said, 1978, p.347).

He forces us to confront the link between Eurocentric representations of the East and the business of Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries so that long established depreciatory stereotypes proposed by the European intelligentsia are disrupted. Said demands of literary scholars and teachers that we confront the socio-political and material context in which texts are produced, so that the link between power and representation is acknowledged, and the taken for granted, interrogated. In making a case for genuine inclusiveness in the literature classroom, Poon (2020), argues that post-colonial study with its interrogation of nation and Eurocentrism has an important role to play in literature education. She finds that the foregrounding of, and the literary significance of transnationalism, and the inevitable results of contact, exchange, and heterogeneity, may be overlooked by the post-colonial theorist.

2.11.1 Interrogating Stereotype

In the context of the current study's investigation of teacher conceptualisations of the intercultural, an issue that arises is the teacher's perspective regarding how texts that feature marginalised characters might be responded to. Can resistance to the type of catastrophic stereotyping that Said scrutinises be advanced among Junior Cycle students? What forms of counter-story telling can be explored in the context of the Junior Cycle English classroom?

Like Said, Homi K. Bhabha (1990), seeks to resist and transcend the limited naming and codifying of people and places and ways of being synonymous with the discourse of

Orientalism by talking back to it. His work offers alternate post-colonial responses to the reality of the globalised world we live in. In *Nation and Narration,* Bhabha (1990) rejects conceptualisations of nation that ascribe originality and a singularity of identity to it in favour of a view of nation constructed as a series of competing narratives, competing multiple perspectives. This perspective has interesting implications for the current research as the Junior Cycle classroom reflects global mobility and is, therefore, characterised by the complexity of multi-layered identities. Bhabha's theory of the *Third Space* (1994) is a useful lens through which we can conceive of the intercultural potential of the Junior Cycle classroom. In this 'in-between' space students bring their complex cultural identities to encounters with each other and with the literature and film with which they engage to produce hybrid culture that is in a permanent state of becoming in the literary/cinematic encounter. The concept of the *Third Space* subverts historical domination of one 'culture' over another by deconstructing essentialist and binary oppositions such as East and West, North and South, self and other (1994, p.276). As Byrne (2009) describes it, the Third Space "is not simply one thing or the other, nor both, at the same time, but a kind of negotiation between both positions (p.42).

2.11.2 The Question of Representation

Spivak (1988) also seeks to provide space for the marginalised voice to be heard. In *'Can the Subaltern Speak?'* (1988*),* she cites the example of the nineteenth century *sati* (the by no means universal Hindu system of immolating a widow on the funeral pyre of her dead husband) whose voice is always negotiated and appropriated by patriarchal Hindu culture or the colonial ruler. Spivak points out that:

> …one never encounters the testimony of the women's voice consciousness…it would have constituted the ingredients for producing a counter sentence" (p.93).

She goes on to describe:

> …the grossly mis transcribed names of these women, the sacrificed widows in the police reports included in the records of the East India Company" (ibid)

Spivak highlights the absence of voice, pointing out the very explicit trope being communicated, which she describes in terms of white men saving brown women from brown men. I allude to this foregrounding of silencing because Spivak argues it is the role of the post-colonial critic to record the silencing of the woman's voice in imperial and patriarchal discourses. This preoccupation with the voice of the marginalised and previously silenced, speaks to the current study, as one issue of interest relates to teacher views on the extent to which literature and film pedagogy in the intercultural space might lend itself to discussion of issues around whose story is being told, and how diverse characters are being represented.

Spivak's call for the acknowledgement of the silenced story, aligns with advocacy for a critical reappraisal of the curriculum to investigate the extent to which school texts reflect cultural diversity and address oversights and omissions in terms of representation. This type of understanding prompts the teacher of English to critically examine both his or her selection of class material and pedagogy as a first step towards moving beyond superficial and apolitical approaches to difference (Dervin, 2016; Moore-Gilbert, 1997). In the current study, the issue of representation will be addressed by considering whose voices and stories are being heard and valorised and whose are being marginalised or completely ignored. From a post-colonial perspective, the issue of representation must involve a reappraisal of the canon whereby it is understood as implicated in a process of what Said (2001) describes, as a process of "cultural centralisation, a direct consequence of imperialism and the globalism we still live today" (p. xxx). He also alerts us to the

dangers of an 'empty humanism' whereby the study of literature promotes humanistic values in such a way as to "eliminate any mention of transnational experiences such as war, slavery, imperialism, poverty and ignorance that have disfigured human history…" (p. xxxi). Importantly, Said also reminds us that it is possible and necessary not to simply "distort or reject" the canon but to re-read and re-examine it, "to resituate writers in their own history, with an emphasis on those apparently marginal aspects of their work which because of the historical experience of non-European readers have acquired a new prominence" (p. xxix). The issue of text re-examination is important in the context of the current study given the presence of canonical texts on Junior Cycle English reading lists.

The scholarship of Walter Mignolo is vital in this regard. He explains coloniality in terms of a colonial matrix of power: "a structure of management (composed of domains, levels and flows) that controls and touches upon all aspects and trajectories of our lives" (2017, p.40). Importantly. Mignolo reminds us that 'coloniality' which emerges in the sixteenth century voyages of conquest of the East and of the 'New World' has not disappeared, rather it has transformed since that formative period. In the contemporary moment, Mignolo (2017) makes a case, not for resistance against the lingering effects of coloniality but instead appeals to all of us to 're-exist'. In the context of this research, such 're-existence' means the promotion, not of universality, but what he terms 'pluriversality', an acknowledgement of the value of myriad ways of seeing and imagining the world, and meaningful engagement with various expressions of this imagining. Meaningful engagement implies an actively decolonising agenda in terms of curriculum.

In their study, *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft et al. (1989) provide a theoretical account of a broad range of post-colonial texts which expose and reject the

misrepresentation of the colonised by the imperial centre. This literature constitutes a radical critique of Eurocentric notions of language and literature. For our purposes, post-colonial theory illuminates a type of literary response appropriate to the Junior Cycle English classroom whereby the taken for granted is subjected to critical scrutiny. This is important because as the co-authors of *The Empire Writes Back* point out:

> The study of English has always been a densely political and cultural phenomenon, a practice in which language and literature have been called into the service of a profound and embracing nationalism (Ashcroft et al., 1989, p.1).

Sabaratnam (2017) points out that the process of decolonising the curriculum involves interrogating assumptions about how the world is and why it came to be that way. It involves an understanding of the relationship between the identity of the writer, what they write and how they write about a particular theme or issue (Bhambra, 2014). This research allowed teachers of Junior Cycle English to reflect on their approach to reading pedagogy. It was important to discover what approaches to texts are adopted in the classroom and what questions of and about those texts are being posed.

The present study also seeks to discover the extent to which Junior Cycle English classrooms embrace reading that might constitute a critical and decolonising approach to specific texts. To what extent might the Junior Cycle English classroom be considered truly inclusive so that the stories that have traditionally occupied the centre and those that have been marginalised or perhaps completely ignored, might be repositioned by teachers to facilitate a rebalancing of power? Proponents of a decolonial reconstruction of curriculum call on educators to move beyond the language of diversity and inclusivity, and instead address issues of structural and institutionally embedded bias (Grosfuogel, 2013). Decolonial scholars remind all teachers of their complicity in a system where

racism may not be spoken of. In such a system, knowledge which is valued and foregrounded, is considered mainstream and normalised. Keval (2019) reminds us that knowledge produced in the West (and this includes artistic works) has not happened in an epistemological vacuum outside the West's collusion with racial, gendered, and economic genocide since the sixteenth century.

The current study seeks to discover English teachers' perspectives on the level of diversity represented in the lists of texts and film at their pedagogical disposal. Simply diversifying the Junior Cycle English curriculum, however, does not challenge racism or engage readers in active decolonisation whereby the legacy of centuries of colonial and racialised privilege and discrimination is stripped bare and confronted. The current research seeks to explore, therefore, both what is taught and how it is taught in terms of Junior Cycle English, and to consider the potential of the Junior Cycle English classroom as a space conducive to active anti-racism in school. Post-colonial scholars caution against the tendency in education to homogenise differences and overlook asymmetrical relations of power (Bhabha, 1994; Mignolo & Schiwy, 2003; Spivak 1988). These scholars remind us how difficult or uncomfortable knowledge can be avoided in the classroom.

The present research seeks to establish the extent to which English teachers are prepared to confront issues of positionality and racism. Anthias (2013) also suggests that to be 'intercultural' encompasses a journey beyond the reductive binary of self and other so that we reach a more sophisticated appreciation of how we are mutually different, mutually other. Such a conceptualisation of interculturality is characterised by a disruption of the assumption that otherness is a given rather than a process of othering. It demands questioning where "knowledge is centred, how it relates to authority and

addresses the in-between complexities of post-colonial spaces and identities" (Sobré-Denton & Bardhan, 2013, p.152). It also interrogates what DiAngelo (2010) terms the discourse of individualism, whereby the significance of race and the advantage of being White is denied. The myth of colour-blindness and meritocracy is reproduced, the individual conceptualised as being in control of one's destiny whereby one's 'success' in life is a measure of one's intelligence and hard work, rather than one's ethnicity or social circumstances.

2.12 Summary

The focus of this chapter has been to map out the scholarly context in which the current research is situated. This involved, firstly, a search of the literature for different conceptualisations of the intercultural, ranging from celebration of diversity to critical anti-racist and interrogatory approaches that challenge unequal power dynamics that marginalise and disenfranchise certain minoritised groups. The chapter also outlined the study's theoretical framework comprising Critical Literacy, Critical Race Theory, and two key aspects of Post-Colonial Theory. The themes identified in this review of these critical theories will guide, though not overpower, the exploration of teachers' understandings and experiences of intercultural education in the context of their selection of literature and film in the Junior Cycle classroom. The framework highlights the need to critically examine the literary and cinematic pedagogy of the Junior Cycle English teacher to understand how the intercultural is conceptualised and realised within the complexity and messiness of the classroom. The critical framework presented here also clarifies that the challenges involved in promoting transformational educational endeavour cannot be underestimated.

Examination of studies featuring literary and cinematic pedagogy, as well as issues relevant to the relationship between teacher education and the intercultural is undertaken in Chapter Three. It involves an exploration of the implications for intercultural education in the English literature/film classroom, where decolonising the curriculum and recommitting to intercultural education's transformative roots may be realised (Gorski, 2009).

Chapter Three: Intercultural Education and English Teaching

'The function of art has always been to break through the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness'

John Dewey (1954)

3.1 Introduction

The genesis of this study is my belief in the transformative potential of the English classroom as a space conducive to imaginative engagement with literature and film. This is an environment wherein as Maxine Greene describes it, the student is enabled "to think about alternative ways of being alive, possible ways of inhabiting the world" (2001, p.32). Similarly, Vinz et al., (2000) conceive of the classroom as an educational space with the potential to encourage students to become "(other)wise" where the transformation of student thinking and perceptions of the other is encouraged.

The current study seeks to understand the extent to which such transformation might be made possible, through interruption of texts whereby racism is explicitly interrogated, or conversely, the ways in which English pedagogy may inhibit or block completely such ethical engagement.

To this end, the current chapter draws on studies that engage issues pertaining to text selection and intercultural education. First, (and bearing in mind the deeply interrelated nature of the themes under investigation), attention will centre on the issue of racism in

the context of pedagogy focused on analysis of literature and film. The following sections will examine the status of the canonical text in the classroom, with an emphasis on teacher responses to the racism that is encountered during literary/cinematic engagement.

Later in the chapter, the role of critical literacy as a means of problematising the canonical text will be examined. Various categorisations of literature: multicultural, world, and global will be outlined, before the implications of the adoption of a critically intercultural orientation towards English pedagogy will be considered. The final part of the chapter will deal with the contribution of teacher education, and of ongoing professional development to the field of intercultural education. As researcher and English teacher, I acknowledge that although certain disciplinary practices and critical theories of English have the potential to develop critical consciousness, teaching them is not enough. Kavanagh and Rainey (2017) remind us that English does not have a neutral history, influenced as it has been by "racist, sexist, heterosexist, classist, colonialist, and nativist values and beliefs" that have privileged some and marginalised others. (p.934).

3.2 Literary/Cinematic Engagement and Intercultural Education

The current research seeks to probe both the 'what' and the 'how' of that which is read and viewed in the Junior Cycle English classroom, mindful of Kundera's conviction that literature provides a landscape in which the readers might question "the world of life" (2003, p.5).

Choo (2015) maintains that literary texts have a vital role to play in the context of diversity at the level of the classroom and in the world. Texts, she reminds us, invite us "to attend to the specificity of values contextualized within particular histories and

traditions". (Choo, 2014, p.14). Many scholars have made a similar case for the role of the literary text in the promotion of intercultural understanding (Alter, 2013; Lütge, 2013; Scott & Huntington, 2002; Short, 2011). Similarly, Roofe and Bezzina (2018) hold that curriculum must respond to our postmodern era, an era which challenges "our provincial notions of common values and defined roles and boundaries" (p.230). They also suggest that "curriculum as the cornerstone for learning in schools, should serve as the foundation for providing opportunities that awaken the critical consciousness of citizens..." (ibid). One important element of critical consciousness raising is the issue of classroom discussion of racism as encountered in literature and film.

3.3 Racism and the Classroom

The need for research that probes racism within the broader theme of interculturality and English teaching in the Irish education system (given the absence of such studies) is borne out by the findings of international as well as Irish studies which we will now consider. The present research, (despite its limited scope), aspires to contribute to a scholarly conversation already initiated by researchers who address the broad issue of interculturality in the Irish context.

3.3.1 International Context

Of relevance to the current research is a study conducted by Castro (2010) among pre-service teachers in the U.S. to gather their views of cultural diversity. It reveals a dearth of any complex engagement with issues of inclusion and diversity, noting an absence of meaningful reflexivity about individual positionality, particularly among White student teachers. The findings of Castro's research are similar to those reached in studies in Australia conducted by Mills (2009) and Santoro (2009), who discovered among pre-

service teachers there, a limited understanding of the implications of cultural diversity in education.

In the Canadian context, Gulliver & Thurrell ((2016) undertook an examination of English language textbooks, employing critical discourse analysis to determine the extent to which the realities of racism were acknowledged or denied in their presentations of contemporary Canada or Canadian history. They found that while the textbooks they analysed embraced multiculturalism, they did so without any critical engagement with the reality of racism, both historical and contemporary. Another conclusion reached was that the textbooks do not examine "how white supremacy shapes systems, institutions, language and education in Canada" (p.43).

Such findings are enlightening given the current study's brief to ascertain the level of sophistication evident in teachers' intercultural perspectives, and to establish the extent to which the perspectives expressed reflect a concern or preoccupation with issues of race and racism in the context of Junior English pedagogy related to literature and film.

3.3.2 Irish Context

Bryan (2007, 2008) finds that policies and practices associated with intercultural education in Ireland, and which claim to promote an anti-racist agenda, actually (albeit unintentionally), have the effect of reproducing racial inequality. Her conclusions in the Irish context are echoed by those reached by Gulliver and Thurrell (2016) who point to serious deficiencies in multicultural policy and practices identified in Canada.

Bryan (2009) highlights the lack of studies "examining Irish curricular knowledge in light of its potential to foster or combat racism …" (p.298). This is the lacuna that the current research aspires to address.

In the next section, we will examine research studies that examine the issue of racism by addressing issues around selection of classroom material. Firstly, we must consider the status of the canon in the English curriculum.

3.4 English Teaching and the Canon

Applebee (1996) has described the canon in terms of whiteness, maleness, and Eurocentrism, captured succinctly in the phrase "deadly traditions" (p.21). The literary canon has served to "affirm cultural narratives of power, dominance and heterosexuality" (Cherry-Mc Daniel & Fisher-Young, 2012, p.8) which sometimes "function as tools for maintaining a marginalizing status quo" (Bissonnette & Glazier 2016, p.685).

In their 2012 review of English classroom practices in the U.S., Johnston and Mangat (2012) found that well known or canonical texts tended to remain on reading lists for decades, with little consideration given as to how they might be taught in ways responsive to the needs of the ethnically and culturally diverse classroom. This, despite the fact, that several studies have demonstrated the many benefits for students associated with the inclusion of a range of diverse texts for exploration in a culturally diverse classroom (Brauer & Clark, 2008; Davies et al., 2013, Ebe, 2012; Friese et al., 2008; Hastie & Sharplin, 2012). Mc Ardle (2017) also points out that there has been "much debate about whether or not the classic English canon can sufficiently address the needs of a multicultural audience" (p.98).

We have already noted the prevalence of canonical texts such as *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937) and *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960) in Junior Cycle English prescribing reading lists. The perspectives of the study participants will be sought on

issues around text selection and the study also seeks to understand to what extent teachers are problematising canonical texts in relation to representation and stereotype.

3.4.1 Problematising the Canon?

Martin (2014) conducted research which addressed the challenges she encountered as a White educator using a canonical novel to examine the impact of hegemony on her students. She describes the impact of reading *Huckleberry Finn* (1884) through the lens of critical theory, pointing out the difficulty and danger involved in reading a novel in which the "N" word features 219 times.

Martin acknowledges the complexities that exist around language usage, distinguishing between the overtly racist employment of the 'N' word in Harper Lee's 1960 novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* (a standard on Junior Cycle English prescribed reading lists), and the more complicated and challenging discussion necessitated by the use of the problematic language in Twain's novel.

The theoretical framework underpinning the study features critical race theory: Bell (1992), Ladson-Billings (1999), affirming Chaisson's position that critical race theory in the classroom is a "pedagogical approach that allows for the critical examination and challenging of traditional epistemologies of race" (2004, p.345).

The researcher, who is White, embraced Hip-hop in the classroom as a tool to facilitate expression of student counter narratives. Students were given "the opportunity to talk about race in critical ways by intersecting 'out-of' literacies (Hip-hop) and in-school literacies (Huck Finn) and by relating the two through language, e.g., usage of the "N" word. The researcher admits that classroom problematising of the concept of language reclamation i.e. the use of the "N" word in Hip-hop, is difficult.

The conclusion reached by the study is that to read a canonised text that deals with race without problematising historical and current issues of race in our lives, "is to succumb to institutionalized racism" (p.248).

Similarly, Nieto (2008) argues that being culturally responsive involves moving beyond niceness or colour-blindness, or simply treating students equally. On the contrary, it is the view of Pollock (2004), and Schultz et al. (2006), that talk about race must be distinguished. My research concerns itself with the extent to which racism is foregrounded (or not) in Junior Cycle English classroom talk in a distinguished and critical way.

In the Irish context, those who make curricular decisions are overwhelmingly White. Martin concludes that one's positionality or standpoint affects one's response to a literary text or film (p.264). She admits that students of colour in her school did not have exposure to texts featuring Black people other than those centred on the theme of oppression or racism. Consequently, she emphasises the need to read classroom texts written by African American authors so that a canonical text steeped in racism is counterbalanced with different depictions of blackness in literature.

Attention will now be directed to the application of critical literacy responses to canonical texts in the classroom.

3.4.2 Critical Literacy and the Canon

Borsheim-Black et al., 2014, point to the lack of scholarship pertaining to the application of critical literacy in the teaching of canonical literature. They emphasise that it is the very nature of the perceived merit of such texts which "offers apposite opportunity to engage students in critical literacy" (p.124). As we have seen in Chapter 2, underlying

critical literacy frameworks, is the Freirean concept that critical literacy is about "reading the world" and paying attention to that which is included or omitted from a text, so that its ideological foundations are disclosed (Luke, 2000). It poses a challenge therefore to educators to problematise over-reliance on the traditional literary canon (Haddix & Rojas, 2011).

To challenge his students to interrogate the ideologies embedded within the canonical *The Odyssey (Homer),* Steiss (2019), employed critical literacy in its study. Described as critical canon pedagogy (Borsheim-Black et al. (2014), and Macaluso (2017), applying critical literacy to the study of the canonical text promotes social consciousness, by "critiquing and disrupting problematic narratives" (Steiss, 2019, p.434). In keeping with Beck (2005) and Lopez (2011), Steiss concludes that teachers, especially novice critical literacy educators, "would benefit from the support of critical literacy practitioners and mentors" to enable them to learn how to teach reading against a text (2019, p.440).

So too Mc Ardle (2017), demonstrates how Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) can be read in a way that explores colonialism, historical sexism, and racism but which also facilitates an examination of contemporary structural racism through the employment of critical literacy. He acknowledges the 'uncomfortable' place that Conrad's novella occupies in literature, where, on the one hand, Western critics commend it for tackling colonialism and racism, while African critics, such as Chinua Achebe, condemn the work for its barbaric representation of Africa and its people (Mc Ardle, 2017, p.99). These studies are examples of teacher employment of critical methodologies as they confront difficult subjects with their students and grapple with issues of racism and representation.

The application of critical literature pedagogy to the study of the canonical text enables the student to rewrite narratives of marginalisation to include diverse perspectives (Dyches, 2018 and Janks, 2000).

3.5 Positionality and Intercultural Education

As an English teacher, I am alert to the reality that "classrooms are interpretive sites, where the intentions of the main players are not immediately transparent to anyone, any more than the full implications of anything they may say or do can be" (Doecke, 2014, p.144). We must recognise, therefore, the myriad interpersonal negotiations that occur within the classroom, and acknowledge the significance of complex autobiography. Adrienne Rich (1986) reminds us to read and feel the unique differences that our bodily positioning in history, geography, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation makes. She describes how her:

> …body had more than one identity [female, white, Jewish, middle-class, Southern, North American, lesbian…] here is no liberation that only knows how to say "I"; there is no collective movement that speaks for each of us all the way through (p.224).

Following Rich, therefore, intercultural engagement is, as Jay (1991) describes, "a dialogue among and within socially constructed bodies and subject positions" (p.265). This foregrounds the need to attend to the positionality of the teacher and the student, to facilitate self-scrutiny, and make possible what Jay denotes as, 'responsible pedagogy' which involves "vigilant criticism of racism and discrimination in all their forms" (p.266). It highlights the obligation on teachers to acknowledge and respond to "the impact of cultural differences on the lives, experiences, and identities of diverse groups" (Goodwin et al., 2008, p.4). Attention must now shift to the issue of text selection. We

will begin with multicultural literature which has been identified as a potential tool for developing teacher understandings of race and racism (Glenn, 2012; Glenn, 2015; Lazar & Offenberg, 2011)

Other categories such as world and global literature will then be considered, before I outline what a cosmopolitan orientation to literature/film teaching might mean for the teacher who aspires to the promotion of social justice in the culturally diverse Junior Cycle English classroom.

3.6 Multicultural Literature: Advantages and Limitations

Multicultural literature is described as a literature which focuses on people of colour, or those under-represented from diverse cultural, linguistic, and religious groups that have been marginalised by dominant culture (Canales et al., 2002; Sanders, 2009). It provides:

> …mirrors through which students can read about situations that resemble their own worlds and discover the richness of cultures other than their own (Stalworth et al., 2006, p.480).

Young people experience a boost in self-esteem when they feel they can relate to the culture reflected in the literature that is explored (Nieto, 2006; Tschida et al., 2014). When children do not see themselves reflected in the books they read. or when the images are inauthentic or negative, they learn a lesson about how they are devalued in society (Bishop, 1990).

However, while multicultural literature can provide children with a sense of affirmation about themselves and their culture (Colby & Lyon, 2004; Gangi, 2008), its mere inclusion does not mean that the needs of culturally diverse students are being met.

Cai (2002) and Fang et al. (2003) have shown that traditional methods of English teaching do not work when teaching multicultural literature. Other studies have demonstrated that pedagogic approaches which draw on New Criticism (emphasising close reading for thematic and stylistic points), as propounded by Brooks (1947/2001) and Richards (1924/2004, 1929) foreground intrinsic stylistic features and tend to negate the possibility of critical dialogue (Applebee, 1996; Hines, 1997). Sulzer (2014) has also criticised the "simplification, reduction and revision of young individuals into a uniform set of readers", pointing to the inadequacy of standardised assessment which prioritises "close reading and text-dependent questions" (p.143).

So too the limitations of a reader response approach in the multicultural literature classroom have been described by Jordan and Purves (1993), and Pirie (1997), who point out that while reader response pedagogy as conceptualised by Rosenblatt (1995) encourages the reader to forge personal connections between their reading and their personal experiences, such an approach may not prompt the reader to probe in any critical sense, their worldview or sense of self-identity. Pirie suggests that such an approach risks "narrowing our focus to the individual and masking the context" (Pirie, 1997, p.10). The social and political context in which the literary is produced and received is vital, because as Barker (2000) cautions, writing is "never a neutral or objective phenomenon but a matter of positionality" (p.5). It is for this reason that Choo (2012) urges the teacher to pay attention to the ways in which literature is mediated in the classroom space. Approaches to textual mediation by Junior Cycle teachers of English are of vital interest to the current research.

3.6.1 Multicultural Literature and Pedagogic Response

Bigler and Collins (1995) also foreground the vital role of the teacher in their examination of "the way in which the stories told, and the stories silenced" expose the myth of neutral knowledge in debates about multiculturalism (p.1). Merely adopting a more 'inclusive' text, produces little meaningful change. It is the role of the teacher in challenging stereotype and addressing the issue of representation which is crucial. So too Willis (2000), suggests that teaching multicultural literature begins with the teacher's reflection on his or her race and culture.

In her analysis of the adoption of the Common Core Standards in various parts of the U.S., Berchini (2016), alerts teachers to the need to guard against "inclusion for inclusion's sake" (p.61) and to conduct critical analyses of race, gender, and class representations in the text. Scafe (1989) too, emphasises the need to interrogate cultural assumptions when reading the Black literary text in the classroom, reminding teachers of the danger of devaluing such a text, simultaneously confirming the dominant culture's superiority.

Morrell and Morrell (2012) also point out that if "multicultural texts are taught in culturally alienating ways, what good have we done?" (p.11). What is necessary, these researchers have found, is the bringing of "multicultural perspectives to the texts" by challenging stereotypes and "questioning inferred messages" (p.14). This is important work because, as Toni Morrison has shown, "in matters of race, silence and evasion have historically ruled literary discourse" resulting in what she describes as, "the habit of ignoring race" (1992, p.9).

Our attention will now shift to other categorisations of comparative literature which might be drawn upon by the Junior Cycle English teacher committed to a genuine spirit of inclusion in the classroom.

3.7 World Literature and its Critique

Pizer (2006) reminds us of the Eurocentric origins of the category 'world literature' or *Weltliteratur,* a phrase first employed by the nineteenth century German scholar Christopher Martin Wieland, whose idea of world literature centred on classic Greek and Roman writers. Choo (2012) criticises the category's foregrounding of "representative masterpieces" which contributes to superficial or stereotypical understandings of other cultures and communities. Lawall (1994) also cautions educators to be mindful of issues of exclusion and inclusion inherent in world-oriented approaches to teaching literature.

3.8 Global Literature

Global literature as a category may be more inclusive, embracing as it does the multicultural and the international, and including books written in English as well as those available in translation (Qureshi, 2006; Liang et al., 2013; Short, 2016.) It overcomes the problem associated with world literature, whereby students may regard "anything non-western as 'other' or foreign, rather than with a stronger sense that we are the world; and the world is us (Qureshi, 2006, p.34). Furthermore, scholars such as Ulrich Beck argue that it is necessary to undertake a global reframing of the curriculum as "21st century life and identities are…simultaneously global and local" (Beck, 2002, p.36).

Bond (2006) and Montero and Robertson (2006), however, have shown how students from the dominant culture (in the US context), can become disengaged due to

unfamiliarity with a text. This disengagement is referred to by Soter (1997) as 'aesthetic restriction' whereby the global text is rejected because of its presentation of different social and cultural practices which may prove alienating for some.

Furthermore, a global text might leave students with a reductive or superficial understanding of another culture (Stewart, 2008). *The Breadwinner* by Deborah Ellis (2000), for example, has been criticised for its stereotypical depiction of girls and women in Afghanistan (Sensoy & Marshall, 2010). There is also the risk that reading a global text can perpetuate an us/them duality, the "we're fortunate syndrome" (Stewart, 2008). These issues have led scholars to reflect on pedagogical approaches to global literature that might promote "an other-oriented approach...to draw the interpreting self into a responsible relation with the marginalized referent other in the world" (Choo, 2014, p.78).

One example of research which places under the spotlight such an 'other-oriented 'pedagogy' is that which was undertaken by Wissman (2018) who presents a case study in which an English teacher introduced global literature into her predominantly White classroom with the intention of 'disturbing the waters'. The research sought to investigate the pedagogical and curricular choices the teacher made when teaching a literature class, using a framework informed by critical perspectives on literacy and language. The study reveals that the teacher succeeded in bringing about disruptions by inviting students to share their responses to the text by privileging multiple perspectives and focusing attention on the ways in which language shapes meaning.

The teacher "repeatedly paused while reading aloud and asked her students, "What are you thinking?" (p.27). Wissman notes that this critical attention to language often prompted profound shifts in individual student perspectives. (p.29). This research has

interesting implications for the current study in which Junior Cycle English teacher may (or may not) demonstrate the dexterity and bravery required to enable the embracing of difficult issues of race and racism.

There remains the danger, however, that classifications such as 'commonwealth' or 'global' literature as highlighted by Choo (2014) and Vinz (2000), may simply involve the replacement of one universalising scheme by another. Choo (2011) argues instead for a re-conceptualisation of the literature curriculum through the model of a cosmopolitan approach. This allows for the nurturing of non-measurable values rather than over-emphasis on student acquisition of skills and avoids the dangers inherent in rigid labelling.

3.9 A Cosmopolitan Orientation to Global Literature

Theorists who propose a cosmopolitan orientation to literary pedagogy maintain that it promotes a perspective that is invested in the other and demonstrates a commitment towards the notion of a common humanity that transcends territorial boundaries (Lu, 2000). Cosmopolitanism in education is described as an orientation conducive to learning from the other (Appiah, 1998; Hansen, 2011; Mehta, 2000; Nussbaum, 1997). It embraces a hybrid perspective which while respecting tradition and loyalty to nation, is also committed to cross-cultural conversations (Williams, 2007). A literature curriculum reflecting a cosmopolitan orientation resists narrow parochialism, featuring what Hansen (2011) refers to as, the 'hospitable imagination' characterised by "reflective openness to the new with reflective loyalty to the known" (p.1). Hence it leans more towards literary pedagogy that aligns with the main tenets of critical literacy previously described.

Choo (2014) has conducted research that seeks to examine the ways in which the literature classroom can facilitate the 'hospitable imagination' in a globally interconnected age. In her view, it "becomes a potent force that can disrupt violent hostilities toward the other" (2014, p.73). Based on her classroom observations and data gathered from six English teachers who described themselves as teaching world or global literature from two schools, each in New York, Perth and Singapore, Choo notes that all the teachers demonstrated to some extent, cosmopolitan pedagogies in the work, creating dialogic spaces conducive to the expansion of perspectives.

In the classes observed, Choo identified pedagogy conducive to what Adorno (1973) refers to as, 'non-identity thinking' (whereby the individual moves beyond the imposition of concepts on the other). The other is prioritised and relativised so that characters encountered in literature are perceived in their complexity and fullness. Choo (2014) also finds that intertextuality was a literary approach common to all the teachers, whereby one text was read against another which while featuring a similar theme or cultural context, does so while presenting an alternative perspective. This has the effect of disrupting a singular reading that might otherwise objectify the other. The study concludes that the 'hospitable imagination' can be nurtured in the literature classroom through a conscious decentring of the self. (p.85).

Having described research that features ethical intercultural literary pedagogies, it is also important to consider studies that examine salient themes pertaining to teacher education in the intercultural context. Examination of such studies is necessary because as Nieto's (2006) U.S. based study into how to prepare teachers for diverse classrooms, demonstrates, the most effective teachers cherish their students' diversity. Another finding from that study is that White teachers cannot teach what they do not know, so that

what is required for the development of the successful multicultural educator is “training, experience and heart to do so” (p.471).

3.10 Educating English Teachers in the Intercultural Space

While teachers may acknowledge the urgency with which they need to develop means to integrate multiculturalism in the curriculum (Banks, 2014; Peterson et al., 2015), they may also feel unprepared to address issues of interculturality in the classroom (Gay, 2002; Wake & Modla, 2008). In their analysis of both in-service and pre-service teachers, Hammett and Bainbridge (2009) discovered “blindness and ignorance in their assertions of the invisibility of diversity and…of whiteness” (p.158) and concluded that teachers did not possess the knowledge or attitudes to teach students with a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

There is a growing consensus that English teaching requires practitioners who have the skills and dispositions conducive to pedagogic engagement with multiple worldviews held by students encompassing a range of racial, cultural, sexual, and economic identities (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011; Hallman & Burdick, 2011). There is also the concern that certain approaches to multiculturalism may unintentionally perpetuate whiteness ideology as

> …the language of teacher education programs includes social justice and multiculturalism and diversity while the ideology, values and practices are assuredly reinscribing White privilege, power and racism (Cross, 2005, p.266).

While it is not within the remit of the present study to examine teacher education in any comprehensive way, a brief review of international studies that engage this theme is required.

3.11 Culturally Diverse Literature and Teacher Education

Utilisation of literature in the preparation of English teachers is one response to what Florio-Ruane (2001) concludes is a failure of teacher education to help student-teachers understand how complex questions of representation are enmeshed within questions of gender, culture, and race. Some scholars advocate the application of a critical lens to the study of multicultural literature to move student-teachers out of their comfort zones, so that they feel sufficiently safe to tackle the uncomfortable and the controversial (Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010; Moller, 2012).

In their study, Haddix and Price-Dennis (2013) as teacher educators of colour, conducted two case studies that involve pre-service teachers' critical encounters with multicultural literature, chosen because it challenges the 'white-ification' of texts (Kinloch, 2007), and can be both "a window and a mirror" (Bishop, 1990). The researchers concluded that through exposing student teachers to urban and multicultural literature, they were able to expand their definition of literacy practices, introduce counter narratives to disrupt traditional discourses that frame diversities as deficits, and explicitly address issues of race and discrimination.

Importantly, they point out that texts will not do the critical work all by themselves, instead the research emphasises the vital role of the educator and the critical lenses he or she employs. The researchers also point out that to frame multicultural texts uncritically, or to omit them from the classroom altogether, teachers "knowingly or not reify monoculturally normed texts and continue to foster inequitable educational futures for diverse children and youth" (2013, p.277).

Iwai (2019) also describes a study that employed multicultural literature in a literacy course designed to deepen pre-service teachers' capacity to practice culturally responsive

teaching. This pedagogy engages “cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students, to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them” (Gay, 2010, p.31). It is a type of teaching that helps students learn about others’ cultures to develop cultural sensitivity and appreciation as global citizens (Gay, 2015). Iwai’s research was conducted at a mid-sized university in the U.S. Midwest with a predominantly White student population. Multicultural literature in a variety of genres was explored by the students with a view to selecting literature for the classroom that would respond to the needs of the diverse classroom. The study surveys revealed that pre-service teachers’ immersion in multicultural literature increased teacher awareness and knowledge relating to issues of diversity and inclusion.

Similar studies that have incorporated children’s books with multicultural perspectives in teacher education courses, have also demonstrated increased comprehension of multicultural literature and enhanced understanding of multicultural education (Hadjioannou & Hutchinson, 2014; Ness, 2019; Palmi et al., 2016). Glenn (2012) explored the potential of literature that challenged pre-service teachers’ constructions of race. Her research found that the provision of time and space to this cohort of student teachers to interrogate dominant discourses that marginalise the students they may teach, resulted in their challenging personal worldviews and racist ideologies and structures.

Similarly, Nganga (2020) undertook research that examined the benefits of teaching pre-service teachers’ intentional analysis of hidden bias in children’s literature. She found that at the outset, student teachers expressed their lack of knowledge, and some demonstrated resistance. She concludes that teachers are less motivated to teach certain topics when they feel unprepared, but that having experienced explicit instruction in

hidden bias analysis, students were able to identify it in children's literature (p.102).The finding that teacher unpreparedness breeds a reluctance to engage with the necessarily complex and difficult issues that arise within intercultural education, confirms the urgency with which Junior Cycle English teachers' intercultural competencies need to be examined and possible blind spots or deficiencies addressed.

3.12 Intercultural Education and Continuous Professional Development

Nganga (2020) notes that "developing a critical multicultural perspective is a journey" (p.103). Importantly for the current research, she points to the need for all educators to "participate in ongoing professional development and mentoring activities because mastering essential knowledge and skills in critical multicultural education is a process, not an event". (p.104). The conclusions drawn by her research mirror the findings of studies undertaken by Casciola, 2014; Hadjioannou and Hutchinson, 2014; Palmi et al., 2016 and Robinson, 2013.

Drawing on their experience as educators who work with pre-service teachers on critical multicultural education, DiAngelo and Sensoy (2010) also argue the need to move student teachers away "from a formulaic solution-orientation to multicultural pedagogy towards a discursive orientation" (p. 98). 3 These study findings align with Carr's contention that critical learning is an ongoing process which cannot be narrowed to a series of lesson plans (2008).

3.13 Summary

This chapter addressed the issue of racism and representation and literary pedagogy, both internationally and in the Irish context, before attention shifted to consideration of studies

which feature pedagogic approaches to the canon. Critical approaches to literary exploration were examined and the issue of text selection was highlighted.

The issue of positionality and how it may influence the ways texts are selected and read, and the role of teacher education and professional development were examined. The study seeks to identify potential issues in initial teacher education from an intercultural perspective to make some suggestions as to how these shortcomings might be addressed. The issues that have arisen in the theoretical and empirical literature reviews will be addressed during the teacher interviews, as the study seeks to ascertain teachers' perspectives on the extent of their preparedness and competence in responding to the opportunities and challenges of teaching English in the contemporary Irish context. The next chapter will outline the study's research methodology.

Chapter Four: Methods

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed in the study where methodology is the strategy behind the selection and employment of methods (Crotty, 1998, p.3). The current chapter concerns itself with the why, what, from where, when, and how data were collected and analysed. It also includes an overview of participant profiles, my role as reflexive teacher-researcher, and a description of ethical considerations pertinent to the study.

The research was undertaken to gain insights about the possibilities and challenges presented by intercultural education, and to inform future trajectories in the development of a socially just intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English teaching. Three critical theories pertaining to literacy, anti-racism and curricular representation constitute the study's theoretical framework, providing incisive conceptual tools with which to examine the acquired data. This framework has been outlined in Chapter Two.

From the outset, I wish to provide clarity about the reflexive nature of the critical qualitative study which was conducted. The intent of qualitative research is to investigate and understand a social situation (Locke et al., 2014) and it became clear that the most appropriate means to address the social situation in question would be a qualitative study featuring semi-structured teacher interviews centred on the issue of intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English.

It is also important to acknowledge the small-scale nature of the study which centred on semi-structured interviews conducted with 10 teachers of Junior Cycle English. Myers

(2000) reminds us that in quantitative research, measuring and quantifying phenomena as distinct and analytically separate allows for inferences to be drawn about the whole from the analysis of its parts. This is not the case with qualitative research.

The qualitative paradigm to which the present study belongs typically features a relatively small sample, (in this case, ten participants). While generalisability in the traditional quantitative sense is impossible, scholars argue this does not diminish the potential of this type of research to general valuable knowledge. Stake (1980) and Yin (1989) maintain that qualitative studies featuring a small sample size can make a significant contribution providing that parameters are guided by the goals of the study and meet the study objectives. I have stated explicitly that the raison d'être of this study was not to reach general conclusions about all Junior Cycle English teachers and their conceptualisations and experiences of intercultural education. That is not the goal of research in the qualitative paradigm. I set out, instead, to garner insights based on interviews with 10 teachers. The findings chapter will demonstrate that this goal has been achieved.

4.2. Reflexive Research

At all times throughout the study, reflexivity was the cornerstone of my approach to uphold the highest ethical research standards, and to make clear my awareness of the ways in which I was affecting both process and research results (Alvesson et al. 2008; Creswell & Creswell, 2018, Weick, 2002)

At all stages of the study, I have reflected on my English pedagogy, and how my whiteness, my background, culture, and socio-economic status, impact my teaching and my relationships with students whose cultural background and life experiences are often very different to my own. It is for this reason that I have embraced the autobiographical "I"

throughout the thesis. I am conscious of my own story of White middle-class privilege. In the opening chapter, I employed what van Manen (1997) calls “openness”. I achieved this by outlining my commitment to critical and transformative research and describing how the experience of being a ‘stranger’ at the beginning of my teaching career in India, has helped to inform my interest in issues pertaining to interculturalism and English teaching.

From the initial planning stage of the thesis, therefore, I have kept a research journal in which I have made personal notes on my positionality, recording my insights about the ways my background, values, and professional experience were influencing my choices, the design of interview questions, and my reactions to participant perspectives throughout the research journey. Journalling has been an insightful means by which I have been able to capture my thoughts and feelings at key stages (Borg, 2001). In addition to note making about my family and educational background, I wrote about my experience of teaching in a Catholic all-girls’ school with a socially, ethnically, and culturally diverse student cohort, and reflected on how my experience of the intercultural on the ground was informing my approach in the study.

I questioned whether my critical orientation towards interculturalism in the classroom might lead me to prejudge teacher perspectives on English pedagogy that did not align with my own approach to literary/cinematic engagement. I reminded myself that not every teacher might be familiar with critical theory. I had to alert myself, therefore, to remain receptive to the potentially broad range of conceptualisations of the intercultural. to which the research participants might subscribe. Following Hertz (1997) advice on the role of personal accounting to enable researchers to become aware of the impact of positionality on all aspects of research, I kept a log of key research decisions and scribbled notes describing my feelings and responses to meetings with my supervisors, as well as my

thoughts and feelings before, and in the immediate 'aftermath', of each interview I conducted.

Researcher reflexivity involves thinking about how our thinking came to be (Haynes, 2012) and for Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009), thinking refers to interpretation and reflection. In this regard, I have turned my attention inwards to clarify how my ideological, intellectual, cultural, and professional principles have not only brought me to this research but have influenced both the questions I have sought to address, and my interpretation of data (Finlay, 2002).

As each of us sees the world through lenses bestowed upon us by our culture and experience (Crotty, 1998), I remained at all stages throughout the research process, mindful of Fine's cautioning of White researchers. She advises that "those of us who are White have an obligation to excavate critically our own stories of privilege to understand how we sit in tragic dialectics with structures of oppression, and how we might replace ourselves within solidarity movements of resistance (2018, p. xiv).

4.2.1 Insider Research

It is important to recognise that when the researcher belongs to the group to which the research participants belong, he or she somewhat assumes the position of 'insider'. (LaSala, 2003). As a teacher of English, I am conscious of the importance of declaring my 'insider' status (Watts, 2006). I acknowledge the advantage of being a Junior Cycle English teacher, my understanding of issues related to the 'intercultural' in the classroom, and my appreciation of the messiness and complexity of classroom dynamics (Labaree, 2002; Corbin-Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

However, I also recognise the risk that participants might become too close to a researcher with whom they feel they have a lot in common, or that as insider I might overlook aspects of data that I might take for granted (LaSala, 2003). While I sought to put my interviewees at ease, I did strive to conduct each interview in a formal way, conscious of the need to avoid too familiar an environment. In the immediate aftermath of each interview, I documented my initial impressions, and sought to understand why I experienced a particular reaction to some point that was expressed.

I have guarded against the possibility of misreading or misinterpreting something said by an interviewee, what Dahlberg et al., (2008, p.130) refer to as 'bridling', to caution the researcher not to reach an understanding "too quickly, too carelessly, or slovenly". Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009, p.167) also caution researchers to resist the temptation to draw conclusions easily to meet an agenda.

In the next section I will describe the research design and rationale.

4.3 Research Design

The study seeks to present thick descriptions and in-depth analysis of a particular group of Junior Cycle English teachers' experiences and perceptions of 'intercultural education'. In line with my identifying as a social constructivist (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Slevitch, 2011), whereby knowledge is co-created in the dynamic between researcher and participant, a qualitative research methodology was employed with rich descriptions gathered from ten teacher interviews (Dahlberg et al., 2008).

In the next section I will outline the decisions I made in relation to the research participants.

4.4 Teacher Participants

In selecting participants for this study, my aim was not to generalise a population of Junior Cycle English teachers, but rather to develop an in-depth exploration of a particular group of teachers' understandings and experiences of 'intercultural education' in the context of the Junior Cycle English classroom (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). Purposive sampling, therefore, was the sampling strategy applied because the participants had a particular knowledge of Junior Cycle English teaching, and of "intercultural education", given the cultural diversity that characterised each of the schools in which the participants teach.

Purposive sampling does not provide a cross section of the population, but it provided me an opportunity "to concentrate on instances that best illuminate the research question at hand" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 35). It provided me with data directly relevant to my "research interest" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p.149). The sample chosen was determined by geographical location and limited to post primary teachers of English in schools with a culturally and ethnically diverse student cohort. (The geographical region is withheld to strengthen the protection of anonymity of both the teacher participants and the schools in which they teach).

Due to the extremely challenging nature of conducting in the field research in the context of a global pandemic, I decided to concentrate my focus on a particular region, initially contacting all the principals in two of the main towns in the region. This geographical location was chosen because of its mix of urban and rural contexts, the presence of direct provision centres, and the mix of types of post-primary schools in the area. Given the pressures faced by schools coping with the challenges associated with the pandemic, it was my view that it might be easier to gain access to potential participants through personal

contacts. All the schools contacted were known to me to feature considerable ethnic and cultural diversity.

The initial email was sent to principals as 'gatekeepers' in September of 2021, requesting them to bring my research to the attention of their English teachers, and inviting any interested teachers to contact me directly for further information. Originally, I envisaged that given the prevalence of COVID-19 in the autumn of 2021, that all of the interviews would be conducted via Zoom, and when I made initial contact with potential participants, I made it clear to them that the interview could be conducted either in person, or via Zoom, depending on their preference and in line with all public health guidelines (See Appendix B).

In the end, seven interviews were conducted in person, with both researcher and participant sitting at a safe distance (in one case behind a screen). Two of the teachers opted to do the interview in an office in my home. Three more teachers decided to participate in the interview via Zoom and I travelled to the schools of the other teachers. I was happy that circumstances allowed for the choice to conduct face to face interviews as they "enable interpersonal contact, context sensitivity and conversational flexibility to the fullest extent" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018, p.578). But my experience of the Zoom interviews was also very positive, and the participants who opted to speak to me remotely were also happy that they had been given an opportunity to express their views on intercultural education and Junior Cycle English teaching. (See Appendix C). The in-person interviews were audio-recorded on a recording device (using my mobile phone as a technical back-up). The three Zoom interviews were recorded on the Zoom platform.

My objective in speaking to the ten teachers (including two participants who engaged in a pilot interview), was to seek out individuals who would, in Patton's terms, be "information

rich" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). The study participants largely reflect the homogeneity of the Irish teaching population (Heinz & Keane, 2018) with all participants identifying as White, and from a settled background. Except for Rosa who has an immigrant background and who came to Ireland as a child with no English, all the participants are Irish. John and Edel described how the personal experience of having a Black family member has informed their approach to the intercultural.

Table 1. Overview of Participant Profiles NB Pseudonyms are applied to teachers and schools

Teacher and No. of Years Working	School	Ethos
Maeve 4 years	High Cross	Catholic All-Girls' Public Ethnically/Culturally/Religiously Mixed (White Irish, Traveller Irish, White European, Arab, Black, Asian Students)
Marie 13 years	High Cross	Catholic All-Girls' Public Ethnically/Culturally/ Religiously Mixed (White Irish, Traveller Irish, White European, Arab, Black, Asian Students)
Rosa 9 years	St. Teresa's School	Catholic All-Boys' Public Ethnically/Culturally/Religiously Mixed (White Irish, European, Arab, Black, Asian Students)
John 17 years	St. Teresa's School	Catholic All-Boys' Public Ethnically/Culturally Religiously Mixed (White Irish, European, Arab, Black, Asian Students)
Edel 20 years	Tynestown College	Multi Denominational Co-Educational Community School Ethnically/Culturally/Religiously Mixed (White Irish, Traveller Irish, Roma, European, Arab, Black, Asian Students)
Laura 18 years	Tynestown College	Multi-Denominational Co-Educational Community School Ethnically/Culturally/Religiously Mixed (White Irish, Traveller Irish, Roma, European, Arab, Black, Asian Students)
Anna 5 years	Hillview School	Multi-Denominational Co-Educational Community School Ethnically/Culturally/ Religiously Mixed (White Irish, European, Arab, Black, Asian Students)
Noeleen 5 years	Hillmount Grammar	Quaker Co-Educational Private Ethnically/Culturally/Religiously Mixed (White Irish, European Black, Arab Students)
Emer 10 years	Highfield School	Catholic Co-Educational Public Ethnically/Culturally/ Religiously Mixed (White Irish, Traveller Irish, European, Arab, Black, Asian Students)
Susan 3 years	St. John's College	Catholic All Boys' Public Ethnically/Culturally/Religiously Mixed (White Irish, European, Arab, Black, Asian Students)

4.5 Data Collection

Stake (1995, p.64) maintains that the in-depth teacher interview is the "main road to multiple realities", and I gave considerable thought to how the interviews might be

designed in such a way as to best address the research questions under investigation. I brainstormed in my research journal to arrive at what I deemed would be a schedule of questions conducive to the garnering of rich insights.

I facilitated the emergence of teachers' understandings and experiences by asking them to describe the school context in which they work, as well as the Junior Cycle English class/es they teach or have taught. I wanted to develop a deep understanding of the intercultural composition of the student cohort(s) with which they were working. I was then explicit in asking them what their understanding of 'intercultural education' is, before probing this conceptualisation in relation to the experience on the ground of their Junior Cycle English pedagogy. Given the critical nature of the research, I was also guided in my framing of the semi-structured interview questions by concepts drawn from the three-pronged critical theoretical framework already described.

To this end, I asked teachers to describe the novels and film they explore with their Junior Cycle students, probing the factors that inform their selection, as well as inviting them to describe the type of classroom engagement with these texts their pedagogy makes possible. I wanted to establish whether and in what way the issue of representation in the context of the intercultural classroom arises. To what extent are teachers mindful of the impact of the text selection in the class on diverse students? The degree to which teachers are facilitating the development of a critically oriented approach to textual engagement whereby difficult questions about stereotype and racism are aired is central to the study.

During each interview, therefore, I invited teachers to describe instances where racism featured in a classroom text to examine their perspectives on how the issue was responded to. Here I sought to understand what forms of response to racism are happening on the ground, and to what extent critically informed classroom discussion of the multiple forms

of contemporary racism which may be the lived experience of some students in any post-primary classroom is happening. In allowing teachers to reflect on their pedagogic choices, I wanted to establish the depth of teacher knowledge of intercultural education, and to determine the level of sophistication with which they manage the affective nature of student responses to classroom texts, particularly stereotype and racism directed at a minority group.

An important rationale for the study was my commitment to acquire insights about the current state of play pertaining to the intercultural, with a view to informing teacher education and ongoing professional development. I determined, therefore, to allow teachers the space to frankly discuss their assessment of their preparedness to tackle difficult subjects. I wanted to establish teacher perspectives on how they feel they can be better supported in the vital intercultural dimension of their English teaching.

Freire holds that participants and researchers work together in a dialectical process co-creating knowledge with a view to bringing about transformation (Freire, 1970, p.51) and it was in this dialogic spirit that I conducted the interviews. (See Appendix A).

4.5.1 Pilot Interviews

Two pilot interviews were conducted with teachers who are known to me (one experienced and one more recently qualified), to check for the appropriateness of the questions, and to identify any issues that might arise such as a question requiring clarification, as well as timing of the interview. These were an essential preparation for the research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The two pilot interviews confirmed to me that the research had the potential to unearth interesting and valuable insights about intercultural education in the context of the Junior Cycle English classroom.

The pilot interviews were very important in providing me with the opportunity to self-assess my skill as interviewer (Merriam, 1998), as I was conscious of the dexterity required in asking probing and follow up questions to drill deeper and facilitate 'thick descriptions' (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). While the research participants (apart from the two colleagues with whom I had conducted the pilot interviews), were not known to me personally, in another sense, my experience of teaching Junior Cycle English in every year since it has been introduced in 2014, and my long years of experience of working with a culturally and ethnically diverse student cohort, did to some extent convey upon me the status of 'insider'. I have already addressed this consideration in my outline of reflexivity and the study.

4.5.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Each interview took on a very distinctive character as the very different personal and professional experiences of the participants informed the unique direction of each research conversation. As Bell (1999) puts it, "A skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses, and investigate motives and feelings which a questionnaire can never do" (p.135). In each conversation, I endeavoured to employ a flexible and responsive approach, inviting one individual to elaborate on childhood experience of feeling 'othered' because English was not the spoken language at home, and encouraging another teacher to explain how he believed that his experience of having a Black cousin had informed his view of the importance of the intercultural in school. In the case of the four more recently qualified teachers, I encouraged them to describe in detail the type of initial teacher education they had experienced. I wished to determine whether they felt more conceptually and pedagogically prepared to embrace the challenges as well as opportunities arising in the intercultural classroom than their longer serving colleagues.

Following Silverman (2010), broad questions at the start of the semi-structured interview helped me to put participants at their ease, and I had a schedule of interview questions to refer to throughout the interview process. This question plan helped to ensure a consistency of approach to each interview (Langdridge, 2007). Each interview, however, was conducted in a flexible manner to allow for participant freedom to express his or her perspective in detail. Some demographic details were gathered at the start of the interview. Participants had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the interview schedule ahead of time to allow for reflection.

Lareau (2021) suggests that:

> …...interviews "help us understand the challenges and experiences of people in a specific circumstance, capture unintended and unknown consequences of many policies, and richly show the impact of institutional forces on daily lives of individuals (p. 260).

This assessment was borne out over the course of the ten conversations and the data which emerged will be presented in the next chapter.

Following each interview, I documented some initial observations in my research journal which enabled me to record my first general impressions of the conversation, such as moments where frustration or enthusiasm was expressed by the participant. I wanted to take note of anything surprising or unexpected which had arisen during the interview. This was an important feature of my endeavour to pursue the research in a reflexive manner. Transcription of the audio recordings was the next stage of the process, during which time, I had opportunity to familiarise myself closely with the interview data.

4.6 Reflexive Thematic Analysis

I decided that some form of thematic analysis would be the best way to analyse the data and began to familiarise myself with this 'family' of methods (Fugard & Potts, 2020). I employed Braun and Clarke's six phase guide to 'Reflexive' Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019) because the reflexivity at its core aligns with my epistemological and ontological understanding that knowledge is always incomplete and is therefore in a constant state of development and renewal in light of new knowledge, experience, and changes, in the course of the research process.

I realised that this framework would enable me to identify 'patterns of meaning' across my data set, identify codes in an inductive (data-centric) manner in the early stages of my analysis, and then later employ concepts drawn from the study's theoretical framework to inform, though not overwhelm, the analysis.

Such a reflexive approach to data analysis was in keeping with my determination throughout the study to uphold a circular approach to the work, where themes and insights were visited and revisited in light of more reading, and reflection, and discussion with my supervisors. Given my professional identity as English teacher with extensive experience of teaching Junior Cycle English in an ethnically and culturally diverse setting, the 'reflexive' nature of Braun and Clarke's approach to data analysis was a good fit for my study as I remained vigilant to the issues arising in 'insider' research.

Before beginning the process of interview analysis, I familiarised myself fully with the six-step plan that Braun and Clarke (2006) propose.

Table 2. Braun & Clarke's Six Phase Guide to Reflexive Thematic Analysis (2006)

Phase One: Familiarising oneself with the data
Phase Two: Initial Coding
Phase Three: General Initial Themes from Codes (Developing Categories)
Phase Four: Developing and Reviewing Themes
Phase Five: Refining, Defining and Naming Themes (Developing a Thematic Framework)
Phase Six: Writing the Report

Following Braun and Clarke (2019), I adopted a deliberately reflexive approach which necessitated a refining of the step-by-step approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Guided by these authors' later reflections on reflexive thematic analysis, I embarked on the analysis of my ten teacher interviews with the aim of actively seeking out themes across the ten transcripts that would represent "patterns of shared meaning underpinned or united by a core concept" (Braun & Clarke 2021, p.342).

My aim was to provide a rich description of my entire data set as intercultural education, specifically in the context of Junior Cycle English, has not been researched. Above all, I knew that I could not simply sit back in the hope that initial reading would allow themes to emerge or be easily identified. On the contrary, my approach to the data analysis was to move back and forth across the interview transcripts, actively and consciously seeking out patterns and contradictions to tell an insightful story of the data. The analysis was guided by the study's research questions which centre on positioning teacher perspectives on the intercultural, on a spectrum. I wished to understand the extent to which teacher

conceptualisations and experiences of the intercultural reflect liberal or more critical approaches to literary pedagogy.

Braun and Clarke's assertion that "qualitative researchers are always thinking, reflecting, learning and evolving…journeying" (2019), resonated with me. I realised that I did not have to confine myself to a recipe style approach to analysis, but rather that I could be creative in my adoption of the Braun & Clarke (2006) guide, coupled with the conceptual influence of my chosen theoretical framework. Active decision making was the cornerstone of my approach as I sought to answer the study's research questions.

Concepts drawn from Critical Literacy, Critical Race Theory and Post-Colonial Theory around issues regarding literacy and social justice, text selection and interpretation, representation and visibility and stereotype, as well as classroom engagement with racism, informed my analysis and interpretation of findings. The nature of intercultural conceptualisation described by participants was vital to my understanding of the spectrum of intercultural understandings which may pertain.

I asked questions of teachers about their pedagogic responses to racism encountered in texts, and whether classroom discussion of the theme of racism was confined to examination of the theme within the text as it related to a particular character. I wished to determine whether teachers were encouraging in their students the facility to delve deeper into the area of representation by interrogating authorial decision-making around portrayal of minoritised characters.

While critical scholarship did help to guide my interpretation of what the teachers shared during their interview, their insights and experiences were allowed to speak for themselves. This critically informed story of the data is presented in Chapter 5.

4.6.1 Phase One-Familiarisation with Data

In this phase, I developed an in-depth knowledge of the entire data set. Following Streubert and Carpenter (1999), I devoted a lot of time to immersing myself in the interview transcripts, reading and rereading them, and listening to them to deepen my familiarity. In this phase, I was ever mindful of the glorious 'messiness' of qualitative research that resists neat boxes and categorisation and is conversely characterised by the inevitability of contradictions and divergences. In this regard, and even in these initial stages of reading, I began the process of marking ideas for coding and making initial notes guided by Bird's advice that transcription is a "key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology" (2005, p. 227). When I was satisfied that I had developed an excellent working knowledge of the scripts, I moved into the second phase of analysis.

4.6.2 Phase Two-Generating Initial Codes

Here I began the process of generating initial codes by assigning a general descriptor to key points of a transcript of relevance to the study's research questions. See Appendix F for a sample of initial transcript coding. Coding is at the heart of the data analysis process (Richards 2022, p. 156) and given the small-scale nature of the data gathered, I wanted to remain very close to it. For this reason, analysis was conducted manually with paper, highlighters, and post-its.

I decided on descriptive codes initially to capture exactly what participants were saying. As my familiarity with the data deepened, I began to apply more latent codes guided by the study's theoretical framework. The 'light' influence of theory on data analysis is in keeping with the position of Richards (2022), who maintains that themes do not spontaneously emerge from coding data. At all times, I was actively involved with the data, identifying patterns and themes. Each transcript was broken down into manageable units,

where statements of significance were identified, and I was keen to review, select, interpret, and summarise the data without distorting it (Walliman & Buckler, 2008). See Appendix G for Initial Codes Generated in Phase 2

4.6.3 Phase Three-Generating Initial Themes

In this phase, initial codes generated in phase two were combined into "shared patterns of meaning, underpinned by a central concept" (Braun & Clarke 2021, p.342). From the outset, I sought to develop patterns across the data set, by identifying and creating broader codes. The code according to Braun and Clarke (2006) is a "feature of the data that appears interesting to the analyst" (p.18) My focus here was to identify statements of significance (across the ten transcripts) that I grouped together to form overarching codes. I made multiple photocopies of the transcripts which were then cut up into smaller sections and grouped together in folders, each folder representing an overarching category.

4.6.4 Phase Four-Reviewing Themes

By this stage in the process, I began to group some codes together and discard others (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.91), depending on the extent to which I assessed their usefulness in addressing the research questions. Following a process of reading, re-reading, and active cross referencing across the ten transcripts, I developed three major themes, and a number of sub-themes associated with each. This process of refinement was in line with Richard (2022) who contends that at every stage of the analysis, concepts become more abstract. The themes became more conceptual than descriptive, and will be explored and discussed in the following chapter:

1. Intercultural Education as Response to Ethnic and Cultural Diversity

2. Teacher Responses to Racism/Anti-Racism in the context of literary/cinematic engagement in the classroom
3. Literary/ Cinematic Representation of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity

4.6.5 Phase Five-Defining and Naming Themes

In this fifth phase of analysis, I began the process of selecting data extracts that would illustrate the salient features of each of the three themes to present a "coherent and internally consistent account with accompanying narrative…not just paraphrase" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.22). Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise the centrality of researcher writing to the analysis process, and so this phase involved building a story from my data so that the teachers' perspectives would be presented in an insightful, authentic, and compelling manner. At this stage, I was beginning to identify significant patterns and dissonances, and to develop interesting insights into teachers' conceptualisations and experiences of intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English.

See Fig.2 Overview of themes and subthemes developed in phase 5 of the analysis.

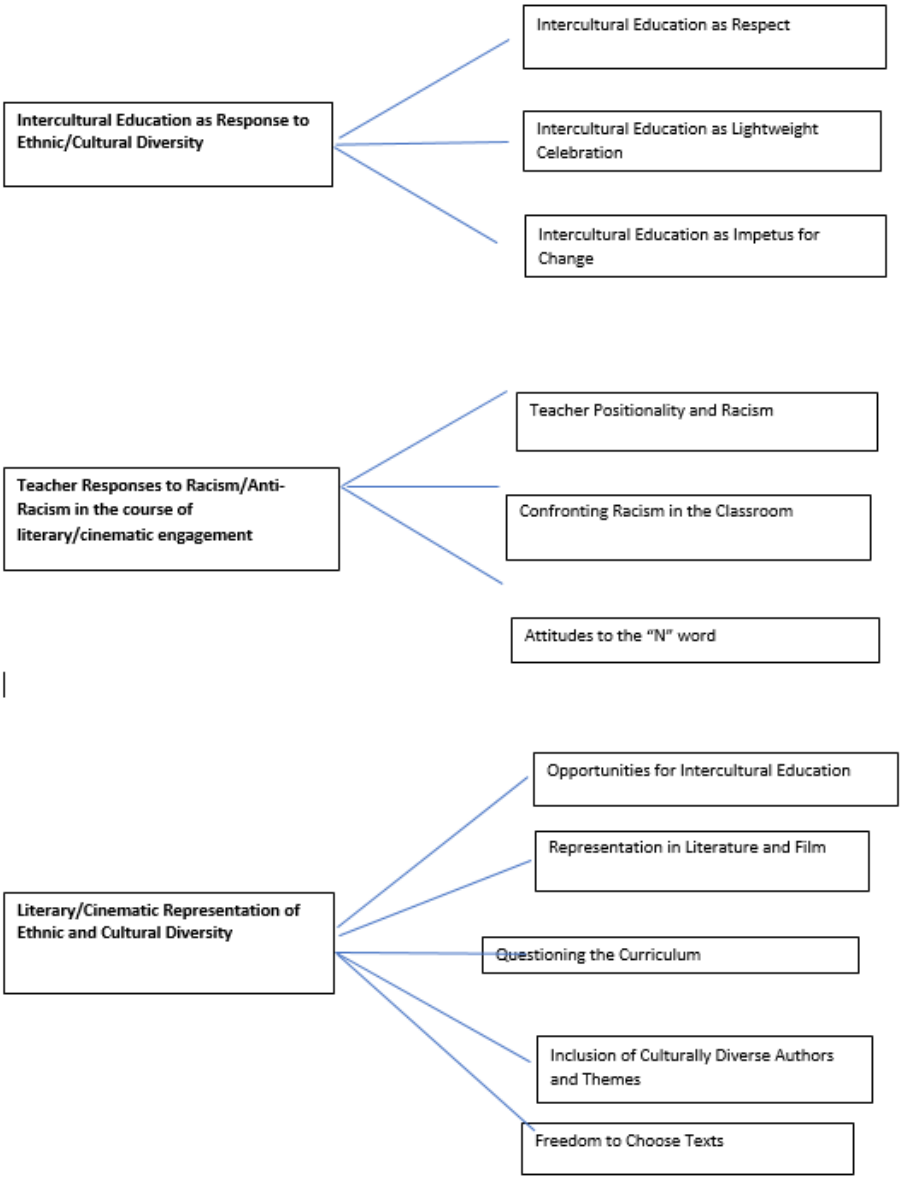


Figure 1. Overview of themes and sub themes developed in phase five of the analysis.

4.6.6 Phase Six-Writing the Report

Chapter Five presents the study findings: the report of the data analysis process. In this chapter, the theoretical framework will inform, though not overpower, my interpretation of the findings. I wished to tell a compelling story of my teacher interview data, to present points of commonality as well as contradiction, and to convince my reader of the merit and

validity of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021). I chose data extracts sufficiently vivid and rich to capture the essence of the overarching points I was trying to make within a narrative that would provide useful insights into intercultural education from a policy and practice perspective.

At every stage of the analysis process, I was mindful of the subjectivity inherent in my approach, and constantly reminded myself of the ways in which my values and the critical lens at the heart of my research, were informing my approach. I used the journal to document and reflect my thoughts on how my positionality and a critical orientation to English teaching were influencing my developing interpretation of the codes I was identifying.

4.7 Validity and Reliability

Central to my mission to conduct reflexive research was my commitment from the outset, to uphold validity and reliability throughout the process. I associated the collective teachers' voice with themes arising in the literature review (theoretical and empirical), to gain an in-depth perspective on teachers' understandings and experiences of 'intercultural education' with a view to adding "rigour, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to the inquiry" (Flick, 2009, p. 229)

The application of insights gleaned from my review of theoretical and empirical literature pertaining to critical literacy, critical race theory, and post-colonial theory in the context of English teaching in diverse settings, guided my analysis of what teachers were telling me about their conceptualisations and experiences of the intercultural. Focus remained centred on facilitating expression of teacher voice in the Irish context of the Junior Cycle

English classroom, with the framework guiding both the questions asked, and the overall assessment of the participants' views.

The teacher respondents were aware that as I am also a full time English teacher, I too am grappling with issues at the heart of the study. In this sense, there was an understanding that my participants and I were actively co-creating knowledge, though I was conscious of the need to guard against my biases leading the interviewee in a particular direction (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.337).

4.8 Trustworthiness and Credibility

Credibility relates to the trustworthiness of the data presented and its analysis, and I have endeavoured to uphold reliability and credibility by writing up reflective notes about the data collection process, and before, and after, every interview. Coe (2017) argues that validity in qualitative research is best understood in terms of credibility of data interpretation.

I sought to achieve this credibility firstly, through the recruitment of research participants who would have experience of the 'intercultural' in the context of Junior Cycle English teaching. The interviews were conducted at a time when the Covid situation had eased, and public health guidelines allowed for the resumption of in-person interviews (seven interviews were conducted in-person). This in-person communication enhanced the interpersonal connection experienced during the conversation. I also ensured that I spoke to each participant over the phone, prior to their interview, to familiarise them with the process, and provide another opportunity to them to ask any questions or express any concerns they may have had. Careful transcription ensured faithful documenting of each teacher's perspectives. Another important aspect of the study's credibility arises from the

critical and robust feedback I had from my supervisors at every stage of the thesis, resulting in adjustments, additions, and the provision of clarifications where necessary.

The critical thrust of the project demanded of me that I engage in a constant process of self-interrogation. I remained ever vigilant to the myriad ways my values and positionality were impacting the research (Gary & Holmes, 2020). As I have mentioned, recording of my impressions, questions, responses to the unexpected as the unexpected arose during interviews, and later in the process of data coding, in my research journal, enabled me to engage in on-going self-examination (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Employment of Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis (2006, 2013) ensured that themes were not generated until the last phases of the analysis. As I have noted in the earlier section on reflexivity, and following Gadamer (1975), I have been ever mindful of the need to make the lenses through which I analysed the data, clear. To this end, I have provided an overview of the critical concepts which have informed the study, and I succeeded in remaining true to my aspiration that teacher voice would be facilitated by the study with concepts drawn from the theoretical framework informing both the design of the interview schedule and my interpretation of the interview data.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

O' Leary (2017) reminds us that knowledge generated through research needs to be credible, and every stage of this study was undertaken with my commitment to respect for the individual and social justice. Cresswell and Cresswell (2018) highlight the responsibility of the researcher to protect study participants by developing their trust and promoting the integrity of the research, as well as guarding against any unethical conduct.

Therefore, I ensured that potential participants had ample opportunity to ask questions about the study, and what exactly their involvement in the research would entail.

Potential participants were also informed of their right to withdraw at any stage so that they could make an informed decision as to whether they wished to participate. School principals (as gate keepers) were emailed, and a request made to them that they disseminate my information letter among their English teachers and invite those interested to contact me directly (See Appendix B). Every effort has been made to protect participants' identity, and their data has been stored in a secure manner in DCU Google Drive, on a password protected computer stored in a secure office in my home. I also made research participants' rights very clear to them in the Plain Language Statement and Informed Consent Form (Appendices D and E).

Halasa (1998, p.3), points out that "teacher researchers see themselves as doubly bound to ethical behaviour both as teachers and researchers". I felt a particular responsibility to the teacher participants in the study, whom I see as colleagues, committed as I am to the investigation of intercultural education and Junior Cycle English. I was conscious that their involvement in the research coincided with a particularly difficult time in their career due to the myriad challenges imposed on teachers and their students by COVID-19. Through my verbatim transcribing of their interview responses, I was determined to allow their voices to be heard clearly and loudly in the study.

Ethical approval to conduct the research was sought from and granted by the Research Ethics Committee in Dublin City University on June 4th, 2021. Ethical principles of respect for the person, consent and confidentiality were upheld at every stage throughout the process, and I was guided by Luttrell (2019), when she cautions researchers to ensure that they uphold standards consistent with a reflexive approach to research that requires more

than simply ‘doing no harm’ (p.10). Reflexivity has necessitated ongoing self-interrogation around the research decisions I have made regarding research objectives, questions posed, and how the data was to be analysed, and the findings interpreted.

4.10 Summary

This chapter provides an outline of the methodology employed in the research. The study’s criticality was also outlined before a rationale for the research methodology was provided. I explain why I considered it vital to pursue a reflexive approach at every stage of the project, before outlining the process of data collection through a series of ten semi-structured teacher interviews. The chapter also features a description of the participant recruitment process as well as my justification for the adoption of Braun and Clarke’s guide to Reflexive Thematic Analysis (2006, 2019, 2021). I also outline the actions taken in Braun and Clarke’s six phase guide to data analysis. Finally, attention is drawn to issues of validity and credibility, and I conclude the chapter with an outline of the ethical considerations pertaining to the study.

Chapter Five: Research Findings and Discussion (Part 1)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the first part of the discussion of the study's key findings which address the questions posed by the research. At the heart of the study was my aim to contribute to scholarship that engages English teaching in the contemporary Irish context of cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. I set out to achieve this aim by positioning the conceptualisations and experiences of the intercultural of the English teachers who feature in the study on a spectrum potentially ranging from approaches that are characterised by respect and celebration of cultural diversity to critical anti-racist approaches. While scholarship positions these pedagogic stances as occupying polar end points of the spectrum, this study reveals a more nuanced picture which will be addressed in this chapter.

Flowing from this aim was my mission to establish how pedagogy which addresses literature and film analysis informs intercultural education in the Junior Cycle English classroom. The other key objective of my research was to investigate how a critically informed analysis of the intercultural dimension of Junior Cycle English pedagogy can guide both initial teacher education and inform Junior Cycle English curricular design and practice. This concern will be central to the discussion in the final chapter.

In Chapter 2, I mapped out the theoretical framework underpinning the study. I asked how a framework with Critical Literacy as its main pillar might be a useful analytical tool informing the future vision and practice of intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English teaching. Paulo Freire's conceptualisation of and practice of literacy

pedagogy is grounded in his view of the need to equip students to read the world as they read the words of texts. In the case of this study, it is the words of film and novel texts which are foregrounded. In the final chapter I will elucidate how the study findings indicate the potential role and value of applying a framework built on Freirean theory and supported by concepts drawn from Critical Race Theory and Post-Colonial Theory to guide the future trajectory of intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English.

The small-scale nature of the study means that while the findings revealed do provide valuable insights, the perspectives expressed by ten teacher participants cannot be considered representative. I have addressed this issue in the fourth chapter. Despite this limitation, the study has unearthed important knowledge that constitutes an original contribution to scholarship centred on English teaching and the intercultural in the contemporary Irish post-primary context.

Three main findings have emerged in the research and will be explored in this chapter as follows:

1. Personal vision and values determine the level of criticality that characterises individual teacher pedagogy. Critical conceptualisations of the intercultural are heavily informed by prior personal experience. Critical intercultural understanding and a consequent commitment to anti-racist literary/cinematic pedagogy are more likely to be the pedagogy of teachers who have themselves been made to feel ‘other’ or who have close family experience of racism.
2. The issue of racism is a major feature of Junior Cycle English teachers’ understanding of intercultural education. Teacher readiness to tackle issues of stereotype and racism is heavily dependent on personal vision and values as well

as conceptual knowledge and professional confidence. Teachers' fear of getting it wrong or causing offence limits opportunities for important classroom talk. A range of approaches to the issue of racism in texts was identified in the teacher interviews, indicating a significant divergence in the ways intercultural education is experienced in the classroom.

3. From a critical intercultural perspective, the broad range of teacher understandings and experiences that are described, indicates differences in teacher knowledge and the reality of a spectrum of classroom intercultural experiences. These range from actively anti-racist pedagogy to approaches that foreground respect for students and acknowledgement of the normality of differences and celebration of cultural diversity. In terms of representation of cultural/ethnic diversity, considerable tensions and ambiguities pertain to teachers' conceptualisations. Therefore, the student experience of literature/film exploration, can vary hugely in terms of the type of material being explored, and the forms of engagement that are facilitated.

The implications of the findings for the Junior Cycle English curriculum and pedagogy will be considered in the final chapter.

I wish to discuss the three findings under the umbrella of the themes which were identified during data analysis. The first two issues are intercultural education as response to cultural/ethnic diversity and responses to racism encountered in texts. These themes will be discussed in this chapter. Chapter Six will address the third theme which is curricular representation of ethnic and cultural diversity.

Data analysis was mainly conducted in an inductive manner, involving a more deductive approach in the latter stages, whereby the theoretical framework was put into

conversation with teacher perspectives to enable robust critical interpretation of the data. It indicates that the teachers' conceptualisations and experiences of intercultural education within Junior Cycle English exist on a spectrum, ranging from at the one end what Srivastava (2007) and Lee et al., (1997) describe as celebratory approaches to ethnic and cultural diversity, to at the other end, an English pedagogy rooted in a commitment to anti-racist and socially justice practice (Gorski, 2008; Kumashiro, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2004). In this study, it is important to note that individual teacher descriptions of pedagogy indicate a nuanced picture, with some teachers who emphasise the need to celebrate diversity, for example, also describing a range of responses to racism encountered in texts.

The first main finding will be presented and discussed using individual participant profiles as 'hooks' to contextualise the discussion. Given the study's critical thrust, I made the decision to foreground the profiles of five teachers whose understanding and experiences align with a critical orientation to intercultural education. These critical perspectives will be put into conversation with teacher descriptions that reflect a more liberal or celebratory approach to cultural/ethnic diversity.

The latter two findings will be presented in a way that features various participant perspectives in conversation with one another. The inclusion of extensive quotes is a response that recognises the paucity of Junior Cycle English teachers' voices in research and in line with Thomas's advice that readers should be able to "hear the sound of voices" (2011, p.7). Following Lareau (2021), I concluded that telling the research story of the findings through association with the participants who provide rich insights into them, would make for the most compelling sharing of the insights gleaned during the research.

5.2 Overview of Participant Profiles

It is necessary to contextualise the findings by providing an overview of participant profiles. The research participants' identities are protected through pseudonyms and fictitious names for the schools in which they teach. All participants in the study, teach in schools that are characterised to some extent by ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. All of them teach in settings that feature student cohorts reflecting varying numbers of White Irish, Black and Asian students, and students from different Eastern European countries and Roma and Traveller students.

All participant teachers, are currently teaching Junior Cycle English, ranging from more recently qualified (Maeve and Susan**)** to very experienced (Edel, Laura, John, Marie**)**. Except for John (teaching for 17 years), who works in the boys' Catholic school, St. Teresa's, all the participants are female and all except Rosa (teaching for 9 years) identify as White Irish. Rosa also teaches in St. Teresa's. Susan teaches in St. John's College, an all-boys' Catholic school, Maeve, one of the pilot interviewees from Highfield College works in an all-girls' Catholic school and Noeleen (who teaches in the only fee-paying Quaker school represented in the study) are the most recently qualified teachers of English with 3,4 and 5 years- experience respectively.

Most of the teachers have spent their teaching career in Irish schools. However, Rosa has spent the first part of her career teaching in the UK and Edel (Tynestown College) who moved abroad from age seven to thirteen. She returned to X to attend university and began her career there. She spoke about her experience of intercultural education in the context of several culturally and ethnically diverse schools in an urban area, where she had taught at the start of her career. She described her perceptions of how disadvantaged minority students were marginalised at school. She noted how they did not see their

culture or experience as people of colour reflected in the stories they were reading at school.

5.3 Divergent Conceptualisations of the Intercultural

The inconsistencies and tensions identified within individual transcripts during the analysis defy neat categorisations of Junior Cycle English teaching into 'good' critical orientation towards the intercultural and 'bad' soft orientation.

Some participants highlighted what in their view was a significant influence on their conceptualisation of the intercultural, namely the personal experience of either having a family member of a non-White ethnicity or having themselves moved from one country to another as a child and having experienced a sense of feeling 'Other', particularly in school. In these cases, teacher descriptions of understanding and pedagogy aligned with elements of a critically informed framework.

In this first section we will meet John, Laura and Rosa whose direct personal or family knowledge of the minority experience in the Irish context, informs their critical intercultural understanding underpinned by a human rights perspective. The experience of Maeve and Maria will also be presented here because though Irish, both of their perspectives align with a critical conceptualisation of the intercultural, and both teachers emphasise the formative influence of childhood experience on their pedagogic vision.

In the following section, attention will shift to teachers who, though very committed to their students' well-being and academic success, demonstrate a less critically informed approach to intercultural education.

5.3.1 Personal Experience and Critical Conceptualisations of the Intercultural (John, Laura, Rosa, Maeve, Marie)

Profile One: John

John is a White male teacher who has taught in St. Teresa's School, an all-boys' Catholic post-primary school, for seventeen years. When asked about his understanding of the intercultural, John spoke about growing up in an Irish rural town in the 1980's with his Black cousin and how unintended racial remarks from friends had been a feature of his cousin's childhood. John reflected on the way his observation of his cousin's experience had led to his deepening awareness of racism as he began his teaching career.

Identifying St. Teresa's as being culturally and ethnically diverse, John (T4) demonstrated a caring awareness of the reality of the experience faced by some of the minority students in his class who reside in a direct provision centre outside the town. He was very forthright in his acknowledgement that some of the Syrian and Afghan boys in his school may have experienced trauma. He used the example of teaching Junior Cycle English to a fourteen-year-old Syrian boy new to the school. John had learned that the boy had not been in a conventional school since he was nine years old, due to the Syrian conflict, and the fact that the boy and his family had been living in a refugee camp in Lebanon before arriving in Ireland:

> He arrived in Ireland with little English and I realised immediately that anything to do with war such as the World War One poetry I had considered doing would be totally inappropriate for this child (John, T4).

During his interview, John made it clear that intercultural education has to be underpinned by a values approach, cautioning against the danger of merely paying lip

service to inclusion. He emphasised the need to challenge the mistaken assumption that there is one way to be in the world. As he articulated:

> In everything you do as an English teacher you are communicating messages about ways of being in the world and what's valued and how you treat another person…I think a teacher needs to think about what they are teaching. You ask some teachers "What have you taught?" And "teach the curriculum "is their response, that's it. I just don't think that's good enough. We have to make conscious decisions.… (John, T4).

John's understanding of the need for the teacher to adopt a justice-based approach in the classroom aligns with Børhaug and Weyringer (2019) who advocate empathetic reflection on social justice. John reflected on his identity and family background, describing what in his view, is the relatively unusual scenario of having a White Irish uncle who married a Black woman in Ireland in the late 1970's. John linked the experience of growing up with his two Black cousins in a rural Irish town in the 1980's with his personal investment in issues relevant to the student of colour in the classroom:

> It influences my thinking because I know they encountered that kind of unconscious racism that's there and I was aware of that, you know, growing up. My cousins were the only Black kids in the school. They never experienced explicit racist comments but more thoughtless remarks with no real malice behind them but hurtful all the same. K however would always say that he grew up perfectly happy. Um, and he grew up in Ireland, in quite a rough housing estate (John, T4**).**

John links his active anti-racism and his empathic approach to minority students in his class with formative family experience. His critical intercultural understanding resists the type of '3 Ss Multiculturalism' that merely celebrates

diversity without challenging injustice (Allenuma-Nimoh 2016; Alleyne 2002; Race,2015). His views aligned with those expressed by Laura.

Profile Two: Laura

At the time of the interview, Laura had been teaching for 18 years in Tynestown College. It is a large multi-denominational mixed school in an Irish city with a highly diverse student cohort that includes Traveller Irish, Roma, Arab, Asian and Black students. She emphasised how being the mother of a Black son (now adult) continues to inform her understanding of, and interest in intercultural education in school, and her values as a teacher. She described her Black son's experience of the Irish education system as a child and teenager in eighties Ireland. She was very candid in expressing her feelings of frustration and anger at the often (in her assessment) grossly unfair misconceptions and prejudices held by some of her son's teachers on his journey through school. False assumptions about his proficiency in English and his ability in Irish or that he must be from a disadvantaged background were some of the prejudicial attitudes her son had had to disprove in his time at school. Allen (2013) has shown that many White teachers possess unexamined deficit views of students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

We have seen how Kromidas (2011) argues that engagement with intercultural education must involve a movement beyond restrictive and damaging understandings of difference that centre on deficit thinking around diversity**.**

Laura became quite emotional as she described the impact such prejudice had had on her son and on her as she strove to ensure that his blackness would not limit his potential to succeed. Arising from her first-hand experience of systemic racism in education, she

makes the case for a more actively inclusive intercultural education with transformative potential:

> What we do at the moment I think, is still operate a White homogenous education that demands of students of every cultural background that they integrate. There are cultural needs that are ignored. Students will say to me that the predominant culture is White that their culture isn't acknowledged. We don't actually see or celebrate their cultures often or the diversity, we just go on with our culture and it's up to them to integrate into us (Laura, T6).

Laura's acknowledgement of the mono-cultural norms within Irish education aligns with the position of Barrett, (2013), Levey (2012) and Palaiologou and Gorski (2017), who argue the need to interrogate educational hegemony that frames some students as 'other' and the already privileged as mainstream or the norm.

Laura's assessment is in keeping with Bourdieu (1977) and suggests that there are teachers who are engaging in reflexive thinking, mindful of the damage that can be caused to students of minority cultures who do not see or feel themselves reflected in school culture or curriculum. Laura's pedagogy in interrogating colour blindness in an Irish context, bears the hallmark of a critical race approach (Crenshaw, 2011; Crenshaw et al., 1995; West et al., 2021).

Bonilla-Silva (2013), Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich (2011) and Bonilla-Silva and Forman, (2000), argue that White teachers frequently espouse colour-blind ideologies, a means by which they circumvent discussion of racism by claiming they don't see the child's colour. Similarly, Keeter and Lewis (2001) argue that White teachers prefer teaching commonalities across cultures. In contrast, Laura's critical awareness is the result of her family experience. Recognition of the pervasiveness of White hegemony in schools was not expressed by most

of the teachers indicating the reality of a nuanced picture of intercultural education in the Irish context. It became clear that some teachers are aware of critical social issues pertaining to the intercultural in school, even if they do not feel adequately equipped to respond to them in the classroom. The inability of teachers to respond to that with which they are not familiar, or adequately equipped to respond to, is an assessment reached by Castro 2010; Mills, 2009 and Santoro 2009.

Laura's school also hosts an annual Black History Month, about which she expressed some scepticism because she felt it was a 'tokenistic' effort to be inclusive. She also expressed discomfort at the idea of an Open Night which had been proposed by other teachers who had suggested that the 'foreign students" would dress up in their national costume. Her unease at this singling out of certain students, reflects that of Erel, 2010 and Hofstede, 1997 who warn against the dangers of cultural reductionism whereby some people have a misleading homogeneity imposed on them, and culture is classified as a thing to be carried around. Laura's misgivings about what she perceives as a lightweight and potentially damaging, though well-meaning nod to ethnic and cultural diversity, capture a significant gulf between her critical understanding and the general vision of intercultural education which prevails among some of her colleagues. While we cannot make sweeping generalisations about the extent to which teachers hold a limited and somewhat superficial vision of the intercultural, the range of conceptualisations and experiences described in the research data points to significant dissonances in understanding and vision.

Laura expressed concern at the potentially damaging and divisive impact of a superficial nod to diversity. Her concern is foregrounded by Ladson-Billings (2009) and Mc Donough (2009), both of whom call out the serious inadequacies inherent in pedagogies that merely teach tolerance, whereby racism is situated in the individual or classroom rather than across

systems. Most of the teachers interviewed did not have that kind of personal insight held by Laura around issues resonant with the experience of students from minority communities. However, memory of the personal experience of migration, was a theme reflected upon by Rosa and Maeve.

Profile Three: Rosa

Rosa is a colleague of John's who teaches in St. Teresa's School. She migrated to Ireland with her parents from X in the 1990's. Arriving with no English, she describes struggling to feel accepted in primary school, pointing out that the experience of having been excluded from games in the playground, and being misunderstood in the classroom because of the language barrier, shape her empathic response to boys in her school whose first language is not English:

> I myself am not Irish you know. Uh I've been here for twenty-three years. My own experience in school wasn't great. We were among the first migrants to my school in 1998 and we lived in a hotel for six months…when I went to school uh I was definitely treated differently at the time by the other kids and the teachers. Mostly the kids, a lot of kids didn't want to play with me. They kind of excluded me from games. Um they kind of looked at me like I was an alien…And when I see students now from other countries come to school, I'm wondering is that the same for them (Rosa, T3).

She foregrounds the formative personal experience of feeling misunderstood and disconnected in a new classroom environment as a migrant child in considering that which informs her conceptualisation of the intercultural. She links her early experience to her approach as a teacher, moving beyond what Hill (2012), Sleeter (2014) and Chaplin (2019), describe as a superficial discourse of tolerance.

It is interesting that Rosa, unlike John, does not describe the school as culturally diverse. She points out that the school she previously taught in the U.K. was much more culturally and ethnically diverse. This noticeable difference in the assessment of student diversity suggests the centrality of teacher perspective when we seek to understand conceptualisations of intercultural education in the school context.

She described how her own experience of having been a newly arrived child migrant in Ireland had shaped her view of the potential of intercultural education to build a meaningfully inclusive classroom: When invited to elaborate, Rosa acknowledged that her childhood experience of feeling 'othered' in school had informed her view of intercultural education. She described how her experience of feeling that her language and cultural heritage were not valued in school, has deepened her consciousness that a student's background may differ significantly from that of the teacher. She used the "adjective "warmer" to suggest how her approach is underpinned by an empathy and a solidarity with the minoritized student, who like her, may also feel that their family background and lived experience is not reflected in the classroom.

Rosa's experience supports the assertion of Jimenez (2003) that teacher-student relationships are crucial to the student's progress in school. So too, Dee and Penner (2017) argue that culturally diverse students succeed in school when teachers employ pedagogies that reflect student experiences. This was not Rosa's early school experience in whose view, intercultural education has the potential to make students of every cultural background feel that they belong at school, so that differences of all kinds are taken for granted as a normal part of life and not simply attributed to particular cultural groups. She expressed the view that recognising the normality of difference must be the foundation of a meaningfully inclusive intercultural education.

The perspectives of these three participants are deeply informed by close personal knowledge of a culturally/ethnically minoritised experience. While Maeve and Marie are White Irish and English is their first language, childhood family experience is identified by both as informing their intercultural approach. Both teachers who participated in the pilot interviews also expressed perspectives that align with a critical orientation to the intercultural.

Profile Four: Maeve

At the time of the interview, Maeve had four years of teaching experience and worked in High Cross, an all-girls Catholic school with a socially and culturally diverse student population. She described her experience of feeling othered as a child. She had moved from primary school in Ireland to primary school in England and back again. She too identified a formative link between that early experience of cultural misunderstanding in school and her commitment to fostering real intercultural inclusion in her English classes.

As I read and reread the interview transcripts, it became clear that personal and professional experience was a factor informing the degree to which participants' conceptualisations of the intercultural are critically informed. In Maeve's consideration of teacher values pertaining to the intercultural, she cited the example of Eastern European students who are White but whose cultural experience may be significantly different from those of the other White students and the teacher in the room, to illustrate the care that is required to avoid misguided and potentially damaging teacher assumptions.

Maeve drew on the memory of having been an 'outsider' in the classroom, her family having moved to the U.K. from Ireland while she was in primary school) when reflecting on her view of intercultural education in the context of her Junior Cycle English teaching. She was forthright in her linking her awareness of student sensitivity about being singled out, to her early childhood experience of having moved primary school between Ireland and England and back again to Ireland:

> I was the only Irish kid in the class that I could remember…I don't really remember that much of being over in England but I remember coming back to Ireland and being yelled at in my Irish class because I thought that the first month of Spring was March instead of February and that I was answering the question wrong…..(Maeve, T1).

The memory of being in the minority continues to guide her approach in the culturally diverse Junior Cycle English classroom. She went on to explain that a feeling of embarrassment and of being othered as the 'newcomer' has remained with her as a teacher and guides her approach in the English class. She provided the example of approaching poetry in a culturally and linguistically diverse English class creating a momentary level playing field whereby no student would have the advantage of prior linguistic knowledge. She achieved this by presenting some poetry in Mandarin with which no student is familiar (Maeve was unusual in her proficiency in Chinese) and acknowledged her consciousness that kids proficient in Arabic, Swahili, Romanian or Igbo are generally categorised in terms of their deficiency in English.

On the other hand, she also pointed out that she has encountered some resistance from White Irish students, who, in her experience, had questioned her rationale for bringing in material for classroom discussion that engaged other cultures. Soter (1997) employs the concept of 'aesthetic restriction' to describe how students may reject material because of

its unfamiliar frame of reference. This assessment is also made by Bond (2006) and Montero and Robertson (2006).

Maeve cited the example of students actively challenging her decision to read a poem such as Imelda May's *You Don't Get to be Racist and Irish* (May, 2020). In reflecting on this experience, Maeve considered the role of language in the English classroom and explained that she had reminded her students that even where they did not consider themselves racist, they might come up against racist language or behaviour. It was clear that Maeve sought to achieve what Wissman (2018) describes as 'disturbing the waters' to instil in her students an other-oriented approach to textual engagement (Choo, 2014).

Her insights, while focused on the issue of overtly racist language, did in her consideration of the damaging effects of othering bear the hallmark of some understanding of critical interculturalism and demonstrated an openness to tackling the "uncomfortable", particularly regarding language usage (Nieto & Bode, 2012).

Profile Five: Marie

While she does not have a family member who belongs to a minority community, Marie (who has taught at High Cross for over thirteen years and was one of the pilot interviewees), noted the role of family influence on her understanding of the intercultural. During her interview, she described being aware as a child of her own mother's work in education with young Traveller children in the town in which she grew up. Marie has undertaken post-graduate research on minority students' experience of Religion in the context of a Catholic school. In her descriptions of intercultural education in the context of English teaching, it was clear that she was theoretically informed as she

drew on insights gleaned from engagement with scholarship encountered during her study.

In Marie's description of the multiple worldviews and ways of being represented in her school building, she chose the adjective 'pluralist' in an effort to convey something of the school's inclusivity. At the same time, she acknowledged the hegemonic nature of the White Irish curriculum that characterises the Irish post-primary school experience, and expressed the need for an active self- interrogation of the work she does as an English teacher.

During her interview, she referenced the U.K. Rampton Report (1981) when invited to describe her understanding of intercultural education, and what it means to her in the context of her Junior Cycle English teaching:

> um, before getting ready for this I was remembering a line from that report about a good education which cannot be based on one culture only, and where ethnic minorities form a permanent and integral part of our population which they will please God always in Irish society, that education should not seek to iron out the difference or have one dominant culture (Marie, T2).

In considering her perspective on intercultural education, Marie also referenced what she considers to be the overall aim of Junior Cycle, which is to advance a student-centred approach that promotes student voice. When I probed her understanding of student voice further, Marie went on to allude to the Lundy model of child participation, referencing Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and highlighting her commitment to in her words "uphold the legitimacy of the child". As she spoke about what she considers her obligation as a teacher to ensure that all voices are respected and heard, she made clear her view that the issue of being heard in the classroom is all the more acute, for students who belong to minority cultures, and who are not represented in

the curriculum. We will return to the issue of representation when examining the third major finding of the study.

Marie is another teacher who views intercultural education through a human rights lens and sees its potential to have a transformative effect in upholding the rights of all students to be represented and heard. Marie's critical understanding of issues related to intercultural education reminds us that despite the contention of Gillborn (2006) that whiteness is invisible to most White people, there are individual white teachers with the critical faculty and values conducive to a radical unpacking of curriculum and pedagogy to arrive at a justice-based approach in the ethnically diverse classroom. Marie also noted her disappointment that the word intercultural is not used in any Junior Cycle document, despite all of the focus on wellbeing. As noted earlier, Marie herself acknowledges the inspiring influence of her mother's work teaching Traveller children on her development as a teacher of English, and here was another example of formative childhood experience informing the development of a critically oriented vision of the intercultural.

In keeping with the perspectives expressed by Laura, Rosa and John, Marie's socially just vision of intercultural education resists the tendency to regard the student whose first language is not English in terms of deficit. Five study participants expressed views that align with advocates of a critical interculturalism that disrupts cultural and ethnic stereotype (Dervin, 2016; Gregoriou, 2013; Kromidas, 2011).

Teachers such as Laura, John, and Rosa, who had formative intercultural experiences-tended to express a deeper commitment to active anti-racism and an intercultural pedagogy rooted in social justice. This finding aligns with the conclusion reached by Necochea (2018) who posits that racial witnessing moments where the individual

experiences a moment in which they or someone close to them is Othered because of the racial group to which they belong, "build critical race consciousness of teachers" (p.726).

In the next section we will meet teachers whose perspectives reflect more liberal and mixed approaches to intercultural education.

5.3.2 Liberal Understandings of the Intercultural

An emphasis on respect for students was a common theme across the range of school ethea, whether Catholic, Quaker, or non-denominational. Nine of the ten participants were familiar with the term 'intercultural' and although Susan, a recently qualified teacher in St. John's College, (an all- boys' Catholic school), admitted that the actual term "intercultural education" was not one with which she was familiar. Susan's approach in the classroom aligns with the approach described by Fennes and Hapgood (1997), where the teacher promotes acceptance of and respect for cultural diversity. Her employment of the word "equality" when thinking about her relationship with students in the context of the culturally diverse school in which she teaches, aligns her approach with other teacher participants who foregrounded the concept of respect in their descriptions of intercultural education.

Emer, who has been teaching for ten years at Highfield College, a co-educational school with a Catholic ethos, remarked that in her view:

> The good English teacher is a teacher of the world, and a good English student is a student of the world so that what we do in the classroom develops their understanding of the world. And with my current third year group I am trying to get them to have a sense of empathy with others and understand that there are different paths in life…and to

> develop a sense of empathy and an understanding of difference, I suppose normalising difference (Emer, T9).

She sees the English classroom's potential as a space to deepen students' understanding of the world in all of the variety, of its cultural heritage and richness (Kymlicka, 2003).

Similarly, Edel made a strong connection between the classroom and wider society regarding the role of the intercultural. She has taught in Tynestown for twenty years, having qualified as a teacher and having begun her career in X with the experience of teaching in ethnically diverse schools in the vicinity of a large city. She describes Tynestown as a large multicultural, and progressive school, with up to a third of students having a non-Irish background. During her interview, she drew on her experience in another country, noting that, in her view, Ireland's intercultural story is in its early stages:

> It's different to when I taught in X because X has been multicultural for many years with people from all over the world…. I think when things are new that brings about its own problems. Once you're educated about things you've got informed opinions, you're more accepting (Edel, T5).

It is Edel's view that Ireland is an intercultural journey, and she is hopeful that education can have a transformative impact on the ways in which people belonging to different ethnic and cultural groups can interact. Edel's highlighting of the relatively new multicultural Ireland points to the potential role of education in nurturing anti-racist thinking. Lack of conceptual knowledge of racism is foregrounded in the literature where scholars show the extent to which pre-service teachers neither know, nor want to know, what racism really is (Galman, Pica-Smith &Rosenberger, 2010),- but across all transcripts was clear evidence that the ten teachers who participated in the study are hardworking and eager to create a classroom atmosphere conducive to enabling all of their students to reach their academic and social potential in school.

Care for the diverse students in their charge was a recurring theme across all the transcripts. While the pedagogy of some teachers does not reflect elements of critical education that names and calls out oppression experienced by some groups (McDonald & Zeicher, 2009; Torres & Noguera, 2008), a common theme among these participants was a desire to normalise and celebrate diversity. Amosa and Gorski (2008) remind us, however, of the need to move beyond non-interrogatory approaches in the classroom.

Several of the research participants emphasised the primary role of intercultural education as promoting a celebration of cultural and ethnic diversity. Susan, a recently qualified young teacher in St. John's College (all boys' Catholic non-fee-paying school), focused on the school's positive, welcoming message, signified by the presence of flags representing the countries with which the school's students are associated in the school reception area. She emphasised the importance of visual symbolism throughout the school in communicating the positive regard in which the cultural diversity that characterises St. John's College is held.

Similarly, Noeleen (T8), qualified for five years and who teaches in Hillmount Grammar, a co-educational fee-paying school with a Quaker ethos in the same town as St. John's, also culturally and ethnically diverse but with a more affluent student cohort, emphasised the role of intercultural education in celebrating cultural and religious diversity. She described a diversity week that takes place in her school annually, pointing out the need, in her view, to research and learn about different cultures and focus on the positive:

> We tend to focus on the negative sides. Obviously, you have to talk to them about racism at some point but maybe we ought to celebrate the positives of each culture…Students came in dressed in their national costume…the Nigerian students brought in jollof rice. The Indian and

> Pakistani students looked beautiful in their traditional dress (Noeleen, T8).

Noeleen's remarks capture her foregrounding of the need to promote positive intercultural relationships in school and also respond to racism. Leonard and Leonard (2006) and Milner (2008), posit that positionality can explain the failure of White educators to address racism but Noeleen was making a conscious decision to respond positively to the ethnic and cultural diversity that characterises her Junior Cycle English class.

According to Dyer (1997), race is only applied to non-White people with the effect that White people are not racially seen or named, it follows, therefore, that White people function as the human norm. Whiteness then becomes the unmarked category (Ladson-Billings, 2009 and Picower, 2009). This has the insidious effect of removing the need for White people to think about or confront an issue that does not directly affect them or their families. Teachers such as Noeleen and Susan demonstrate well-meaning and positive responses to cultural and ethnic diversity, there is a risk however that an over-emphasis on celebration may at the same time overlook whiteness in terms of dominance, normativity, and privilege (Frankenberg, 1993)

When asked about the participation of 'Irish' students, Noeleen noted that a few of them wore their GAA jerseys. In this example, the annual celebration of diversity in the school is largely confined to students whose cultural background is not White Irish. 'Culture' is the preserve of the more exotic non-Irish. Noeleen did not identify this as being problematic. Celebrating the cultural diversity of non-White students was seen in genuinely positive and inclusive terms. Such an approach, however well-meaning may

have the effect of othering students from minority ethnic communities, albeit clearly unintentionally.

The failure here to consider the White students in terms of culture; privileges their whiteness and indicates the need to examine it to disrupt its normalcy. Watson (2012) suggests that the name 'White' as a race should include those of us who are White in the conversation about racism from the point of view that is at the centre rather than from the outside. Mc Intosh (2012) has described White privilege as an invisible knapsack of unearned assets. In Noeleen's description of her school's Intercultural Week, the invisibility of whiteness was apparent.

Celebration of diversity here amounts to a singling out, albeit in a colourful and apparently celebratory manner, the student whose family may have roots in Congo or Pakistan. This represents a lightweight once-a-year school-wide approach. It pays lip service to inclusion but is counter-productive to a genuine justice-based inclusion (Banks 1993; Bryan 2009**)** and is evidence of a lack of the type of conceptual understanding of interculturalism required if teachers are to be in a position to embed the sort of critical intercultural education that might result in positive change in the classroom experience of their students as well as their lives (Bryan & Bracken, 2011; Sleeter & Montecinos, 1999).

Other participants in the study, as we have seen, however, were clear in their conceptualisation of the potential of a more critical intercultural education underpinned by a focus on social justice. In this study, critical insights into the role of intercultural education were expressed by individual teachers, particularly John, Laura, Rosa and Maeve, who drew on their life experiences to elucidate their conceptualisation. These teachers emphasised how their values related to the intercultural are informed by

personal experiences and, particularly, personal childhood experiences. The issue of racism in different forms featured in varying ways in all the teacher interviews, and the next section will explore the findings around teacher responses to encounters with racism in the Junior Cycle English classroom, particularly when it arises in classroom exploration of literature and film.

5.4 Responding to Racism in the Junior Cycle English Classroom

The second research question posed by the study relates to how classroom engagement with literature/film analysis informs intercultural education in the Junior Cycle English classroom. Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed the prevalence of racism as a classroom issue common to all the teachers when invited to reflect on their pedagogic experience of the intercultural. In keeping with the range of intercultural conceptualisations expressed in the previous section, the same level of divergence applies to the pedagogic approaches to racism across the transcripts. The research shows that teacher handling of racism in the course of literary and cinematic engagement informs the degree to which the type of intercultural education that is experienced might be deemed critical.

Most of the teachers considered Blackness in their reflections on intercultural education. Many teachers referenced *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck (1937) as they considered which novels or films, they had explored which featured the theme of racism (this book is one of the novels that teachers may choose from the Junior Cycle English reading list). The novella features the story of George Milton and Lennie Small, two White migrant ranch workers moving around California in search of work during the Great Depression. The ranch in which the story unfolds features one Black character, a lonely stable hand isolated because of his Blackness. A victim of 1930's racial segregation, Crooks is

referred to by other ranchers in terms of racial slurs and derogatory language, particularly the “N” word.

It was important to examine teacher perspectives about racism particularly in the context of the literature or film being explored in the classroom, to understand how these perspectives inform intercultural education. It was necessary, therefore, to establish whether teachers were actively seeking out opportunities to promote an anti-racist agenda and whether this was the case more particularly within classrooms that were ethnically and culturally diverse.

5.4.1 Liberal and Critical Approaches

A range of understandings of racism and approaches to dealing with the issue explored in literature and film emerged during data analysis. Lee and Dallman (2008) believe that White teachers focus on commonalities of experience across cultures. Over emphasis on what all students have in common, limits the time available to confront that which may only be in the experience of non-White or minority culture students (Matsuda et al., 1993). Bearing this in mind, the study sought to investigate the extent to which teachers focused on commonalities of student experience, and whether positionality is informing approaches to the issue of racism in literature or film. It was vital to consider whether individual teachers were conscious of how their ethnicity, class, gender and political stance might influence their response to the issue of racism in the classroom, and to what extent teacher positionality was being deemed significant.

5.4.2 Teachers’ Views on Positionality/Response to Racism-A Mixed Picture

In discussing their selection of texts that explicitly feature the theme of racism and racist language, the issue of identity and positionality arose during several teacher interviews. A

study conducted by Gray (2009) found that teacher ethnicity was not a factor in the selection of multicultural literature. This assessment is contradicted somewhat by this research.

With regards to racism in texts, some of the research participants were clear in stating that they believed that their positionality did inform their openness to confronting what was, for many teachers in the study, the difficult and very uncomfortable issue of racism in the Junior Cycle English classroom. Other teachers, however, pointed out that their positionality did not preoccupy them. Dressel (2005) foregrounds the significance of positionality when examining White teachers' approach to intercultural education, concluding that White teachers rarely imagine themselves in racialised terms, and therefore accept themselves as the cultural norm, non-Whites viewed as 'outsider: 'other'.

This was only the case among some of the teachers interviewed. There were varying degrees of acknowledgement of the centrality of positionality in informing values, approaches, and levels of comfort in the culturally and ethnically diverse classroom. Teachers frequently referenced *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937) because of the anti-Black racism it expresses. A range of teacher attitudes about the teaching of this novel which emerged during the interviews will now be explored.

Two teachers explained that the personal experience of having a Black family member informs their approach. Laura, whom we have already met, described how her racial awareness in the classroom is influenced by her experience of being the White mother of a Black son:

> I've raised a Black child here and so I feel I am very racially aware. I see how people don't see it. I can see the nuances, people don't understand

> how their ignorance comes across ...I'm exposed very personally to the issues, and I am going back for a period of thirty years…My son is an adult now and the Ireland that I would have been raising him in, it's not the same Ireland (Laura, T6).

Laura went on to make a distinction between the Ireland of then and that of now, adding that though the experience of a Black student today in school will not be the prejudicial experience of her son, she frequently detects evidence of colleagues' unconscious bias in her school staffroom. Her English pedagogy is rooted in a justice approach committed to upholding the equality of every student in her classroom (Coulby, 2011). Similarly, we have seen John describe how his experience of having a Black cousin influenced the development of his values around inclusion in the classroom. These teachers identify the personal experience of issues of racism as having a hugely formational influence on the development of their approach to racism in classroom texts.

Conversely, Anna (who teaches in Hillview) did not consider positionality or how it might inform her approach to the issue of racism:

> No, I've never really actually considered my position as a young White woman or my cultural background, my middle-class status. I know that's going to sound strange (Anna, T7).

Anna's admission that positionality does not feature in her thinking about teaching indicates that some teachers, though well-meaning and committed to the best outcomes for all of their students have a more limited conceptual grasp of issues informing their pedagogy.

In the next section, we will consider teacher difficulties surrounding racism.

5.4.3 Racism and Teacher Unease

Anna did, however, acknowledge how sensitive an issue racism is among teenagers and was forthright in describing her approach to the teaching of a controversial book. She acknowledged the care she takes when reading *Of Mice and Men* with her students, pointing out the time she takes to contextualise the novella, describing what was happening at the time, 1930's racism, the Depression, and the experience of migrant dustbowl workers. In this approach, racism in a text is examined in its historical context without reference to the more uncomfortable reality of a present where racism is still the experience of Travellers and people of colour in the Irish context.

She went on to describe how she uses an audiobook version of the novel and that the "N" word is heard:

> I found that they (students) took a very mature approach to it. Nothing was really said and it was accepted that this was just a book…obviously the first couple of times the word was mentioned, you get the odd kind of look, but then after that the students just accepted that's the type of language that was used back then (Anna, T7).

In Anna's description, students just accepted that this is how it was in the past for Black people. This consigning of racism to the past has the effect of absolving teachers from responsibility to address the reality of structural racism. Gillborn (2005), however, warns that racism is not an aberration and that it is, in fact, a fundamental characteristic of the education system itself. Anna's perspective makes it clear that her pedagogy does not align with what Dei (1996) describes as anti-racism:

> Action-oriented strategy for institutional systemic change that addresses…issues of race and social difference as issues of power and equity rather than as matters of cultural and ethnic variety (p.252).

A comparison of Anna's experience with that of other teachers who had also explored *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937) revealed a very broad range in teacher understanding of what constitutes racism. The use of a racial slur is foregrounded in Anna's interview, and she confines the type of explicit racism encountered in the novel to a historical context. She did not consider whether her assessment of the accepting attitude of the students truly reflected the perspective of all of the students (particularly students from minority communities) in that class.

This view categorises the past, particularly the past as it was in the American Deep South or among migrant labourers in the Dust Bowl of the nineteen thirties as bad, backward and racist. The danger here is that the present, particularly the contemporary Irish context, is absolved of any responsibility for societal racism where individual incidences of verbal racial abuse, for example, are deemed an aberration, the rare event attributable to ignorance.

This was an approach identifiable in the responses of several teachers. This understanding fails to consider the more nuanced and insidious structural racism, which constitutes a lack of opportunity and a silencing of stories and perspectives (Melamed, 2006). Critical race scholars such as Gillborn (2005) argue that far from being an aberration, racism is an embedded and inherent characteristic of White dominated societies. This is a position shared by Watson (2013) and Watson and Thompson (2015), who suggest that racial discrimination is frequently positioned as an individual problem rather than a structural one.

Referencing and cross-referencing respondents' descriptions of their pedagogic experience of Steinbeck's novel, made it clear that the degree of understanding of racism and anti-racism students develop depends on teacher knowledge, attitudes, and comfort levels regarding preparedness to tackle the potentially uncomfortable.

Rosenberg (1997) and Galman et al. (2010), acknowledge that confronting racism is difficult for many White educators. Even where there was a willingness to confront racism, particularly in the context of an ethnically and culturally diverse classroom, teachers admitted to their unpreparedness and a fear of getting it wrong. Meaningful anti-racist education, however, does not shy away from the uncomfortable in the classroom (Kailin,2002). As Tator and Henry (1991), articulate, anti-racist education challenges racism by confronting its contemporary manifestations and historical roots. Borsheim-Black et al. (2014) and Macaluso (2017) show how critical literacy can empower students to critique and disrupt problematic narratives. The final chapter will discuss the role of a critical literacy framework to guide and inform both the curriculum and pedagogy in the Junior Cycle English classroom.

5.4.4. Preparedness to Tackle the Uncomfortable?

Reluctance to tackle issues for which teachers did not feel adequately prepared was a recurring theme. Teacher fear arising out of a sense of unpreparedness, and lack of skills necessary to foster discussion of race-related issues in the classroom, is highlighted by Sue et al. (2009). They point to feelings of discomfort, defensiveness, and uncertainty as White teachers attempt to navigate race-related dialogue in school. The authors also suggest that teacher fear of perceived incompetence by students is another factor inhibiting their engagement in hard classroom talk about racism. The result they find is that teachers often resort to silence rather than embrace discomfort.

Some teachers in the study expressed hesitation in tackling racism for fear of causing offence or embarrassment and, feared that the Black student or the student belonging to an ethnic minority in the class, might feel singled out and exposed. As Rosa (not Irish, works in a Catholic all-boys' school) suggested:

> Teachers like to remain in their comfort zone...the majority of teachers are White and Irish and they may not have the education themselves or the experience to talk about certain issues (Rosa, T3).

A common thread across the transcripts was teachers' feelings of unpreparedness (Meckler and Natanson, 2022; Buchanan, 2015; Milner, 2017). Teacher reluctance to confront a controversial issue such as racism is commonplace, and teachers may feel intimidated due to external pressures, as is the case in the US (Geonzon & Davison, 2021).

Some teachers also admitted that *Of Mice and Men* had become "too controversial" in their school. As a result, teachers had become increasingly reluctant to read it with their students, lacking the confidence to grapple with a book that was causing discomfort. Godsil and Richardson (2017) note how teachers can feel discomfort in approaching racism in the classroom, even when they are motivated to do so. The implications of the ubiquitous discomfort among teachers engaged in intercultural work will be examined in the concluding chapter.

By contrast, Laura made a strong case for its continued inclusion in the classroom, proposing a values-based approach to any class reading of the novella. While acknowledging teacher fear in embracing the controversial, she advocates a "reading against" the text to probe it and promote an interrogatory and critical response among her students. This is a position shared by John, who also eschews avoidance of the difficult

and the uncomfortable, advocating instead a head-on confronting of stereotypes and racism, a pedagogy consistent with critical literacy (Freire 2000; Giroux 1988, 2020; Luke 2018).

Analysis of interview transcripts revealed a marked contrast in the approaches of teachers when it came to the issue of racism in the classroom. Some feared the possible implications of tackling such a potentially explosive issue. They also expressed a fear of appearing racist or of facing a backlash from parents. This fear is also foregrounded in other studies that engage teacher experiences of the intercultural (Alvarez & Milner, 2018; Palmer and Louis, 2017).

However, other teachers, particularly those with personal experience of being a migrant, or those with family experience, or a theoretical grounding related to this area, determined to confront, and tackle it as a necessity. Their determination to engage in anti-racist discourse in their class demonstrates an understanding of how talking about race in the classroom can enhance racial literacy among students (Skinner & Meltzoff, 2019; Hughes et al., 2007). In the next section, we will explore teachers' responses to the "N" word as encountered during literary/cinematic exploration.

At the same time, fear, whether on the part of teachers or students, was a recurring theme in teachers' descriptions of classroom responses to the issue of racism. Almost all the teachers expressed their need for greater support in equipping themselves to do, what they acknowledged, was the vital work of intercultural education. Lack of confidence was evident even among teachers who wanted to promote anti-racism in their classes (Buehler et al., 2009).

While there was considerable variation in conceptualisations of racism on the part of teachers, what was common across most of the transcripts, was a desire to develop a Junior Cycle English pedagogy that is truly reflective of, and responsive to, the ethnic and cultural diversity that characterises the classroom, and the world in which Junior Cycle students live. Teachers were vocal in requesting support in meeting the challenge of confronting stereotypes and racism in their classrooms. This call for guidance supports the position of Milner (2017), who holds that many teachers do not feel equipped for this important work.

5.4.5 Responding to the 'N' Word in Texts

Most of the teachers who read *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937) with their students expressed the care they took in preparing their class at the pre-reading stage. Some teachers were adamant that the 'N' word would not be said aloud. Others insisted that the word must be read aloud and that "it is important not to turn a blind eye" (Rosa). While she acknowledged the strong impact that the word has, her willingness to embrace discomfort in the classroom highlighted her refusal to indulge in avoidance. Her preparedness to tackle uncomfortable reading in the classroom, and recognition of the discomfort that may be felt by some students more than others, illustrates her refusal to shy away from confronting the difficult and rather conduct reading with caution and empathy to the feelings of all in the room.

Empathy on the part of teachers was a recurrent theme. Emer described being very conscious of her whiteness as she thought about *Of Mice and Men,* and how reading that novel might impact her Black students. She acknowledged that she had banned vocalisation of the 'N' word in class so that the word was skipped over during class reading. She described that in one class students were keen to discuss the issue of racism

in the book and issues around the use of the 'N' word but that she had also found it difficult to gauge the mood in the class as a whole or how everyone was feeling in that moment. Emer went on to explain how she had focused on Crooks (the only Black character in the story) and his marginalisation, and how the racist treatment he had experienced led him to be bitter and mean. She admitted that while the students had expressed sympathy for him, the class discussion around his character was not mobilised to initiate student debate on the broader theme of contemporary racism in the context of Irish society.

In this instance, therefore, although historical racism was being pulled apart and probed in classroom discussion, links to contemporary language use and the experience of racism today, whether explicit or in more insidious forms, were not being broached. Where teachers were responding to historical racism in the novel in terms of legacy from the past and even where teachers acknowledged that many of the Black boys in their class were using the 'N' word in their slang and listening to it in Rap and Hip-hop, there was an overwhelming reluctance to engage discussion around contemporary usage of the "N" word. Laura's approach to the "N" word in class reading is similar. She insists that the word is not said aloud in her classroom even though it is in current usage among some of the Black male students she teaches:

> Within their Black space we've no right to jump in. We all have to acknowledge the limits to our understanding (Laura, T6).

Laura's reflection on her personal experience and her relationship with her students, makes it clear that she was, always, in her classroom interactions, mindful of her positionality as a White teacher and mother to a son who is Black. She continued to emphasise the way in which her positionality informs her approach to interculturalism.

There was a marked contrast between the depth of her self-awareness and that expressed by other teachers who do not have the same personal experience.

Unlike Laura, who expressed reluctance to facilitate discussion of the "N" word in contemporary slang, Susan described a class debate about whether the 'N' word should be said aloud in class while reading aloud from *Of Mice and Men*. When it was pointed out that the 'N' word features extensively in black Rap and Hip- Hop, one of the White boys in her class pointed out that it was only acceptable for Black people to use the word. She said that a range of opposing views about contemporary usage of the 'N' word were expressed but that by the end of the discussion, there was consensus that if an author has used a particular word, then it should not be censored. Here is an example of teacher preparedness to enable textual engagement to prompt wider discussion of a contemporary societal issue. Teachers' openness to embrace the potentially controversial was not a common theme across the transcripts.

Emer expressed her concern about how her school has now shied away from doing the novel because of teacher unease:

> I'm worried about what else we might shy away from and alternatively just stick with because of easiness and familiarity because we just aren't confident in dealing with the hard stuff (Emer, T9).

Two of the participants expressed concern at what they perceived as a reluctance on the part of colleagues to confront the reality of the lived experience of racism of some of their students. Flynn (2015) coined the phrase "white fatigue" to capture a feeling of helplessness and even victimisation on the part of White people who disengage from the need to tackle racism actively. This awareness of the prevalence of avoidance of the uncomfortable in school clearly demonstrates a critical understanding on the part of some

teachers of the capacity of the Junior Cycle English classroom to be a space conducive to challenging things as they are with a view to transforming individual hearts and minds.

As Marie reflected:

> with a little bit of planning ...I think it's (English classroom) the ideal setting to have those difficult conversations where there are certain rules and certain parameters and respect and it's a safe place because you're inviting them to talk about the difficult issue.… (Marie, T2).

Throughout her interview, Marie returned to the value of opening conversation about diversity and inclusion. She also addressed the issue of the 'N' word in *Of Mice and Men,* stating that in introducing the book before the reading begins, she outlines some of the important contemporary debates about the employment of the 'N' word. She also foregrounded positionality, saying that she is honest in letting her students know that as a White person she does not feel comfortable using the word even in the context of reading from a novel, while also acknowledging that there are a range of contemporary Black perspectives on the usage of the 'N' word, where some argue for the need to take back ownership of the word. Interestingly, she acknowledged her frequent feelings of discomfort when tackling issues around racism in the classroom quickly adding:

> I think it's okay sometimes to be uncomfortable. I mean I have a problem with things being too easy all of the time (Marie, T2).

Marie's embracing of discomfort responds to the work of DiAngelo (2012) who calls on White educators to challenge comfortable patterns of engagement necessary to interrupt deeply internalised racial socialisation (p.14).

While some teachers in the study were of the view that there is value in reading a novel such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960) or *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937)

because of the classroom opportunity they present to confront racism, John, addressed the problematic depiction of Blackness in these books. His view demonstrates an awareness of the damaging impact of stereotypes whereby if the only texts depicting Blackness that teenagers read are stories of catastrophe, then the potentially misleading and damaging impression that may be given is that the Black character is always the victim because they only have examples of Blackness framed in terms of suffering and injustice. Four participants stressed the need for a broader range of material historical and contemporary presenting a range of different Black experiences and perspectives.

John's approach is to encourage the students to address the offensiveness of the racist language featured in the book. He also described how he usually brings a copy of the nineteenth English magazine *Punch* into his class as a preparation for their reading of *Of Mice and Men* to show his students that the Irish were depicted in racist ways and that intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English means that:

> teaching English isn't just a kind of academic exercise, there is a social aspect, an ethical element, yeah, that's it (John, T4).

Pedagogy described by teachers such as John and Marie, bears the hallmark of interculturalism, characterised by an anti-racist agenda. These teachers described how they were committed to using opportunities that arose during literary and cinematic engagement to prompt a deeper examination of racial stereotypes and discrimination in the contemporary context. Their work bears the hallmark of what Ohio (2016) deems a pedagogy of discomfort, so called for its ability to cultivate in students an openness to discussing race with a critical focus.

Various studies suggest that teachers' perceptions of support from school authorities have considerable effects on their willingness to engage students in discussions of race

(Alvarez, 2018; Alvarez &Milner, 2018; Philip et al., 2017). This conclusion, however, is not supported by either John or Marie, neither of whom cited the influence of school management on their work.

It became clear, therefore, that while some teachers were either avoiding the issue of racism altogether or consigning it to a 'bad old past', there were some instances of others facilitating quite sophisticated classroom discussions about racism and language used in the historical and the contemporary context. The different approaches to teaching *Of Mice and Men* that were described, again suggest a broad range of understandings and experiences of intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English classrooms. It also became clear that the student experience of intercultural education in Junior Cycle English is hugely dependent on the teacher's class in which he or she ends up. The randomness of this is problematic, and in the final chapter, issues regarding the varied picture of intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English teaching will be reflected upon.

5.4.6 Overview of Findings Part One

Respect for difference and a belief in the importance of celebrating that difference is foregrounded in the conceptualisation of intercultural education expressed by several study participants. Five participants, however, expressed a more critically charged understanding of intercultural education, emphasising its capacity to pose difficult questions and challenge the status quo. This demonstrates examples of Junior Cycle English classrooms where transformative pedagogy characterises literary/cinematic engagement.

As we have seen earlier, teachers with a close personal investment in the intercultural through family relationships and other personal experiences such as the memory of being othered in school tended to demonstrate more of an awareness of the critical potential of intercultural education. These teachers demonstrated through their conceptual and experiential descriptions, a commitment to a critical intercultural education with a socially just and actively anti-racist agenda. While it could be seen that teachers were expressing a genuine wish to be inclusive of every student in his or her English classroom, it also became clear that a range of understandings of intercultural education spanning the spectrum from celebration of cultural difference and the singling out of the colourful ethnic detail, to more critical understandings underpinned by a commitment to challenge racism in explicit and subtle forms is present in Junior Cycle English classrooms. This variation points to the possibility of a very diverse range of student experiences of the intercultural in different Junior Cycle classrooms. The implications of this varied intercultural picture of the ground will be addressed in the concluding chapter.

John, Laura, Rosa, and Marie demonstrated commitment and openness to moving beyond the celebratory approach to cultural and ethnic diversity to actively confronting blind spots related to representation and racism, as well as acknowledging the need for genuine reflection on a justice-based approach to intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English teaching. They articulated a well-informed critical understanding of issues related to the intercultural, expressing their mission to challenge stereotypes and racism as it is encountered in classroom reading. These teachers clearly described their view of intercultural education as an opportunity for their students to generate thinking to effect societal change at a wider level (Burbules, 1997; Gregoriou, 2013; Kromidas, 2011).

Other teachers in the study described responses to racism that tended to situate it in the context of a different geographical space and time. While these teachers were deliberate in their efforts to normalise and celebrate diversity, there remains the risk that harm may be caused inadvertently through missed opportunities to challenge the status quo through failure to facilitate hard classroom talk.

Racism emerges as a significant preoccupation with all the participants. All the teachers addressed this issue during their interviews, and various views were expressed. Issues around racism and anti-racism were foregrounded by all the participants, demonstrating the importance teachers place on their response to an issue, which is the very real experience of some of their students and which should concern all. All the participants acknowledged that teachers are predominantly White Irish and middle class and often look different from many of the students in their care.

While some teachers expressed a clear understanding of how their stance on racism is shaped by their identity and personal experience, as well as the importance of such an acknowledgement, others admitted that their identity is not an issue which preoccupies them insofar as it might inform their relationship with students from different ethnic and cultural groups. It was surprising that some of the more recently qualified and younger teachers interviewed did not afford more significance to teacher identity and, social and cultural background when considering how they deal with the issue of racism in literature or film.

Most of the teachers interviewed had some experience of exploring a novel which explicitly grapples with racism. Within this cohort, however, there was variety in the range of approaches towards racism expressed. Among some teachers, there was a tendency to consign racism to a bygone era whereby a distinction was made between the

rampant and deeply embedded structural racism of the American Deep South or the Dust Bowl of the nineteen thirties and isolated incidences of racism in contemporary Ireland.

Some teachers were hesitant to ask uncomfortable questions about the experience of Black people and people of minority cultural groups in Ireland today. Some teachers were adamant that the "N" word would not be read aloud in the classroom; others insisted that it should be read with a view to upholding the integrity of the text.

Reluctance on the part of teachers to ask difficult questions about explicit or structural racism in contemporary Ireland was a recurring theme. Teachers were worried about inadvertently causing offence or embarrassment. There was fear of being misunderstood and misreported where contemporary racism might be interrogated during class discussion prompted by exploration of a book or film featuring racism. Teachers, particularly the less experienced ones, expressed fearfulness about landing themselves in trouble through their handling or perceived mishandling of a controversial issue.

Others were concerned that classroom talk featuring racism might have the effect of singling out or exposing the Black or Asian student(s) in the room. The need for empathy so that teachers can gauge how a student(s) might be feeling when the very painful (for some) issue of racism is confronted directly was highlighted across the data.

Some teachers were resolute about their commitment to raising potentially unsettling issues and allowing for classroom discomfort so that students reflect on how reading books, or watching films that address issues around racism, might challenge students to make connections between its historical context and structural racism today.

These teachers, albeit in the minority, were very passionate about their mission as they see it, to advance a critical anti-racist approach to textual and film analysis. They were

comfortable in encouraging students to challenge the status quo and were making connections between the text and the lived experience of diverse students. These teachers emphasised the need for very careful pre-teaching before a highly problematic novel featuring the "N" word could be introduced.

What the teachers open to embracing critical racial discourse in the classroom largely had in common was not only previous family experience of racism but also more experience in the classroom. Alvarez (2018) has also found that more experienced teachers report increased readiness to engage students in 'race' talk.

There was considerable divergence among teacher approaches to the handling of racist language. Some choose to avoid classroom engagement with the "N" word altogether. Others express the view that classroom reading of a novel that features racist language provides a vital opportunity to engage students in important debates about the role of language in school and society.

The ubiquitous nature of the "N" word in Hip-Hop and Rap was an issue raised by several teachers eager to forge links between classroom and student talk whether at home, or on the street. These teachers created meaningful connections between intercultural experiences inside and outside the Junior Cycle English classroom, actively inviting students to share lived experience of issues in the spotlight.

Above all, the prevalence of teacher fear signals a demand for guidance around issues pertinent to intercultural education such as racism in the context of the culturally and ethnically diverse classroom. The participants' clearly expressed fear of causing harm confirmed the urgency with which teacher preparedness to grapple with the challenging issue of racism needs to be addressed. This issue is examined in the concluding chapter.

Chapter Six: Research Findings and Discussion (Part 2)

6.1 Curricular Representation of Ethnic/Cultural Diversity

The study's second research question seeks to investigate how teacher selection and pedagogic exploration of literature and film inform intercultural education. Teachers were invited to reflect on the extent to which the voices, experiences, and stories that constitute the novels, films, and poetry that feature in the Junior Cycle English classroom mirror the cultural and ethnic diversity that characterises that classroom. Data analysis indicates that many versions of intercultural education are being played out because of the material that is being chosen or not as well as the pedagogic choices being made about how literature/film is presented and the nature of the student responses that are invited.

Findings related to participant reflections on their choice of fiction and film, the factors informing their decision- making around text selection and modes of engagement, and the implications of these choices for intercultural education will now be presented.

Bishop (1990) believes texts should provide windows to view the world, sliding doors to pass through and mirrors to reflect our lives. Mindful of the powerful potential of the text to either include or exclude, it was necessary to probe teachers' views on text/film selection. As descriptions of the issues informing their choices were read and re-read, I was mindful of Said's (2001) appeal to teachers of literature to acknowledge that cultural centralisation is a direct consequence of imperialism (p. xxx). It was necessary, therefore, to establish the extent to which teachers reflected on the impact of their choice of material on students. Were they conscious, for example, of the potentially damaging

impact on diverse readers of over-reliance on an ethnocentric bank of literature and/or film? (Gundara, 2008, 2014).

DiAngelo (2018) maintains that White teachers frequently fail to understand how the over-representation of White people in the curriculum, as well as in teaching and the under-representation or absence of people of colour, 'others' the experience of minority communities. This understanding was expressed by teachers in the study who had expressed a critical understanding of intercultural education. Other teachers expressed a less critically informed view.

Advocates of multicultural literature (DiAngelo & Dixey 2001; Nieto 2006; Tschida et al., 2014) have found that young people experience a boost in self-esteem when they feel personally related to the culture reflected in the literature they read. It was important therefore, to discover whether any of these considerations feature in teachers' decision making around classroom texts and film and whether the practice of reading against the traditional canon so that the taken for granted in classic fiction is interrogated was being encouraged. Toni Morrison's *Unspeakable Things Unspoken* (1988) examines these issues in the U.S. context of marginalised Black writers and demands of literature educators that they pose questions about whose story is being told and by whom.

The research participants expressed different views when invited to consider the extent to which the Junior Cycle English curriculum reflects the culturally and ethnically diverse range of voices and experiences that characterise Irish society and the classroom.

Many teachers distinguished between the type of skill set that is being tested in Junior Cycle English assessment at the end of the third year and which doesn't speak to a spirit of interculturalism and the potential for intercultural education presented by the oral

Class Based Assessment conducted in second year or through classroom engagement with and discussion of texts.[1]

Teacher perspectives on text selection as an expression of ethnic and cultural diversity are now explored under five sub themes:

6.1.1 Divergent Views on Intercultural Capacity of Junior Cycle English

In their experience of teaching Junior Cycle English, Noeleen and Rosa acknowledged opportunities presented by the Junior Cycle English classroom to foster intercultural education centred on connection. Noeleen expressed the view that there are different ways of doing intercultural education, pointing out that the teacher can bring material of his or her choosing into the classroom. This freedom of choice was borne out across the other teacher interviews but only in so far as it involved short stories, prose pieces or poetry.

Rosa also foregrounded the value of choice in her English teaching, singling out for mention her interest in reading Maya Angelou with the boys she teaches. She emphasised the importance of considering Angelou's work in its historical context and thinking about the challenges she faced as a Black woman. However, she also used that exploration as a springboard for student discussion of any issues arising that might resonate with them.

Here, again, is an example of classroom exploration of a text that inspires reflection on the ways in which issues and themes raised during classroom reading, speak in uniquely individual ways to different sensitive readers.

[1] Class Based Assessment is an oral communication task undertaken by students in second year over a three-week period. Students select an issue or topic of interest to them, conduct independent research and present orally to the class in one of a variety of possible genres including talk, interview, role play or poetic/dramatic performance

Five interviewees stressed that the oral Class Based Assessment in English provides a wonderful opportunity for the teacher to engage the student's voice. Teachers were enthusiastic in their praise for the opportunity students took to deliver oral presentations on an issue they are passionate about, or some aspect of their family or cultural background. Maeve spoke about the value of getting "students to use their own experience and using the skill of inquiry. Marie shares her positivity about the intercultural potential of the CBA, referring to one occasion where a Black girl in her class spoke about the issue of colour-blindness in school and in society:

> It was wonderful that she could have the space to initiate that important classroom conversation but it's a bit disappointing that this may be the only space where students can introduce a topic of real concern to them. We need more of these conversations. One girl's CBA prompted a natural exchange of questions and views (Marie, T2.)

Teachers also noted some of the challenges and barriers to intercultural education that arise, with some commenting on the nature of the final two-hour exam taken at the Higher or Ordinary level and, which Laura described as emphasising skills such as analysis. Many of the participants noted that the extent to which the Junior Cycle English classroom recognises and promotes intercultural education is primarily a function of the individual teacher's interest. Data analysis indicates that the type of intercultural education that unfolds in the Junior Cycle English classroom, is a function of the degree of criticality that characterises the individual teacher's conceptualisation of intercultural education.

Examination of the relationship between literary/cinematic pedagogy and intercultural education is central to the study and the next section features teacher reflections on their

choice of literature and film and an assessment of how these choices inform intercultural education in the Junior Cycle English classroom**.**

6.1.2 Teacher Selection of Literature and Film

When multicultural literature is explored in class, it engages students to challenge assumptions and illogical conclusions, thereby disrupting stereotypes and bias and confronting racism (Dressel 2005; Özturgut 2011). Teachers were asked about the kinds of texts they chose and the factors influencing their choices. This was necessary to explore the extent to which teachers felt that the diversity in their classroom, and in society, is being reflected in the types of novels and films and authors given a platform in the classroom. It was also important to discover the extent to which Junior Cycle English teachers grappled with identity and representation issues. To what extent was teacher Whiteness considered in the context of a potentially ethnically and culturally diverse classroom when it came to selecting novels and films for exploration?

The power of the story, whether in film or in literature, to teach us about ourselves and each other was a theme that was voiced by nearly all the teachers interviewed. Some of them went further in highlighting the need to ask questions about which voices and whose stories are being given a platform in the Junior Cycle classroom. In the next section, the findings around questioning the curriculum will be explored.

6.1.3 Questioning the Curriculum?

The need to interrogate issues around novel and film selection is a theme that was expressed by several teachers. Edel's view that while there is capacity within the Specification to explore literature and film from around the world, teachers don't always (for whatever reason) fully explore those opportunities was echoed by several teachers.

Conversely, Rosa's perspective on the capacity of the prescribed Junior Cycle English reading lists is that there is not enough choice on the list for it to be genuinely intercultural, and that teachers who do wish to engage in issues of interculturalism may feel inadequately prepared to take on texts that engage issues with which they are not familiar. Rosa expressed frustration at a departmental discussion about text selection for the coming academic year: a colleague had suggested they avoid *Of Mice and Men* for fear of potential controversy involving either students or parents. Rosa explained that she disagreed with this self-imposed curricular censorship because, in her view, simply removing a text to avoid the raising of a difficult issue such as racism removes from teachers and their students the opportunity to grapple with difficult and vital topics.

Other teachers, such as Emer and Laura, focused on the need for greater teacher confidence in embracing discomfort during curricular engagement. Committed to introducing literature by a range of diverse authors, Laura spoke about how she had read Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) with a Senior Cycle English class but was at pains to point out to them that the male protagonist at the heart of the book is not representative of all Nigerian men, and that domestic violence is not exclusive to Nigerian culture (Eugene Achike is a wealthy Nigerian and strict Catholic, the domineering and abusive patriarch of his family who imposes a harsh regime on his wife and children that includes meting out violent punishments for any misdemeanour or failure to score full marks in a school test).

Laura stressed the need to handle texts that examine difficult issues very carefully and sensitively, mainly to avoid cultural stereotyping. During her reflection on the factors informing her choice of material for classroom engagement, she foregrounded the importance of challenging stereotypes, and acknowledged that certain themes:

> can hit and resonate hard and you have to be able to deal with that. And sometimes issues crop up in unforeseen ways. You don't know how a child might be affected… I think it's hard to embrace that vulnerability and unpredictability…Somebody says something that you weren't expecting, that's where I find I might get thrown. I actually think people would take more risks if they were more equipped…there's a fear element with teachers, saying the wrong thing… (Laura, T6)

The issue of care in approaching text selection was also a theme Marie took up, reflecting the danger of being uncritical of stories. Like Laura, she supports the representation of diverse authorship in the Junior Cycle English curriculum. She makes the case for instilling in students the ability to read with a critical eye so that, in her words, "everything is held up to scrutiny".

Another issue expressed by several teachers, was their fear of causing embarrassment to a student by singling them out in discussions of representation. Emer spoke about how conscious she is of her Whiteness and that she tries to push aside the issue of self-consciousness in the English classroom to facilitate meaningful engagement with the issue of representation. She noted the school's overwhelming Whiteness and middle-class culture and continued to explain how she sees her role as one dedicated to creating the English classroom as a "safe place to discuss all sorts of issues" (Emer, T9).

Three of the teachers spoke about the issue of Traveller representation. Edel made the point that a Traveller boy or girl would not feel that his or her culture is recognised or represented in the English classroom and admitted her hesitation in foregrounding the culture of an individual student for fear of singling the boy or girl out. Her early teaching experience in X, where she worked with minority community students, has had a formative effect on her values and pedagogy. She noted that just as her Traveller students would not recognise themselves in the books and films being explored in their English

class, nor would the students whom she had encountered early in her career in several schools around X have been able to identify with "a lot of traditional canon writes like Dickens and Shakespeare" (Edel, T5)

A recurring theme was the need for curricular guidance around multicultural novels and film. Edel acknowledged her identity as a teacher and mother and wanted support in accessing new multicultural titles for her students and for her own children. Emer echoed this request for guidance and acknowledged that her Junior Cycle English students were asking her why there were so many White authors on their reading list. Maeve also alluded to the idea of "dead white guys" represented on Junior Cycle English reading lists, pointing out that if a Junior Cycle English teacher were so inclined, he or she could "choose an ethnically White all-male curriculum".

While analysis of the transcripts reveals that some teachers are actively questioning their choice of material and considering the implications of those choices on the way in which intercultural education unfolds in the classroom, it also became clear that even where some teachers wish to include literature/film that is more representative of student cultural diversity, they were also looking for guidance both in the selection of material and in classroom approaches to it. The issue of teacher fear of offending students belonging to minority communities was a recurring theme.

6.1.4 Inclusion of Culturally Diverse Authors and Intercultural Themes

Several teachers described how their decision to include the work of poets of colour such as Maya Angelou and Angela Gorman is a conscious effort to facilitate student understanding of more diverse voices, and to reflect ethnic and cultural diversity in the classroom. Commitment on the part of some teachers to include Black writers makes it

clear that there is a growing awareness among some of the value of broader curricular representation.

A recurring theme in most transcripts was a demand for more guidance on novelists and poets of colour whose work would be a rich addition to the bank of literary and cinematic resources from which teachers might draw. Some teachers were very explicit in expressing their desire for advice about where to turn to find titles that they could explore as a class text or recommend to their students for personal reading. As Laura pointed out:

> A lot of what we teach is often canonised and we don't have that same narrative today. We have to challenge it and look for new narratives…way more contemporary. I certainly do introduce some but it's hard to find these Black Irish writers for example (Laura, T6).

In some cases, teachers were keen to point out their inclusion of texts examining intercultural themes. *Bend it like Beckham* (2002), directed by Gurinder Chadha, was the film being explored in Emer's class, and she commented on how the intercultural themes could be discussed through the students' common interest in soccer.

There was considerable variation in how text selection could be considered meaningfully representative. Some teachers were of the view that the novel they had chosen was representative of a non-White perspective once it was set in a developing country and featured non-White protagonists. *Trash* by Andy Mulligan (2010) is a case in point. One of the teachers who had read the book in their Junior Cycle English class mistakenly stated that the book was set in The Philippines when it is located in Behala, a district in Kolkata. This was a minor error but what was interesting was the fact that the portrayal of marginalised Indian children by a White British author was not in any way considered problematic by the teacher concerned.

It seemed that with a few teachers, the mere inclusion of a book featuring non-White characters suffices as engagement with the intercultural. While all the participants were well- meaning in their concern to ensure that all of their students are happy and reach their potential within Junior Cycle English, cross-referencing between transcripts revealed that there was considerable disparity between teachers in terms of their understanding of how their choice of stories and films and the ways they are engaged with in class impacts diverse students.

This indicates significant ambiguities and tensions regarding the type of intercultural education that is the classroom experience. Some students are being enabled to critique forms of stereotypical representation by reading against texts (Freire, 1970; Luke, 2000), and others are experiencing well-meaning though potentially damaging versions of 'intercultural' engagement, which result in the perpetuation of stereotypes and prejudicial thinking rather than disruption.

Determining authenticity in a text is an issue fraught with controversy (Harada, 1995; Lu, 1998,) and there is not the necessary space here to explore this issue fully. What must be noted, however, is that there are features of quality, including literary quality as well as cultural accuracy, portrayal of gender roles, dialogue, representation of lifestyles as well as author background, which are issues for consideration when thinking about authenticity in the intercultural context. Simply including a text because it is set "elsewhere" constitutes a very flimsy and potentially harmful approach to intercultural inclusion. This is a concern because of the risk of reinforcing stereotypes or the failure to challenge them.

Laura read *The Breadwinner* (Ellis, 2001) with her class. Again, this is a novel that explores the experience of vulnerable children in a non-Western context, in this case,

Afghan children under Taliban rule. The novel is written by a White Canadian author, Deborah Ellis, and I must stress here that I am not suggesting that a White author cannot or should not tackle social issues in Afghanistan or another part of the world affected by conflict. What is striking in the context of the intercultural and the Junior Cycle classroom, is the fact that the authorship of a novel that speaks to the experience of vulnerable Afghan children did not arise in Laura's description of the classroom reading experience as an issue that might be addressed in the exploration of the text. This indicates both the need for teacher intercultural knowledge as it pertains to classroom material and the need for a re-imagining of the Junior Cycle prescribed reading lists.

The prescribed reading lists associated with the Specification for Junior Cycle English (NCCA 2015b), include novels and films (even those engaging themes related to the intercultural or featuring Black or Brown characters) which are in the main written or directed by White people [N. B. For an overview of the Junior Cycle English Specification and prescribed reading lists please see Section 2.4 in Chapter Two].

Maeve described how she actively seeks to include material that engages with intercultural themes. She reflected on her experience of thinking about reading *The Weight of Water* (Crossan, 2011) with her third-year students. This coming-of-age novel explores the alienation experienced by a young Polish immigrant in the UK, written by White Irish author, Sarah Crossan. Maeve described how having a Polish girl in her class who had recently become homeless and who was living in a hotel with her family made the novel she had considered wholly inappropriate. She acknowledged that she did not want to embarrass a student in her class whose experience was very close to that being treated in the book. There were several instances described by the study participants

where they abandoned a particular book or film due to their themes' sensitive nature and out of consideration for the potential emotional impact on a student or students.

Teachers' descriptions of their mindfulness of student sensitivities, indicated that all the teachers featured in the study wanted to do their best for students academically and emotionally. Gaps in intercultural knowledge may have resulted in unforeseen and certainly unintended negative consequences, such as the non-challenging of racist stereotypes, but teacher intentions were always good.

Teachers were also keen to discuss their choice of film. John expressed his belief in the value of cinematic exploration:

> I think movies are a great way to teach kids. They're very receptive to film as a genre. The critic Roger Ebert described movies as empathy machines and I think they are, you know…and that's why I really welcome them coming in because some of them are culturally diverse such as *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (John, T4).

John's assessment of the film is that the "people are bound together in poverty, but there's no racism". His response to the film captured the extent to which perceptions are rooted in the individual perspective. The beauty of classroom literary and cinematic exploration is that it encourages the individual response once rooted in close, and careful and sensitive reading or viewing.

It is important to note that there has been much criticism of Benh Zeitlin's 2012 film and John's assessment that *Beasts of the Southern Wild* is a film without racism is not a view shared by Black scholar bell hooks. She has written a scathing review of the film in which she exposes what in her view are the damaging ways in which Blackness is depicted through the child character of Hushpuppy, her alcoholic father Wink, and their

Louisiana Bayou community. bell hooks argues that the film is framed in racism, poverty, and catastrophe. She has described being "deeply disturbed and militantly outraged" by the film's images and what she perceives to be the "physical and emotional violation of the body and being of a small six-year-old black girl…a miniature version of the 'strong black female matriarch' racist and sexist depictions have represented from slavery to the present" (2012).

There is absolute polarity between John's assessment of this film and that of bell hooks. As we have seen earlier, John spoke at length about his family background and the experience of growing up with Black cousins. In his descriptions of classroom practice, he demonstrated in many ways, his commitment to a values-led and socially just approach in the Junior Cycle English classroom. The dissonance between John's assessment and that of a critically informed Black literary critic and scholar suggests that there may be gaps in teacher knowledge particularly in relation to the issue of race and racism in literary and cinematic depiction. The implications of this finding will be presented in the concluding chapter.

Some teachers' descriptions of the factors informing their text and film selection indicate an alignment of their pedagogy with the principles of critical interculturalism (Coulby, 2011). Marie's description of why she chose to explore *Wadjda* an Arabic film made in 2012 (the first feature-length film ever shot entirely in Saudi Arabia and directed by a Saudi female director, Haifaa Al-Mansour), demonstrates her interest in engaging her students in a film directed by a Muslim woman that explores important intercultural themes. Marie, as we have seen, teaches in a Catholic girls' school with a significant number of Muslim students who, at the time of interviewing were for the first time in the school's history, being offered the choice of wearing the hijab. Marie's choice of the film

was a very deliberate move to generate conversation about gender issues, perceptions of Islam, particularly those relating to Muslim girls and women and stereotyping in general. She spoke about how her Muslim students, in particular:

> enjoyed the fact that it (film) confronted lots of stereotypes about Muslim girls and women…through its portrayal of Wadjda a spirited young girl who lives in Riyadh and who dreams of owning a bicycle… (Marie, T2)

Marie explained that while choosing a film based on artistic merit, she also wanted this cinematic exploration to represent a valuable opportunity for meaningful and challenging intercultural education. In her description, there was no sense in which the aesthetic experience was being made to serve a pre-conceived agenda.

Some teachers saw a lot of intercultural potential in their exploration of poetry because their choice of poetry is not limited in any way by prescription. Laura emphasised her belief in a values-based approach to poetry study:

> I include poets like Maya Angelou because her work is so relevant…there's others such as Amanda Gorman. I'm like that's great that they can see role models with whom they can identify. That's what I like to be able to see somebody that is creating something new and who represents a positive voice, a positive image of Blackness as opposed to an image of deficit or being on the receiving end of prejudice (Laura, T6)

She was not seeking to shy away from the more uncomfortable issue of anti-Black racism. Instead, she felt there was also a need to explore Blackness in terms of creative energy and optimism about the possibility of transformation with a view to an equal future. Her approach aligned with that of Marie, who expressed her interest in the work of Amanda Gorman, whose poetry she sees as building on the legacy of Angelou.

Teachers remarked on the lack of diverse authorship of the texts they had encountered during their own time in school when students. Marie pointed out that she could not remember studying the work of a single female poet at school, let alone a Black female poet. These teachers were very forthright about their conscious decisions to include the voices of people previously less heard or not heard at all.

During these discussions about text selection, a variety of understandings of interculturalism prevailed. It became apparent that many teachers were making choices about texts within the parameters of the choice available on the reading lists but were also very much guided by the interests, individual needs, and cultural backgrounds of the students in front of them. It was also clear, though, that there was considerable variation in where, on the intercultural spectrum already alluded to, Junior Cycle English individual teacher pedagogy is situated, with the descriptions of some teachers situating them very clearly at the lighter end of the spectrum. Lastly, the findings on teacher freedom around text selection will be presented.

6.1.5 Teacher Freedom to Choose Texts?

Many participants pointed out that their freedom to choose material is curtailed by the collective decision-making in their English department. Edel (Tynestown) described how some dominant voices in the English department in her school tend to dictate the titles selected for year groups for the coming year. The easy lure of the familiar text was a recurring theme, with many teachers admitting reluctance to take on something new, particularly in the context of increasing demands and relentless time pressure. As Edel put it, “busy teachers often opt for convenience” (T5).

Laura, who also teaches in Tynestown, wanted to make the point that the choice of text is the most fraught aspect of collegial interaction in the English department. She welcomed the opportunity to express frustration at the way in which certain texts may be foisted on teachers due to departmental pressure and explained that she felt that her voice had been side-lined and that her preference would be to have a freer choice.

It was clear, however, that decision-making in other schools was conducted very differently, with individual teachers having agency over their choice of material. John described the in-depth (in his words, "philosophical") conversations he and his colleagues have about text selection. His description captured the democratic and reflective nature of these discussions in which the possible impact of including certain texts and films on students is discussed.

Again, the degree of freedom afforded the individual Junior Cycle English teacher to choose material that speaks to interculturalism depends on the school and English department in which he or she is situated. While experienced teachers reflected on their frustration at the sometimes lack of freedom they experienced, it was evident that the recently qualified or newly appointed English teacher felt even less equipped to call for more discretion when choosing classroom texts. The range of experiences about text selection expressed by teachers in their various school settings again suggested how differently intercultural education is being experienced in different Junior Cycle English classrooms. Even where teachers did acknowledge a free choice in their text selection, they also pointed out how their choices are heavily curtailed by the prescribed nature of text exploration in the second and third years.

6.1.6 Overview of Findings Part Two

Teachers expressed a range of views on the extent to which the Junior Cycle English prescribed novels and films reflect ethnic and cultural diversity. Some teachers felt that there was enough multicultural material on the list to facilitate their selection of a film or novel that reflects the cultural diversity of the classroom and Irish society. Others felt that there was either insufficient variety of text or that they were ill-equipped to grapple with new material and/or challenging themes.

There was also considerable disagreement about the capacity of Junior Cycle English to promote meaningful intercultural education, by which I mean a form of intercultural education that prompts reflection and cross-cultural learning so that students are challenged in their thinking to be open to perspectives and life experiences potentially very different from their own. Some teachers were making conscious choices to develop in their students a capacity for a critique of the taken for granted within the parameters of the Junior Cycle English curriculum.

While many teachers noted that the skills-based thrust of the final summative Junior Cycle assessment at the end of the third year does not lend itself to the promotion of values associated with a genuinely critical intercultural education, such as the direct challenging of cultural stereotypes and the interrogation of racism whether explicit or implied in text or in film, others applauded the value of CBA1 as a chance to talk to their peers about some aspect of their identity or cultural background.

The issue of freedom to choose texts was also discussed. While some participants described their English departments as being overly prescriptive, others described how, as a department, they were having quite philosophical discussions about the merits of

certain books or films in relation to their intercultural value. Most of the teachers acknowledged that the choice of material should ideally be made considering the needs, interests, and range of abilities of the class they happen to be teaching. All the teachers foregrounded student well-being.

The level of autonomy afforded teachers in their engagement with the Junior Cycle English curriculum is of considerable significance regarding teacher capacity to select material responsive to the intercultural composition of their class. Even where teachers have the freedom to select novels and film for classroom exploration, their choices are limited by the prescribed nature of the curriculum which as several teachers point out, offers limited scope for the selection of texts that engage intercultural themes.

While some teachers demonstrated an eagerness to explore novels and films written/directed by authors of colour and engaging diverse intercultural themes, others acknowledged a feeling of unpreparedness to embrace unfamiliar material, and a lack of guidance and support around selection of newer texts. These teachers admitted to a limited capacity to engage material that presents alternative versions of Blackness, for example, other than the story of victimisation, racism, and catastrophe that characterises a novel such as *"Of Mice and Men"* (Steinbeck, 1937). Therefore, a very mixed picture of literature and film selection was identified among this specific group of Junior Cycle English teachers.

6.2 Conclusion

The ten teachers featured in the study are not representative of all Junior Cycle English teachers, nor are the systems in place in their respective English departments which they described, reflective of the systems in departments across all Irish post-primary schools.

What the research findings do indicate, however, is the reality of a spectrum of teacher understandings and experiences of intercultural education ranging from approaches that emphasise respect and normalisation and celebration of diversity to more radical and actively anti-racist approaches. This points to the need for a clear vision of the type of intercultural education that might be realised in Junior Cycle English classroom and beyond. It highlights the urgency with which the intercultural education of English teachers, both pre-service and in-service, requires a significant overhaul if a meaningfully transformative intercultural education is to be the experience of all Junior Cycle English students. Coulby (2011) suggests that what is not important is the programme's title, be it intercultural, anti-racist or critical multicultural education, but rather the programme's content and purpose of promoting real social justice. The study reveals that intercultural education manifests differently in different Junior Cycle English classrooms (Børhaug & Weyringer, 2019). The capacity of interrogatory anti-racist pedagogy to inspire a transformational re-imagining of the status quo is addressed in the concluding chapter.

The findings also indicate a broad range in the racial literacy of teachers with some conceptualising racism as an individual issue rather than a systemic one. Teacher perspectives on curricular representation of ethnic and cultural diversity arising from their (or imposed) classroom material selection, were similarly varied. A few teachers acknowledged the issue of visibility of diversity during textual engagement and the impact on students where it is lacking.

For other teachers, this was not a concern. In the next chapter, the implications of these findings will be discussed, and suggestions are offered as to how a critical literacy framework might support future trajectories in intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English policy and practice.

Lund (2006) observes that even among scholars who work within multicultural education, there is a wide range of thought and activity, and the findings presented in this study bear out this assessment. Significant differentiation among teacher conceptualisations and on- the-ground experiences of intercultural education has been identified, suggesting significant variety in levels of expertise and teacher preparedness to tackle issues arising in literary and cinematic exploration in ethnically and culturally diverse classrooms.

There is synergy, therefore, between the themes emerging here and the insights provided by Nieto (2006), who holds that effective teachers in a multicultural setting share a passion for the cultural and ethnic diversity of their students and believe that students have a right to their multiple identities and language (p.469).

While exploration and analysis of the data reveal that all the teacher participants in the study are deeply committed to ensuring the well-being of all their students, in some cases, there was a marked reluctance to engage with certain issues. Teacher hesitation about confronting racism, whether by avoiding certain texts altogether, limiting classroom talk, or consigning racism in a text to its historical context and eschewing examination of contemporary language use or curricular representation, suggests the need to equip teachers in the Irish post-primary context with the necessary knowledge and competences to advance a social justice agenda in the course of Junior Cycle English literary and cinematic engagement.

Teachers' fears around dealing with such a sensitive issue as racism are addressed by Nieto and Bode (2012), who appeal to teachers to take on the uncomfortable topic or issue. In some cases, the teachers interviewed admitted to being thrown off guard when, during a read-aloud, the "N" word appeared; others admitted to being too nervous to read

a text because they did not feel adequately prepared to tackle potentially uncomfortable reading. The tentative findings of the current study suggest considerable alignment with the conclusions reached by Nieto (2006), who discovered that teacher fear leads to a loss of opportunities for meaningful intercultural education. She argues that you cannot teach what you don't know and that teachers need to have the "training, experience and heart to do so" (p.471). The need to address the lack of preparedness of teachers to do the vital work that is intercultural education in an Irish context will be addressed in the concluding chapter.

In the following chapter, the implications of the study findings for Junior Cycle English teaching policy and practice in the context of intercultural education will be outlined. Suggestions around the need for additional research in this area will also be made.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

A central aim of this study was to address the significant lacuna in the literature regarding the relationship between English teaching and the intercultural in the contemporary Irish context. This has been achieved through a critically informed analysis of how intercultural education is conceptualised and experienced by ten teachers of Junior Cycle English. Published research that addresses the forms of intercultural education articulated in the Irish context has focused on policy (Bryan, 2010), or has taken a cross curricular approach (Bryan & Bracken, 2011).

The current research contributes to this scholarly conversation by providing an in-depth insight into the forms of intercultural education that are being enacted specifically in the Junior Cycle English classroom, to position English teacher perspectives and pedagogy on an intercultural spectrum.

This chapter demonstrates how the Critical Literacy framework supported by concepts from Critical Race Theory and Post-Colonial Theory that has been employed in the study can inform future policy and practice pertaining to the intercultural and Junior Cycle English teaching for the promotion of social justice.

This chapter also provides an overview of the purpose of preceding chapters before returning to the study's research questions and drawing on the study's analysed findings discussed in Chapter Five. Informed by the critical theoretical framework that underpins the research, as well as the main findings, it proposes several policy, practice, and

research recommendations. It also outlines how the study contributes to knowledge in the field of intercultural education and Junior Cycle English teaching, and English teaching in Ireland more generally. As I present these recommendations, I again draw attention to the nature of qualitative research and its analysis of data gathered from a relatively small sample size (10 participants in the current study). While the participants cannot be considered representative of all teachers, the findings are evidence of the achievement of the aims and goals articulated for the study in the early part of the thesis. The findings offer valuable insights which will I now translate into several recommendations. First, it is important to remind ourselves of the overall research structure.

7.2 Overview of Study

Chapter One introduced the thesis by delineating the qualitative and critical thrust of the project and describing the purpose of the following chapters. It outlined the research questions and aims and described my personal and professional interest in the intercultural dimension of English teaching. Key concepts underpinning the work and an overview of the Junior Cycle English Specification and associated prescribed reading lists were described. The rationale for the research as well as the societal and political context of the study were presented.

The study's theoretical framework was the subject of Chapter Two. A Critical Literacy lens supported by concepts drawn from Critical Race Theory, Anti-Racist Pedagogy, and Post-Colonial Theory was outlined. This theoretical framework was supported by Chapter Three's overview of empirical studies that engage issues related to the relationship between intercultural education and literature/film analysis with a focus on the issue of racism, as well as the role of initial and ongoing professional development of

English teachers. The Methodology chapter elucidated the research design, the reflexive nature of the research, and ethical considerations, particularly the steps taken to prevent the undermining of research reliability and validity resulting from my 'insider' status as English teacher. Chapters five and six presented the findings of the research under three main themes generated through reflexive thematic analysis.

In the following sections, these findings will be revisited through the lens of the research questions to contextualise the study's key recommendations.

7.3 A Spectrum of Intercultural Understandings and Experiences

This section addresses the three questions which form the kernel of the study:

> 1.What are English teachers' understandings and experiences of intercultural education in the context of the Junior Cycle English classroom?
> 2. How does pedagogy centred on exploration of fiction and film inform intercultural education in the Junior Cycle English classroom?
> 3. How can a critically informed analysis of pedagogy related to literature and film exploration guide developments in intercultural education policy and practice in the context of Junior Cycle English?

Analysis indicates considerable variation between participants' conceptualisations and experiences of intercultural education. In line with international research (Lee et al., 1997; Kincheloe, 2001)), the teacher perspectives articulated in this study can be situated on a spectrum that ranges from liberal understandings that centre on respect and celebration of diversity to approaches characterised by a very deliberate and active anti-racism. An emphasis on student well-being was a common theme across the range of school ethea, whether Catholic, Quaker, or non-denominational. Nine of the ten

participants were familiar with the term 'intercultural', with half of the participants expressing intercultural perspectives that featured a liberal conceptualisation centred on inclusion and respect for all students.

A critical conceptualisation of intercultural education underpinned by a commitment to adopt an actively anti-racist agenda, was the understanding expressed by the other half of the study participants. The next two sections will address this varied picture of intercultural conceptualisations and classroom pedagogy, before a series of policy, practice, and research recommendations are made.

7.3.1 English Teachers' Conceptualisations of Intercultural Education

Chapter Five presents a critical analysis of how Junior Cycle English teachers conceptualise intercultural education. Personal vision and values, as well as prior experiences, determine the level of criticality characterising individual teacher conceptualisations of the intercultural. Susan and Noeleen, both recently qualified teachers, who by their own admission, do not have first-hand or close experience of racism, for example, emphasised the role of intercultural education in celebrating the cultural and religious diversity that characterises each of their schools. In foregrounding the need for celebration, and what in their view, is the importance of not dwelling on a difficult issue such as racism, both teachers, though hardworking and well-meaning, were overlooking Whiteness in terms of normativity and privilege (Frankenberg, 1993). They admitted to not being pre-occupied with the effect of positionality in the classroom.

Those teachers who demonstrate a critical understanding of racism, and the significance of curricular intercultural representation, by contrast, described pedagogy centred on literature/film analysis with the potential for social transformation, grounded in a commitment to social justice. This group of teachers which includes John, Rosa, and

Laura, constituted half of the study participants in number, and data analysis revealed that individuals with personal or close family experience of racism or the experience of being othered were more likely to be committed to actively anti-racist pedagogy in the classroom.

This indicates that the type of intercultural education that is experienced in the classroom depends on the values, disposition, and/or prior experience of the individual teacher. The implications of this randomness whereby one set of students may be taught in ways conducive to the nurturing of a critical intercultural consciousness, whereas others experience a positive intercultural education (which may feature omissions) will be addressed later in the chapter.

Teachers without that personal intercultural encounter tended to describe positive, celebratory and well-meaning understandings of the intercultural. Analysis of the data revealed significant gaps in some teachers' knowledge, particularly regarding the potentially harmful consequences for students from minority backgrounds who either do not see themselves at all represented in the curriculum or are in classrooms where blind spots cause opportunities to engage crucial issues such as stereotype or racism to be missed, or even deliberately avoided.

While an emphasis on respect was present in the perspectives of almost all the participants, some placed a lot of emphasis on what in their view, is the need to promote celebration of ethnic and cultural diversity. All the teachers who participated in the study demonstrated a real interest in, and commitment to work hard, on behalf of their students. However, it became clear that gaps in conceptual knowledge had the potential to cause harm (albeit inadvertently), through the mis- categorising of racism as an individual aberration rather than a systemic issue.

7.3.2 Pedagogy centred on literature/film exploration and Intercultural Education

The second question posed by the study seeks to understand how pedagogy centred on classroom analysis of literature and film informs intercultural education.

I wished to investigate both the factors influencing teachers' decision-making around the selection of texts, and their pedagogic responses to the novel or film being explored. The issue of text selection provided interesting insights into the intercultural pedagogy of individual teachers, and a wide range of issues informing selection emerged. In the case of some teachers, choice was curtailed by school level departmental decision-making, whereby a text was chosen for an entire year group for practical financial reasons or convenience. Suitability to the interests of potentially diverse cultural identities of student cohorts, was not a consideration in such scenarios.

In other cases, teachers explained that the reassurance of the tried and tested novel or film, given time constraints, and the lack of guidance available on the unfamiliar, determined the material to be explored. Some teachers expressed frustration at having to follow departmental diktat whereby the more vocal, or the 'way things were just done' tended to hamper teacher freedom.

Other teachers expressed reluctance to explore a novel featuring racism, preferring to avoid difficult issues altogether, rather than risk causing offence or getting into trouble. Teacher fear and consequent avoidance of the controversial, was a recurring theme in several transcripts. These teachers were forthright in acknowledging a lack of confidence resulting from what they described as, unpreparedness to confront racism, particularly in the context of an ethnically diverse classroom. However, there were some teachers who articulated an openness to embrace titles for classroom engagement with intercultural

themes with which they are not familiar if there were more accessible and efficient guidance available to them on possible classroom approaches.

What was common across all teacher descriptions of engagement with the intercultural in terms of literary/cinematic engagement, was their foregrounding of the issue of Blackness. Analysis of the data indicated the prevalence of racism as a key issue in teachers' descriptions of their pedagogic experience of the intercultural. As we have seen in terms of intercultural conceptualisations, there were significant dissonances among teachers' pedagogic responses to novels and films featuring intercultural themes and issues, particularly that of racism.

Critical analysis of pedagogy surrounding novels and film revealed a synergy between the type of intercultural conceptualisation expressed by teachers, and the impact of these divergent understandings of the intercultural when it came to engagement with the key issue of racism. Teachers who placed a lot of value on the celebration of diversity (particularly as diversity related to the non-White student) were more likely to avoid a controversial novel such as *Of Mice and Men.* Where some did explore the text with their students, it was clear from their pedagogic description, that discussion of racism in the novel was limited to its historical American Deep South context. These teachers expressed reluctance to expand discussion of the 'N' word in the novel to discussion of contemporary use of the term.

Teacher positionality or more specifically Whiteness was cited by some as an issue influencing their approach to racism in the context of an ethnically and culturally diverse classroom. For some teachers, their ethnicity was a factor informing their reluctance to confront racism by expanding discussion of the issue from its textual context to a wider discussion about contemporary societal racism and language use, particularly the

prevalence of the ‘N’ word in Hip-hop or Black slang. Others had not given any thought to positionality. Some teachers expressed a fear of either causing discomfort to Black or Asian students in their class, or inadvertently causing offence through lack of expertise in racial literacy.

Those teachers, however, whose intercultural understanding as we have already noted, is characterised by a more nuanced and critical orientation, described markedly more competent and sophisticated pedagogy in their classroom exploration of texts engaging issues of stereotype and racism. Analysis of the data revealed that teachers such as Laura and John and Rosa who had either close family or formative early experience of racism, were prepared to confront the uncomfortable by facilitating important classroom talk about racism. These teachers expressed the importance of adopting a values-based approach to pedagogy, emphasising the importance of classroom discussion of representation and stereotype, whereby students were encouraged to interrogate the depiction of certain characters and the taken for granted within the text. These teachers were prompting reflection on broader issues of representation across the curriculum. Such teachers were encouraging in their students the development of critical consciousness whereby they were being supported to engage in interrogation of the stories they were exploring as well as question why other stories might be overlooked.

It became clear that teachers who exhibited a critical conceptualisation of the intercultural were committed to encouraging students to connect the issues which they were encountering during literary/cinematic engagement with the world outside the classroom. These teachers were equipping students with a critical vocabulary conducive to broader interrogation of systemic issues of inclusion and social justice.

It is also important to point out that in the case of all the study participants, the desire to develop in their students, skills of self-expression and to instil in them a love of literature and film was key. In the case of those teachers who demonstrated a critical intercultural orientation to pedagogy, aesthetic pleasure derived from novels and films was not subjugated to the cause of an education in active anti-racism. The research indicates that these are not mutually exclusive.

As was the case with teacher intercultural knowledge, intercultural education as informed by classroom exploration of novels and film can be situated on a spectrum that ranges from the diversity celebration model to the more actively anti-racist.

7.4 Recommendations

In the following sections, I will present recommendations for policy, practice and research based on the divergent intercultural understandings and resulting divergent intercultural pedagogic approaches to literature and film that have been articulated.

7.4.1 Junior Cycle English Policy

Significant variation in teacher conceptual understanding of intercultural education points to an urgent responsibility on the part of all the Irish educational stakeholders jointly at the level of policy as well as practice to establish a clear shared vision for a type of intercultural education that is specific to the Junior Cycle English class. A vision which can orient teachers at the level of curriculum and on the ground is necessary for the Junior Cycle English class to respond meaningfully to the rights of all students, particularly in the contemporary context of cultural and ethnic diversity.

A key objective of the research was to investigate how a Critical Literacy framework (as envisioned by Paulo Freire) and supported by concepts drawn from Critical Race Theory and Post-Colonial theory can inform the future trajectory of intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English. From the outset of the thesis, I have described the critical lens with which I set out to analyse teacher conceptualisations and experiences of the intercultural.

In the current absence, nationally, of a vision for intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English teaching in Ireland, I propose the development of such a vision to be established following a broad-scale consultation. Such a vision is vital and necessary if intercultural education is to be foregrounded in all aspects of curriculum and pedagogy related to Junior Cycle English teaching and more broadly throughout the education system. The framing process, therefore, should involve representation of all the educational stakeholders in Ireland: Dept. of Education, Oide, NCCA, teachers, parents/guardians, and students, as well as teacher educators, mindful of the need to ensure that the voice of minoritised communities be included and heard.

It is my hope that the findings presented in the current study might contribute to such a consultation, providing insights as to the value of a critical orientation to intercultural pedagogy grounded in a commitment to uphold human rights and tackle injustice, particularly the injustice of systemic racism.

A liberal intercultural understanding positions the individual as a person with a positive attitude towards diversity (Kymlicka, 2003), while this view is laudable, a more critical perspective is that advanced by Borhaug and Weyringer (2019) who advocate an intercultural education that features the development of critical and empathic reflection on social justice .The findings of this study prompt consideration of how such a critical

orientation might look like in the context of the Junior Cycle English classroom. It involves moving beyond the mere inclusion of multicultural texts as a 'tick-box' nod to interculturalism, of the type alluded to in the phrase 'saris, samosa, and steel bands' (Race, 2015). For it to be meaningfully transformational, it must embrace a radical overhaul of curriculum and pedagogy that acknowledges structural inequalities affecting minority students.

Hill (2012), Sleeter (2014), and Chaplin (2019) posit that the liberal foregrounding of tolerance discourse is so prevalent as to prevent the embedding of more critical pedagogies. Consequently, in the case of the English class, opportunities to disrupt the frequently invisible whiteness of curriculum and classroom pedagogy are either minimised or avoided. A critically inclined intercultural vision for Junior Cycle English teaching in Ireland would emphasise the need to prioritise issues of equity rather than cultural diversity. It would establish a set of values for the English curriculum that would support rather than dictate to individual teachers on the ground committed to equipping their students with critical skills of empowerment.

Such a vision, if coupled with deepening teacher conceptual knowledge and the provision of supports to guide teachers on their own path of intercultural learning, would have transformative potential. In such a case, all students (and not just those who happen to be taught by a teacher who is through personal, academic, or professional experience already embracing a critical intercultural pedagogy) would be enabled and encouraged to read and assess interrogatively and to feel confident in asking hard questions about point of view and representation in the material with which they engage.

It is not the remit of the current research to develop such a vision for a critical intercultural education that might underpin Junior Cycle English teaching. That should be

the collaborative work of many interested groups to whom I have referred. It is my hope, however, that this study's findings which highlight significant dissonances in teacher perspectives and pedagogy, as well as significant gaps in conceptual critical intercultural knowledge on the part of some participants, flag the necessity for a radical and multi-perspectival examination of the future direction of intercultural education, specifically in the context of English in the first three years of post-primary education in Ireland.

In the next section, I will draw on the study's theoretical framework as well as its empirical findings to suggest how a critical intercultural vision might inform a re-imagined Junior Cycle Framework.

7.4.1.1 An intercultural vision for the Junior Cycle Framework

Published in 2015, *Framework for Junior Cycle*, according to its own foreword:

> …sets out a clear vision of how teaching, learning and assessment practices will evolve in the first three years of post-primary education to ensure a learning experience for our young people that is appropriate to the needs of the 21st century (p.2).

Furthermore, it claims to have been "informed by engagement with the educational partners and by national and international research" (ibid,) Yet the document which runs to 58 pages does not make a single allusion to intercultural education. School based assessment is highlighted as the new element of Junior Cycle education most demanding professional time and resources to ensure its successful implementation. In such a key document that purports to be the blueprint underpinning a new departure in the first three years of second-level education in Ireland, the absence of any reference to the intercultural dimension of contemporary education is striking.

The closest reference to the intercultural is the principle of Inclusive Education, one of eight key principles set out in the framework. The phrase "educational experience is inclusive of all students and contributes to equality of opportunity, participation and outcomes for all" (p.11) while positive is also so vague as to be meaningless in its lack of detail. Of the 24 statements of learning laid out in the framework, statement 6 which alludes to student appreciation and respect for "how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and culture in which she/he lives" (p.12) comes closest to an intercultural theme.

This document which declares itself the blueprint scaffolding Junior Cycle education in Ireland makes no demand on the teacher to promote anti-racism in his/her engagement. Nor does it offer any guidance to the teacher who wishes to pursue an actively anti-racist approach in their pedagogic engagement.

The findings of the current research make it clear that teachers including those who were already demonstrating a commitment to active anti-racism, and particularly those teachers who admitted to feelings of unpreparedness to tackle an issue such as racism, are eager for support and guidance in their intercultural endeavour. Given the lack of reference to the intercultural in the key document framing Junior Cycle education, there is an urgent need both for the creation of a shared intercultural vision to which teachers can subscribe, as well as the development of a set of guiding principles to help teachers develop their own intercultural pedagogy. In the next section, we will consider the implications of the findings for the Junior Cycle English Specification and associated reading lists.

7.4.1.2 An intercultural vision for the Junior Cycle English Specification and associated reading lists

Teachers expressed mixed views when invited to reflect on the capacity of the Junior Cycle Specification and associated reading lists to facilitate intercultural engagement. Those teachers who expressed a critical intercultural orientation to pedagogy tended to problematise the Specification, pointing out the limited scope of the prescribed reading lists to facilitate selection of multicultural texts that represent diverse multicultural experience. Some of these teachers pointed to the current prevalence of depictions of blackness and minority ethnicity/culture in terms of deficit or catastrophe. Analysis of the reading lists also revealed that all too frequently, the titles available that engage intercultural themes are written by White writers when literature in translation or films produced in other languages are available with sub-titles.

The study findings, therefore, indicate the need for a creative re-imagining of the prescribed reading lists from which teachers may make novel and film selections. Research into the availability of diverse fiction and films should be undertaken and guided by a shared intercultural vision, if teachers and their students are to be supported in rich and transformative intercultural engagement. Provision of meaningful choice for teachers, as well as guidance on novel and film material with which they may not be familiar, is essential if they are to be empowered to provide their students with opportunities to engage with literature/film which will both fire imaginations and prompt incisive thinking about the world.

However, the mere inclusion of multi-cultural texts in the curriculum, does not make for a meaningfully transformative intercultural education. In order for the Junior Cycle classroom to become a site of social justice, teachers have to be supported in their embracing of a critically oriented intercultural approach, that takes the form of a career-long journey rather than as a pre-packaged suite of intercultural sound-bites that simply pay lip-service to inclusion and actually cause harm by ignoring blind spots and difficult issues such as the prevalence of structural racism.

In the next section, I will make recommendations about the vital role of initial teacher education in the development of a critical intercultural orientation among pre-service English teachers.

7.4.2 Junior Cycle English Practice

All the teachers in the study demonstrate a commitment to hard work and real interest in the progress of their students. All of them demonstrated a love of teaching and an eagerness to do their best in the classroom. While half of the teachers interviewed, expressed perspectives that align to varying degrees with a critical understanding of intercultural issues, the other half expressed more limited intercultural understanding. While these teachers were enthusiastic and well-meaning in their approach, scholars such as Nieto, 2000; Vavitsas and Nikolau, 2021, and Vavrus, 2002, caution that well-meaning intercultural pedagogy that celebrates diversity, but which fails to disrupt structural inequity in education, negates the transformative potential of education. Some of the teachers in the study lacked a comprehensive understanding of racism (Modica, 2012, Sleeter, 1995, Young, 2011), categorising it as an individual phenomenon (Carignan, Sanders & Pouravood, 2005).

Alternatively, critical scholars argue that the deeply embedded and systemic nature of racism needs to be understood as an institutional problem as a prerequisite for real change (Gareet and Segall 2013; Howard and Navarro, 2016; Young,2011) However well-meaning the pedagogy of teachers in the study who promote celebration of diversity, their classroom engagement with texts prioritises celebration over the championing of equity (Gorski, 2006; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

The main tenets of Freirean Critical Literacy were presented in Chapter Two. At its core, it draws attention to the fact that the text is never neutral. It is an approach to reading and writing that nurtures in students the ability to understand and engage the politics of daily life through its foregrounding of the ways in which a text represents a particular point of view, or points of view. In this sense, it encourages students to interrogate the taken for granted, and promotes reader agency, whereby the student is supported in examining a text and relating it to his or her life and society. Luke (2012) reminds us that it is an approach that fosters the critique of "dominant ideologies, cultures, economies, institutions and political systems" (p.5).

A critical literacy framework cannot be reduced to a particular formula or method. There is no single prescription for doing it. Conversely, it is practiced in myriad ways that respond to the unique context of the individual classroom retaining at its core, a commitment to critique and transformation through disruption of the commonplace and confronting of socio-political issues. For the transformational goals of critical literacy to be realised in the intercultural space, teachers must be attentive to student responses so that over time, classroom exploration of fiction and film can become an emancipatory practice.

As demonstrated in my elucidation of the study's theoretical framework, there is considerable synergy between critical literacy and the goals of a critical intercultural education. It is for these reasons that I propose this framework as a guide informing developments in Junior Cycle English pedagogy in the intercultural context.

In the next section, I will consider the role of initial and in-service education in preparing teachers for this vital work.

7.4.2.1 Intercultural Teacher Education

Whilst again acknowledging the small number of participants in the study, the limited understanding of intercultural education expressed by some teachers who foregrounded celebration of diversity, and the value of the colourful one off 'Intercultural Day', points to the need for anti-racist education to be a core, rather than elective module, in initial teacher education in Ireland. When invited to describe the type of learning with which they had engaged during their post-graduate teacher education, the participants were critical of the lack of intercultural preparation made available to them.

The varied picture of teacher descriptions of pedagogy and the prevalence of teacher unease, and fear in tackling racism, points to the urgency with which initial teacher education must embed principles of critical intercultural education in all aspects of teacher preparation programmes.

I therefore, propose the employment of a Critical Literacy framework supported by concepts drawn from Critical Race Theory and Post-Colonial Theory to educate English teachers in ways appropriate to the promotion of social justice in the intercultural space. Such a framework could inform guidelines conducive to the development of a critical

consciousness among pre-service teachers. I also contend that the development of initial teacher intercultural education must be connected to an overarching and agreed intercultural vision as previously outlined.

Meintjes (1997) argues that White teachers require education that will empower them to employ pedagogies that can develop critical consciousness among students. To transform teacher understanding of White privilege, teachers themselves need to experience transformative education so that conditioning to White racial privilege, bias, and dominance is dismantled (Tansey & Katz, 2015).

A few of the more recently qualified teachers in this study, articulated limited understandings of racism. Anna, for example, described her care when reading *Of Mice and Men* with her class, pointing out that she impresses on them the prevalence of racial discrimination in the U.S. context of the thirties whereby Black people were frequently subjected to the racial slur. In describing the reactions of students generally to classroom reading of the book, Anna described a few odd looks, coupled with silence: “Nothing was really said, and it was accepted that this was just a book….”.

In this case, teacher pedagogy has presented a novella in such a way as to enable student acceptance that racism is simply an aberration associated with a distant historical and geographical context. At best, it points to the missing of an important opportunity for classroom discussion of an issue relevant to all. However, student silence may also indicate a classroom environment not conducive to a more incisive probing of the theme of racism or representation of the Black character or wider discussion of contemporary societal racism.

I cite this example of described classroom pedagogy here because it points to a gap in teacher conceptual knowledge. Among the cohort of teachers who expressed liberal

perspectives, there was also considerable variation among their perspectives on the relationship between positionality and text selection, particularly in the way(s) their Whiteness may inform text selection or classroom approaches to difficult issues which arise during text exploration.

Critical race scholars remind us that the inevitable consequence of the fact that race is applied only to non-Whites, is that White people are not racially seen or named and therefore White people become the unspoken human norm (Ladson-Billings, 2009 and Picower, 2009). This has the insidious and problematic effect of removing from White people the need to confront issues that do not directly impact their lives. This assessment was borne out during this research as some of the teachers admitted to rarely, if ever, giving any thought to their ethnicity or other aspects of identity in the context of their English teaching.

Susan and Noeleen's (undoubtedly well-intentioned) foregrounding of the value of the 'Intercultural Day' as an opportunity to celebrate the Nigerian or Pakistani students in the school over any commitment to engage an anti-racist pedagogy, also points to gaps in their intercultural education to become teachers, indicating a need for examination of initial teacher education programmes in Ireland. Another recurring issue that was identified through data analysis was the fact that even where teachers expressed a willingness to confront racism, they frequently felt constrained by a sense of unpreparedness and a fear of getting it wrong.

As we have seen, however, half of the study participants were prepared to tackle the uncomfortable with Marie, for example, expressing her view that the English classroom is the ideal site in which to host hard talk. Teachers cannot teach what they do not know, and Galman et al. (2010) have found limited knowledge of what racism really is among pre-service teachers.

To ensure that all Junior Cycle English students have opportunities for critical intercultural engagement, a re-imagining of the way teachers can be taught for work in the intercultural Irish society in which we live, is needed. This is essential if we wish to advance an intercultural education that understands issues of race difference in terms of equity and power, rather than simply as matters of ethnic or cultural variety.

7.4.2.2 Continuous Professional Development

For teachers already working in classrooms, the role of continuous professional development is vital. Teachers in the study were calling out for guidance and support both in their selection of novels and films, as well as in English pedagogy appropriate in the intercultural context. Whole school conversations about intercultural issues relevant to the unique context of each school must be encouraged. Time and resources for ongoing education in the intercultural should be allocated if a transformational intercultural education that aligns with the principles of social justice is to be realised.

7.5 Concluding Remarks

Choo (2012) has noted that despite the wealth of research in literary genres or in the nature of the literary test itself, there is insufficient research on classroom approaches to teaching literature in ways that mediate interpretation and reception of the text. My study responds to that appeal and makes a significant contribution to policy and practice in the context of Junior Cycle English teaching of literature and film and the intercultural. It also makes a significant contribution to scholarship in the under-researched area of English teaching in Ireland generally. The thesis has engaged with theoretical and empirical literature in the intercultural space in an original way as no other study has investigated the intercultural dimension of Junior Cycle English teaching in Ireland.

I intend on utilising the findings of the research positively in the context of my own professional practice. The study findings challenge me to acknowledge and confront my own blind spots and interrogate my pedagogy as English teacher to consider the impact of what I do and say and do not say on the student. The insights I have garnered will inform my ongoing decision-making around novel and film selection, as well as classroom analysis of material. The study findings also impress on me the necessity to facilitate student voice daily in the classroom, and the danger of assuming that student silence equates to everything being ok.

The findings indicate several areas for further research. An in-depth analysis of the status of the intercultural within initial teacher education programmes in Ireland is warranted, given the sense of unpreparedness to tackle difficult intercultural issues expressed by some study participants. The small-scale nature of the current study points to the potential of conducting of a much larger project that would engage the perspectives of more teachers and perhaps include the voice of students (past and present), to elicit their views on the intercultural dimension of their classroom experience of English. There is also rich potential in the undertaking of comparative studies that would map the intercultural experience of English teachers in Ireland with those of their counterparts in different international contexts.

Given the dearth of scholarship examining English teaching in Ireland, there is much scope for more work that engages both the perspectives of teachers, students, and parents on the contemporary experience of English in broad terms. A historical review of the evolution of English teaching in Ireland since the foundation of the State would also be a useful contribution to Irish educational scholarship.

I intend to share the study findings with my teacher colleagues with a view to initiating whole school conversations about the ways we can advance a critical intercultural agenda

in our own context. Aside from my role as English teacher, I also have responsibility for policy development in my school and the findings of the study will be very useful in helping to inform the future trajectory of intercultural policy in the school.

It is my hope that the published thesis will be of use to other researchers interested in investigating other facets of intercultural education or English teaching in Ireland more generally.

Above all, it is my hope that the work will inspire critical conversations among educators dedicated to establishing classroom environments characterised by a love of English and simultaneously committed to developing the critical consciousness of students. The study acknowledges Ball's (2016) call to re-imagine the teacher as intellectual rather than technician who delivers outcomes. In this sense, I hope that the thesis speaks to the ethical agency of English teachers in the intercultural space.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Schedule

Establish Rapport

1. Remind the participant that the interview will be recorded and that following transcription of the interview, they will be provided with a copy.
2. Remind the participant that they have read the Plain Language Statement and that they have read and signed the Informed Consent Form.
3. Remind the participant that they may choose to withdraw from the study at any stage and that while no further data will be gathered from them, all previously gathered data will be processed.
4. Explain Purpose of Study: To investigate a specific group of English teachers' understandings and experiences of intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English and to investigate the ways in which teacher selection of and responses to literature and film in the classroom inform intercultural education

Context

5. How long have you been an English teacher?
6. How many cohorts in Junior Cycle English have you taught and in which years?
7. Can you describe the type of school in which you teach?
8. Can you describe in general terms the Junior Cycle English classes you teach/have taught?
9. Do you teach (or have you taught) Junior Cycle English classes that are culturally diverse? Please describe.

Selection of Fiction/Drama/Film/Poetry

10. Which novels, plays and films have you taught in your Junior Cycle English classes?
11. What factors influence your selection of texts?
12. In what ways do the Specification learning outcomes and previous exam questions influence your selection of material and your teaching strategies?
13. Are there texts or films on the prescribed lists that you would not explore with your English class? Please explain.

14. Are there any novels, plays or films that you would like to see included? Please explain.
15. Have you explored a film with subtitles in your class(es)? And how did your students respond?

Teaching Fiction/Drama/Film /Poetry

16. What are the main elements of literary /film analysis that you teach your students as they engage with a poem or a novel or play or film?
17. Can you describe some of the teaching strategies you employ when exploring literature or film in class?

Intercultural Education and English

18. What is your understanding of intercultural education in the context of English teaching?
19. What is your view of its role or status in Junior Cycle English?
20. (does it relate to the ways your students encounter diversity through their engagement with novels, poetry and film? / does it relate to in class intercultural communication/relationships?)
21. What if any pre or in-service training in Intercultural Education have you received?
22. (What is your impression of it?)
23. What difficult issues arise in the English class?
24. Are issues of identity discussed in your English classes? Please explain.
25. What are your views on the issue of representation in class texts/film?
26. How do you deal with the issue of racism or racist language in a class text?
27. What is your view on the relationship between English class and social justice in school?
28. (Do you think that English class has a role to play in the promotion of social justice?)
29. What are your thoughts on the ways in which (if any) the student experience of literature and film in class relates to life outside school?
30. Have you any further comments on the theme of intercultural education and Junior Cycle English teaching?

Thank you for taking the time to share your experience of Junior Cycle English teaching.

Appendix B: Email to Principals

School of Human Development, DCU

Researchers: Ursula Murphy (doctoral student), Associate Professor Jones Irwin (supervisor), Associate Professor Audrey Bryan (supervisor)

Dear , ,

I hope that you and your staff are well and settled back into the school routine in what continue to be challenging circumstances. My name is Ursula Murphy and I am a teacher of English and History in Our Lady's College, Greenhills, Drogheda. At present, I am undertaking a doctorate in education at the Institute of Education, DCU and am in the fourth year of my studies.

I am conducting research about intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English. The title of the study is "***Intercultural Education" and the Junior Cycle English classroom-challenges and possibilities: an analysis of English teachers' perspectives***.

I wish to investigate English teachers' perspectives about the relationship between intercultural education and engagement with literature and film in the Junior Cycle English classroom. The study seeks to elicit English teachers' perspectives on the challenges and possibilities presented by intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English.

I am writing to you in the hope that you will circulate the attached Research Recruitment Advertisement, Plain Language Statement and Informed Consent Form among your English teachers. These documents outline the research and invite interested teachers of Junior Cycle English to contact me by phone or email to express their interest in participating in the study and to seek any clarification they may require.

Interested teachers will be invited to participate in a one-hour interview that will be conducted either in person or via Zoom and on a date and time that is convenient to them.

I am hoping to begin conducting interviews in October and November 2021. The interview questions will be emailed to the participant in advance of the interview.

I am very mindful of the extra pressures and challenges faced by you and your staff at this time and would really appreciate your help in bringing this invitation to the attention of your English teachers.

Please feel free to contact me for any further clarification.

Ursula Murphy: 087 6838728

email: ursula.murphy3@mail.dcu.ie

Many thanks and kind regards,

Ursula Murphy

Appendix C: Protocol for Conducting One-to-One Interviews Online

Research Study: 'Intercultural Education' and the Junior Cycle English classroom-challenges and possibilities: An analysis of English teachers' perspectives

Researcher: Ursula Murphy

1.Purpose of this Document

This is a protocol for the conduct of online interviews to be held as part of the study 'Intercultural Education' and the Junior Cycle English classroom-challenges and possibilities: an analysis of English teachers' perspectives.

The document outlines the process through which the researcher, Ursula Murphy will conduct individual 1-1 online interviews with Junior Cycle English teachers. All participants are over 18 years of age.

2. Pre-Interview

DCU advises the use of Zoom for online interviews. All communications from the researcher with interview participants regarding the interview are to be conducted using DCU's secure institutional platforms ie DCU Zoom (for the interview), DCU email for emails sharing documents regarding the interview and DCU Google Forms (for arrangement of consent to interview).

Use of these DCU-based platforms by the researcher through pre-, during and post-interview stages will be in accordance with DCU's Acceptable Usage Policy, Privacy Policy and Data Protection Policy. While it is not anticipated that a data breach will occur prior to, during or after the interview, any data breach at any stage will be responded to by informing the DCU Data Protection Officer Mr. Martin Ward (data.protection@dcu.ie ph. 01-700118/7008257)

Participation in the study is voluntary and consent for participation in the interview will be formally sought.

Interviews will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for the participants. The interview will be scheduled for no more than one hour. Once a date and time has been agreed with the participant, the researcher will issue a Zoom invitation to interview on DCU's Zoom platform.

Once the interview date has been arranged, and not later than a week before the interview itself, the researcher will email participants this interview protocol, the informed consent form, plain language statement and a schedule of the interview questions.

Participants will indicate their consent through an online consent form based in DCU's secure Google Forms platform.

3. During Interview

The entire meeting (including pre- and post- interview activities will be limited to 75 minutes). The actual interview will be no longer than one hour.

The interview via zoom can be conducted on a desktop, laptop or tablet device, and only if absolutely necessary on a phone device. Both parties must conduct the interview in a private setting with a reasonably low level of background noise (see below regarding interruptions)

The researcher will join the meeting 10 minutes before the interview is scheduled to begin to ensure that all is in order.

Once the participant joins, the researcher will ensure that the participant is aware that:

They must have fully consented to the interview taking place using the online consent form.

Zoom is being used to hold the meeting/interview and the interview will be audio recorded via Zoom.

The completed transcript will be emailed to the participant for approval/further comment/amendment with request that any additions or amendments are provided within two weeks.

While use of microphones is necessary for the conduct of the interview, the researcher and the research participant have the right to turn their camera on or off at any time.

The interview participant may choose to withdraw from the interview before commencing, or during the interview.

The interview participant may choose to pause and recommence the interview, or choose not to answer a certain question, to request clarification, or leave the interview at any time.

The interview participant has certain data protection rights including the right to access personal data relating to them, and the right to object to the processing of personal data relating to them.

The chat/messaging function on Zoom should not be used by either party during the interview itself. Any interview-related documentation should have been shared prior to the interview via email, and any need to share/re-share interview-related documentation during the interview should take place over institutional email.

The researcher will advise the interview participant when audio-recording is about to commence via Zoom.

The researcher will approach the interview questions in a semi-structured manner (i.e. non-chronologically) with additional follow-up and clarifications questions where necessary.

It is unlikely that the interview will cause upset. Where a participant should experience distress, the researcher will immediately stop the recording and ask the participant if they wish to continue or cease the interview. The participant may reschedule the interview or decide not to participate in any further interview. For debriefing purposes, they will be advised to consider contacting relevant supports or advice such as a colleague, school principal or the Department of Education and Skills Employee Assistance Service.

If there are technical or other issues during the meeting which lead to the need to restart the meeting, audio-recording will be paused. The researcher will always advise the interview participant when audio-recording is about to recommence.

If there is an unplanned interruption on the part of the researcher or the interview participant during the course of the interview, the interrupted party should request to pause the interview and audio-recording and recommence once ready. The interrupted party should mute their microphone and turn their camera off as necessary during the period of interruption.

In the unlikely event of a digital interruption or intervention ('hacking' or 'bombing') from a third party, the researcher will immediately cease the interview and report a potential data breach to the DCU Data Protection Officer, Mr. Martin Ward (data.protection@dcu.ie) The researcher will keep the interview participant aware as appropriate of any developments relating to the data breach.

If there are technical or other issues during the meeting which lead to a significant loss of interview time (ie 20 minutes or more), the researcher may suggest that the interview be conducted at another time. Any rescheduling is entirely voluntary on the part of the interview participant.

The researcher will stop audio recording once the interview is concluded or 70 minutes of the scheduled 75 minutes have passed whichever comes first. The researcher will advise the interview participant when the audio recording via Zoom has ceased.

4. Post-Interview

To debrief after the interview, the researcher will ask the interview participant if they are happy with the conduct and content of the interview and if they are generally happy with what they have shared. If they are unhappy with any element of the interview:

They will be reminded that they can withdraw from the study at any stage but that once data has been anonymised it may still be processed. Personal data cannot be used from the point at which a participant chooses to withdraw from the study.

If the participant indicates feelings of distress on completion of the interview, they will be directed to the relevant support service.

The researcher will advise the interview participant that:

The audio recording of the interview will be used to transcribe the interview.

The full, anonymised transcript of the audio will be shared only with the researcher and her supervisors Dr. Jones Irwin and Dr. Audrey Bryan.

Participants are welcome to make any additional comments or amendments via email, which will be included at the end of the transcript of the audio recording.

The full transcript will be sent to the participant to allow them to make minor amendments. Participants will have a further two weeks to make such amendments.

Once the interview transcript has been agreed by the participant, the transcript will be held on DCU Google Drive for a period of 5 years before deletion.

Appendix D: Plain Language Statement

Plain Language Statement for Teacher Participants

School of Human Development, DCU

Plain Language Statement for Teacher Participants

Researchers: Ursula Murphy (Student), Associate Professor Jones Irwin (Supervisor), Associate Professor Audrey Bryan (Supervisor)

About the researcher

My name is Ursula Murphy. I am currently undertaking doctoral research in education under the joint supervision of Associate Professor Jones Irwin (School of Human Development) and Associate Professor Audrey Bryan (School of Human Development), DCU. I am a secondary teacher of English and History in Our Lady's College, Greenhills, Drogheda.

What is the research about? Why is it being conducted?

The title of my research is "*Intercultural Education" and the Junior Cycle English classroom-challenges and possibilities: an analysis of teachers' perspectives.*

The research aims to examine English teachers' understandings and experiences of 'intercultural education' in the context of Junior Cycle English. The study seeks to explore English teachers' perspectives on the ways in which engagement with literature (novels, drama, poetry, short stories) and film relates to intercultural education. The

research will also investigate teachers' views about the challenges and possibilities presented by intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English.

Through qualitative interviews, the research aims to capture English teachers' lived experience of 'intercultural education' as they facilitate literary and cinematic engagement among their students.

What does participation in this study involve?

You will be required to take part in one semi-structured interview, approximately one hour in duration. The researcher will adhere to all public health advice pertaining to Covid-19 and so the interview will take place either in person or via Zoom on a date and time most convenient to you. Interviews will be held in October and November 2021. The schedule of interview questions and an online interview protocol will be provided to you one week before the interview is due to take place. When your interview has been transcribed, a copy of the transcript will be sent to you to ensure that all of your interview responses have been recorded accurately (a process known as member-checking).

What are the benefits and risks involved in taking part?

The overall aim of the research is to examine English teachers' perspectives about the relationship between intercultural education and engagement with literature and film in the Junior Cycle English classroom.

The study will provide a forum to teachers to describe their lived experience of 'intercultural education' in the context of Junior Cycle English and it is anticipated that the study findings will contribute to the conversation about English teaching and 'intercultural education' form a policy and practice perspective in the Irish context).

We have determined that the risk associated with participation in the research study is relatively low. Examination of 'intercultural education' does however necessitate investigation of sensitive issues of race and racism which you may find difficult. Prior to the interview, you will have had an opportunity to reflect on the questions which will be asked. It is not anticipated that you will become upset in the course of the interview but should this occur, recording of the interview will cease and you will be afforded a break and where you are happy to proceed, the interview will recommence.

On completion of the interview, a short debriefing session will be held at which time the researcher will 'check-in' with you to ensure that you are happy with how the interview has been conducted. Contact details of supports available will be provided to you where any distress should arise. All participants will be provided with a copy of their transcribed interview via email. The investment of an hour of your time is all that is required and your informed consent to participate will be sought.

How will privacy be protected?

Your personal data will be kept confidential and all of your transcribed data will be anonymised. It is important to note that there are limits to confidentiality pertaining to participation in the study. While every effort will be made to protect your identity, it is not possible to fully guarantee complete anonymity. To protect your privacy in the reporting of the findings, your name will be replaced with a pseudonym and all of your data will be anonymised, for example, the school (s) in which you teach or have taught will not be named.

Data Protection/Privacy Notice (Personal Data-GDPR Compliance)

Data will be protected within the legal limitations of data confidentiality. Confidentiality of information can only be protected within the limitations of the law as it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting.

Data will be available only to the researcher (Ursula Murphy) and her supervisors (Assoc. Prof. Jones Irwin and Assoc. Prof. Audrey Bryan). Copies of anonymised data will be saved in a password protected folder on the researcher's DCU Google Drive, which will be accessed by her on a password protected laptop in a secure office in the researcher's home. Personal data such as names will not be linked with these data. All records and data will be disposed of appropriately after a period of five years, in accordance with DCU Data Protection Policies. Data collected from the study will be included in a doctoral thesis and may feature at conferences or in academic journals. The storage of the data will be in accordance with best practice guidance on GDPR.

For the purpose of this project, DCU is the data controller and I, Ursula Murphy am the data processor. To access your personal data or if you have questions in relation to data protection please contact the DCU Data Protection Officer- Mr. Martin Ward

(data.protection@dcu.ie Ph.: 01-700118/7008257). If at any point you feel that there has been a breach of your general data protection rights, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the Irish Data Protection Commission.

Voluntary Participation in the Study

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, you reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence or penalty. Your participation in the project will end at the point at which you withdraw. No future data will be collected from you from the point of departure but previously collected and anonymised interview data will still be processed. If you wish to withdraw your consent, please contact the primary researcher, Ursula Murphy (ursula.murphy3@mail.dcu.ie Ph. 087 6838728).

Further information

Thank you for taking the time to consider this information. The researchers and the DCU research ethics committee may be contacting using the details below:

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If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact: The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel. 01-7008000 Email rec@dcu.ie

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form for Teacher Participants

School of Human Development, Dublin City University

Informed Consent Form for Teacher Participants

Research Study Title: "*Intercultural Education" and the Junior Cycle English classroom-challenges and possibilities: an analysis of English teachers' perspectives*

Researchers: Ursula Murphy (Doctoral Student) Associate Professor Jones Irwin (Supervisor) and Associate Professor Audrey Bryan (Supervisor)

Guidelines for Participation

This research is being undertaken to investigate English teachers' understandings and experiences of intercultural education in the context of Junior Cycle English. The study will examine English teachers' perspectives on the ways in which literary and cinematic engagement relates to intercultural education in the context of the Junior Cycle English classroom.

You will be required to participate in one semi-structured interview of approximately one-hour duration at a time and date that is convenient for you either in person or via Zoom and all Covid 19 protocols will be observed. I am hoping to conduct interviews in October and November 2021. When your interview has been transcribed, a copy of the transcript will be sent to you to ensure that all of your interview responses have been recorded correctly by the researcher (this process is known as member-checking).

Data Protection

I am aware that the data controller for this study is Dublin City University (DCU) and the data processor is the EdD student researcher, Ursula Murphy. I am aware that the data will be available only to the researcher (Ursula Murphy) and her supervisors (Assoc. Prof. Jones Irwin and Assoc. Prof. Audrey Bryan).

I know that copies of the data will be saved in a password protected folder in the researcher's DCU Google Drive and will be accessed by her on a password-protected laptop in a secure office in her home. Personal data (such as names) will not be linked with these data.

I have been informed that all records and data will be disposed of appropriately after a period of 5 years. I know that data collected in the course of this study will be included in a doctoral thesis and may feature in the future in academic journals or at conference proceedings.

Confirmation that involvement in the research study is voluntary

I am aware that if I agree to take part in this study that I can withdraw from participation at any stage. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the research study have been completed. I understand that should I choose to withdraw from the study, my participation will end at the point of departure and no further data will be gathered from me. I am aware that all data gathered previously and anonymised will be processed. All data gathered before the point of departure will be disposed of appropriately by the researcher Ursula Murphy after a period of five years.

Confidentiality

I know that anonymity cannot be guaranteed, although the researcher will make every effort to ensure that my identity is protected. I am aware that in the reporting of findings, all names will be replaced with pseudonyms (fictitious names) and that the name of the school(s) in which I teach or have taught will be omitted. I know that confidentiality of information can only be protected within the limits of the law-i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, a freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions.

Please indicate your responses to the following statements by circling either Yes or No

I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me).
Yes/No

I understand the information provided.
Yes/No

I understand the information in relation to data protection.
Yes/No

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study.
Yes/No

I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions.
Yes/No

I am aware that my interview will be recorded on Zoom.
Yes/No

I am aware that the findings of the study will be published

in the researcher's doctoral thesis and that the findings may also be

disseminated in academic journals and at conference proceedings.
Yes/No

Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.

Participant's Signature: _____

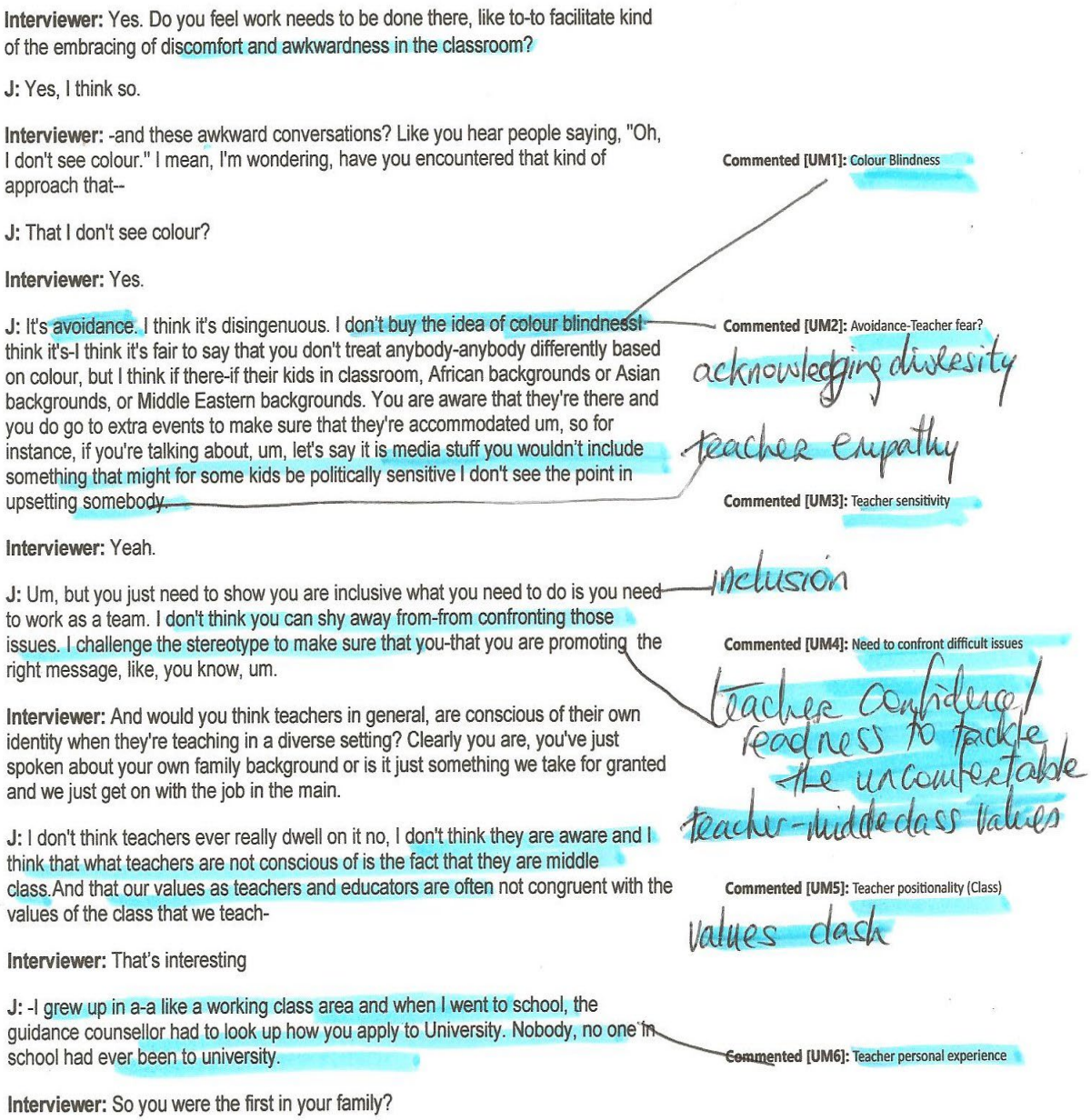
Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: Sample of Initial Coding of Transcript

(phase 2)



Interviewer: Yes. Do you feel work needs to be done there, like to-to facilitate kind of the embracing of discomfort and awkwardness in the classroom?

J: Yes, I think so.

Interviewer: -and these awkward conversations? Like you hear people saying, "Oh, I don't see colour." I mean, I'm wondering, have you encountered that kind of approach that--

J: That I don't see colour?

Interviewer: Yes.

J: It's avoidance. I think it's disingenuous. I don't buy the idea of colour blindness I think it's-I think it's fair to say that you don't treat anybody-anybody differently based on colour, but I think if there-if their kids in classroom, African backgrounds or Asian backgrounds, or Middle Eastern backgrounds. You are aware that they're there and you do go to extra events to make sure that they're accommodated um, so for instance, if you're talking about, um, let's say it is media stuff you wouldn't include something that might for some kids be politically sensitive I don't see the point in upsetting somebody.

Interviewer: Yeah.

J: Um, but you just need to show you are inclusive what you need to do is you need to work as a team. I don't think you can shy away from-from confronting those issues. I challenge the stereotype to make sure that you-that you are promoting the right message, like, you know, um.

Interviewer: And would you think teachers in general, are conscious of their own identity when they're teaching in a diverse setting? Clearly you are, you've just spoken about your own family background or is it just something we take for granted and we just get on with the job in the main.

J: I don't think teachers ever really dwell on it no, I don't think they are aware and I think that what teachers are not conscious of is the fact that they are middle class.And that our values as teachers and educators are often not congruent with the values of the class that we teach-

Interviewer: That's interesting

J: -I grew up in a-a like a working class area and when I went to school, the guidance counsellor had to look up how you apply to University. Nobody, no one in school had ever been to university.

Interviewer: So you were the first in your family?

J: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

J: Yeah. You make assumptions as well that our way is right. Um, you've got kids from backgrounds where there's not even a newspaper in the house, and you're also dealing with kids who are like-- I'm dealing with a kid whose dad is an editor for a very well known publisher. So you've got this huge disparity between like the very disadvantaged in the class and those with-with extreme advantage.

J: The important work that the teacher does is to create an atmosphere, I think it is vital to establish trust when you start the trust, kids from disadvantaged and non-Irish cultural backgrounds begin to understand where you're going and that you're going bring them with you and that they're not going to be left behind. We make very conscious decisions about texts on the basis of who we're teaching and obviously, you want them to do well in exams but you want to come out being, you know, decent human beings. So anything you do in class feeds into that main mission and I think that as English teachers, there's a unique responsibility and a unique privilege as well.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

J: I'm very conscious that's it not like maths or a science subject where two plus two is always four. You know, you-you are what you want to think about-think about it or not. In your attitude, in the text you're selecting and how you approach those texts, you are communicating, um, messages about ways of being in the world and what's valued and how you treat the fellow person.

Interviewer: I definitely agree with what you've said. Can you think of a specific time where you-you confronted a difficult issue in one of those texts? Where, you know, racism had to be confronted? Can you think of a time when that was difficult to handle in a class?

J: There was, yeah. Um, there was actually a weird one. Um, it actually wasn't among those texts you'd expect It was the word in the text. It was a word in *Macbeth*, 'niggardly' There was two Black kids in the class and the class literally turned around and looked at the two lads. I presume waiting for a reaction from them. Now it wasn't sneering, they weren't like jeering at the two lads. It was like, "Jesus Christ, like what's he gonna--? How is the teacher gonna react to that?"

J: And I was like, "Wait," I stopped it. And I went on to explain the meaning of the word but it also opened a conversation about language in the class.- You cannot just gloss over issues that arise You can't just ignore the fact that this is an issue.You have to highlight it and I find that if you deal with it with a little bit of humour, it gets

Commented [UM7]: Teacher assumptions.. values

differences in social class

Commented [UM8]: Social class

classroom atmosphere

Commented [UM9]: Importance of creating trust in the classroom

teacher decision making re. texts

ways of being in the world

Commented [UM10]: Text selection and the values being communicated

confronting the unexpected in the classroom

Commented [UM11]: Classroom language

language use

confronting the difficult issue in the classroom

role of teacher

everybody on side. It gets everybody a bit more relaxed, you know Otherwise it stops them from mentioning it, and it makes it seem like this is some sort of taboo um, it's something you don't talk about when it is something you should talk about.

Interviewer: And in terms of the boys that you teach, I'm sure they-- A lot of them listen to hip-hop and talking since you brought up N-word. I'm wondering, is there a difference in opinion as to how acceptable the word is? Say among the Black lads or among the White lads?

J There is Yeah. I think that's it, there is appropriation there and I've never heard any of the-the lads of African descent here use that word ever. Even among themselves.Yeah, never. Um, so I would-- I treat that kind of like cultural reappropriation.

Interviewer And lastly John to what extent do you feel equipped to take on the difficult issues in the English classroom?

J: Well I think that I have learned a lot on the job. More recently qualified teachers are much more averse to dealing with difficult issues and I have discussed this issue with colleagues

Interviewer: Okay I have to ask you why do you think that is?

J: It's two things actually. It's, they're afraid of offending and people involved and they're actually afraid of getting in trouble themselves.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

J: I think they feel that if you challenge like anybody in any way like reading a racist term in the course of class reading but if it's in a text and it's brought up and somebody takes offence and complains they fear they might get into trouble at the end of it.

Interviewer: And especially when you're in that kind of precarious position of not being permanent and-

J: Yeah.

Interviewer: -yeah. That's interesting.

J: they're frightened of dealing with certain issues in case offence is caused and then they're afraid of the consequences if they do deal with a difficult issue

Interviewer: Okay.

J: In my experience some of them have ridiculous expectations in that they're still not aware of the middle-class position that they're coming from. So they might be acutely aware of African culture or say, uh, gay culture. They're acutely aware of that but they will shy away from it it's a form of racism a kind of denial of the issue and so that feeds into structural racism

classroom atmosphere conducive to 'opening up'

Commented [UM12]: Teacher openness to conversation about language .. N Word

attitudes to the 'N' word.

confidence of experienced teacher v fear of inexperienced

Commented [UM13]: Teacher preparedness to deal with difficult issues

Commented [UM14]: Teacher fear of causing offence or getting into trouble

teacher fear of causing offence/getting into trouble

fear of the challenging issue

Commented [UM15]: Avoidance of issue of racism in the classroom as form of structural racism

Appendix G: Initial Codes Generated in Phase 2 Data Analysis and Frequency with which they are referenced

Codes	Frequency
Celebrating diversity in multicultural context	9
Intercultural education as acceptance not assimilation	4
Promoting tolerance	2
Intercultural Week/Black History Month	7
Ignorance and structural racism in school	2
Intercultural education as conversation	2
Moving beyond intercultural education as 'lip service'	3
Language use and false assumptions re. understanding	1
Moving beyond 'dead white guys' on the curriculum	1
Challenge to maintain relational aspect of education in school	2
Empowering female voice	2
Empowering multicultural voice	5
Addressing racism in texts	10
Need to re-evaluate the Junior Cycle English prescribed reading lists	3
Values-based nature of English classroom	3
Power of storytelling	5
Connecting story to lived experience outside classroom	3

Codes	Frequency
Limiting effect of teacher familiarity with certain texts/reluctance to embrace the 'new'	**4**
Resisting colour-blindness	**4**
Representation of ethnic/cultural diversity	**5**
Anti-Islamic prejudice	**1**
Drawing on student experience/promoting student voice	**6**
Freedom in Junior Cycle associated with CBA 1	**7**
Resistance associated with semi-homogenous classroom	**3**
Rampton Report (education system influenced by 'dominant' culture	**1**
Providing tools to confront racism	**3**
Of Mice and Men	**9**
To Kill a Mockingbird	**3**
Freedom to choose texts	**10**
Teacher competency/confidence	**5**
Teacher discomfort around racism in texts	**8**
Openness to embracing discomfort	**5**
Fear of causing student embarrassment	**2**
Eastern European student experience sidelined	**2**
Lack of teacher diversity in Irish context	**3**
Dialogical nature of Junior Cycle engagement	**3**
Teacher agency	**2**

Codes	Frequency
Experience teaching Traveller students	**3**
Acknowledgement of teacher positionality	**8**
Different approaches to 'N' word arising in classroom text/ language debate	**3**
Confronting stereotype in texts	**4**
Problematising stereotypical depictions of Blackness in texts	**3**
Historical/contemporary racism	**9**
Reading critically	**4**
Departmental v Individual teacher choice re. text selection	**7**
Setting ground rules in the classroom before exploring the controversial text	**3**
Challenge to provide a multi-perspectival approach in the classroom	**2**
Exploring texts that deal with sensitive issues experienced personally by students (homelessness, gender issues, war, racism)	**4**
Challenge to building relationships in trust in the classroom	**3**
Teacher personal experience	**5**
Teacher lack of preparedness (inadequate initial teacher education/CPD)	**9**
Categorising the minority student as deficient in English	**2**
Inclusion of multicultural literature	**4**
Lack of funding to buy new books	**1**
Opportunities for/Barriers to intercultural education in Junior Cycle English classroom	**8**
Student discomfort around discussions of race/racism	**6**

Codes	Frequency
Greater student confidence in oral (classroom talk) rather than written work on issue of racism	**3**
Need for teacher support and guidance re. text selection	**6**
Need for school-based support for teachers new to an ethnically/culturally diverse school	**2**
Communication difficulties with parents	**2**
Council of Europe intercultural competencies	**1**
Lundy Model of Child Participation	**1**
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	**1**
Absence of term 'intercultural education' from any Junior Cycle document	**1**
Wadjda (Haifaa al-Mansour) enjoyed particularly by female Muslim students	**1**
Scope of poetry to facilitate inclusion of diverse voices Maya Angelou /Amanda Gorman	**3**
Film as 'empathy machine'	**1**
Skills focus of summative Junior Cycle English exam (close reading and analysis)	**6**
Teacher freedom to include short stories	**2**
Time pressure leading to selection of the 'short' novel	**3**