"I think it's quite an insulting question, 'what's it like to be white?'... It's not a question that needs to be asked": An exploration of how white trainee counsellors in South Wales understand 'race', racism, and whiteness.

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DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed …. Ruth Smith.... (candidate)

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STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s). Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references.   A bibliography is appended.

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STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for deposit in the University's digital repository**.**

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CONTENT WARNING:

This thesis includes sentiments and language that some readers may find upsetting and/or offensive. Self-care is advised when reading this thesis.

ABSTRACT

This research sought to understand how white trainee counsellors in South Wales understand 'race', racism and whiteness. Research that considers understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness in a counselling context in South Wales has not been found elsewhere and addresses a gap in knowledge. The literature review found that white people were unaware of having a 'race' and that 'race' is an overlooked aspect of counselling pedagogy and practice. The research was undertaken in a Welsh Further Education college with 16 first-year, white trainee counsellors. Using a post-critical ethnographic approach, this research used the method of participant-observation which included document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Post-critical ethnography requires researcher reflexivity, therefore critical personal reflections are woven throughout the thesis. The theoretical position was further underpinned by using critical whiteness studies as the primary theoretical lens to contextualise the research findings into wider academic discourse about 'race', racism and whiteness. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the findings and four themes were identified: (Mis)Understanding 'Race' and Racism; White (Un)Awareness; Barriers to Racial Discourse and Socio-political (Dis)Connection. The empirical findings of this research has allowed two original theoretical contributions to knowledge to be made. The first contribution, 'White Ignorance Disruption', builds on the concept of 'White Ignorance' (the wilful not knowing about 'race') and is used to describe the unformed moments between white ignorance and cognitive and emotional responses. 'White Ignorance Disruption' has been conceptualised as a theoretical bridge which can connect white ignorance to other theories of whiteness. The second contribution is the concept of the 'Good White Counsellor' which is used to describe a white counsellor who

understands themselves as a 'good' person and misguidedly uses colour-blind ideology to demonstrate their 'goodness' and express their belief in equality. This research recommends the explicit incorporation of 'race', racism and whiteness into counselling curricula and policy to overcome the systemic colour-blind racism identified in this research.

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COLOUR BLIND BY LEMN SISSAY

If you can see the sepia in the sun,
Shades of grey in fading streets,
The radiating bloodshot in a child's eye,
The dark stains in her linen sheets.

If you can see oil separate on water,
The turquoise of leaves on trees,
The reddened flush of your lover's cheeks,
The violet peace of calmed seas.

If you can see the bluest eye,
The purple in petals of the rose,
The blue anger, the venom, of the volcano,
The creeping orange of the lava flows.

If you can see the red dust of the famished road,
The white airtight strike of Nike's sign.
If you can see the skin tone of a Lucien Freud,
The colours of his frozen subjects in mime.

If you can see the white mist of the oasis,
The red, white and blue that you defended.
If you can see it all through the blackest pupil,
The colours stretching, the rainbow suspended.

If you can see the breached blue of the evening,
And the caramel curls in the swirls of your tea,
Why do you say you are colour blind
When you see me?
(Sissay, 2017, p. 108)

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> 'Race is fiction we must never accept. Race is a fact we must never forget'
> (Jensen, 2005, p. 14).

This statement guides this research as it is acknowledged that 'race' is a social

construct, a 'made-up' category with no biological basis (see Chapter 2, Sections 2.1.1

and 2.1.2). It is fiction. Nonetheless, the category of 'race' has historical and

contemporary consequences through ongoing racial inequality (see Chapter 2,

Sections 2.1.6 and 2.1.7). It is a fact. In recognition of the fact/fiction dichotomy of

'race', inverted commas are used throughout this thesis when discussing 'race', to

acknowledge its social construction but not to diminish its consequences.

The purpose of this doctoral research is to explore how white trainee counsellors in

South Wales understand 'race', racism and whiteness. The following research

questions will be explored:

- How do white counselling trainees understand 'race'?
- Do they understand 'race' to be a social construct?
- How do they understand racism?
- Do they perceive whiteness as a racialised identity?
- How do they feel discussing 'race' and racism?

To date, these questions have not been explored through empirical research in this

context, meaning that this research provides an original contribution to knowledge.

How these questions were identified is presented in Section 1.2 and Chapter 2.

The methodological approach taken in this research is post-critical ethnography (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders, 2019). A post-critical ethnography advocates that the researcher critique and incorporate their own positionality into the research. An overview of the theoretical and personal positionality is presented in this chapter (Section 1.5) and the methodology will be discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.5). It is important to note that the subject of this doctoral research is Social Justice; therefore, this research is not concerned with the intricacies of counselling practice. Rather, counselling provided the context to understand the social justice issue of 'race', racism and whiteness.

Relevant to post-critical ethnography's exhortation for critical consideration of the researcher's positionality, it is appropriate to acknowledge the personal motivation for undertaking this research.

1.1 Personal Background to this Research

The origins of this research project can be traced back to 2015, when as a trainee counsellor, I undertook a placement at a Welsh charity counselling refugees and asylum seekers. As a white woman in her late 20s, I had spent my life in predominantly white spaces: I grew up in a white English town, my friends, family and teachers were white, I moved to a white village in Wales and on my counselling course, my tutors and fellow trainees were all white. However, when as a trainee counsellor I began working with refugees and asylum seekers, it became clear how Eurocentric my life had been and how ignorant I had been to the reality of 'race'. I was

employed by the charity in 2016, during the Brexit referendum (Farrell and Goldsmith, 2017) and Donald Trump's election as the president of the United States (Smith and Hanley, 2018). Both Brexit and Donald Trump's election have been accused of using a nationalistic and populistic political rhetoric in their respective campaigns (Gusterson, 2017). The result of this nationalistic rhetoric was something that my clients brought to the counselling sessions as they were the recipients of increased racial hostility. I began to wonder what my whiteness was representing to my clients, how the racial difference impacted the therapeutic relationship and how the politics of the day were present in the therapy room. I took these questions to my MA in Counselling and Psychotherapy Practice, where my dissertation looked at three therapists' experiences of multicultural counselling practice. The two black participants detailed the racial discrimination they had experienced in their training and practice (Smith, 2018). In contrast, I had not needed to consider what my 'race' meant during my training and when working cross-racially, the development of my white racial identity was a personal choice, not a statutory one. When I tried to engage white counsellors with conversations about 'race', I was met with silence and resistance. Therefore, this PhD research was an effort to break that silence and explore that resistance. By 2018, I experienced vicarious traumatisation, which is the negative psychological effect of working with highly traumatised people (McCann and Pearlman, 1990; Smith, 2021, see Appendix vi). An initial temporary break from counselling has become a decision to stop counselling practice indefinitely (Smith, 2020). Consequently, I came to the PhD feeling emotionally exhausted but intellectually energised by my personal experiences. These experiences, coupled with a commitment to racial equality, has been the motivation behind this research.

In 2020, this motivation seemed more imperative with global Black Lives Matter

protests (Reuters, 2020; Chapter 6, Section 6.1) in response to the murder of African-

American George Floyd in May 2020 by white police officers in the United States (Hill

et al, 2020). A few months later, with protests still ongoing, President Donald Trump

refused to condemn white supremacists in the United States presidential election

debates (Gabbatt, 2020). In addition, as the global pandemic of Covid-19 took hold, it

was found that in England that the mortality rates were higher for people of colour in

comparison to white people (Public Health England, 2020). The reason for this was

cited as 'historic racism and poorer experiences of healthcare or at work' (Public

Health England, 2020, p. 5). A similar report commissioned by the Welsh Government

found that people of colour in Wales were more likely to catch and die from Covid-19,

due to 'socio-economic and environmental factors' and racial inequality (Welsh

Government, 2020a, p. 2). The report stated that 'the coronavirus pandemic is, in

some respects, revealing the consequences of such inaction on race equality' in Wales

(Welsh Government, 2020a, p. 2). This impact coupled with the anticipated effect on

mental health due to the strains of living through and losing people to a pandemic

(Javed *et al*, 2020) meant that this research became more relevant, as potentially

white counsellors could be offering counselling to bereaved people of colour who are

more impacted by Covid-19 mortality rates (Public Health England, 2020; Welsh

Government, 2020a). Despite the recognition that racial inequality was a factor in the

high Covid-19 mortality rates in people of colour, a UK government commissioned

report into 'race' in the UK recently claimed that that 'geography, family influence,

socio-economic background, culture and religion have more significant impact on life

chances than the existence of racism' (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities,

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2021a, p. 8). The report's claims were met with criticism (The Runnymede Trust, 2021a; The BMJ, 2021; Lentin, 2021; United Nations, 2021). The report is discussed further in Chapter 2 (Section 2.1.7). Similarly, a government minister has claimed that the teaching of critical race theory and white privilege as a fact is considered by the government as 'illegal' (Murray, 2020). Thus, this research which focused on 'race' racism and whiteness comes at a time when arguably there is a governmental disengagement with 'race'. However, as the data collection took place prior to the death of George Floyd, the global Black Lives Matter protests, the Covid-19 pandemic and the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report (2021a) the participants' response to these issues was not elicited. Nonetheless, it presented a powerful contemporary context to the research.

1.2 The Gap in Knowledge

A gap in knowledge resides in how white trainee counsellors understand 'race', racism and whiteness. Addressing this question and then contextualising these understandings within a wider historical and socio-political narrative of 'race', racism and whiteness has not been explored to date. Similarly, using critical whiteness studies (Delgado and Stefancic, 1997; Hartmann Gerteis and Croll, 2009; Applebaum, 2016a) as the theoretical lens in research in a counselling context in Wales, was not evident in the research literature. The original contribution to knowledge this research provides is outlined in Section 1.4.

The last time concurrent data was available regarding the racial demographics of both England and Wales and the membership the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) was in 2011. In that year, the census showed that the

population of England and Wales was 87 per cent white, with Wales being the least

ethnically diverse area (Office for National Statistics, 2012). This was reflected in the

membership of the BACP which in the same year was 84 per cent white (Lago, 2011, p.

179). I emailed the BACP for demographic statistics regarding the racial identity of

their membership and was told that information was not available due to a 'new

system' and 'it is not a priority' (Townsend, 2019). However, I requested the data

again in 2020 and was sent the unpublished survey results the ethnic background of

BACP members (Boyle, 2020; Table 1). The survey was sent to 52386 members of

BACP and 6579 responded (Boyle, 2020). Therefore, it is not possible to say that this is

representative of whole membership of the BACP, but it does correlate with the

membership data of 2011 (Lago, 2011, p. 179):

Table 1 Unpublished Survey of Ethnic Background of BACP members June-July 2020

(Figures given as %)	ONS data – 2011 census data, UK.	BACP member survey 2020 (n=6579)
White	87.1	85.6
Gypsy/Traveller/Irish Traveller	0.1	Not collected
Mixed/multiple Ethnic Groups	2.0	2.5
Asian/Asian British: Indian	2.3	(Asked as 'Asian/Asian British') 2.1
Asian/ Asian British: Pakistani	1.9	
Asian/ Asian British: Bangladeshi	0.7	
Asian/ Asian British: Chinese	0.7	
Asian/Asian British: Other Asian	1.4	
Black/ African/Caribbean / Black British	3.0	3.1
Other Ethnic group	0.9	1.9
Prefer not to say	n/a	4.7

(*Taken from*, Boyle, 2020)

The statistics outlined in Table 1 show that counselling is a white dominated

profession. This is significant as research in the UK has found black people have an

'overwhelmingly negative experience of mental health services' (The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2002, p. 6). Likewise, the Mental Health Foundation (2018) found black and ethnic minority groups in the UK are more likely to be diagnosed with mental health problems and experience poor outcomes from treatment, the consequence of which is a disengagement from mainstream mental health services. Supporting this, the argument has been made that people of colour face healthcare inequalities in the UK, including mental health services, but the responsibility tends to be placed on 'cultural considerations' rather than the service provider or systemic factors (Chouhan and Nazroo, 2020, p. 89).

Although counselling differentiates itself from the medicalised models found in mental health services and does not diagnose mental health conditions (see Chapter 2), it has been argued that the Eurocentric nature of counselling, or its Western-European centred concepts (Dupont-Joshua, 2003), means that what may be considered 'normal' behaviour in one country can be considered abnormal in the UK (Hall, 2011). Similarly, it has been suggested that counselling puts forward the majority cultural values, leading to 'culturally encapsulated' practitioners (Alladin, 2006, p. 175). This argument has been furthered by Watters (2011) who argues that Western ideas of mental well-being neglect cultural differences and homogenise mental health. Chapter 2 explores mental health, counselling and 'race' in greater depth.

Given the predominately white demographic of England and Wales, counselling being a white dominated profession and the negative experiences of mental health services that people of colour experience, the argument that training institutes are failing to

prepare white trainee therapists to work multi-culturally (Jackson, 2018) makes sense. One reason for this could be that there is no national standardisation relating to the teaching of 'race' and culture in counselling (d'Ardenne, 2013) and whiteness as racial identity is an overlooked aspect of counselling training (Ryde, 2011). In the BACP's course accreditation guidelines (BACP, 2012; BACP 2019) and ethical framework (BACP, 2018a), the words 'race', 'racism' and 'whiteness' are omitted altogether. Likewise, related terms such as 'multiculturalism' and 'cultural difference' are not included in the ethical framework (BACP, 2018a). 'Culture' is mentioned in regard to the BACP's ethical commitment to 'facilitating a sense of self that is meaningful to the person(s) concerned within their personal and cultural context' (BACP, 2018a, p. 8) and 'appreciating the variety of human experience and culture' (BACP, 2018a, p. 8). 'Diversity' is referred to in relation to respecting clients through the 'endeavour to demonstrate equality, value diversity and ensure inclusion for all clients' (BACP, 2018a, p. 15) and as an organisation to 'take the law concerning equality, diversity and inclusion into careful consideration and strive for a higher standard than the legal minimum' (BACP, 2018a, p. 15). However, it could be argued that these policy statements are ambiguous and open to interpretation. This is reflected in the findings of this research, whereby the counselling curriculum, written in accordance with the BACP's ethical framework, was similarly ambiguous in relation to addressing diversity and discrimination (Theme 4, Chapter 5, Section 5.5 and Chapter 6, Section 6.6). The potential consequences of the omission of 'race', 'racism' and 'whiteness' are discussed in Chapters 2, 6 and 7.

This omission and ambiguity may help to explain the normalisation of whiteness in counselling training (Rotham, Malott and Paone, 2012) and white counsellors averseness to discussing racial identity with black clients (Barnes, Williams and Barnes, 2014). Indeed, it has been suggested that the counselling profession is guilty of white privilege and supremacy (Turner, 2018a; Turner, 2018b). The need to challenge the white-centric nature of counselling training and practice has been called for by practitioners (of which I was a contributor), who recognise the need for white counsellors self-exploration, collective activism and a challenge to the power of whiteness in the counselling profession (Jackson, 2020a). Thus, this research is a timely contribution to the issue of the dominance of whiteness in counselling. Consequently, the argument that 'a silencing of race has resulted in the illusion that racial inequalities have been addressed and dealt with' in society (Bhopal, 2018, p. 8), also seems applicable to the counselling profession. Similarly, it has been argued that in Britain, 'whiteness is not an identity that is often spoken of' (Byrne, 2006, p. 170). This research sought to open a dialogue on the issue of 'race' through discovering how white counselling trainees understood 'race', racism and whiteness in South Wales in order to break the silence Byrne (2006) and Bhopal (2018) refer to. After all, it is counsellors and clients of colour who experience the negative consequences of the silence around 'race', racism and whiteness within the profession (Jackson, 2020b).

The decision to focus on white trainees has been influenced by the argument that the onus of learning about the issue of 'race' must be placed onto white people (Eddo-Lodge, 2017). This is not a new argument, as Lorde (2007 [1980], p. 115) has argued that when black people and people from the Global South:

> …are expected to educate white people as to our humanity… [the] oppressors maintain their position and evade their responsibility for their own actions.

Echoing the arguments of Lorde (2007 [1980]) and Eddo-Lodge (2017), Gay (2014, p. 259) has also argued, 'it's dangerous to suggest that the targets of oppression are wholly responsible for ending that oppression'. This research is an answer to the call that overcoming oppression, specifically racial inequality, is a collective endeavour. The major motivation of this research was to break a seemingly collective white silence in counselling and contribute toward racial justice by asking the research questions (Section 1.3). The need for white people to take responsibility for our actions (Lorde, 2007 [1980]; Gay, 2014; Eddo-Lodge, 2017), is recognised in conjunction with an awareness of the psychological impact of racism, known as 'race-based traumatic stress' (Carter, 2007, p. 13, see Chapter 2, Section 2.1.7). As my professional background is as a trauma counsellor, the psychological safety of research participants is paramount, meaning that it would feel unethical as a white researcher to potentially provoke racial trauma in participants of colour by asking them to recount incidents of racial discrimination in counselling training. Hence, the focus on white trainee counsellors is not meant to be exclusionary to people of colour, but rather falls in line with the purpose of critical whiteness studies to critique and deconstruct the meaning of whiteness to achieve racial equality (Delgado and Stefancic, 1997; Hartman, Gerteis and Croll, 2009; Applebaum, 2016a). Critical whiteness studies is discussed below and in greater depth in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4).

1.3 Research Question, Aims and Objectives

The main aim of the research is to explore white trainee counsellors understanding of

'race', racism and whiteness. To achieve this aim, the research question asked was:

> *How do white trainee counsellors in South Wales understand 'race', racism*
> *and whiteness?*

This question was explored by asking the following research questions:

- How do white counselling trainees understand 'race'?
- Do they understand 'race' to be a social construct?
- How do they understand racism?
- Do they perceive whiteness as a racialised identity?
- How do they feel discussing 'race' and racism?

The research objectives were to:
- Explore how white trainee counsellors understand 'race', racism and whiteness.
- Identify the feelings that emerge from discussing 'race', racism and whiteness.
- Achieve a space for trainees to have their views heard in a respectful way.
- Explore and identify key themes regarding white trainee counsellors understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness who are training in South Wales.
- Add to the knowledge based of 'race', racism and whiteness in Wales.

This research has situated its findings into a wider historical and socio-political context

by considering how the participants' understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness

compared and contrasted to historical and current ideas about these issues; the wider

socio-political context will be explored in the literature review (Chapter 2) and in the

discussion of findings (Chapter 6). Therefore, while this research focuses on

counselling trainees, it will also contribute to wider scholarship about perceptions of

'race', racism and whiteness amongst white people.

1.4 Original Contribution to Knowledge

This research offers an original contribution to knowledge through the combination of asking how white trainee counsellors understand 'race', racism and whiteness in South Wales and the theoretical lens of critical whiteness studies. In doing so, it provides a unique piece of research and fills a gap in the current knowledge base of both counselling and critical whiteness studies. Clarke and Garner (2010, p. 59) have argued that British sociological research into whiteness has focused on urban England, neglecting the other home nations, rural areas, and women. Therefore, this research can be a contribution to British whiteness studies through its location (South Wales, in a semi-rural area) and through 15 of the 16 participants being women. In addition, using post-critical ethnography as the methodological approach for counselling related research in Wales, is also a contribution to knowledge as this combination of methodology, topic, theoretical lens and geographical location has not been evident in research literature.

One of the key findings I will present is my concept of 'White Ignorance Disruption'. Simply put, White Ignorance Disruption is the moment(s) between ignorance and response. This concept draws on Mill's (2007) theory of white ignorance, or the wilful not knowing about 'race' in order to sustain white racial hierarchy (Chapter 2, Section 2.1.5). I present White Ignorance Disruption as a descriptive term to explain the initial stirring of unformed cognitive and emotional responses experienced by the research participants when asked to talk about 'race', racism and whiteness. I have conceived of it as a theoretical bridge which connects Mills (2007) concept of white ignorance to

theories of whiteness such as white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018) and the emotionality of whiteness (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015; Matias, 2016). White Ignorance Disruption is evident in my empirical research and will be outlined and presented in Chapter 6.

A second key finding is the concept I have termed the 'Good White Counsellor'. This brings together Sullivan's (2014a) notion of the 'good white people', DiAngelo's (2018) good/bad binary of racism, and Bonilla-Silva's (2018) theory of colour-blind ideology. In doing so, it describes a white counsellor who would be appalled to think of themselves as racist and who uses colour-blind ideology as a way to express their 'goodness' (in comparison to the 'bad' racists).

In addition, the uniqueness of this study is the data from a Welsh perspective. In a recent book which considered contemporary racial inequalities in the UK, information regarding England and Wales was presented in conjunction (Byrne *et al*, 2020), meaning that insight into 'race' from a solely Welsh perspective was absent. Therefore, this research also adds to the knowledge base of 'race' in Wales separate to that of England. Additionally, it does so at a time when a Welsh Government report into the effects of Covid-19 on people of colour in Wales has recognised that there is systemic racial inequality in Wales (Welsh Government, 2020a).

1.5 Positionality

The consideration of researcher positionality is an integral aspect of the methodological approach of this research, post-critical ethnography (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders 2019). Post-critical ethnography will be further discussed in

Chapter 3. For clarity, this research understands positionality in terms of the theoretical and the personal. However, that is not to say they are neatly delineated as my personal experiences have influenced the theoretical decisions of this research. Hence, the selection of a conceptual framework which recognises the political aspects of research and emphasises social justice echoes my intrinsic values. Chapter 3 critically considers the selection of the conceptual framework.

Theoretical Positionality

To answer the research questions, the ontological position was that of historical realism (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 98) and the epistemological stance was 'theorised subjectivity' (Letherby, 2013). Both of these recognise the political influences on both researcher and participant(s). The latter also factors in the emotional impact of research for those involved with it (Letherby, 2013). Complimenting this, critical theory was the theoretical perspective as this takes a political stance with an aim toward emancipation (Strydom, 2011; Scotland, 2012) and social justice (Tracy, 2019). Supporting this perspective is the primary theoretical lens of critical whiteness studies which 'is a growing field of scholarship whose aim is to reveal the invisible structures that produce and reproduce white supremacy and privilege' (Applebaum, 2016a, p. 1). White supremacy refers to the invisible machinations of whiteness operating systemically through practice, policy and procedures (Applebaum, 2016a). Turner (2018b) has urged for critical whiteness studies to be used as a means to consider how white supremacy functions in counselling. Critical whiteness theorists have argued that when using this approach,

scholars and writers of colour should not be overlooked as they have been critiquing whiteness much longer than white people have (Roediger, 2002; Dolan, 2006; Owen, 2007). For this reason, critical race theory has also been incorporated (Crenshaw *et al*, 1995; Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). Complementing both critical theory and critical whiteness studies, the methodological approach taken was post-critical ethnography, which is concerned with social justice and advocates for researcher reflexivity and care in the representation of research participants (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004). This reflexive stance allowed space for critical engagement with my own positionality as a white researcher; this engagement is woven throughout the thesis.

Indeed, post-critical ethnography has been called a 'moral activity' (Nobilt, Flores and Murillo, 2004, p. 24) and one expression of that morality is researcher reflexivity. Likewise, the notion of research being 'moral' and ethical was supported by the personal research maxim I used throughout the research, in that it would be ethical, equal, reflexive and relational. This is something I strived for throughout all stages of this research. This was supported by the 'procedural and practice' understanding of research ethics (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004), which refers to meeting the institutional research guidelines (for this research, UWTSD, 2017), while also being sensitive to the ongoing 'microethics' in encounters with participants (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004, p. 265). Examples of these ethical encounters are detailed in Chapter 4. A significant theory that is applied to understand the research findings is that of 'white ignorance' (Mills, 2007), or white people's wilful not knowing about 'race' and its consequences. White ignorance is discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.1.5) and Chapters 6 and 7.

Data was gathered over four weeks of participant-observations with 16 first year

counselling trainees at a Further Education college in South Wales (referred to as

'Welsh College A'). This involved observing seminars, participating through giving

feedback to students about their counselling skills, and spending time with the

participants during break-times. After this, 7 participants were interviewed over two

weeks using semi-structured interviews. Documents were analysed by looking at

course material, specifically student handbooks, assignment briefs and handouts. The

methods were applied in conjunction with the principles of post-critical ethnographic

methodology. Particularly in the notion of researcher morality (which was understood

as being ethical and caring toward the participants including how their words were

represented in this thesis) and engaging with researcher reflexivity (Noblit, Flores and

Murillo, 2004; Anders, 2019). Chapter 4 (Section 4.2) discusses this further.

Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was used to analyse the findings in order

to identify the research themes. Therefore, my theoretical positionality can be

summarised in Figure 1:

Figure 1 Chapter 1: My Research Elements
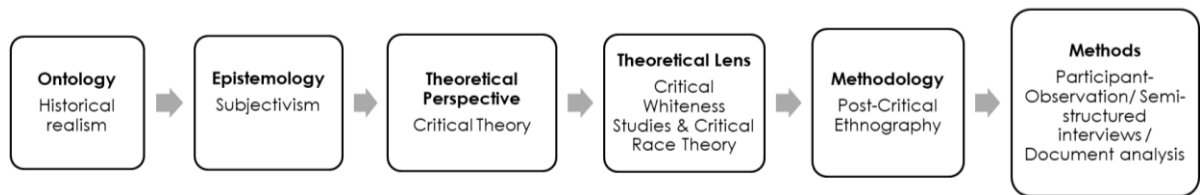
<div align="right">(adapted from Crotty, 1998, p. 4)</div>

Chapter 3 will outline the conceptual framework and methodology in greater depth

and Chapter 4 presents the methods used to gather and analyse the data, as well as

discuss research ethics.

Personal Positionality

Linking together the theoretical positionality is the notion that research is

political and can challenge systemic power. Supporting this 'post-critical

ethnographies require the interrogation of the power and politics of the critic

himself/herself as well as in the social scene studied' (Noblit, Flores and Murillo,

2004, p. 19). Therefore, the methodology encourages the researcher to critique

their own positionality and this is woven throughout the thesis. However, it does

so in the awareness that it risks centralising whiteness through my positionality

as a white researcher, with white participants and using critical whiteness

studies as the primary theoretical lens. As Ahmed (2007, p. 149) states:

> the field of critical whiteness studies is full of an almost habitual anxiety
> about what it means to take up the category of 'whiteness' as a primary
> object of knowledge.

Arguably, the critical whiteness researcher also experiences that same anxiety,

not wanting to centralise whiteness yet believing that researching whiteness can

have a contribution to the field of 'race' studies and racial justice. Indeed, it has been called 'potentially dangerous' for white researchers to centralise whiteness (Byrne, 2006, p. 170). This research was undertaken with the aim of making whiteness, and white understandings of 'race' and racism, visible in order to challenge white supremacy, in accordance with critical whiteness studies (Applebaum, 2016a) not to privilege whiteness further.

However, the cautions are acknowledged, and it is in this awareness that I present two caveats. First, that as a researcher I recognise that 'race' is a social construct but understand that in writing about whiteness and blackness in the literature review (Chapter 2) this may be contributing to racial categorisation. Although this research has been conducted through the theoretical lens of critical whiteness studies (Delgado and Stefancic, 1997; Hartman, Gerteis and Croll, 2009; Applebaum, 2016a) and critical race theory (Crenshaw *et al*, 1995; Delgado and Stefancic, 2017) and used a critical research paradigm to explore the research question, it is still the case that I brought my white positionality to this research. Although I have been developing my own white racial identity since 2015 and have brought a passion for critical whiteness studies to this research, most of my life experience has been de-racialised. As Yancy (2012a) argues, even when white people do consider their whiteness, it is still located in a place of power and privilege. It is also recognised that:

> White supremacy is so embedded in our psyches that we end up doing it even while we claim (and believe) it is what we oppose (Phipps, 2020, p. 4)

Therefore, this research was conducted with the awareness that as a white researcher, using critical whiteness studies, seeking to understand how white participants understand 'race', racism, and whiteness, I may unwittingly reproduce white supremacy, i.e., the domination of whiteness. While the focus on whiteness is intended as anti-racist allyship, those reading it may interpret it as a centring of whiteness. Further, readers may 'see' things I have unintentionally missed due to whiteness being 'wily' and 'embedded' in my psyche (Phipps, 2020, p. 4). The solution to this potential problem is an openness to critical feedback and an understanding that the process of learning about whiteness is a lifelong commitment. This doctoral thesis is a contribution to that commitment, not the conclusion of it.

The second caveat is that I recognise this research is situated in a black-white binary view of 'race'. Originally, I had wanted to include other ethnic minority groups, however, due to the temporal constraints of a PhD, it was necessary to narrow the focus to allow for a greater depth of knowledge. Therefore, I chose to consider the experiences of black people in the literature review. Perhaps this was an unconscious expression of my own racial socialisation, in that 'race' meant 'black' to my mind, as influenced by cultural representations of whiteness and blackness, where blackness is presented as the ultimate 'Other' to whiteness (Dyer, 2017). On a conscious level, I was influenced by my master's research (Section 1.1), specifically the contrasting experiences of counselling training and practice that I (as a white woman) and my two black participants had. Consequently, when I came to this PhD research a few months later, this

disparity of experience was fresh in my mind and the conscious reason for

focusing on a black-white binary of 'race'.

Nonetheless, I have been sustained by the argument that 'there is no good reason to

study race other than working toward the elimination of racial oppression' (Golash-

Boza, 2016, p. 130). It is hoped that this research will contribute to racial equality

through understanding how white trainee counsellors understand 'race', racism and

whiteness.

1.6 Layout of the Thesis

The literature review (Chapter 2) is separated into three parts. It starts by

contextualising 'race', racism and whiteness by situating them in their historical

construction and contemporary consequences. Part two explores 'race', mental health

and counselling and the third part offers a summary of the findings through the prism

of critical whiteness studies and critical race theory. Chapter 3 presents the

conceptual framework and methodology used in this research and the rationale

behind their selection. Chapter 4 outlines the methods used to collect and analyse the

data, as well as presenting the research ethics used. Chapter 5 analyses the findings by

presenting the four research themes identified from the data. To illustrate each theme

and to privilege the voices of the participants, extensive interview excerpts are used.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings of the research by situating the research themes into

existing literature. Chapter 7 draws the research to its conclusion by synthesising the

findings and also addresses the limitations and implications of the research, as well as recommending areas for further research.

The research that is presented in this thesis does not make hubristic claims to have a solution to the issues of 'race', racism and whiteness either in society more generally or counselling more specifically. Rather, its intention is to contribute to the knowledge base of critical whiteness studies and counselling through exploring how white trainee counsellors in South Wales understand 'race', racism and whiteness.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to present how the concepts of 'race', racism and whiteness are understood in this research, and does this by focusing on key issues associated with this original doctoral research. These key issues are divided into three parts in this chapter. To begin, part 1 outlines the social construction of 'race' and whiteness (Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2). Then, it considers racial identity (Section 2.1.3), white privilege (Section 2.1.4) and white ignorance (Section 2.1.5). The focus on whiteness is not intended to be exclusionary, rather, it is done with critical whiteness studies aim to 'reveal the invisible structures that produce and reproduce white supremacy and privilege' (Applebaum, 2016a, p. 1). Thus, examining whiteness is done as a way to critique, not centralise, whiteness. This intention is analogous with the methodology of post-critical ethnography adopted in this study which understands research as political (Anders, 2019) and a way of achieving 'social transformation' (Gerstl-Pepin, 2004, p. 385). The contemporary implications of 'race' are then discussed by focusing on education (Section 2.1.6) as this research took place in an educational setting. After which, three forms of racism are considered: systemic/institutional, racialisation and colour-blind (Section 2.1.7). In part 2, counselling and 'race' are discussed (Section 2.2), through exploring Eurocentrism and mental health (Section 2.2.1), counselling (Section 2.2.2) and counselling pedagogy (Section 2.2.3). Again, the aim of the literature review is to make whiteness visible (Applebaum, 2016a) through explicitly discussing 'race', racism and whiteness. Part 3 (Section 2.3.3) seeks to synthesise the preceding parts by considering them through the theoretical lens of critical whiteness studies (Delgado and Stefancic, 1997;

Applebaum, 2016a) and critical race theory (Crenshaw *et al*, 1995; Delgado and

Stefancic, 2017). Using these theories for a social justice doctoral studies in Wales, as

well as using them to consider counselling practice and pedagogy, is a unique

contribution to Welsh academic knowledge.

To achieve this, the literature review is interdisciplinary and considers historical,

psychological, social science and counselling perspectives. Given the scope of

literature and the various disciplines it draws upon, this literature review is intended

to present a firm foundation to understand these topics and the original research that

follows. It will also allow identification of the gaps in knowledge and present a

rationale for the choice of methodology; this will be presented in part 3 of this chapter

(Section 2.3.3).

Key Terms

To research 'race', it is important to clarify what is meant by the word and those

closely associated with it. For the purpose of this research, Fernando's (2010; Table 2)

definitions have been used as the framework for understanding these terms:

Table 2 Definitions of Race, culture, ethnicity and identity

	Characterised by	**Perceived as**	**Assumed to be**	**In reality**
Race	Physical appearance	Physical, permanent	Genetically determined	Socially constructed
Culture	Behaviour, attitudes, etc	Social, changeable	Passed down by parents/ parent substitutes	Variable and changeable blue-print for living
Ethnicity	Sense of belonging	Psychosocial, partially changeable	How people see themselves in terms of background and parentage	Culture-race mixture
Identity	Subjective feelings	Psycho-personal, several parts. Each fairly fixed once formed	Formed through upbringing and experience	Feelings about heritage; personal choice

(*taken from* Fernando, 2010, p. 8)

The recognition that 'race' is a socially constructed category underpins the entirety of this research. How 'race' became socially constructed is outlined below (Section 2.1.1). More specifically, a definition of what is meant by 'black' and 'white' is also required. Clarke and Garner (2010) suggest that 'white' is an ambiguous term, with a lack of agreement on a definition within the field of social science. However, they do suggest that whiteness relates to issues of power and privilege that are not necessarily related to socio-economic status, as even lower income white people will unintentionally benefit from their whiteness (Clarke and Garner, 2010). For this research, 'white' refers to those of Western European heritage. This is because despite having a white phenotype, or skin colour, those who are of Eastern European heritage and those from the Gypsy, Romany, Traveller communities face discrimination (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2009) and are not given

access to the category of 'whiteness', including its privileges (Bhopal, 2018). This is considered below (Section 2.1.2). 'Black' will refer to people of Afro-Caribbean heritage. I have used 'black' when discussing black people specifically and 'people/person of colour' for those who have been racialised as non-white. As noted in Chapter 1, it is accepted that 'race' is a social construct, so inverted commas are used throughout this thesis to acknowledge the false categorisation of humans into a racial typology. However, when 'race' appears without inverted commas in direct quotations, it is because I have followed the author's stylistic decision. Racism has been described as a:

> frighteningly real, burning and omnipresent issue. It is directed at people because of a number of perceived 'identities': 'race', ethnicity, nationality, religion or a combination of these… Racism can also be unintentional as well as intentional…Racism can be direct or indirect; it can be overt or covert… Racism can be dominative (direct and oppressive) as well as aversive (exclusion and cold-shouldering) (Cole, 2016, p. 2)

Consequently, racism can be obvious, ambiguous and mutable. For clarity, Chapter 2 (Section 2.1.7) considered three forms of racism: institutional/systemic, racialisation and colour-blind as these were most relevant to the research. However, it is acknowledged that racism is not limited to these three specific types. It is also recognised that the term 'colour-blind' may be offensive to some people, given its ableist connotations. Given that 'colour-blind' is the prevalent term to describe the 'not seeing' of 'race' and is a key concept to the research findings, it will be used in this thesis. However, it is done so in recognition that this terminology may evolve and thus its use in this thesis may seem incongruous to future readers.

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) is the largest

professional association for counsellors and psychotherapists in the UK, with over

50,000 members (BACP, 2020a). The next largest professional body, the UK Council for

Psychotherapy, has 10,000 members (UKCP, 2020a). The reason for focusing on the

BACP in this thesis is because the training course observed for this research is a BACP

accredited course (BACP, 2012) and the research participants follow its ethical

framework (BACP, 2018a). Hence, the BACP was in one sense an invisible stakeholder

in the research and so 'counselling' and counselling pedagogy is understood through

their specific requirements. The BACP (2020b) use 'therapy' as an umbrella term to

describe both counselling and psychotherapy, and state that counselling and

psychotherapy can 'help you understand yourself, your behaviours and your

relationship with others' though weekly sessions in a 'safe and confidential space'

(BACP, 2020b, p. 3). The word 'counselling' is used in this research despite the BACP

preferring the terms therapy/therapist because the training course observed for this

research was a first year (of three) Foundation Degree in Counselling course and the

participants self-described as trainee counsellors, not 'therapists'. Part 2 of the

literature review explores counselling in greater depth.

The Gap in Knowledge

When considering the literature reviewed in this chapter, spanning the historical

construction of 'race', the contemporary reality in education and current counselling

practice and pedagogy, it is possible to conclude a gap in knowledge resides in clarity

around how white trainee counsellors living in Wales understand 'race', racism and

whiteness. This was evidenced through not finding research that asked white trainee counsellors for their own understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness. Similarly, an in-depth analysis of the history of the social construction of 'race' and whiteness was not found in British counselling research/theory. However, it is recognised that Tuckwell (2002) and Lago and Thompson (2003) provide brief historical contexts in their books about counselling and 'race'. This literature review will address this exclusion.

The Contribution of this Thesis

The original contribution to knowledge that will be presented in this thesis will address the omission within the literature, of the lack of clarification around how white trainee counsellors understand 'race', racism and whiteness. The overall research question is:

> RQ: How do white trainee counsellors in Wales understand 'race', racism and whiteness?

This question will be explored by asking the following research questions:

- How do white counselling trainees understand 'race'?
- Do they understand 'race' to be a social construct?
- How do they understand racism?
- Do they perceive whiteness as a racialised identity?
- How do they feel discussing 'race' and racism?

This doctoral research will provide an original contribution to knowledge in the following ways:

- Discovering how white trainee counsellors understand 'race', racism and whiteness.

- Including the historical and contemporary context of 'race' within the research to provide a broader context.
- Contribute to the field of critical whiteness studies by providing research originating from Wales and Welsh academia.
- It will be an original contribution to the knowledge base of 'race' and counselling in Wales and Welsh academia.

In addition, Golash-Boza (2016) argues that 'race' and racism are often treated as separate subjects in research but contends that the two cannot be separated given the consequence of the social construction of race is racist ideology and practice. By researching both 'race' *and* racism in the same research project, and using a critical whiteness studies lens, will also add to the understanding of these subjects in Welsh academia.

2.1 Understanding 'Race'

In an attempt to redress the absence of the history of 'race' in research within the context of counselling, this literature review will begin with an overview of the origins and implications of 'race' as a social construct. This absence of an historical context in counselling related research may be due to the notion that white history is history itself, given that whiteness is perceived as 'normal' (Halley, Eshleman, and Mahadevan-Vijaya, 2011; Hayes *et al*, 2013), with whiteness dominating the cultural narrative (Dyer, 2017). Contrary to this perception, as will be demonstrated, the notion of whiteness is itself ambiguous and changeable (Section 2.1.2). Hence, this literature review will make whiteness visible (Applebaum, 2016a).

To begin the process of making whiteness visible, the following section will provide a succinct yet sensitive overview of how 'race' as a concept became formulated and ingrained into society and its consequences. It is hoped this will overcome 'the uniquely British combination of convenient ignorance and awkward squeamishness that prevents us from confronting the past' (Hirsch, 2018, p. 316).

2.1.1 The Historical Construction of 'Race'

In ancient Egyptian and Greek civilizations, and later the Roman Empire, colour differences were not used a means of classification or separatism within society. Whilst cultural and language differences may have led to notions of superiority, this was not dependent upon 'race' as we understand it now (Rattansi, 2007). This was highlighted by the fact that although the Greeks did refer to some people as barbarians, this was not related to skin colour but rather, it was a pejorative reference to non-Greek speaking people (Rattansi, 2007). Indeed, the Roman Empire had a North African Emperor named Septimius Severus who ruled the Empire for eighteen years, starting in 193 AD (Birley, 1999); this counters the notion held by some that the Roman Empire was only ruled by the (white) Romans. Later, the fourth-century AD saw the commencement of anti-Semitic rhetoric amongst Christian preachers which culminated in the massacre of European Jewish communities living in France, Germany and England in 1096 (Rattansi, 2007). It was during this time, known as the Crusades, the belief that Jewish and Muslim people were of impure blood, was established within Christian Europe; a concept later applied to African and Native American people (Bethencourt, 2013). Whilst there has been a consensus that in the

Middle Ages 'race' referred to lineage or bloodline (Biddis, 1979; Hannaford, 1996), contemporary medieval historians are challenging this idea by re-examining medieval society's perceptions of 'race'. Heng (2018), has viewed medieval history through the lens of critical race theory and puts forward the argument that 'race' was invented in the Middle Ages and outlines how black became synonymous with negative connotations of malevolence and white became a symbol of purity and elitism within Christianity. Indeed, it is here we find 'the ascension of *whiteness* to supremacy as a category of identity' (Heng, 2018, p. 44).

There is consensus between scholars that the concept of 'race' began during the Enlightenment in the eighteenth-century, most notably with Carl Linnaues (1707-1778) who in 1735 introduced the classification, or taxonomy, of humans (Fara, 2017). Linnaues divided humans into four categories of descending import: Europaeus (white)*,* Americanus (red)*,* Asiaticus (yellow) and Afer (black) (Rattansi, 2007). In a continuation of the Middle Ages association between morality and colour, Linnaues viewed the white Europeus as intelligent and the black Afer as lazy (Fara, 2017). It is possible to read this almost three-hundred-year-old taxonomy of human beings and with ease relate them to our modern lexicon regarding 'race' and nationality. This was further developed through the scientist, craniologist and anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) who has been cited as one of the most important contributors to 'race' as a scientific concept (Bhopal, 2007). It has been argued the work of Blumenbach has been misinterpreted and misjudged by modern readers who fail to place his work within its historical context (Livingstone, 2017). Painter (2003, p. 12) also highlights that Blumenbach 'rejected racial hierarchy and emphasised the

unity of mankind'. What is undeniable is that Blumenbach introduced the term

'Caucasian' (Painter, 2010). Around this time, and influenced by Blumenbach, ideals of

beauty were also being placed upon physical appearance through the work of the

philosopher Christoph Meiners, whose dualistic concept of race, the Tartar-Caucasian

(white) and the Mongolian (brown and black), were differentiated through his notion

of beautiful (Tartar-Caucasian) and ugly (Mongolian) (Guédron, 2014).

When combined with already established notions of moral character and physical

appearance, we can see the elevation of whiteness as good and attractive and

blackness perceived as bad and ugly. By this point in history, it was believed that

'physical appearance and social behaviour of individuals was an alterable expression

of biological type' (Meer, 2014, p. 115). This is known as biological determinism,

whereby one's behaviour is determined by one's biology; it is now a discredited

theory (Marks, 2017).

In considering the history of 'race' the fact of the transatlantic slave trade cannot be

overlooked, yet I am aware that a brief overview of this era of history will not be

sufficient to explain the horrors and injustices experienced by millions of people.

Equally, it will be a gross oversight to not mention this important part of history.

Therefore, it is with this awareness that slavery is discussed. The moral and physical

attributes being placed upon black people were reinforced and used as justification for

the slave trade. This justification was sought from the Bible in the Story of Ham,

condemned to slavery by his father Noah, and used to perpetuate the erroneous

argument that Africans were therefore fated by God to slavery (Whitford, 2016; The

Bible, Genesis 9:20-27). Despite Britain's early involvement in the slave trade, they

were not major participants until the mid-eighteenth-century when slavery

overshadowed life in the Americas (Walvin, 2007). It would appear that the increase in

slavery coincided with the Enlightenment's early scientific endeavour of categorising

humans and ascribing superiority (white) and inferiority (black) (Fara, 2017).

Approximately eleven million black African people were taken across the Atlantic to

work on plantations, and whilst Britain had slave ports (such as Liverpool, Bristol and

London) these were stops along the journey to the British Colonies, meaning 'unlike in

America, most British people saw the money without the blood' (Eddo-Lodge, 2017, p.

5). Indeed, it has been suggested whilst parliament passed through the Abolition Act

in 1807 ending the buying and selling of slaves and later the Slavery Abolition Act in

1833, Britain in fact grew wealthier after abolition through its reliance on slave grown

cotton, allowing Britain's manufacturing economy to grow (Sherwood, 2007).

Similarly, Imperial rule of India led to Britain's wealth and rise in power with the

formation of the British East India Company in 1600 which grew in economic

dominance via the oppression of, and violence toward, Indian people under British

rule (Tharoor, 2018). Therefore, colonialism and imperialism have been significant

aspects of British history. However, a clear definition of these terms can be

challenging given their changing semantic meaning depending on the historical

context of their use (Loomba, 1998). Simply put, 'colonialism can be defined as the

conquest and control of other people's lands and goods' (Loomba, 1998, p. 1).

Whereas imperialism can take political and economic forms; with the former relating

to the governance of colonised countries and the latter to control of the economic

markets (Loomba, 1998).

Therefore, colonisation could be viewed as the practice or the means by which imperial political and economic power is achieved. The effects of colonialisation is that it 'locked the original inhabitants and the newcomers in the most complex and traumatic relationships in human histories' (Loomba, 1998, p. 2). Indeed, Memmi (2016) argued in the 1960s that there are long-term psychological effects of colonialism for both the coloniser and the colonised. Postcolonial theory (Said, 1978; Loomba, 1998; Gandhi 2019) contests colonial domination and offers a way of understanding the complicated legacy of colonialism and imperialism. Whilst postcolonialism can be used as a theoretical lens in 'race' studies, critical whiteness studies was the preferred primary theoretical lens due to the significance of whiteness in this research (my own, the participants' and the dominance of whiteness in counselling). Critical whiteness studies is discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4).

The culmination of attempting to turn the socially constructed idea of 'race' into biological and scientific fact was reinforced with the rise of the Eugenics Movement (Kühl, 2013). In the early 20th century, eugenics was a combination of science and social policy which intended to promote healthy human reproduction and prevent unhealthy reproduction from those deemed undesirable (Levine, 2017). Intelligence and purity were primary concerns for eugenicists (Levine, 2017) and in regard to 'race', it is relevant to remember that the earliest taxonomy of 'race' by Carl Linnaeus had asserted that white people possessed a superior intellect (Fara, 2017). Eugenics was further catastrophically developed in Nazi ideology and policy (Conroy, 2017). Nazi racial ideology began with Social Darwinism, which was an adaptation of Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection and extrapolated to human society (Gasman,

2017). From Social Darwinism, Darwin's cousin, Francis Galton developed the theory

of Eugenics, the main principle being the reduction of those deemed as 'inferior'

'races' and the promotion of those seen as 'superior', concepts which were predicated

on a belief that characteristics, behaviour and intelligence 'were in and of themselves

determined by heredity' (Ifekwunigwe, 1999, p. 6). The Eugenic Movement's idea of

racial superiority and the need to eradicate inferior 'races' was subsumed into Nazi

ideology and its effects tragically witnessed in the Holocaust (Bergman, 2014). As a

strong refutation to Nazism and scientific explanations for 'race', the United Nations

Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) stated:

> There was no delay or hesitation or lack of unanimity in reaching the
> primary conclusion that there were no scientific grounds whatever for the
> racialist position regarding purity of race and the hierarchy of inferior and
> superior races to which this leads. (UNESCO, 1949, p.36).

An evolution of the history of 'race' can be traced from the Middle Ages idea of

impure blood to the Enlightenment's emerging scientific pursuit of categorising

human beings, to Social Darwinism and the Eugenics Movement's belief in the

eradication of 'inferior' 'races'. This has been demonstrated by linking the progression

from the Medieval conception of 'race' being related to bloodlines (Biddis, 1979;

Hannaford, 1996) and whiteness equating moral purity (Heng, 2018), to the

Enlightenment's notion of white intellectual and aesthetic superiority (Fara, 2017;

Guédron, 2014). This led to the Eugenicist emphasis on intellect and the purity of

blood and nation (Levine, 2017). The commonality of these ideas is the superiority of

one group of people (white) over another (non-white). These theories have been used

to justify atrocities including the transatlantic slave trade, Imperialism and the

Holocaust. However, the historical way of thinking of 'race' as being determined by biology is now known as biological determinism, biological racism or scientific racism and is rejected by the scientific community (Marks, 2017). It is important to highlight that although discredited, such theories are still propounded, notably in the controversial work of Herrnstein and Murray (1994) who claim African-Americans have lower IQs than whites. The authors' work has been critiqued for ignoring contemporary research (Rattansi, 2007) and for allowing pre-existing prejudices, in regard to racial stereotypes, to affect the research (Hilliard, 2012). Indeed, when considering the USA social context when Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) work was produced, there was a 'social and legislative backlash to the progress of the civil rights era' (Serrianne, 2015, p. 172).

More recently, controversy has surrounded Nobel-prize winning biologist James Watson's assertion that genetics affect intelligence along racial lines; this led to Watson's honorary professional titles being removed (BBC, 2019; Charlton, 2019). Therefore, whilst biological determinism is no longer an accepted rationale such ideas continue to persist (Saini, 2019).

Hall (2017) has recognised the persistence of 'race' despite academic contributions proving it is not a biological category, but rather a socially constructed one. He argues that 'race' is 'the floating signifier' (or 'the sliding signifier') a category that is discursively constructed, changing its meaning depending on historical time, context and relational dynamics. In this way, 'race' continues to persist as a method of classifying people which has consequences that can be witnessed in systemic

inequalities. As Hall (2017, p. 43) argues 'we still have to account for why race is so tenacious in human history, so impossible to dislodge'. Therefore, in outlining the social construction of 'race', it is also recognised that 'race' continues to exist as a form of categorisation.

2.1.2 The Historical Construction of 'Whiteness'

The historical implications of 'race' and the categorisation of humans has been considered and arguably would be known to even those who are not well-versed in this area. The transatlantic slave trade (Walvin, 2007), the British Empire (Tharoor, 2018) segregation in the Deep South of the United States of America and the subsequent civil rights movement (Tuck and Umoren, 2019) and apartheid in South Africa (Clark and Worger, 2016) are points in history that most will be aware of. Contemporary iterations would include the Windrush scandal (Gentleman, 2018), the refugee crisis in Europe (Kingsley, 2017), the Black Lives Matter movement (Lowrey, 2017) and the tragedy of Grenfell Tower (Bulley, Edkins, El-Nany, 2019). However, Painter (2010, p. ix) states that although history 'offers up a large bounty of commentary on what it means to be nonwhite', the history of whiteness has rarely been examined in the same way. One reason for this may be found in the argument that white people have been the traditional gatekeepers of the cultural and historical understanding of 'race' (Dyer, 2017). The aim of this section is to offer a context into which this research can be placed. The reason for the inclusion of the construction of whiteness is to avoid ambiguity about the notion of whiteness and to offer parity with the exploration of 'race'. In other words, this section is intended to counteract the

presumption that whiteness is the norm through considering its origins. Indeed, it has not been possible to source research conducted in Wales that utilises critical whiteness studies in conjunction with counselling, placing this doctoral research in a unique position in Welsh academia.

It is important to consider what is meant by 'white'. As will be explored, who or what is defined as 'white' is not static, but rather an ever evolving and redefined category. Despite this, white people do not generally consider themselves as having a 'race' (Ryde, 2009), whiteness is largely invisible to white people and is the standard white people use to gauge what is 'normal' (Halley, Eshleman, and Mahadevan-Vijaya, 2011) leading to whiteness being seen as non-problematic and legitimate (Hayes *et al*, 2013). Likewise, it has been argued that historically white people have had more control over how they are represented culturally, meaning that other groups are viewed within racial terms, whilst white people are seen as people or human (Dyer, 2017). This normalisation of whiteness results in a powerful position as 'the claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity' (Dyer, 2017, p. 2). Therefore, it is possible to contend that generally white people do not consider themselves as belonging to a 'race', but rather as the standardisation of humanity. This normalcy coupled with the authority to control the representation of whiteness (and by extension other 'race's') has led to whiteness being a dominant power. This can be reflected in the British educational system which will be discussed below (Section 2.1.6).

As with the social construction of the concept of 'race', the notion of 'white people' was also constructed. Through the exploration of ancient texts and artefacts, it is apparent that Northern Europeans were viewed not as a homogenous entity but rather as tribes with names ascribed to them by the Greeks and Romans (Painter, 2010). From this we derive amongst others, the Celts (Painter, 2010). In the sixteenth century, the art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1711-1768) promoted the aesthetic ideal of whiteness, believing whiteness equated beauty based upon Greek art and sculpture; an idea that gained prominence and influence in later burgeoning scientific thought (Painter, 2010). As noted earlier, white people became classified as 'Caucasian' by Blumenbach in the eighteenth-century and his assertion of the superior beauty of the Caucasian skull (Guédron, 2014) is reminiscent of Winckelmann's belief in the white aesthetic ideal (Painter, 2010). If one returns to the Medieval Christian idea that whiteness symbolised purity (Heng, 2018), and combine this with artistic notions of whiteness equating beauty, it is possible to conclude how the artistic representation of Jesus Christ as a white man came to be. The implication of this use of skin colour for 'Christ representations' offers a reinforcement of the perceived connection between whiteness and morality (Yancy, 2012b; Dyer, 2017). It was during this time of the scientific zeitgeist of classifying human beings, that the notion of white people being intellectually, morally and aesthetically superior became established and accepted as scientific fact (Rattansi, 2007; Painter, 2010; Marks, 2017).

Although the intellectuals and scientists of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, themselves white men, proposed white superiority, there was an expectation found in the historical exclusion of the Irish into the category of whiteness (Allen, 1994;

Ignatiev, 2009; Painter, 2010; Dyer, 2017). This exclusion demonstrates that the concept of 'white' has been a changeable category that is not necessarily predicated on skin colour. Dyer (2017) states the Irish (as well as Latins and Jews) were often insecure in the category of whiteness and were frequently represented by the English as ape-like in nineteenth century caricatures (Kenny, 2007; Pearl, 2010). Likewise, contemporary cartoons also depicted the Irish as poor, violent, and ugly drunkards (Painter, 2010). During the potato famine in the mid-nineteenth century, many Irish emigrated to the United States where they initially lived and worshipped alongside African-American communities; at this point the Irish immigrants were not seen as black but simultaneously they were not seen as white (Halley, Eshleman, and Mahadevan-Vijaya, 2011). Ignatiev (2009) argues that the Irish became to be seen as white by distancing themselves from the black communities, forming the working class, and through violent means. Whilst the Irish immigrants in the United States may not have achieved overt prosperity, it was seen that they elevated and distanced themselves from the African-American population, became 'white' and consequently gained access to the privilege this identity affords (Ignatiev, 2009). The experiences of the Irish illustrate that whiteness is not a static category that relies on self-identification but rather relies upon the perception and acceptance of others already established into the category of whiteness. This is evident in the contemporary context of Brexit whereby white immigrants, such as the Polish, faced increased hostility from some British people (Lowe, 2016) and as a consequence left the UK (Hughes, 2016; Travis, 2017). Therefore, possessing a white skin colour does not equate to inclusion into the category of whiteness nor allow access to its privileges. Bhopal (2018) presents the notion of acceptable and non-acceptable whiteness, the

former being represented by middle-class values and the latter being applied to 'chavs' and the Gypsy, Romany and Traveller (GRT) communities. Therefore, an intersection of 'race' and class can ensure a stronger foothold into the category of 'white'.

The contemporary lives of Gypsy, Romany and Traveller (GRT) communities reflect the consequences of being perceived as possessing a non-acceptable form of whiteness. Whilst GRT communities may have a white ethnic identity, they are not recipients of white privilege (Bhopal, 2018) (Section 2.1.4 explores white privilege). Research has shown that GRT communities experience inequality, racism and discrimination across various areas of life including sectors such as education, criminal justice and health (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2009). This exclusion and discrimination can cause anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicide (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2009). Research conducted across 32 countries discovered that GRT communities face barriers in accessing health care, with a dominant theme being discrimination by healthcare professionals and staff in the form of hostility, lack of sympathy and negative stereotyping (McFadden *et al*, 2018). Supporting this finding is research conducted by Stonewall (2004) which considered prejudice against minority groups in Britain, ranging from older people, disabled people, people from the LGBT+ community and ethnic minorities. It was found 14 million British people admitted being prejudiced against GRT communities, the largest number polled in the six categories provided, with refugees and asylum seekers a close second (Stonewall, 2004). Similarly, a discourse analysis of comments made on internet forums found that Gypsies, Romany's and Travellers are often demonised and dehumanised (Lowe

and Goodman, 2014), this prejudice and discrimination is a phenomenon Ljujic *et al* (2012) term 'Romaphobia', akin to Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. Therefore, the overtness and breadth of racism that GRT communities encounter illustrates that a white skin tone does not necessarily mean inclusion into the category of whiteness.

The history of the Irish, from being perceived as socially, morally and intellectually inferior by the British, to becoming integrated immigrants within white USA society is an illustration of whiteness as a mutable construct. This is echoed in the contemporary discrimination experienced by Gypsy, Romany and Traveller communities. Both of these lived realities deftly demonstrate that 'race' is a fluid social construct without fixed parameters. Consequently, it indicates than an absolute definition of whiteness has been, and continues to be, alterable.

2.1.3 Racial Identity

An important aspect of 'race' is the formation of racial identity; therefore, this section of the literature review will consider black and white racial identity. Thus far, there has been a critique of the word 'race' and the ensuing consequences of such a category, therefore a consideration of racial identity may seem incongruous. However, given that racial identity development can offer a means of understanding oneself within wider social and historical factors (Wijeyesinghe and Jackson, 2012) the consideration of it fits within the aims of this literature review to contextualise the thesis within social and historical perspectives.

Helms (1990) is a pioneer in the field of racial identity, defining it as 'a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perceptions that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group' (Helms, 1990, p. 3). Racial identity has also been defined as 'how people view themselves and the world through racialized (*sic*) lenses' (Thompson and Carter, 2012, p. xv). However, the authors caution that one's racialised lens may be unacknowledged and unrecognised by the individual (Thompson and Carter, 2012). Similarly, it has been argued that racial categories are imbued with historical use, located within societal norms, internalised within the individual and given the fluid nature of racial categorisation in a diverse society, one's racial identity may not neatly fit within a prescribed category (Deaux, 2018). Social science research has been criticised for a tendency toward perpetuating notions of 'a "damaged" black psyche' when considering racial identity (Zirkel and Johnson, 2016, p. 301). This section does not seek to sustain this stereotype. However, I am also cognisant of my positionality of being a white woman writing about black racial identity and have feelings of apprehension permeating my thoughts. This apprehension is predicated on awareness that my understanding of black racial identity is filtered through the experiences of being a white person. Therefore, it is with this consciousness the topic of racial identity is considered.

Racial identity models

The two most influential models of racial identity are arguably Helms (1990) White Racial Identity Development Model and Cross's (1991) Nigrescence Model. These models have provided the foundation for subsequent research and understanding of

racial identity development. Both Helms (1990) and Cross (1991) are based in North America, meaning their work comes from an American perspective and may not be directly applicable to UK society. However, giving the impact and longevity of these models they are worthy of consideration.

Helms (1990) believed that creating a positive white racial identity comprises of two phases, first the relinquishing of racism and secondly the development of a non-racist identity (Table 3). Each of these two phases consist of three statuses (Helms, 1990, pp 54-66):

Table 3 Summary of Helms (1990) White Racial Identity Model.

Phase 1:	Description
Contact	Unaware, naïve, unsophisticated. Limited interaction with Black people/communities.
Disintegration	Conscious, conflicted awareness whiteness, questioning the racial reality that has been taught.
Reintegration	Conscious of white identity but maintains belief in racial superiority. Easy to get stuck at this stage.
Phase 2:	Description
Pseudo-Independent	Active questions of ides of white superiority, acknowledges racism and engages in self-examination on how one perpetuates racism.
Immersion/Emersion	Re-educating oneself to substitute racial stereotypes with accurate knowledge. Emotional and intellectual re-formation.
Autonomy	Abandonment of personal, cultural and institutional racism. Possesses a new understanding of whiteness. Not a static stage but part of an ongoing process.

(*adapted from* Helms, 1990, pp 54-66).

Finding criticism of Helms (1990) model proved difficult, indicating its canonical position within racial identity theory. However, disadvantages have been highlighted,

particularly the model's focus on reframing attitudes toward racial groups rather than

addressing white identity attitudes and the assumption that the progression of racial

identity development will be linear (Rowe, Bennett and Atkinson, 1994).

Ryde (2009), a white British psychotherapist who has considered what it means to be

white in the helping professions, developed her own 'Cycle of White Awareness'

(Ryde, 2009, pp. 50-55; Table 4). This model includes feelings of guilt and shame that

are absent from Helms' (1990) model. The cycle comprises of five stages:

Table 4 Summary of Ryde's (2009) Cycle of White Awareness

Stage:	Description
Denial	Denial of accountability white people have for racism.
Struggle to understand other	The implication of being white is not deeply comprehended.
Guilt and shame	Alerts us that something is amiss but can leave the individual feeling helpless.
Struggle to understand self	The effect and meaning of whiteness are understood deeply.
Integration	Integration of learning but can lead to complacency and then denial that continued learning is required. The cycle continues.

(*adapted from* Ryde, 2009, pp. 50-55).

Both Helms (1990) and Ryde's (2009) models of white identity seem to present the

process as a personal, individualistic one. It appears that the interpersonal aspect of

white identity development has been neglected, specifically in regards as to how

developing an anti-racist white identity effects one's relationship with white family,

friends and colleagues whose own attitudes may remain unchanged. Possibly, white

racial identity models are failing to address complex feelings that may occur during

the process and the impact these feelings have on the individual and their social circle. This is a potential area for further research.

The Nigrescence Model (Cross, 1991) presents the development of black racial identity and is based on an earlier black identity model titled the 'Negro-to-Black conversion experience' (Cross, 1971). A later model, known as the expanded model, was presented by Vandiver *et al* (2001). The original model was created during the Civil Rights movement and the rise of the Black Power movement where embracing a black identity took on political import (Worrell, 2012). Cross (1991) notes that the term 'negro' was already outmoded by the early 1990s and was being replaced with African-American, Black American and Afrocentric. As a white woman I note my discomfort at including the word, however given the influence of this model it seems congruent to use the terminology the author chose. Cross's (1991) model is viewed as the foundation of black racial identity theory (Sullivan, Winburn and Cross, 2018) and for that reason it is this version that is considered here.

The model (Table 5) consists of five progressive stages of development and within those stages exist certain attitudes and characteristics (Cross, 1991, pp. 190-223):

Table 5 Summary of Cross' (1991) Nigresence Model

Stage:	Description:
1. Pre-encounter:	Value placed on things other than Blackness.
Low-Salience Attitudes	Race is largely viewed as insignificant.
Social Stigma Attitudes	Race perceived as a problem.
Anti-Black Attitudes	Blackness seen as negative.
Miseducation	Inaccurate understanding of Black history.
A Eurocentric Cultural Perspective	Internalised Eurocentric frame of reference.
Spotlight, or Race image, anxiety Assimilation-Integration	Hypersensitivity regarding racial issues.
Value Structure and Value Orientation	Belief that assimilation and integration to whiteness will resolve racial discrimination. Priority placed on organisations and causes that place little emphasis on race.
2. Encounter	A big event, or series of small events, occurs that disrupts the pre-encounter world view. Individual must feel personally and powerfully impacted by the event(s). Range of emotions including anger, guilt and shame experienced.
3. Immersion-Emersion	Commitment to change. Deconstructing old perspective whilst creating a new one. Immersion into black culture. Emersion from ideologies.
4. Internalisation	High salience of Blackness internalised. Other identity concerns (gender, religion, sexuality) have space to be considered.
5. Internalisation-Commitment	Internalisation of black identity and commitment to black community and black issues.

(*adapted from* Cross, 1991, pp. 190-223).

The 1971 model (Cross, 1971) was originally presented as a linear process and conceived as a one-time occurrence during the individual's lifespan. However, Parham (1989) contested this assertion and suggested the formation of black racial identity was more cyclical in nature. In order to address this critique, Cross (1991) included Parham's (1989) idea of recycling through the stages at different points in one's lifetime, where gaps in knowledge may be identified and challenged.

Both Helms's (1990) and Cross's (1991) racial identity models share similarities in that they each describe a process whereby the individual moves from a place of unconsciousness to conscious awareness of racial identity and acknowledges the meaning of their racial identity personally and socially. Likewise, both share the same terminology in the 'immersion-emersion' phase and with it being the penultimate stage. However, Cross (1991) offers a more nuanced description of the 'pre-encounter' stage, recognising the different forms it may take whereas Helms (1990) first 'contact' stage is dependent upon contact with black people/communities and considers how the white individual manages those encounters. A stage similar to the 'pre-encounter' stage that considers the white person's self-concept of whiteness would prove illuminating. In the same way, Helms (1990) seems to overlook the emotional experience of developing a white racial identity, preferring to focus on the cognitive progression whereas Cross (1991) does acknowledge that challenging feelings may occur. Overall, it seems that the intention of Helms's (1990) model is concerned with the way that white people renounce individual and systemic forms of

white power whereas Cross's (1991) model is about gaining a powerful positive black

racial identity that will help the individual and wider black communities.

When considering these models, it is important to remember that white and black

people are individuals with their own experiences which will influence how, when and

why their racial identity is formed. Correspondingly, the social, economic and political

background of the individual may also influence the formation of racial identity. The

acknowledgment of these factors avoids essentialising (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017)

subjective experience and considers the role of intersectional identities (Crenshaw,

1989). Therefore, these USA specific models may not be directly applicable to a British

context given the different social, economic and political histories. Ryde's (2009)

'Cycle of White Awareness' is a British consideration of white racial identity and does

include the emotional implications of white guilt and shame. However, these are

negative emotions and the cycle neglects to consider that once the cycle of awareness

is complete, the white person may experience positive emotions through clarity of

thought and a commitment to social justice, such as anti-racism activism. Despite

these criticisms, both Helms (1990) and Cross (1991) have provided influential

frameworks to understand racial identity development which offer a sound platform

for further insights on this topic, whilst Ryde (2009) has put forward a British

perspective which links the disciplines of racial identity and psychotherapy.

<u>White racial identity</u>

A prominent contribution to understanding white racial identity, and to critical whiteness studies, is Frankenberg's (1993) research into how white women construct their 'race'. She conducted 30 in-depth interviews with white American women of various ages, class and sexualities over a 2-year period. Frankenberg found that the white women she interviewed tended to evade conscious awareness of colour and power, failed to recognise that whiteness is structurally advantageous and saw whiteness as normal. Frankenberg (1993) concluded:

> the process of altering present and future meanings of whiteness is inextricably connected to that of altering the meanings of other co-constructed racial and cultural identities (p.243).

This assertion that co-construction is necessary concurs with white racial identity models, such as Helms (1990) 'immersion-emersion' status and Ryde's (2009) 'understanding the other' phase. What these stages seem to overlook is the impact the development of white racial identity may have on people of colour if this learning takes place with an expectation that people of colour become facilitators in the development of a white racial identity. It has been argued that expecting black people to educate white people about 'race' is 'an old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master's concerns' (Lorde, 1984, p. 113).

Echoing Frankenberg's (1993) findings that white women avoid 'race', the feminist movement has been criticised for focusing solely on the struggles of white women who ignore the contributions of feminists of colour and fail to understand the intersection of 'race', gender, and class (Phipps, 2020). Crenshaw (1989) developed

the theory of intersectionality to describe the intricate way in which black women are discriminated against in the North American criminal justice system for both their gender and their 'race'. Crenshaw (1989) argues that intersectionality relates to the ways in which institutions (i.e., the law) leaves those with intersecting identities (i.e., black woman) vulnerable through systemic means (i.e., discrimination policies). This is pertinent as the inequalities black women face are not singular identity issues and their needs have often been overlooked by social justice causes, such as 'race' equality and feminism (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016). To overcome the traditional exclusion of black women by white feminists (Phipps, 2020) it has been suggested the development of a white racial identity can lead to an anti-racist white identity and intersectional ally status (Linder, 2015; Feenstra, 2017).

However, developing an intersectional white racial identity and engagement in anti-racist activism can lead to conflicting experiences. Malott *et al* (2015) conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 American participants who considered themselves in Helm's (1990) 'autonomy stage'. The results indicated the participants viewed whiteness as an oppressive force, felt they needed to construct a positive, intersectional identity and felt active participation in anti-racist activism counteracted their negative associations with whiteness. Yet challenges occurred, primarily with feelings of isolation from, and frustration with, white peers who remained unaware of their 'race'. This study partly addresses the gap found in white racial identity models which overlook the impact on interpersonal relationships with white peers.

Research has emphasised that possessing a strong white racial identity does not necessarily equate to intersectional inclusivity. In a quantitative study, comprising of a randomised telephone survey with 2081 North American participants, Croll (2007) found those who view diversity positively are less likely to have a strong white racial identity and the participants who perceived America as a 'white nation' positively (Croll, 2007, p. 628) had a stronger white racial identity and placed more importance on it. Although scholars posit that the development of racial identity is a 'path to enlightenment and activism' (Croll, 2007, p. 632) it can also be a marker of racist beliefs. This is supported by Goren and Plaut (2012) who highlight the importance of considering not just the strength of the person's white racial identity but also the form it takes: racist or anti-racist. Indeed, Hughey's (2010) year-long ethnographic research into anti-racist and white nationalist organisations, led him to conclude these apparently disparate groups shared similarities. These included both groups feeling victimised for their whiteness, the nationalists because of political correctness and the anti-racists feeling they were targeted for their activism. They also viewed black people as inferior, with the nationalists citing biological inferiority and the anti-racists citing cultural inferiority. This led Hughey (2010, p. 1306) to conclude:

> white racial identities cannot be distilled into static political formations
> that are distinct and separable; rather they share a common allegiance to
> dominant racial (and often racist) ideologies that transcend differing belief
> systems.

Therefore, it seems that simply claiming to have a white racial identity does not mean the individual is anti-racist and even within those who identify as anti-racist, prejudice may still remain. This suggests that there is ambiguity around what having a white

racial identity means for a white person. However, through asking white trainee

counsellors how they understand 'race', racism and whiteness, this research has

brought some clarity as to how they understand whiteness and their racial identity.

This is presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

2.1.4 White Privilege

The consequence of a pervasive belief of the superiority of whiteness as a form of

racial identity has led to what has been termed as 'white privilege'. The term is most

closely associated with McIntosh (1988) who outlined forty-six ways in which she

benefitted from, or was privileged by, being white; a phenomenon she coined as the

'invisible knapsack of white privilege' (McIntosh, 1988, p. 8). The recurrent theme in

her list of white privilege is the lack of repercussion for being white and an ability to

move adroitly through different aspects of life including schooling, medical care,

housing, employment and culture without having to consider whether her white racial

identity would be a barrier in doing so. McIntosh (1988) reflects upon the elusiveness

of whiteness as a subject and the pressure to avoid it by comparing it to male

privilege, as both white people and men are taught not to consider their privilege and

the ensuing advantages:

> As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something
> that puts others at a disadvantage but had been taught not to see one of
> its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage
> (McIntosh, 1988, p. 2).

A contemporary definition of white privilege is that it is a hierarchical expression of power within formal and informal frameworks, which is maintained by white people rationalising the categorisation of people of colour, through racism and cultural insensitivity (Bhopal, 2018). To operate in a society where whiteness is upheld at the cost of minorities, it has been suggested that white people numb themselves to the pain their actions can cause (Kendell, 2013, p. 61). The concept of white privilege can be a complex one, with many white people denying its existence but it has been argued that nonetheless, white people do consistently experience some privilege of some kind (Jensen, 2005). The contention that can surround white privilege was recently illustrated when a UK Government minister stated in the Houses of Parliament that teaching the existence of white privilege (alongside critical race theory) as a fact and 'without balanced views' in schools was considered illegal (Murray, 2020).

Another barrier to the notion of white privilege is the semantic connotation that 'privilege' has and the barrier the word can create for working-class white people, whose subjective experience may seem removed from notions of privilege. Reflecting on her experiences of teaching McIntosh's (1988) work to white working-class students, Fuller (2016) suggests that oftentimes these students do not feel they have encountered privilege which hinders their engagement with the concept. McIntosh (1988) describes and questions whether class inequality and oppression needs to be taught adjacent to white privilege to recognise the disparity of privilege. Countering this argument is Roediger (1991) who argues that in American society, whiteness is

more relevant to the concept of class than money. Roediger (1991) states that the lack of unification between the black and white Americans in the United States to improve their collective economic poverty, indicates that white working classes value their whiteness more than economic status. In other words, poor white people can actively vote against their best interests in order to feel aligned with economically privileged white Americans rather than unify with African-Americans for collective economic advancement. Succinctly, the psychological benefits of whiteness trump the economic benefit of class unity (Roediger, 1991). Jensen (2005) also recognises that whilst class does effect lives, society is constructed to uphold whiteness to a position of power and privilege.

A critique of McIntosh's (1988) work has been put forward by Blum (2008) who suggests that although the exploration of white privilege is a powerful force in tackling racial injustice, it presents itself in generalised terms and fails to provide a structural analysis. Blum (2008) also argues the term 'privilege' is too generalised, to address this he refines it into three categories: 'spared injustice'; 'unjust enrichment'; and 'non-justice-related privileges'. The former relates to a white person being spared the discrimination as faced by a black person; the second to a white person benefitting from the discrimination of a black person; and the latter refers to privileges whereby injustice is not present, but benefits are accrued, such as one language being privileged over another. In the same way, Sullivan (2017) reframes 'white privilege' as 'white priority' to overcome universalist generalisations of privilege that exclude issues of poverty and class. Instead, 'white priority' refers to all white people,

including lower-economic whites, who will still retain the belief that: 'at least I'm not the lowest of the low. I come before someone else: people of color (*sic*) and black people in particular' (Sullivan, 2017, p. 178). Whilst Sullivan (2017) herself recognises no term will perfectly encapsulate the reality of racial and class disparity, her 'white priority' does at least try to address the exclusionary, class-based connotations the word 'privilege' invokes. However, it has been argued that the notion of 'white privilege' focuses attention away from racism by reframing the issue of whiteness to the more palatable idea of privilege, even when the exploration of privilege is done with good intent (Chen, 2017). Supporting this argument, Lensmire *et al* (2013) suggested that whilst initially useful, McIntosh's (1988) concept of white privilege is used as 'stand-in' for all anti-racism work in the North American education sector, homogenises and simplifies white racial identities, and argues that the term 'white supremacy' needs to replace 'white privilege' in racial discourse. Therefore, it would seem that whatever the semantics used, considering the benefits of whiteness may be a way to avoid the realities of racism and racial inequality. This echoes Dyer's (2017) warning that critical whiteness studies may be a way of centralising whiteness.

Although white privilege seeks to critique the ways in which white people benefit from their white racial identity no matter their socio-economic status, white people can be affronted when it is suggested that such a phenomenon exists (Jenson, 2005; Kendell, 2013; Bhopal, 2018). However, Yancy (2012a) also highlights an interesting point: when white people do consider whiteness and its implications, they do so from their point of view and experience which is itself located in white power and privilege

(Yancy, 2012a, p. 8). This would indicate that white privilege needs to be not only

contemplated from the point of view of individual benefits but requires recognition of

the systemic benefits of being white. This form of consciousness raising may be

achieved through education of the history of whiteness and its contemporary

implications. However, the term 'privilege' may be a barrier to those from a low socio-

economic background who find the notion of being 'privileged' an anathema (Blum,

2008; Sullivan, 2017). Therefore, unpacking the word 'privilege' may be the first step

in consciousness raising.

Truly contemplating the accumulated effects of being the (often unaware) recipient of

white privilege can lead to a range of emotional and behavioural responses; this has

been termed 'white fragility' (DiAngelo, 2018). White fragility is 'triggered by

discomfort and anxiety, it is born of superiority and entitlement' and is a means of

racial control (DiAngelo, 2018 p. 2). One expression of discomfort is feeling individual

or collective guilt about the actions of white people and/or nations. There is a

tendency for white people to avoid their feelings of guilt, which can in fact reinforce

racist attitudes, because confronting the impact of suffering black people (and people

of colour) have been subjected to would produce 'an intolerable level of pain'

(Altman, 2003, p. 97). Likewise, white people feel more comfort when they deny their

feelings of guilt, so it persists from one generation to the next meaning there is never

a proper reparation made (Maddison, 2011). This denial is often coupled with guilt,

fear and anger, and demonstrated in behaviours such as silencing and withdrawal

(DiAngelo, 2018). On the other hand, Ryde (2009) suggests that the guilt and shame

experienced by white people around privilege and racism can be re-framed in a positive way and viewed as an opportunity to work through those feelings in order to reach a more balanced power relationship between black and white people.

Therefore, whilst it can be argued that white privilege does exist as the often-unconscious reward of white supremacy, it is often denied and rejected by white people. When it is brought the attention of white people it can be met with hostility or feelings of guilt that can be potentially overwhelming. However, those white people who do accept white privilege and are able to tolerate the ensuing challenging feelings need to be vigilant to the fact they are doing so whilst still situated within a position of power and privilege.

2.1.5 White Ignorance

Perhaps one explanation for white people not recognising and refuting white privilege (McIntosh, 1988; Kendell 2013; Bhopal 2018; Ryde, 2019) is due to white ignorance (Mills, 2007). Ignorance has been traditionally overlooked in relation to epistemology, given that epistemology is concerned with the theory of knowledge (Peels and Blaaw, 2017) and is similarly neglected in sociology (Mueller, 2018). However, the concept of epistemic ignorance is now receiving more scholarly attention (such as: Sullivan and Tuana, 2007; Gross and McGoey, 2015; Peels and Blaaw, 2017; McGoey, 2019). Racial epistemic ignorance has its origins in Mills (1997) theory of the 'racial contract'. This relates to the theory that society functions economically, morally, culturally and politically in favour of white people and therefore upholds white supremacy (Mills,

1997). Mills (1997) argues that historically the racial contract can be evidenced

through colonialisation, Christian doctrine, and the Enlightenment categorisation of

'race' (Section 2.1.1), all of which combined to see whites as 'human' and non-whites

as 'savages'. Moral and legal doctrines adopted this distinction, which became the

foundation of the modern world. Further, in order for the racial contract to function it:

> …prescribes for its signatories an inverted epistemology, an epistemology
> of ignorance, a particular pattern of localized (*sic*) and global cognitive
> dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional), producing
> the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the
> world they themselves have made (Mills, 1997, p. 18).

Thus, the racial contract is sustained through a wilful, collective ignorance by white

people (Mills, 1997), and is supported through institutional practices (Sullivan and

Tuana, 2007). Therefore, epistemic ignorance is understood not as an oversight or an

absence of knowledge, but as a 'substantive practice' (Alcoff, 2007, p. 39). Supporting

the notion of epistemic ignorance being an active, not passive, process, Medina (2013,

p. 140) proposes that although a state of ignorance may not be a conscious choice

'one's *inattention* to the ignorance one partakes in becomes *complicity and active*

participation'. To understand how it functions, Medina (2016, p. 183; Table 6) has

categorised epistemic ignorance in the following way:

Table 6 Medina's (2016) distinction between basic and active ignorance

Form of Ignorance	Description
Basic Ignorance	1) Absence of (true) belief 2) Presence of false belief
Advanced Ignorance	3) Cognitive resistances (e.g., prejudices, conceptual lacunas) 4) Affective resistances (e.g., apathy, interest in not knowing, 'the will *not* to believe') 5) Bodily resistances (e.g., feeling anxious, agitated, red in the face) 6) Defence mechanisms and strategies (deflecting challenges, shifting burden of proof, etc.)

(*taken from,* Medina, 2016, p. 183)

Consequently, an active resistance of knowledge can be multi-faceted from an absence of true beliefs to complex methods of resistance, which can exist at a personal level and be socially sanctioned (Medina, 2013). Further, Medina's (2013, p. 149) 'meta-blindness' is a form of ignorance whereby one has a 'blindness about one's blindness, insensitivity to insensitivity'. This nuanced way of understanding the machinations of epistemic ignorance allows it to be applicable to the resistance of knowing across multiple forms of injustice. It also considers that active ignorance can be wilful, oblivious, personal and societal (Medina, 2013).

White ignorance is used to refer to white people's epistemic ignorance of 'race' and racism. The 'white' in white ignorance refers to people who are socialised into the category of whiteness, in line with critical whiteness studies (Mills, 2015). In this way,

white ignorance understands whiteness as a socially constructed category (shown in

Section 2.1.2). White ignorance was introduced by Mills (2007), and is described as:

> A product of an epistemology of ignorance, a systemically supported,
> socially induced patterns of (mis) understanding the world that is
> connected to and works to sustain systemic oppression and privilege
> (Applebaum, 2010, p. 4)

White ignorance sits in contrast to black people's acute awareness of whites as a

means of literal and figurative survival in a white supremacist society (Mills, 2007). It is

also to be understood as a worldview, not simply a set of mistaken beliefs (Mills,

2015). This concept of a white worldview is seen in the 'white racial frame' which

relates to the myriad ways systemic racism has been upheld historically and

contemporarily by white people (Feagin, 2013). It has been argued that the 'heart' of

white ignorance is 'the refusal to recognize (*sic*) how the legacy of the past, as well as

ongoing practices in the present, continues to handicap people of colour' (Mills, 2015,

p. 219). This has been referred to as a form of 'collective amnesia about the past'

(Sullivan and Tuana, 2007, p. 3). In the same way, this research found there was an

absence of historical insight in the participants' understanding of 'race', racism and

whiteness (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). Further, there was also a collective absence of

contemporary socio-political understanding (Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

Analogous to epistemic ignorance is Fricker's (2007) theory of epistemic injustice,

which refers to a person's knowledge being discredited in two ways: testimonially and

hermeneutically. Testimonial injustice refers to a rejection of the knower's experience

or knowledge due to prejudice based on their identity (e.g., because they are a

woman or because they are a person of colour). Hermeneutical injustice refers to someone not having access to the conceptual and structural resources needed to understand their experiences. Fricker (2013) has resisted Medina's (2012) attempt to expand hermeneutical injustice to include white ignorance because she conceptualised the former as owning to a lack of culpability, whereas the latter is founded upon the notion of active culpability. In addition, white people are not the ones who are harmed by white ignorance because despite being 'hermeneutically disadvantaged' (Fricker, 2013, p. 54):

> their lack of conceptual tools with which to know their own social world plays to their general social advantage in terms of maintaining privilege without guilt (Fricker, 2013, p. 54)

For Fricker (2013), the recipient of injustice needs to take priority and as it is not white people who suffer injustice from white ignorance, epistemic injustice is not an appropriate theory to understand white ignorance. In response to Fricker (2013), Mills (2013) clarifies that white ignorance is not solely experienced by white people as this ignorance effects society systemically through white dominance, consequently people of colour can 'manifest white ignorance too' (Mills, 2007, p. 22). Whilst epistemic injustice is a useful concept to consider power imbalances in access to knowledge, for the purpose of this research it is felt that white ignorance (Mills, 2007) is a more suitable concept to explore the participants' understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness (see Chapter 6). In doing so, it falls in line with Fricker's (2013) argument that using hermeneutical injustice to understand white ignorance seems inappropriate given that white

people do not suffer 'injustice' from their ignorance. Chapter 6 will demonstrate how white ignorance functioned in the research interviews and introduce what I have termed 'White Ignorance Disruption' (Section 6.2).

2.1.6 'Race' and education

The history of 'race' and whiteness has been explored, resulting in a conclusion that 'race' is a social construct (Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2). Further, possessing a white racial identity has been found to be ambiguous for white people (Section 2.1.3). Nonetheless, white people still benefit from their whiteness (Section 2.1.4) and it is argued that this is achieved through strategic ignorance (Section 2.1.5). Moving from theoretical propositions, the practical consequences of 'race' will be considered to understand the contemporary realities of racial categorisation. Education was chosen because this research took place in a Further Education college. Additionally, counselling pedagogy is discussed in part 2 (Section 2.2.3) of this literature review and in Chapters 5 (Section 5.5) and 6 (Section 6.6). An overview of 'race' and education is therefore appropriate to this research.

The academic David Gillborn uses critical race theory to consider 'race' within the British educational system. Gillborn (2008) has put forward the argument that the debate around educational under-achievement often focuses on white working-class boys, leading to the neglection of racism within the British state education system. This has been demonstrated during the economic recession in decisions to cut educational programmes for pupils from multicultural backgrounds whilst

simultaneously introducing educational projects targeted at economically

disadvantaged white pupils (Gillborn, 2010; 2013). Taking a wider purview, Gillborn *et al* (2017) reviewed educational attainment statistics of white and black students in

England over a 25 year period. It was found education policy implementations

widened the attainment gap as benchmarks for measuring achievement were

changed. This meant that white students were 'always at least one and a half times

more likely to attain the dominant benchmark than their Black peers' (Gillborn *et al*,

2017, p. 848). The authors argue that this consistent differential gap is not arbitrary

statistical data, but an indication of wider inequality which may indicate long-term

consequences for black people in relation to further and higher education, as well as

employment opportunities. The reasons for this failure of educational policy may be

located in Warmington *et al* (2018). They interviewed people who were educators and

educational policy contributors in England from 1993-2013. During those two decades,

the participants felt that approaches to educational racial inequality had become ever

more de-racialised and colour-blind (Section 2.1.7 considers colour-blindness),

meaning that educational racial inequality has not been sufficiently challenged

(Warmington *et al,* 2018).

In Wales, the primary and secondary school population statistics are calculated

collectively and includes all pupils over the age of 5. In 2017, 92% of pupils were white

and 0.9% were black (Welsh Government, 2018). In regard to Higher Education in

Wales, statistics from 2018/2019 (HESA, ND) showed that white students make up

88% of the student population and black students 3%. These education specific

statistics reflect the wider demographic makeup of Wales. In the year ending

September 2018, Stats Wales (2019) showed that 4.7% of the Welsh population were

from a 'non-white' background. Therefore, the predominantly white population of

Wales will inevitably be reflected in the education sector's demographics. The Wales-

based Ethnic Youth and Support Team or 'EYST' (EYST, 2018) conducted research into

young Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) peoples experience of racism in Wales.

They held focus groups with 31 BAME pupils across four local authorities and found

that pupils experienced racism in different ways, from overt racial harassment to

covert ways such as the disciplining of BAME students. Students also felt their

identities were not represented in the Eurocentric curriculum (EYST, 2018). The young

people felt that racism was an everyday occurrence and was usually expressed as a

'joke' or 'banter' by their peers; most of the students felt that anti-racism education

was important, but their schools were lacking in it (EYST, 2018). This is supported by

earlier research about 'race' and anti-racism in the Welsh education system which

included students, trainee teachers and qualified teachers (Show Racism the Red Card,

2016). It was found that of the 435 teachers surveyed, 'the majority of teachers (84%)

have not received any training on how to teach anti-racism' and is viewed by teachers

as low priority (Show Racism the Red Card, 2016, p.5). The students' experiences and

the teachers' lack of anti-racism training can perhaps be related to the finding that

formalised approaches to racial inequality in education have become de-racialised and

colour-blind (Warmington *et al,* 2018). Supporting the argument that there is a lack of

'race' education in the Welsh curricula, a Welsh Government (2021a) report also

found that 'racial inequality is a feature of education in Wales' in primary and

secondary education (Welsh Government, 2021a, p. 8). Findings of the report included pupils of colour feeling that the curriculum did not represent their background, teaching resources relating to ethnic diversity were inadequate and that the education workforce was not ethnically diverse (Welsh Government, 2021a). The report included recommendations that education staff have mandatory anti-racism training, increase recruitment of black, Asian and ethnic minority teachers through scholarships and that the whole curriculum should include the teaching of 'themes relating to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities and experiences' (Welsh Government, 2021, p. 16). The Welsh Government's Education Secretary has accepted these recommendations and from 2022 'the history of Wales in all its diversity will be mandatory' within the curriculum (Welsh Government, 2021b).

In the same way that children and young people of colour experience disparity and racism in the educational system, so do staff and students of colour in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). Research into 30 HEIs in England, Scotland and Wales found that staff and students of colour were reluctant to make formal complaints about racial harassment (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019). This was due to inadequate complaints procedures, mostly in complaints not being recognised as serious. Consequently, complaints of racial harassment by staff and students tended to go unreported. Yet HEIs interpreted the low number of reports as evidence that there was a lack of racial harassment (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019).

This is supported by women of colour in British academia who have written about the discrimination they have faced (Ahmed, 2012; Bhopal, 2016). A central theme being that 'race' has not been adequately recognised in discourses about gender in academia, with this unacknowledged aspect leading to feelings of invisibility and exclusion (Bhopal, 2016; Gabriel and Tate, 2017). Furthering this, it has been put forward that educational leadership in UK academia is largely unaware of the barriers faced by academics of colour (Arday, 2018), with management perhaps not wanting to engage with those who may be experiencing discrimination lest is shatters the illusion of institutional harmony (Ahmed, 2012). Indeed, it has been argued that 'race' equality policy has declined in British universities since the millennium, whereby:

> individuals from minority ethnic communities disproportionately experience adverse outcomes in higher education. And yet universities are extraordinarily complacent. They see themselves as liberal and believe existing policies ensure fairness and, in the process, ignore adverse outcomes and do not see combating racial/ethnic inequalities as a priority (Pilkington, 2015, p. 9).

It could be argued that this is because it is rare to find academics of colour in senior managerial positions (Bhopal, 2018). Likewise, Rollock (2019) interviewed 20 of the 25 black female professors in the UK to learn about their experiences in academia. It was found that the challenges they experienced in their careers included bullying, racial discrimination in the form of microaggressions and stereotyping, a complicated promotional pathway which lacked clarity, and a lack of support and solidarity from white female academics (Rollock, 2019). Recalling Gillborn's *et al* (2017) assertion that educational attainment gaps at secondary school can have consequences in further

and higher education, as well as employment, it seems that even those who reach the top of the Academy still experience racial disparity.

Further Education

As this doctoral research takes place within a Further Education institution (FEI) it is relevant to consider the data pertaining to the demographic composition of these institutions. Firstly, the academic year prior to when it commenced and then the academic year when the research was conducted. During 2017/2018, data gathered by the Welsh Government (2019) showed that in Wales, 118,590 students attended FEIs. In total, there were 275 students attending Higher Education (HE) courses at a FEI. HE includes Higher National Diplomas and Foundation Degrees and the FEIs in Wales offer counselling courses at both of these levels. Women aged 25-49 comprised the highest proportion of learners in FEIs in Wales (Welsh Government, 2019). Data showing the racial demographics of FE students in Wales was not available, with gender and age group forming the primary basis for statistical information (StatsWales, ND). However, recent data for the academic year 2018/2019, showed an increase in those attending FEIs in Wales, with 122,040 learners, 7.7% of whom identified as BAME (Welsh Government, 2020b). There was a decrease in HE courses offered, with 225 compared to 275 the previous year. Remaining consistent was that mature female learners comprised the biggest proportion of all learners in FEIs, including on HE courses (Welsh Government, 2020b). These statistics mean that the sixteen research participants (fifteen women and one man) from 'Welsh College A'

who took part in this research were representative of students attending FEIs in Wales as they were white, female, mature students attending a part-time course.

Therefore, it can be seen there is a structural inequality reflected in different levels of the education system (Gillborn, 2010; Gillborn *et al*, 2017; Ahmed, 2012; Gabriel and Tate, 2017). This is particularly the case for ethnic minority women (Arday, 2018; Bhopal, 2018; Rollock, 2019). In Wales, statistical data shows that FE students are in the majority women aged 25-49 attending part-time courses (Welsh Government, 2019; 2020b). Recent data pertaining to the 'race' of students shows that FEIs in Wales are predominantly attended by white people (Welsh Government, 2020b).

2.1.7 Racism

As has been discussed in Section 2.1.3, possessing a white racial identity does not necessarily equate to anti-racist behaviour or action by white people (Croll, 2007; Hughey, 2010; Goren and Plaut, 2012). Understanding racism is to acknowledge the various forms it can take and awareness that racism can be individual and systemic, overt and covert. Therefore, this section will outline institutional/systemic racism, racialisation and colour-blind racism as three examples of the forms racism can take. It is thought these particular forms will give an insight into the complex and covert nature of racism. However, it is recognised this is not an exhaustive list of the manifold forms that racism can take. The types of racism discussed below fall under the category 'new racism', a term devised by Barker (1981) to describe the emergence of a less overt type of racism which, he argued, began to emerge in Thatcher's neo-liberal

Britain. New racism is marked by its covertness, invisibility, and avoidance of racial

vocabulary (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich, 2012).

The historian David Olusoga (2019) has argued that racism is:

> a 400-year-old political and economic system that has infected our
> institutions, our culture and even our thinking.

This statement affirms critical race theory scholar Derrick Bell's argument that 'racism

is an integral, permanent, and indestructible component' of society (1992, p. ix). To

that end, critical race theory understands racism to be a common place occurrence in

society, rather than an anomaly (Crenshaw *et al*, 1995; Delgado and Stefancic, 2017).

Similarly, critical whiteness studies has argued that white people need to investigate

how they benefit from the social construction of whiteness, including racism (Grillo

and Wildman, 1997).

In 1965 at the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial

Discrimination, the United Nations declared:

> "racial discrimination" shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or
> preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin
> which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition,
> enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and
> fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any
> other field of public life (United Nations, 1965, Article 1.1)

Despite this clear definition, it has been argued that 'too little, too slowly' has been

done by the international community in tackling racism (United Nations, 2012, p. v).

Institutional and Systemic Racism

Institutional racism and systemic racism (also referred to as structural racism) are

often used interchangeably. For the purposes of this section, the terms 'institutional'

and 'systemic' are used as they were in the literature. Institutional racism refers to

the:

> patterns, procedures, practices and policies that operate within social
> institutions so as to penalize (*sic*), disadvantage and exploit members of
> nonwhite racial/ethnic groups (Better, 2008, p. 11)

Whereas as systemic racism takes a wider purview, expanding from institutional

practice by stating that:

> Today, as in the past, systemic racism encompasses as broad range of
> white-racist dimensions: the racist ideology, attitudes, emotions, habits,
> actions and institutions of whites in this society. Thus, systemic racism is
> far more than a matter of racial prejudice and individual bigotry. It is a
> material, social, and ideological reality (Feagin, 2006, p. 2).

From these definitions, it is possible to understand how these terms are

interchangeable as both refer to the ways in which institutions enact racial injustice

and racism through policies and procedures which uphold racial inequality. Perhaps

where they differ, is that systemic racism recognises the ideological component

underpinning the policies, practices and procedures used by institutions.

For example, it has previously been outlined the ways in which the education sector

has been accused of institutional/systemic racism through its policies and procedures

which disadvantage students and academics of colour (such as: Gillborn, 2010;

Ahmed, 2012; Arday, 2018). Institutional racism was first introduced by civil rights

activists Carmichael and Hamilton (1967, p. 4) who defined it as 'acts by the total

white community against the black community'. They argued that although

institutional racism may be less identifiable than individual racism, it is no less

destructive yet often receives less public opprobrium.

Arguably, one the most well-known cases of institutional racism in the UK is outlined

in the Macpherson Report (1999). This report outlined the findings of the public

inquiry into the Metropolitan Police's handling of the investigation into the murder of

Stephen Lawrence. The report understood institutional racism as:

> The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and
> professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic
> origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour
> which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance,
> thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority
> ethnic people (Macpherson Report, 1999, 6.34)

This description was soon criticised for being too ambiguous by failing to specify which

particular practices constitute as institutionally racist and for neglecting to

differentiate between individual and institutional racism (Lea, 2000; Bridges, 2000). It

has been suggested the purpose of institutional racism is to uphold white privilege and

does so via 'patterns, procedures, practices and policies' and take various forms such

as exclusion, discrimination and neglect (Better, 2008, p. 11).

In 2021, a Government commissioned report, known as the 'Sewell Report', was

published (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021a) and offers

contemporary insight into how institutional racism is perceived at a governmental

level. The report stated it is 'concerned' with how the term 'institutional racism' has been used since the publication of the Macpherson Report (1999), believing it is 'liberally' used and that 'misapplying the term racism has diluted its credibility' (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021, p. 34). It argued that the:

> use of the term 'institutional racism' to be applied only when deep-seated racism can be proven on a systemic level and not be used as a general catch-all phrase for any microaggression, witting or unwitting (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021a, p. 8).

The report also suggested that discourse around institutional racism (and white privilege) is being perpetuated by 'well-intentioned young people', a discourse that the report argues will only achieve 'alienating the decent centre ground' (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021a, p. 27). Thus, the report's argument seems to be that institutional racism is a rare occurrence and is an overused term that should only be applied with sufficient evidence.

The report, including its stance on institutional racism, was met with criticism (such as: The Runnymede Trust, 2021a; The BMJ, 2021; Lentin, 2021). The UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (United Nations, 2021) have refuted the report's findings stating that 'institutional racism, structural invisibility, and longstanding inequalities have disproportionately impacted people of African descent living in the UK'. Overall, they argue that the report is an 'attempt to normalise white supremacy' (United Nations, 2021).

Countering the claims presented in the Government commissioned report, The

Runnymede Trust's (2021b, p. 17) own report states that:

> Structural and institutional racism therefore shape the inequalities faced
> by Black and ethnic minority people by leading to their disproportionate
> representation in insecure and low-paid employment, overcrowded
> housing, and deprived neighbourhoods.

Indeed, a summary of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report

published on the government website (2021b) admitted that:

> A considerable number of respondents used terms such as 'systematic',
> 'systemic', 'structural', 'institutional', 'internalised', 'inherent' and
> 'cultural' racism to describe what they considered to be the cause of
> ethnic disparities.

However, the acknowledgement that those interviewed frequently cited

institutional racism as a factor in their experience of racial inequality did not

alter the published report which seemed to discredit and minimise institutional

racism (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021a). Likewise, a number

of academics cited in the report have claimed that their research and opinions

were misrepresented (Mohdin, 2021). Using Better's (2008, p. 11) suggestion

that institutional racism can encompass exclusion and neglect,

it therefore could be argued that the report itself may be an example of

institution racism through the exclusion and neglection of an accurate

representation of the people of colour who contributed to it.

Offering a more nuanced understanding of institutional racism as well as addressing

the separation between institutional racism and individual responsibility found in the

Macpherson (1999) definition and a means to confront practice and policy (Better, 2008) is Phillips (2011) multilevel framework. This is an attempt to tackle institutional racism by situating it within individual and systemic racism, recognising these elements work together and are not separate forms of racial discrimination. It uses the concept of racialisation (see below), to reframe institutional racism as 'institutional racialisation'. The multilevel framework comprises of three levels: micro (individual, such as face-to-face racism), meso (context, such as institutional practice, socio-economics and policy) and macro (structural, such as globalisation and distribution of resources) (Phillips, 2011). She recommends addressing micro level racism as the first step in tacking institutional racialisation at the meso and macro levels. However, it has been argued that well-intentioned white people are perpetuating institutional racism by being silent and passive about racism (Trepagnier, 2016). Indeed, white people are 'social actors who do not realise they are part of the tapestry of institutional racism' (Brennan, 2017, p. 210). Since white people are liable to react with strong negative emotions when accused of racism (DiAngelo, 2018), tackling racism at the micro (individual) level may be complex and time-consuming, meaning that the meso (institutional) level remains uncontested. Nonetheless, Phillips (2011) multilevel framework is a useful way to understand how racism can manifest at the micro, meso and macro levels of society and it has been adapted in this research to understand the research findings (Chapter 6, Section 6.7; Chapter 7, Section 7.7).

Racialisation

Phillips' (2011) refers to 'institutional racialisation'. Racialisation was introduced by Fanon (1967) and expanded by Banton (1977) who both understood it in relation to colonialisation, power and dominance. However, it has been argued that the concept is too broad, in both theory and application, meaning racialisation does not allow for an unequivocal definition (Murji and Solomos, 2005; Garner, 2017). For the purposes of this thesis, the understanding of the term comes from Garner's (2017) differentiation between 'race', racism and racialisation: with 'race' being focused on categorisation, racism regarding the consequences of those categories and racialisation relating to the ongoing, mutable process of racial categorisation. Racialisation recognises that the generalisations applied to certain groups can be complex and both can be used to seemingly praise and denigrate entire groups not racialised as white. Generalisations are based upon perceived behaviours, characteristics and cultural values and are placed on whole groups of people without their consent by the dominant group (i.e., white people) (Garner, 2017). However, the generalisations are historically contingent, changing over time depending on the needs of the dominant group. For example, the racialisation of Muslims post 9/11 meant that the dominant group's (white) perception changed from Muslims being perceived as the exotic 'Other' to dangerous (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). Minority groups can also self-racialise as a means of regaining power from the dominant group, such as in the Black Power movement (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967; Garner, 2017).

Research has shown how racialisation can affect ideas of belonging and is relevant to current political issues. Garner (2012) considered the relationship between class, whiteness and racialisation by conducting 450 interviews over a 6-year period in provincial English cities. It was found that although white working classes were constrained in their power, they did possess the ability to 'discursively include or exclude from nation/community, for it was they who construct the "we"' (Garner, 2012, p. 460). It is this racialised understanding of 'nation' that shapes wider national discussion around the topic. To that end, Mondon and Winter (2018) used racialisation to understand the white working classes in the United Kingdom and North America within the context of Brexit and Donald Trump's presidency. They argue this populist racialisation, implemented by campaigners and reinforced by media commentators, resulted in the legitimisation of whiteness as an identity, normalised racism and the far right, delegitimised black and ethnic minorities lived experiences and failed to recognise the diversity of the working-classes. This reveals how racialisation was used in the political realm to reinforce the white dominant status and subordinate the experiences and voices of the 'Other'. However, it has been put forward this racialising of nationalism does not originate from a sense of superiority but from a place of inferiority stemming from a sense of loss over a world that is recognisable to white working-class voters (Virdee and McGeever, 2017).

Therefore, although racialisation can be difficult to define (Murji and Solomos, 2005; Garner, 2017) it involves an ongoing process which seeks to assert dominance through categorising and re-categorising people of colour in terms that are beneficial to

upholding white supremacy (Garner, 2017). Contemporary examples of this include

Brexit and Donald Trump's presidency whereby nationalistic rhetoric (Mondon and

Winter, 2018; Virdee and McGeever, 2017; Gusterson, 2017) was underpinned

through racialising the 'Other'.

Racialisation was identified in this research and evidenced by some research

participants who considered what it would be like to work with a Muslim client.

Generalisations (such as gender stereotypes) were placed upon the imagined client

and were interpreted as being a potential barrier to effective counselling practice. This

will be explored in Chapter 5 (Sections 5.5 and 5.6) and Chapter 6 (Sections 6.3 and

6.6).

Colour-blind Racism

Although racialisation was identified in the research findings, colour-blind racism was

more prevalent and expressed by the participants as a way to demonstrate they were

not racist (Chapter 5, Section 5.4; Chapter 6, Sections 6.5, 6.6; 6.7 and Chapter 7,

Sections 7.5, 7.7). As the British-Ethiopian poet Sissay (2017, p. 108) describes in his

poem 'Colour Blind', which is reproduced at the start of this thesis, colour-blindness

has an inherent fallacy, because white people who are able to see the colour in the

world around them may also claim to not see it in people of colour. This has been

termed colour-blind racism, an example of 'new racism' given its covert nature. It is

described as 'racism without racists' (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, p. 57), as those who claim to

be colour-blind would not think of themselves as racist, rather colour-blindness is seen

as evidence of not being racist. In 2003, Bonilla-Silva presented his theory of colour-blind racism (2003; 2018; summarised in Table 7) in which he argues that this form of racism is used by the majority of white people and comprises of four 'frames':

Table 7 Summary of Bonilla-Silva's (2018) Four Frames of Colour-blind racism

Frame	Description
Abstract Liberalism	The foundation of new racism. Based on the tenets of liberalism, a belief in 'everybody is equal', ignoring the reality of minority inequality (such as in education and criminal justice).
Naturalisation	Echoes biological racism by claiming it is natural for groups to prefer associating with those like themselves.
Cultural Racism	Uses culturally centred statements to generalise whole groups as a rationale for that groups' lack of racial progress.
Minimisation	Minimises the realities and consequences of discrimination. Understands racism only in explicit, overt forms.

(*adapted from* Bonilla-Silva, 2018, pp. 54-74)

The frames are fluid and interact, making it challenging to distinguish the specific frame being used (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). An example of this would be the statement: 'I believe we're all equal because discrimination is no longer that bad'. This statement includes both abstract liberalism and minimisation. Wise (2010) presents what he terms post-racial liberalism, akin to abstract liberalism, which he claims reduces focus on racial discrimination, instead preferring to advocate universal solutions for inequality for all people. Post-racial liberalism, Wise (2010) posits, is a form of colour-blind racism which serves two functions. Firstly, it contains the belief that inequality is not based on 'race' but rather economics, and secondly, it permits a lack of support from whites for policies that address inequality and promote opportunity for people of

colour. In doing so, racism is sustained and further entrenched through minimising the importance of 'race' (Wise, 2010). Colour-blind racism is often enacted by individuals who believe they are unbiased in regard to 'race', but this attitude can lead to feelings of isolation for people of colour and stifles discussion around 'race' and racism (Burke, 2019).

Recent research has presented a fifth frame to add to Bonilla-Silva's (2018) colour-blind model. Termed the 'disconnected power-analysis frame' (Jayakumar and Adamian, 2017) it relates to how white people who are developing their racial identity and a burgeoning knowledge of racism, reconstruct their colour-blind attitudes. This reconstruction facilitates the avoidance of negative feelings and ultimately aids the continuation of white supremacy (Jayakumar and Adamian, 2017). The research was carried out via semi-structured interviews with 18 white, North American students who attend 'Historically Black Colleges and Universities'. Although the interviewer was white, a deliberate choice to allow the participants a sense of safety to be open with their opinions, the researchers were women of colour and they analysed the data. The researchers reflexively note that they often had to step away from the data as the participants' comments were triggering to them (Jayakumar and Adamian, 2017). This research is insightful in two ways: the findings which show how even when confronted with 'race' and racism in black dominated spaces, the white participants adapted their attitudes to feel they were on the one hand learning, but on the other hand protected themselves from uncomfortable feelings. The other insight is the reflexivity of the

researchers regarding the personal effect the data analysis had which illustrates how researching 'race' and racism can be emotionally challenging.

A North American quantitative research study has presented a fresh perspective on colour-blindness. In an online survey with 2521 white, African-American and Hispanic participants, Hartmann *et al* (2017) found that more than 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: 'I'm colorblind (*sic*) – that is, I don't see race' (Hartmann *et al*, p. 871). Hispanics were more likely to agree with the statement and African-Americans more likely to strongly disagree. The researchers concluded from their study that such willingness to admit to colour-blindness suggests that it has become an aspect of self-identity as opposed to a theory to be identified with. However, the study would benefit from qualitative methods to glean further insight, particularly how participants came to learn that not seeing 'race' was a positive characteristic. Hartmann *et al* (2017) acknowledge the statement used in the research itself is problematic as it associates colour-blindness with 'race'. On one the hand, the statement: 'I'm colorblind (*sic*) – that is, I don't see race' (Hartmann *et al*, 2017, p. 871) provided the participants with a definition in order to answer the question but it does not qualitatively explore that different people and different 'races' may attach different semantic meaning to the word 'colour-blind'. Discussing Hartmann *et al* (2017), Burke (2019) recognises the nuance in colour-blindness, that it can change form and expression across racial and political groups, and:

> if someone says they are colour-blind, this can be an expression of moral
> commitment to antiracism as much as it can be a defence of the racist
> status quo (Burke, 2019, p. 22).

Despite this, it is striking that 70% of participants in Hartmann *et al's* (2017) research

openly agreed to being colour-blind which indicates that it is regarded positively.

Likewise, colour-blindness as the preferable way of understanding 'race', was

demonstrated in a report submitted by UK Government to the United Nations

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (United Nations, 2015) which

stated:

> We believe it is a mistake to see inequalities only in terms of race and
> ethnic origin, since socio-economic status and poverty affect people's
> chances in life, regardless of racial or ethnic background. We have
> therefore made a deliberate shift away from interventions specifically on
> the basis of race or ethnicity, and towards increasing the impact of
> mainstream policies and programmes for disadvantaged communities, in
> disadvantaged areas (p. 5)

Citing this statement, The Runnymede Trust (2016a), a 'race' equality think tank,

accused the government of being colour-blind due to its explicit statement of

prioritising socio-economic considerations and actively moving away from 'race'

specific interventions. Therefore, in this statement, the UK Government itself seems to

encompass two of the three forms of racism considered. Institutional racism can be

applied when applying the Macpherson (1999, 6.34) definition, specifically the

attitudes and behaviours that result in discrimination through unwitting ignorance.

This discrimination born of ignorance relates to Bonilla-Silva's (2018) abstract

liberalism and minimisation frames of colour-blind racism in that it promotes the

notion of equality via socio-economic means (i.e., people will experience the same

opportunities if economic barriers are removed). Such a stance minimises the impact

of 'race' in society that the barriers racial difference can make to progress, such as in the education system (Section 2.1.5).

By considering these three forms of racism, it has been demonstrated that racism can be subtle, ambiguous and enacted by people who would otherwise argue they are non-racist. The research presented in this thesis is intended to bring clarity to the subject of 'race', racism and whiteness by seeking to qualitatively explore how white trainee counsellors understand 'race', racism and whiteness. However, racism cannot be reduced to its theoretical components, as it is a lived reality for people of colour. One of the consequences of racism is its effect on the psychological well-being of people of colour. Therefore, the impact of racism will be considered through the theory of race-based traumatic stress.

Race-based traumatic stress

Carter (2007) first introduced the concept of racial trauma. He asserts that there has been a lack of recognition regarding the emotional and psychological effects of racism. This theory allows for acknowledgment of the factors outside the individuals control, i.e., racism, without pathologising or blaming the person for their response. Pathologising can include mental health diagnosis (Carter, 2007). It is associated with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), something which can occur after a traumatic incident when a person is, or perceives themselves (or others), to be in bodily danger either directly or indirectly, leading to psychological symptoms including anxiety, depression, dissociation and hypervigilance (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Hemmings and Evans (2018) concur with this, stating that racism can result in psychological problems including anxiety and PTSD. Similarly, North American research comprising of 743, mostly female, undergraduate students aged 18-29, found a link between dissociation and racial discrimination (Polanco-Roman, Daines and Anglin, 2018). Dissociation is a survival tool that can occur when a person is overwhelmed with feelings of being in danger and 'may escape psychologically, by splitting off the experience and associated sensations' (Sanderson, 2013, p. 39). The researchers argue that a way to mitigate this is through employing coping strategies such as possessing a strong racial identity, they also argue mental health professionals should actively enquire about racial discrimination as standard procedure (Polanco-Roman, Daines and Anglin, 2018). Similar to Polanco-Roman, Daines and Anglin (2018), another North American study with 282 participants, found that an internalised, i.e., strong, racial identity can be related to lower levels of 'race'-based traumatic stress (Carter *et al*, 2017). Whilst both of these studies offer valuable insights into the presentation of 'race'-based traumatic stress, the research itself carries an ethical risk that neither study mentioned: re-traumatisation. These studies relied on self-report measures via various questionnaires and required the participants to re-examine traumatic incidents, it could be argued that this carries a risk of re-traumatisation that was not acknowledged by the researchers. Re-traumatisation pertains to trauma being re-experienced by a person with a similar intensity as when they first experienced it (Rothschild, 2017). Therefore, it is possible to infer that research on this topic needs to be conducted ethically, sensitively and with awareness

that findings may be affected by the re-traumatisation the participant could be experiencing in the present when recounting incidents in the past.

Likewise, a systemic review of 28 studies on 'race'-based traumatic stress (Kirkinis *et al* 2018) found that whilst this is a relatively new area of research that has found significant links between racism and trauma symptoms, the studies fail to account for factors such as vicarious and intergenerational trauma. However, 'race'-based traumatic stress is a theory which has potential for further research and is something to which health professionals need to remain vigilant (Kirkinis *et al*, 2018). Indeed, research in North America using an online survey with 106 counsellors, found that 70% of respondents felt they had worked with 'race'-based traumatic stress yet 71% felt they had not received adequate training to identify it and 81% believed they did not receive any training in how to work with it (Hemmings and Evans, 2018). Therefore, solutions to deal with racial trauma seem to be presented in two separate ways: with the individual affected applying coping strategies (Carter *et al*, 2016; Polanco-Roman, Daines and Anglin, 2018) and mental health professionals, including counsellors, being more aware of it (Carter, 2007; Carter *et al*, 2017; Hemmings and Evans, 2018; Kirkinis, 2018).

Therefore, racism has a psychological impact on people of colour, but it is something to which counsellors feel ill-equipped to identify or work with (Hemmings and Evans, 2018). To understand why counsellors may feel untrained and unprepared to work

with race-based traumatic stress, part 2 of the literature review will consider the counselling profession and its relationship to 'race'.

2.2 Counselling and 'Race'

A succinct history of 'race' and its contemporary implications has been considered in part 1 of this chapter. The literature reviewed thus far indicates that white people are generally unaware of the social construction of 'race' or their racial identity (Sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3). The literature that follows suggests this is also replicated within the counselling profession.

It is worth re-iterating that this research is undertaken with The Centre of Humanities and Social Sciences. Consequently, the literature will not focus on the dynamics of therapeutic practice but rather offer a consideration of broader themes related to 'race', Eurocentrism and pedagogy within counselling. It is thought that in doing so, a balance will be struck between the social justice and counselling elements of this doctoral research. Research pertaining to psychotherapy has been included because the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), do not distinguish between counselling and psychotherapy. This is discussed further when defining what is meant by 'counselling' (Section 2.2.2).

The chapter will begin with an overview of the Eurocentric nature of mental health before focusing on counselling. It would appear that the Eurocentric parameters of mental health reflect the findings in part 1 of this chapter, in that whiteness is the

normalised and invisible standard by which other groups are measured (Halley,

Eshleman, and Mahadevan-Vijaya, 2011; Hayes *et al*, 2013; Applebaum, 2016a).

2.2.1 Eurocentrism and mental health

Eurocentrism relates to the domination of the Westernised perspective on other

cultures (Amin, 2009; Stanziani, 2018). With Eurocentric theories prioritising 'certain

race, class and gender variables over others (e.g., white, middle-class, heterosexual

and masculine)' (Braun Williams, 2006, p. 177). In regard to mental health,

Eurocentrism can present itself in the construction of diagnostic labels and conditions,

meaning culturally appropriate behaviour could be perceived as abnormal from a

Westernised perspective (Hall, 2011). Supporting this argument, Watters (2011) states

that the Westernised understanding of mental illness dominates the global

understanding of mental illness. Thus, culture-specific comprehension of well-being is

being replaced by a homogenised, Western standardisation (Watters, 2011). This

spread of Westernised understanding, diagnosis and treatment to the Global South

has been referred to a form of colonialisation (Fernando, 2014) and 'psychiatric

imperialism' (Fernando, 2010, p. 112). Western historical and political dominance has

been cited as contributory factors in influencing the meaning of 'mental health' in the

Global South that align with Westernised definitions (Fernando and Moodley, 2018).

The Eurocentric parameters of what constitutes as 'mental health' may be one

explanation for why people of colour have negative and inequitable experiences of

mental health services in the UK (The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2002;

Mental Health Foundation, 2018; Chouhan and Nazroo, 2020). To overcome this issue,

there have been calls to decolonialise understandings of mental health, through social

justice approaches (Mills, 2014; Ibrahim, 2017; Gelberg *et al*, 2018) (Section 2.2.2).

As perceptions and definitions of mental health have been accused of being

Westernised and Eurocentric, counselling has also been accused of Eurocentrism

(Alleyne, 2011; Jones-Smith; 2012). Eurocentrism in counselling can perhaps be

located in the dominance of white practitioners (Boyle, 2020). However, it may also be

located in how counselling considers 'race', racial identity, racism and the traditional

approaches it has used in working with people of colour (Section 2.2.2). Likewise, this

literature review has found that reference to 'race', racism and whiteness is absent

from the BACP's course accreditation guidelines (BACP, 2012) and their ethical

framework (BACP, 2018a) (Section 2.2.3). Hence, the dominance of and avoidance of

'race', (Section 2.2.2) supports the argument that like mental health services,

counselling is also culpable of Eurocentrism.

2.2.2 Counselling

Finding a clear definition for 'counselling' is more challenging than it might appear,

given the disagreements within the profession over what constitutes 'counselling'

verses 'psychotherapy' (Reeves, 2013). The two dominant professional bodies in the

UK are the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP, 2020a) and

the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP, 2020a) and both have different

definitions. The BACP contends that counselling and psychotherapy are essentially the

same process and use the word 'therapy' as an umbrella term (BACP 2020b). Whereas

the UKCP differentiates itself by representing psychotherapy and psychotherapeutic counselling, the latter being counselling that is rooted in psychotherapeutic theories and tradition (UKCP, 2020b). Both of these organisations provide training, registration, and accreditation and have their own ethical frameworks (BACP, 2018a; UKCP, 2019). It should be noted that in the UK, counselling is not a regulated profession. To deal with the ambiguity around counselling and psychotherapy, the BACP, UKCP and the British Psychoanalytic Council (BPC) are currently collaborating on a new framework that aims to differentiate and clarify what is meant by 'counselling' and 'psychotherapy'. This is intended to inform training, competency, and standards for practitioners and is known as 'The Scope of Practice and Education (SCoPEd) Framework' (BACP, 2018b).

For the purposes of researcher transparency, it is relevant to present my own understanding of 'counselling' which informs this research. My training was on a BACP accredited course and was rooted in the humanistic models, specifically the 'Integrative Framework' (Lapworth and Sills, 2010) and the 'person-centred approach' (Rogers, 1989). Humanistic models were first developed in the mid-twentieth century and sought to actively move away from the notion of the therapist as the 'expert' (Reeves, 2013) and was centred on the premise that an individual has the capacity to reach 'self-actualisation' (Maslow, 1968). The person-centred approach was developed by Carl Rogers and sought to shift the client/therapist power dynamics, depart from medicalisation and placed greater significance on the relationship between the therapist and client; known as the 'therapeutic relationship' (Rogers,

1989). Indeed, it was Rogers who used the word 'counselling' to signify a mental health professional who did not have a medical background (Joseph, Murphy and Holford, 2018). Central to Rogers theory are his 'core conditions' of counselling: congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathy (Rogers, 1989). This approach has been called radical given its conscious departure from medicalising emotions (Wilkins, 2016) with Rogers exhortation for 'the need to identify external oppressions which we have internalised' (Kearney, 1996, p. 70). Wilkins (2016) and Kearney (1996) concede this political dynamic has been lost.

Counselling and 'race'

The loss of the political dynamic of counselling may explain why there are limited, if notable, voices within the counselling profession who write about 'race'. These include Lago (2001); Sue and Sue (2008; 2016); Tuckwell, (2002); Moodley and Palmer (2006); Ryde (2009), McKenzie-Mavinga (2016) and Turner (2021). This has changed recently with recognition that white counsellors need to become aware of 'race' and their whiteness (Jackson 2018, 2020a; Turner 2018a, 2018b) and counsellors of colour calling for policy changes (Jackson, 2020b).

Banks (1999) suggests that the traditional lack of discourse about 'race' in counselling may be situated in the emphasis on theoretical orientation and counselling model, rather approaching 'race' as a specific topic. He argues that when working with black clients, white counsellors may adhere to their theoretical counselling orientation

rather than considering the socio-political realities of their black clients' lives. Further, white counsellors:

> although claiming to have skills in mutual understanding, empathy, rapport, etc. would seem to have difficulties with issues involving direct reference to race and ethnicity (Banks, 1999, p. 14)

Supporting this, it has been suggested that therapists find it 'difficult to adopt and implement appropriate therapeutic approaches with ethnic minority clients' (Moodley and Palmer, 2006, p. 23). The inference being that white therapists may feel unprepared to change their approach with clients of colour, given the dominance of whiteness in counselling theory and practice (Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3). Part 1 of this chapter showed that there is a lack of awareness about 'race' and whiteness for white people (Sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3). White ignorance has been offered as an explanation for this (Mills, 2007; Section 2.1.5). It is therefore possible to argue that this lack of awareness, or ignorance, continues into the counselling profession which is dominated by white practitioners (Lago, 2011, p. 179; Boyle, 2020). Based on the research findings, this research presents the argument that white trainee counsellors own whiteness was de-racialised and they were confused by what 'race' and racism meant (Chapter 5, Section 5.3; Chapter 6, 6.4; Chapter 7, Section 7.6). This may present one explanation for why white counsellors may adhere to their theoretical orientation (Banks, 1999) and feel unprepared in adapting their approach when working with clients of colour (Moodley and Palmer, 2006). Lago and Thompson (2002, p. 3) highlight the ongoing debate in counselling as to whether counsellors need 'specialist knowledge of and sensitivity to race relations' through historical and

contemporary knowledge. They conclude that counsellors should possess 'maximum

awareness' (Lago and Thompson, 2002, p. 5). However, in discussing oppressions

(including racism) in psychotherapy, Turner (2021, p. 6) has argued that:

> The world of psychotherapy has remained largely immune to the impact of
> these oppressions within the therapeutic dyad, failing to recognise how
> the position of the therapist, be it that they hold the privileged position of
> being heterosexual, or male, or white, or able-bodied, for example, might
> be consciously or unconsciously oppressive for others they will
> undoubtedly encounter.

This suggest that the exhortation for counsellor 'maximum awareness' (Lago and

Thompson, 2002, p. 5) has gone unheeded. The immunity towards awareness of

oppression (Turner, 2021) can perhaps explain why there was no research available

regarding counselling, 'race', racism and whiteness that was conducted in Wales. To

understand this further, counselling and 'race' will be considered through exploring

Carl Rogers' recorded session with a black client, racial identity in counselling and anti-

discriminatory counselling practice.

Carl Rogers counsels a black client

One of the earliest, and significant, contributions to the topic of counselling and 'race'

is found in two recorded counselling sessions between Carl Rogers, the white

preeminent counsellor, and a young un-named African-American man in 1977. The

second session is available on YouTube (2017). The client was in remission from

leukaemia, but his primary concern was the 'race' conflict he felt existed in American

society and his perception of himself as a victim within that conflict. Lee (2004, p. 229)

states 'it is obvious that his Blackness and his experience of it is at the root of the

issue', something which Rogers repeatedly overlooks and fails to explore with the client.

It is notable that the client remains nameless throughout the recording. Perhaps due to confidentiality the participant did not want to give his name (although this feels a logical fallacy given that he is video recorded and therefore identifiable). The absence of a name somehow feels dehumanising and gives the (white) counsellor a higher status. This may be an unfair criticism and there may be legitimate reasons as to why the viewer is not privy to the individuals name. However, when considering Rogers other video-recorded sessions where the clients' are referred to by name, it makes one wonder why the black client is not named. McLeod (2004, p. 176) acknowledges that Carl Rogers is 'privileged' in this exchange from having a famous name and control over the reflective voiceover, while the client remains nameless and is not afforded the same opportunity for self-reflective commentary. Dyer (2017) argues that whiteness is a dominant cultural force because white people dominate the cultural landscape, and it seems that Rogers's privileged voice in this exchange is an example of this.

Further, Brodley (2004) compares this session to other recorded counselling sessions with Rogers and found that Rogers oscillated between the familiar empathetic man embodying his core conditions (Rogers, 1989), to a 'peculiar and disturbing, uncharacteristic' (Brodley, 2004, p. 45) demeanour not found elsewhere in other videoed recordings. Specifically, Rogers was more directive toward this client, as

opposed to the non-directiveness he normally demonstrated and put central to his person-centred theory. This viewpoint is supported by others (Lietaer, 2004) and it is acknowledged that Rogers directiveness was an obstacle to hearing the client and led him away from his 'generally high level of empathic understanding' (Mier and Witty, 2004 p. 99). McLeod (2004) argues, it is important to remember that the sessions were recorded at a time when understanding about multicultural counselling was limited.

Nonetheless, the black client mentioning 'race' and racism throughout the session and the overall avoidance of 'race 'and racism by the white, (famous) counsellor within the session makes for uncomfortable viewing. This is especially so when one thinks of Carl Rogers reputation as an empathetic, gentle person and as someone who has greatly influenced the theory and practice of counselling. Notable is a lack of recognition of client's contemporary experiences of his 'race', or the historical relations between white and black people in American society. Turner (2020) has suggested that Roger's white-male privilege is evident, particularly his complimenting the client's ability to contain his anger which de-historicises and de-contextualises the anger a black man living in the United States may feel. These recorded sessions are a powerful demonstration of how racial identity is important to black people (Zirkel and Johnson, 2016) but does not seem to be so for white people (Frankenberg, 1993) and how even well-meaning white people can be unintentionally discriminatory (Sullivan, 2014a; Trepagnier, 2016).

Racial identity in counselling

Racial identity was previously discussed in this chapter (Section 2.1.3) and it was found it is something white people rarely consider (Frankenberg, 1993) and if they do, the subjective understanding is ambiguous (Croll, 2007; Hughey, 2010; Goren and Plaut, 2012). Psychotherapists Ryde (2009) and Tuckwell (2002) have both argued that white racial identity development is important for white counsellors, advocating for a committed self-exploration to reflect on their whiteness and to develop a racial identity. To that end, Tuckwell (2002, p. 120) suggests that white counsellors need to form a positive white racial identity, which necessitates:

> relinquishing the ties to white dominance and privilege, confronting one's internalised beliefs and feelings and recognising the benefits of evolving a positive white racial identity.

Helms (1984) and Carter (1990) have presented important contributions to understanding racial identity in a therapeutic context. Although it is acknowledged these are not modern contributions, given their standing in 'race' studies scholarship and their therapeutic backgrounds, it is appropriate to present their work.

Helms (1984) considered how racial identity could affect the counselling dyad in her 'Black-White Interaction model'. The model consists of four categories of cross-racial therapeutic relationship: parallel, crossed, progressive and regressive (p. 2). Helms (1984) outlines that within in a parallel relationship, both the client and counsellor have similar attitudes of black and white people. With a crossed relationship, the counsellor's views differ and conflict with the client's views. If the counsellor is at a higher stage of racial identity development, they may be able to support the client to

move their own racial identity development onward, which is seen as a progressive relationship. A regressive relationship means the counsellor is at a lower stage in their racial identity development and therefore, is unable to understand the client's worldview.

Carter (1990) researched the accuracy of Helms (1984) theory that the client and counsellors' stage of racial identity development was relevant to effective cross-racial counselling. The research comprised of 31 participants who were grouped into simulated counselling dyads which consisted of 19 white counsellor/white clients, 8 white counsellors/black clients and 4 black counsellors/white clients. The 'clients' were given a list of 'race' related topics and asked to select one that had personal resonance to discuss with the counsellor. Post dyad, the participants reviewed the recordings with clients giving feedback about their reactions and counsellors giving feedback about their intentions. It was found that black clients had mostly negative reactions related to their own and the white counsellors' racial identity attitudes, no matter the counsellors' intentions within the counselling dyad. This was particularly so if the white counsellor was in Helms (1990) 'Disintegration' and 'Pseudo-Independent' phases of white racial identity development (Section 2.1.3, Table 3). The former relating to 'the conscious, though conflicted acknowledgement of one's whiteness' (Helms, 1990, p. 58) and the latter occurring when 'the person begins actively to question the proposition that Blacks are inferior to Whites' (Helms, 1990, p. 61). The same was true if the black client was in the stages of Encounter, Immersion/Emersion or Internalisation found in Cross's model (1991). Therefore, Carter (1990) concludes

that 'race' alone is not sufficient to predict the efficacy of the counselling dyad but rather it is the stage of racial identity development of each person that is the significant factor.

Assessing the participant's stage of racial identity development was evaluated via Helms (1990) Black and White racial identity attitudinal measures. A deeper level of understanding to this research could be added if participants were asked to state how developed they felt their racial identity was and then compare this to the results from Helms' (1990) measures. The space in-between the counsellor's self-perception and the actuality would offer valuable insights into how aware white counsellors are of their racial identity. It is possible to infer that awareness or ignorance around racial identity impacts the cross-racial counselling dyad as Helms (1984) and Carter (1990) claim. This may be evident in white counsellor's reluctance to discuss racial identity with black clients (Barnes, Williams and Barnes, 2014). On the other hand, it has been argued there is an ethical tension that can occur for therapists when broaching the subject of 'race', noting that in choosing to speak or not speak about 'race', allows the 'potential for oppression' (Gregory, 2013, p. 153). This may be particularly true for those therapists who do not take an active anti-oppressive, consciousness raising worldview. Yet, if 'race' is discussed in the counselling dyad, it may result in a stronger therapeutic relationship (Gregory, 2013). This argument seems to concur with Helms (1984) Black-White Interaction model, although Carter's (1990) research suggests racial discourse between white counsellors and black clients should be done from a place of advanced racial identity development. If the white counsellor is in a pre or

early stage of their racial identity development, they may behave in a way that is racist or discriminatory.

Therefore, it would seem that a white counsellors' stage of racial identity is more significant in cross-racial counselling than 'race' per se, as one's level of racial identity development indicates one's awareness of, and comfort in discussing, 'race'.

Racism and counselling

The findings of this research would suggest that white trainee counsellors perceived colour-blindness as the correct, and even moral, way to understand 'race'. This will be presented in Chapter 5 (Section 5.4) and discussed in Chapters 6 (Section 6.5) and 7 (Section 7.5). This finding supports the argument that covert racism may exist in the counselling profession. It has been put forward that overt racism within counselling and psychotherapy is rare, but 'subtle racism' (Alleyne, 2011, p. 118) can be demonstrated by counsellors in covert ways such as holding negative preconceptions about clients with non-European names, being colour-blind, and disregarding cultural heritage (Alleyne, 2011, pp. 118-119). These examples could also be described as 'micro-aggressions':

> 'the everyday verbal, nonverbal and environmental slights, snubs or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized *(sic)* group membership' (Sue, 2010, p. 1)

Despite this, white counsellors may be dismayed to think of themselves as racist given their chosen vocation requires sensitivity to others (Lago and Thompson, 2002). This is akin to the well-meaning white people who would not perceive themselves as racist (Sullivan, 2014a; Trepagnier, 2016) or react with strong emotions when accused of racism (DiAngelo, 2018). I have developed the theory of the 'Good White Counsellor' to describe this phenomenon within the counselling context (Chapter 6, Section 6.2 and 6.6). To counteract counselling's reluctance to discuss racism, practitioners have been urged to reflect on the silence around racism and to evaluate Eurocentric therapeutic theories (McKenzie-Mavinga, 2016; Jackson, 2020b).

Writing from the perspective of a black woman from North America, Adams (2016) considers how white privilege, white guilt and the invisibility of whiteness has repercussions in therapy by perpetuating colour-blind ideology. Considering Hartmann *et al's* (2017) research findings which suggest colour-blindness is seen as an acceptable, even positive, form of identity amongst white people and that white counsellors are unlikely to believe they could be racist (Lago and Thompson, 2002), it follows that counselling could be culpable of colour-blind ideology. This supports the findings of this research (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). However, counselling has tried to tackle discriminatory practice and become more inclusive. The traditional approach is through multicultural counselling and the more recent approach of social justice counselling.

Anti-discriminatory counselling practice

Anti-discriminatory practice, also called anti-oppressive practice, presents various theories to deal with discrimination and power differentials in counselling. At the vanguard of this was feminist counselling, with its movement away from an individualistic, interpersonal level to consider the cultural and social influences on women's lives, including 'race' (Smith *et al*, 2012). For this literature review, two approaches will be considered: multicultural counselling and social justice counselling. These were chosen as they are representative of the established (multicultural) and new (social justice) anti-discriminatory theories.

Multicultural counselling

Multicultural counselling practice attempts to address the power differentials within the counselling relationship and racial differences between counsellor and client. Cultural competency is at the core of multicultural counselling and requires the counsellor to become aware of their own assumptions regarding 'human behaviour, values, biases, preconceived notions, personal limitations' (Sue and Sue, 2008, pp. 43-44). This ongoing process is combined with an attempt to understand the client's worldview and to employ culturally suitable and sensitive interventions in therapeutic practice (Sue and Sue, 2008). Cultural competency, or the word 'multicultural', does not appear in the BACP ethical framework (BACP, 2018a) as a standard for practice.

The counsellor's self-awareness regarding their own cultural positioning is the first step in cultural competency frameworks (such as: Constantine and Landany, 2001; Sue

and Sue, 2008; Collins and Arthur, 2010) and seeks to prevail over unintentional racism by the counsellor (Ridley, 2005). To that end, Moodley (2004) posits that it may be necessary for multicultural counsellors to contemplate their past and present relationships in order to move forward as a counsellor. However, Moodley (2004) does not further this observation to include the historical past and the socio-political present. However, Collins and Arthur (2010) suggest that counsellors need to become aware of their own cultural positioning, the influence of the dominant culture on counselling theory and to be cognisant of the socio-political reality of clients from nondominant cultures.

Sue and Sue (2016) recognise that the term 'multicultural' counselling can reinforce the belief amongst white counsellors that 'race' and culture are separate issues and requires learning about 'Other' people and their cultures. This is supported by the argument that multicultural counselling fails to consider whiteness and 'risks mirroring the very dynamics embedded in white privilege' (Bartoli *et al*, 2015, p. 426). To that end, Chao *et al* (2011) argue that multicultural awareness needs to focus on the counsellor's critical self-awareness rather than emphasising cultural difference.

Criticism has also been levelled at the theory and application of multicultural counselling competence, as it was developed 'within colonial confines', given the domination of Westernised psychological research, theory and practice (Tate, Torres Rivera, and Edwards, 2015, p. 44). This echoes the argument that understandings of mental health are Westernised and Eurocentric (Watters, 2011; Mills, 2014; Fernando

and Moodley, 2018). Similarly, it has been put forward that multicultural counselling can imitate the very power dynamics they are meant to reject and is only adopted into counselling theory and discourse once its transformative potential has been 'scrubbed', furthering colonial practice (Gorski and Goodman, 2015, p. 2). To decolonise multicultural counselling competency, it is suggested that disregarding the 'multicultural' prefix altogether will remove its colonial connotations and through fostering 'egalitarian inclusion' by asking ethnic minority clients directly what 'competent' would mean to them rather than assuming (Tate, Torres Rivera and Edwards, 2015, p. 49). Given that there may be an association between cultural incompetence and treatment dissatisfaction (Chang and Berk, 2009) and that ethnic minority clients feel that issues of 'race' and ethnicity were important and were left less satisfied when 'race' and ethnicity were excluded from the therapeutic discourse (Meyer and Zane, 2013), it would seem the 'egalitarian inclusion' (Tate, Torres Rivera and Edwards, 2015, p. 49) approach would be a positive step forward and reduce power disparity. On a superficial level, it seems that multicultural counselling, specifically cultural competency, is an antidote to oppressive counselling practice and could offer rich opportunities for the counsellor to consider their cultural and racial positionality. However, a more nuanced critique highlights that 'multicultural' counselling is largely rooted in Western and Eurocentric counselling theory and the very term itself may engrain notions of 'the Other'. Simply put, there is an implication that 'multicultural' counselling is something to be done with people from 'other' 'races' and cultures reserving 'counselling' for white people.

Social justice counselling

A remedy for multicultural counselling may be found in social justice counselling which has been called the fifth force (of five) in counselling, with multicultural counselling being the fourth force (Ratts and Pedersen, 2014). It is motivated by social justice and human rights and has feminist and multicultural theory at its core. It considers 'how inequality, discrimination, oppression and other societal-level forces contribute to mental illness at the individual level' (Rogers-Sirin, 2017, p. 55). Social justice counselling is a progression from the cultural awareness of multicultural counselling to advocating more systemic change (Ratts, Rafferty McCullough and Rubel, 2016). An example of this is the 'Multi-Phase Model' of counselling and psychotherapy developed by Chung and Bemak (2012, p. 78) which promotes social justice and human rights within the therapeutic process. It comprises of five phases and includes client cultural empowerment and the inclusion of non-Westernised practices to support client healing. Counselling has been accused of being perceived by those within and without it as a 'politically neutral activity' (Kearney, 1996, p. 6) which has separated the clinical side from the socio-critical side (Samuels, 2006). Social justice counselling theory and practice is unambiguously political. As has been mentioned above, social justice approaches have been cited as solutions for decolonialising Eurocentric mental health theories and practice (Mills, 2014; Ibrahim, 2017; Gelberg *et al*, 2018). Whilst social justice counselling is concerned with social justice issues more broadly, it offers an activist element to counselling and an opportunity to explicitly include racial discourse in counselling. However, before practicing as a

counsellor, one must train to be a counsellor and it is therefore pertinent to consider how counselling pedagogy does or does not consider 'race'.

2.2.3 Counselling pedagogy

Despite 'race'-based training for white trainee counsellors being recommended (Helms, Guerda and Green, 2012; Bartoli *et al*, 2015) with its potential for positive self-development recognised (Paone, Malott and Barr, 2015), there is a privation of published resources regarding 'race' and counselling training in the UK (Tuckwell, 2002) with no national standardisation relating to the teaching of 'race' and culture (d'Ardenne, 2013). Consequently, whiteness as a racial identity is often neglected in counselling training (Ryde, 2011), with a culture of normalised whiteness permeating (Rotham, Malott and Paone, 2012). In short, training institutes are not adequately preparing white trainee therapists to work multi-culturally (Jackson, 2018). If 'race' is openly discussed, it can elicit powerful and complex emotions amongst white trainees (Tuckwell, 2002; Chick, Karis and Kernahan, 2009; Powell, 2016).

The Higher Education Academy (HEA, 2013) carried out a report that considered counselling and psychotherapy pedagogy. Amongst the findings, the report found that increasingly counselling and psychotherapy was being taught in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). Joseph, Murphy and Holford (2018, p. 387) highlight the 'vulnerability' of counselling and psychotherapy as a subject given its relatively recent status within HEIs. The teaching of 'race', racism, whiteness or multiculturalism was not included in the HEA (2013) report. However, it does state that the counselling

student population is 'diverse' and 'may need additional support for their personal

development' (HEA, 2013, p. 3). It does not elucidate on what is meant by 'diverse' or

specify what the additional support may encompass. The BACP is mentioned within

the HEA report, with the argument that BACP accredited courses are viewed as

'desirable for marketing and quality control purposes' (HEA, 2013, p. 6). This

statement would give credence to Kearny's (1996) argument that the BACP are

monopolising entrance and economic revenue to counselling work by means of

qualifications and accreditation. In the BACP's (2012, pp. 1-20) guidelines for course

accreditation, it outlines the following criteria for the course provider and the trainee.

Table 8 below reproduces the criteria relevant to the focus of this research:

Table 8 Relevant criteria in the BACP's (2012) guidelines for course accreditation

Section	Criteria
B1. Admission	Applicants will be assessed for their: B1.vii: 'Awareness of the nature of prejudice and oppression' (p. 3) B1. viii: 'Awareness of issues of difference and equality' (p. 3)
B3. Knowledge	The trainee shout be able to critique: B3.i: 'The social, political and legislative systems in which we live and the ways these affect client development and counselling practice' (p.4) B3.4: 'Students must be made aware of the influence of social and cultural factors on mental health and the interrelatedness of psychological and physical symptoms' (p. 5)
B4. Client work	B4. iv: 'Work with difference and diversity as it impacts on the therapeutic relationship or the process of therapy' (p. 7)
B5. Professional context	B5.2: 'Students must be made aware of the wider political, social, legal and organisational framework for therapeutic practice; to ensure that they are able to work appropriately in different counselling and psychotherapy contexts' (p. 9)
9.1 B. Understanding the client	9.1B.6: 'Demonstrate awareness of diversity and the rights and responsibilities of all clients, regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity, culture, class, ability, sexuality, religion and belief' (p. 17) 9.1B.12: 'Understand the inter-relatedness of social and psychological factors' (p. 17)
9.1 C. The therapeutic process	9.1C.8 'Acknowledge diversity relating to gender, age, ethnicity, culture, ability, religion, spirituality and sexuality as it impacts on the therapeutic relationship or the process of therapy' (p. 18)
9.1 D The social, professional and organisational context for therapy	9.1D.2: 'Show a critical awareness of the history of ideas, the cultural context and social and political theories that inform and influence the practice of counselling and psychotherapy' (p. 19) 9.1D.4: 'Understand the inter-relatedness of truth claims, belief and ideology and their influence on professional practice' (p. 19) 9.1D.6: 'Explore sensitively and respectfully with clients their culture and associated values recognising cultural differences, for example, in terms of predispositions to individualism and collectivism, emotional involvement and detachment' (p. 19) 9.1D.7: 'Reflect on the role and function of counselling and psychotherapy in society and understand national politics in relation to mental health service provision and client wellbeing' (p. 19) 9.1D.11. 'Demonstrate an awareness of power relationships and dynamics within groups and organisations and their potential impact on therapy' (p. 19)

(*adapted from* BACP, 2012, pp. 1-20).

The criteria outlined above seems to be outward looking, requiring the trainee and/or training provider to consider the social and political context of counselling theory and practice. It omits to emphasise that the trainee applies critical self-awareness to their own personal historical, socio-political or racial positionality, despite trainee/therapist self-awareness being a recurrent theme throughout the guidelines. Nor does it specify how the training provider should present these topics, meaning that they could either be integrated throughout the duration of the course or be referred to in a stand-alone one-hour seminar. Thus, there is no standardisation across all training providers. The guidelines also fail to mention 'race', 'racism', 'whiteness' or 'racial identity'. Although these could be inferred from the quoted criteria above, the guidelines do not mention 'race' and therefore the interpretation of 'ethnicity' and 'culture' is left to course trainers who will be presenting these topics through their own 'racialized *(sic)* lens' (Thompson and Carter, 2012, p. xv). It also advocates that the counsellor explores with the client their cultural values (BACP, 2012, 9.1D.6, p. 19). This opens up criticism on two fronts; it is indicative of Lorde's (1984) argument that expecting minorities to teach white people about their 'race' (in this case culture) is a form of oppression and the replacement of 'race' for 'culture' is removing the potential for anti-racism advocacy, thereby reinforcing the post-racial society narrative (Lentin and Titley, 2015; Bhopal, 2018). On the other hand, openly discussing culture with clients may be the first step to 'egalitarian inclusion' (Tate, Torres Rivera and Edwards, 2015, p. 49). As with the criticism of 'multicultural counselling', the BACP's (2012) course accreditation guidelines would cursorily give the impression that they are attempting to address diversity, requiring the course, trainers and trainee counsellors to be aware of socio-

political factors, and even mentioning the 'history of ideas' pertinent to counselling practice and theory (BACP, 2012, p. 19). This may mitigate potential power differentials. Another interpretation of the guidelines is that they lack clarity in regard to explicit direction regarding *how* to both teach and assess these requirements.

Addressing the lack of discussion around 'race' in counselling training (as evidenced by the BACP's, 2012, guidelines), Nadirshaw (2010) presents topics that could be included in counselling training, such as: awareness of the Eurocentrism and the barriers faced by people of colour in mental health services and evaluating trainees' comprehension of historical and social methods of discrimination.

A lack of mandatory pedagogical requirements around 'race' in counselling training, indeed an omission of compulsorily racial discourse altogether, means that learning around 'race' takes place at an individual level and has an effect on black trainee counsellors. It can result in the exclusion of black trainees own experiences, suppression of their learning needs and expectations from white trainees to provide expertise around 'race' when required (McKenzie-Mavinga, 2009). In Robinson's (2015) personal experiences of counselling training, the avoidance of racial discourse by her white peers led her to conclude that counselling fails to challenge racism. Silence around 'race' can lead to feelings of isolation, shame and self-censorship in counsellors of colour (Jackson, 2020b). In the same way, counselling training has been accused of being colour-blind, with white trainees remaining silent when black and Asian students try to discuss 'race' (Ellis and Cooper, 2013). To combat this, The Black

African and Asian Therapy Network (2020) offers a space for counsellors and psychotherapists of colour, providing resources and events, as well as challenging racism.

Therefore, counselling pedagogy is a potential pathway to facilitate 'race' based learning and discourse amongst white trainees which will ultimately influence counselling practice and future theory. In spite of attempts to recognise diversity as shown in the BACP's (2012) course guidelines, the omission of 'race', racism, racial identity and whiteness is representative of the wider socio-political discourse around 'race' where whiteness is normalised (Halley, Eshleman, and Mahadevan-Vijaya, 2011; Hayes *et al*, 2013) and colour-blind ideology dominates (Bonilla-Silva, 2018)

Part 3 of the literature review will summarise parts 1 and 2, by using the primary theoretical lens of critical whiteness studies (Delgado and Stefancic, 1997; Applebaum, 2016a) and the complimentary theoretical lens of critical race theory (Crenshaw *et al*, 1995; Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). A deeper exploration of these theoretical lenses is discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4).

2.3: Summary of the literature review

The third part of this literature review seeks to synthesise the findings presented in this chapter by using the chosen theoretical lenses of critical whiteness studies and critical race theory to consider the socio-political history of 'race' and counselling theory.

2.3.1 Critical Whiteness Studies

It has been argued that critical whiteness studies consists of three core principles: that white people are unaware of their 'race' and its social construction, white people are unaware of the unearned benefits of being white and that colour-blind ideology disguises systemic racism (Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll, 2009). The literature reviewed would appear to support that these principles are prevalent, both in a societal and counselling context.

When looking at the history of 'race', white people have exerted power in developing its construction, beginning with creating the classifications of 'race' in the eighteenth-century (Section 2.1.1). Contemporaneously this power is demonstrated systemically through institutions such as education (Section 2.1.6). While a contentious term, this unearned, unrecognised power is generally known as 'white privilege' (McIntosh, 1988). When considering counselling, white privilege can be exerted through the authority of Eurocentric counselling theory, it's predominantly white work force and its pedagogy which neglects 'race' (Sections 2.2.2, 2.2.3). Through these means, whiteness is upheld as the invisible standard of 'normal' (Halley, Eshleman, Mahadevan-Vijaya, 2011; Hayes *et al*, 2013). Arguably, underpinning this is white ignorance, the wilful 'not knowing' about 'race' (Section 2.1.5). When applied to counselling, what is deemed as 'normal' parameters and expressions of mental health, 'normal' treatment and 'normal' expectations of both client and counsellor are taken from the (ad)vantage point of whiteness.

Although multicultural counselling has been a leading force in addressing racial discrimination in counselling, the very term 'multicultural' implies something to do with people from other cultures (Sue and Sue, 2016; Chao *et al,* 2011), and normalises whiteness. Postcolonial scholar Spivak (1988, pp. 24-25) argues that the West positioned itself as the powerful Subject and thus allowing it 'to constitute the colonial Other'. Similarly, Hall (1992) refers to the notion of 'the West and the Rest', whereby the West has dominated global power and discourse. Therefore, the perception that multicultural counselling entails working with people from 'Other' cultures is a reimagining of the Subject/Other (Spivak, 1998) colonial dynamic. The Westernised, Eurocentric theoretical foundations of counselling theory suggest a 'West and the Rest' (Hall, 1992) attitude, with its dominance and globalisation of what constitutes as 'mental health' (Watters, 2011; Mills, 2014; Fernando and Moodley, 2018). This is not a new critique, Frantz Fanon (1967) the psychiatrist and 'race' scholar, explored the detrimental effects of colonialism to mental health, as did Albert Memmi (2016 [1974]). To that end, it has been argued the term 'multicultural' needs to be discarded and its theories decolonised (Tate, Torres Rivera and Edwards, 2015; Goodman and Gorski, 2015). However, cultural competency models remain central to multicultural counselling and is the accepted approach to working cross-racially. Yet, it is not a mandatory requirement of training, and cultural competency is taught at the discretion of individual training courses. Consequently, the literature reviewed seems to support the notion that the role of whiteness is an ignored area of psychotherapy (and by inference counselling), even by those working multi-culturally (Dottolo and Kaschak, 2018) and there is a general belief 'that race is a characteristic of those who

are not white' (Dottolo and Kaschak, 2018, p. 2). This research will provide an original

contribution by exploring whether this is true for counselling trainees in South Wales

(Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

2.3.2 Critical Race Theory

The first tenet of critical race theory holds that racism is a commonplace

phenomenon, not an abnormality (Bell, 1992; Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). This

commonality of racism can be seen in the 'new' racisms (Barker, 1981; Bonilla-Silva

and Dietrich, 2012) which present themselves in covert forms and may be hard for

white people to recognise. Indeed, white people can be racist even when they believe

that they are not (Mooney, Knox and Schacht, 2009; Dovidio, Gaertner and Pearson,

2018), with white counsellors reluctant to view themselves as racist (Lago and

Thompson, 2002). Societally, there is a belief that we live in post-racial and post-

racism world (Wise, 2010; Bhopal, 2018). This may be evidenced in the BACP's ethical

framework (2018a) and course accreditation guidelines (BACP, 2012) which omit

'race', racism and whiteness. Bonilla-Silva's (2003) 'minimisation' frame of colour-

blindness feels apposite, given the systemic de-emphasis on 'race' and racism. Critical

race theory contends that white dominance serves two purposes. Firstly, that racism

remains unacknowledged by white people meaning that it is not addressed, with

colour-blindness and blanket equality only tackling more overt forms of racism

(Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). This blanket equality is evident in the BACP's (2012)

course guidelines with words such a 'difference and equality' (p. 3), 'prejudice and

oppression' (p. 3), 'difference and diversity' (p. 7) and 'ethnicity and culture' (p. 17)

used in place of 'race', racism and whiteness. Secondly, 'interest convergence' means white people will only support racial justice when it is beneficial for them to do so (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012, p. 9). Perhaps counselling has not yet alighted on an 'interest convergence' or a good enough and beneficial reason to promote racial justice in theory and practice. Further, epistemic ignorance asserts that the ignorance of the 'racially privileged' is a purposeful act 'made easier by the vast array of institutional systems supporting white people's obliviousness of the world of people of colour' (Sullivan and Tuana, 2007, p. 3). It could be inferred from this literature review that systems such as counselling theory, practice and pedagogy are facilitating wider white ignorance (Mills, 2007) about 'race' and racism. This will be expanded upon in Chapter 6.

2.3.3 Summary of the Literature Review

The literature found that 'race' and whiteness are historically socially constructed concepts (Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2) but the historical elevation of whiteness as superior racial category is one that has ongoing consequences. One consequence is the disparate experiences of whites and people of colour in the contemporary education sector (Section 2.1.6). Another reason for racial inequality can be found in covert racisms, such as systemic racism, racialisation and colour-blind racism (Section 2.1.7). Additionally, it was found that white people are ignorant of their own racial identity (Section 2.1.3). However, if white people are aware it is unclear as to whether it forms part of a racist or anti-racist identity (Section 2.1.3). A lack of white people's awareness of racial identity can lead to white privilege, through receiving systemic and

personal benefits from being white (Section 2.1.4). Arguably, white ignorance is one method through which this racial inequality is sustained, whereby whites actively choose to not know about 'race' and racism or acknowledge the rewards of whiteness (Section 2.1.5).

One manifestation of the dominance of whiteness, and the legacy of the constructions of 'race', can be located in the prevalent Eurocentric view of mental health (Section 2.2.1). This has resulted in what has been referred to as a colonialisation of Westernised standards of diagnosis and treatment in mental healthcare (Section 2.2.1). The origins of counselling, specifically in the person-centred approach, sought to distance itself from the medicalisation of mental health and the role of the counsellor as 'expert' (Section 2.2.2). However, counselling can replicate racial inequality through ignoring 'race', such as Carl Rogers ignoring the racial reality of his client (Section 2.2.2), silence around racial identity (Section 2.2.2) and omitting 'race', racism and whiteness from its pedagogy (Section 2.2.3). Multicultural counselling theory has been the dominant method to address racial 'difference' in counselling, however this can be problematic as it is located in a Eurocentric understanding of wellbeing and risks 'Othering' clients of colour (Section 2.2.2). It was also found that counselling largely divorces the socio-political and historical context in counselling practice and theory (Section 2.2.2) which may explain why 'race', racism and whiteness are not systemically incorporated in counselling theory, training and practice.

Therefore, this literature review identified that whiteness is an 'unseen' category for white people, but one that has ongoing consequences for people of colour through systemic inequality. This includes the field of counselling where 'race', racism and whiteness seem to be similarly 'unseen'. This is supported by the literature review not being able to identify how white trainee counsellors understand 'race', racism and whiteness.

Therefore, this research sought to explore how white people understand 'race', racism and whiteness and specifically with white counselling trainees. In this way, this research adds to the knowledge base of critical whiteness studies through the explicit exploration of white people's understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness in South Wales. Further, it contributes to the field of counselling by asking this question to white trainee counsellors. Combining critical whiteness studies with counselling in South Wales provides an original contribution to knowledge. Arguably, uniting the literature in this chapter is that whiteness is perceived as invisible and 'normal', through white people's lack of awareness about the social construction of 'race', white racial identity and white privilege. This is echoed in counselling where 'race', racism and whiteness are overlooked at systemic and individual levels. Post-critical ethnography (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders, 2019) provided the methodological approach to make the original contribution and make whiteness visible. It does this through two of its core tenets of researcher positionality and reflexivity (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004), which permits the implications of my own whiteness as a researcher and the relationship between myself and the white

participants to be explicit and visible. Therefore, the methodology enabled a way to

address the problem of the invisibility of whiteness found in the literature review. The

selection of the methodology is expanded in Chapter 3 (Section 3.5).

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

This research was a qualitative, post-critical ethnographic exploration of how white

trainee counsellors understand 'race', racism and whiteness. The research questions

were:

- How do white counselling trainees understand 'race'?
- Do they understand 'race' to be a social construct?
- How do they understand racism?
- Do they perceive whiteness as a racialised identity?
- How do they feel discussing 'race' and racism?

A critical research paradigm was chosen to consider these questions. It has been

argued that the choice of a research paradigm needs to be justifiable (Blaikie and

Priest, 2017), therefore a discussion and outline of this paradigm is explored in this

chapter. To achieve a sociological theory of 'race' and racism, Golash-Boza (2016)

contends that empirical studies are needed to understand 'race' and racism in

conjunction; this research and its findings will contribute to the understanding of

'race', racism and whiteness by explicitly exploring them with white trainee

counsellors. This research actively acknowledges the social justice aspect of this

research by aligning the appropriate research paradigm with the research aims, as

well as reflecting my own personal stance. As will be demonstrated, these are imbued

with notions of research being a political and potentially emancipatory activity.

My own positionality and the circumstances that led to this doctoral journey have

been discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.1). As a reflexive and critical researcher, I

purport that consciously and unconsciously, every decision taken during this research

is imbued with my own beliefs and experiences. This is supported by Creswell (2013)

who suggests researchers bring their beliefs and assumptions to their research. For

the purposes of research transparency, this chapter will clearly state the theoretical

positioning and outline the reasons for choosing these. This reflective exploration of

the conceptual framework is understood as an example of post-critical ethnography

being a 'moral activity' (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004, p. 24) as it demonstrates the

theoretical positioning of this research, and by implication my personal positionality.

3.1 Research Paradigm

Although it is over two decades old, Crotty's (1998, p. 4; Figure 2) outline of the

interrelating elements of a research paradigm still provides a cogent description of

each element, which he argues, influences the other:

Figure 2 Crotty's (1998) Research Elements

| Epistemology | → | Theoretical Perspective | → | Methodology | → | Methods |

(*Adapted from* Crotty, 1998, p. 4)

Crotty (1998) excludes ontology from his four elements, with the rationale that

ontology and epistemology are often conflated in research literature. However, I have

considered and included my own ontological position in order to present clarity and

transparency. I have also included the theoretical lens used in this research.

Therefore, the interrelating elements of my research paradigm are:

Figure 3 Chapter 3: My Research Elements
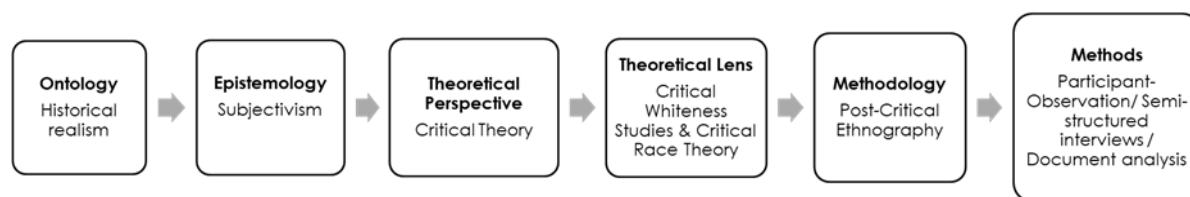
(*adapted from* Crotty, 1998, p. 4)

Although participant-observation encompasses interviewing and documentary analysis, creating one unified method, I have discussed their use separately in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2) for research transparency. How the research elements are interrelated and the reasons for choosing them will be explored in this chapter and Chapter 4.

A qualitative research paradigm was chosen in order to access the lived experiences of the participants. The primary reason for undertaking qualitative research is that the power differential between researcher and participants is smaller in qualitative research than it is in quantitative research (Kumar, 2014). As highlighting, challenging and closing power differentials are a feature of critical theory (Section 3.3), using a qualitative approach is therefore an appropriate means of exploring the research question. Likewise, it has been suggested that social science research, specifically quantitative statistical methods, are rooted in 'white logic, white methods' that mirror the methods used in eugenics research, yet this historical lineage is surrounded by academic silence (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva, 2008). This research sought to challenge silence around whiteness and 'race', critiques the status quo and offer reflexive

transparency around the influence of being a white researcher; qualitative research

lends itself to that aim.

3.2 Axiology, Ontology and Epistemology

The axiological, ontological and epistemological assumptions of this research are

based on critical theory; the rationale for these assumptions will be described and

justified (Blaikie and Priest, 2017).

Axiology is concerned with the philosophy of values (Hiles, 2008). Axiology as a

research concern was introduced by Heron and Reason (1997) as another dimension

to the research paradigm; its function is to ask what is intrinsically worthwhile. Heron

and Reason (1997) suggest that one way to answer this question is to ask oneself as a

researcher what the purpose of the research is. This reflexive questioning has been a

personal motivator throughout this research process. It is hoped that this research will

make a worthwhile contribution to 'race' discourse and social justice in Wales, as well

as to counselling pedagogy. This is where its intrinsic purpose and value is located.

This aligns with the axiological assumptions of critical research, which Heron and

Reason (1997) argue lies in achieving social emancipation. This is supported by Tracy

(2019) who notes that the values associated with a critical paradigm are predicated on

social justice. Further, values take 'pride of place' (Hiles, 2008, p. 53) within a critical

paradigm. Principally, being an ethically rigorous researcher is the central value of this

research.

Indeed, when used in relation to qualitative research, axiology encourages the explicit expression of the paradigmatic assumptions as an ethically motivated action (Hiles, 2008). This chapter, and Chapter 4, outline the paradigmatic assumptions and the practical research process as a demonstration of ethical transparency. Therefore, research transparency and researcher reflexivity could be seen as 'axiology in action' throughout this research.

Ontology relates to the question of reality (Waring, 2012) with epistemology providing a means to know or understand that reality (Waring, 2012). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) have outlined the ontological and epistemological assumptions of critical theory. The ontological stance of critical theory is provided through historical realism, or the belief that reality is 'shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 98). Although not using the term 'historical realism', Strydom (2011, p. 10) put forward a similar argument for the critical theorist's ontological position, noting that its assumption 'that social reality is socio-culturally constituted in an open-ended process of constitution, organization, transformation and evolution'. Thus, social reality is an evolving concept and the understanding of that reality will be shaped by the contemporary context. This is explored in Chapter 6 (Section 6.1).

The epistemological stance of critical theory is that of subjectivism (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). This maintains that reality is based on individual interpretation (O'Reilly and Kiyimba, 2015), giving space to diversity which a critical theory ontology

has been accused of lacking (How, 2003). It also permits different understandings of the various factors that historical realism believes shapes reality, such as politics, culture and gender (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 98). Further, it is an approach that allows the researcher to try to understand the world of the participants in an empathic manner, in contrast to an objectivist epistemology which encourages researchers to become a detached observer (Abma and Widdershoven, 2011). A modern understanding of subjectivity is that of theorised subjectivity (Letherby, 2013). Influenced by feminist research principles, theorised subjectivity is a way of recognising political influences in the lives of both researcher and participant(s) through reflexivity. Further, it also recognises the emotional impact of research for those involved with it (Letherby, 2013). As this research sought to not only understand how the participants understood 'race', racism and whiteness, but to also understand how it felt emotionally to discuss these topics, theorised subjectivity is an appropriate epistemological stance. This is because critical theorists acknowledge the cultural, historical and political context that the research takes place in (Scotland, 2012). Thus, theorised subjectivity (Letherby, 2013) echoes my ontological belief that these factors influence the nature reality. I believe my own contextual factors, those of the participants and the political backdrop this research took place in, will shape the perceptions of the findings of this research (Chapter 6, Section 6.1). My contention is that the participants and I will experience this reality in differing ways, corresponding with the epistemological belief of subjectivism. Moreover, a reflexive approach (Chapter 4, Section 4.2) will allow for a transparent account of these factors. This

compliments the emphasis on researcher reflexivity in the post-critical ethnography

methodology chosen; this will be discussed further in this chapter (Section 3.5).

3.3 Theoretical Paradigm: Critical Theory

The theoretical perspective of this doctoral research is critical theory. This theory has

a long history, with many complex and competing theories within it (Thompson,

2017). Most closely associated with its origins at the Frankfurt School, critical theory

was initially influenced by the work of Karl Marx (Bonner, 2017). It was originally

'intended as a general theory of society fuelled by the desire for liberation' (Bonner,

2017, p. 21). In relation to research, this has been reframed as a means 'to

emancipate the disempowered' (Scotland, 2012, p. 13) and seeks 'enlightenment,

emancipation and transformation, including self-transformation' (Strydom, 2011, p.

9). This is echoed in the assertion that critical theories seek to raise consciousness:

> of social conditions and promoting emancipatory values such as equity,
> social welfare, justice, mutuality and political liberty (Thomas, 2009, p. 54)

To that emancipatory end, critical theory encompasses different schools of research,

such as critical race theory, feminist theory and queer theory (Ormston *et al*, 2014).

The longevity of critical theory shows how it can be adapted to changing societal and

political circumstances (Browne, 2017). This fluidity of application, depending on the

contemporary political and societal climate, made critical theory an advantageous

theoretical perspective to use for this doctoral research. This is because the political

context this research took place in (Chapter 1, Section 1.1; Chapter 6, Section 6.1),

meant that the political narrative was rapidly changing and therefore required an

adaptable approach to contextualise it.

A way of understanding power differentials and social factors can be found in

immanent critique which is a key concept of critical theory. This has been described

as:

> the assessment of the rationality or worth of conventional understandings
> and standards by somehow drawing on resources internal to the society or
> culture of which they are a part (Sabia, 2010, p. 687)

Immanent critique has been termed the most significant contribution of critical

theory, with its notion of societal assumptions and principles being criticised

from an internal perspective (Stirk, 1992). Wrenn (2016, p. 453) outlines that

'immanent' refers to an internal critique of the beliefs and practices 'that typify

the experience and attitudes of the average individual within a given society'.

Recently, Browne (2017, p. 109) has questioned whether immanent critique can

remain relevant given the frictions between empiricism and 'normative

principles'. Whilst it is recognised that one way of overcoming this is via

researcher reflexivity and a subjective epistemology, immanent critique will not

be used as an overt means of understanding or analysing the data. Rather, it is

the notion of understanding of a topic by utilising the resources of a group or

culture from an internalised standpoint (Stirk, 1992; Sabia, 2010) that was

pertinent to this research project. The purpose of this research was to

understand how white trainee counsellors understood 'race', racism and

whiteness by using resources relevant to the group. For trainee counsellors, the

resources of talking, self-reflection and the articulation of emotion was relevant

to their training and therefore the culture of counselling. Additionally, my

previous experience as an internal member of the culture lends itself to

immanent critique. By internal, it is meant that I understand counselling theory

and practice, the training process and how to talk and listen in an empathic way,

which would help to build rapport with the participants. Although it is

recognised that immanent critique is a fundamental element of critical theory,

its application in this research resides in the notion of using resources relevant

to counselling trainees and utilising my own experience as a previous member of

counselling culture.

Although carefully selected, it is also recognised that critical theory as a concept has

been criticised. One major critique argues that it has moved away from the founding

members principles and philosophy, with latter day scholars presenting a version of

critical theory that is 'domesticated' and fails to adequately challenge systems of

societal power and domination (Thompson, 2016). This viewpoint is supported by

Hammer (2017) who states that the second generation of critical theorists took a

more theoretical approach. Whereas the recent generation have returned to the

original aim of the Frankfurt School by focusing on the 'concrete mechanisms of social

exclusion and oppression' (Hammer, 2017, p. 614). For the purposes of this research,

critical theory was chosen for its original intention of the questioning of social

systems, specifically the social construction of 'race'. Therefore, this research aligns

with the traditional purpose of critical theory, rooted in 'concrete' concerns (Hammer, 2017, p. 614) rather than a solely theoretical exposition.

Yet these noble aims have potential drawbacks. It has been argued that the emancipatory aspect of critical theory research may not be realised or lead to a greater sense of well-being, as participants may become cognisant of their situation without being able to change that situation (Scotland, 2012). Consequently, 'despondency may ensue as blissful ignorance is shattered' (Scotland, 2012, p. 14). This suggests that whilst research based on a critical theory paradigm may have honourable intentions, it is important to remain conscious that these may not be achieved and could be potentially harmful. To mitigate this as far as possible, great emphasis has been placed on maintaining a high ethical standard to ensure the participants' well-being. Research ethics will be discussed in Chapter 4 (Section 4.4).

Critical race theory has provided a new critical social theory and was based upon the founding concepts of critical theory (Bonner, 2017). Critical whiteness studies, which derived from critical race theory, is the primary theoretical lens used in this research. Therefore, a connection between the theoretical perspective and theoretical lens can be identified.

3.4 Theoretical Lens: Critical Whiteness Studies and Critical Race Theory
Critical race theory was borne out of critical theory and by extension so was critical whiteness studies (in being an offshoot of critical race theory) meaning that there is a

traceable theoretical foundation for the research paradigm used in this research. Twine and Gallagher (2007) have identified three 'waves' in the development of critical whiteness studies (discussed below). This research falls into the third wave which is concerned with how whiteness is 'performed' (Twine and Gallagher, 2007, p. 5) as it focused upon white peoples' understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness. Examples of this performance can be seen in participants attempts to distance themselves from racism (Chapter 5, Section 5.2; Chapter 6, Section 6.3) and in their reactions to being asked about being white (Chapter 5, Section 5.3; Chapter 6, Section 6.4).

Critical whiteness studies provides the primary theoretical lens of this research, with critical race theory offering a complimentary adjunct to understanding the research findings. The rationale behind this decision is recognising that discussing a critical theory of whiteness, and therefore understanding the structural formation of whiteness, should be done whilst also recognising 'the insight and knowledge of those oppressed by those structures' (Owen, 2007, p. 219). The importance of acknowledging and incorporating the insights of critical race theory is also emphasised by Dolan (2006) who cautions that critical whiteness studies risks centring whiteness, and white theorists as the key agency of change, undermining the contributions of scholars of colour. Likewise, Roediger (2002) argues that for the critical study of whiteness to be worthwhile, the contributions of African-American writers and academics must be recognised because they have been contemplating whiteness for much longer.

Burton (2009) argues that although critical whiteness studies and critical race theory are connected, it is important to remember that they are two distinct fields. To that end, Burton (2009; Table 9) has offered a clear differentiation between the two which forms the understanding for this research.

Table 9 Typology of Whiteness Theory and Critical Race Theory as methodological domains

	Critical Race Theory	Whiteness Theory (studies)
Date emerges as a distinct theoretical approach	1970s	1990s
Initial "host" disciplines	Legal Studies	Labour history
Research focus centres	Race / ethnicity	Whiteness
Race/ethnicity of researchers	People of colour	White
Race/ethnicity of researched	People of colour	White
Methodological Tradition	Storytelling, counter-stories, oral history, ethnography, participatory action research.	Textual analysis, discourse analysis, in-depth interviewing.

(*taken from* Burton, 2009, p. 178)

According to Burton's (2009) typology, it is clear this research aligns with critical whiteness studies in that I am a white researcher, the participants are also white and in-depth interviewing was used as a key component of the participant-observation method used in this research. However, there are some overlaps with critical race theory in that the focus of the research was on understandings of 'race', as well as whiteness and post-critical ethnography providing the methodological approach. Again, this justifies the application of both critical whiteness studies and critical race

theory, but with greater emphasis being placed on the former, given mine and the

participants' racial positionality of whiteness.

Critical Whiteness Studies

Critical whiteness studies is an area of scholarship that has emerged predominantly in

the USA over that last thirty years, with its focus being on how white people

understand racial identity, their culture and their privilege (Hartmann, Gerteis and

Croll, 2009). Its purpose is to expose the systemic factors that produce white

supremacy by examining white privilege (Applebaum, 2016a). Overall, the intention is

to make whiteness visible (Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll, 2009; Applebaum, 2016a). As

Dyer (2017, p. 10) argues, 'the point of looking at whiteness is to dislodge it from its

centrality and authority, not to reinstate it'. It should be noted that when reading

about critical whiteness studies, it is frequently referred to as 'whiteness studies' or

'whiteness theory'. I have taken the deliberate decision to consistently prefix it with

the word 'critical' throughout. This is both in line with how it was described by

Delgado and Stefancic (1997), as well as adhering to the suggestion that:

> taking a critical line might make it possible to retain an analysis of
> 'whiteness' as a potentially emancipatory tool for understanding how
> racism impacts on the freedom of all groups (Garner, 2006, p. 296).

Therefore, the deliberate use of 'critical' is a reflection that the application of critical

whiteness studies as the primary theoretical lens, is done so with its emancipatory

potential at the forefront. In addition, although it was once considered an area of

study dominated by a North American perspective, it has been argued that critical

whiteness studies should take a more international perspective (Steyn and Conway, 2010; Christian, 2019). By using critical whiteness studies in research based in Wales, a new perspective has been presented to the field and will contribute to an international understanding of whiteness.

Although critical whiteness studies began in the early 1990s, its origin is traced back to DuBois's (1998 [1935] p. 700) contention that white workers in 19th century USA, received a 'public and psychological wage' from being white no matter their socio-economic status. In making this observation, DuBois (1998 [1935]) reoriented the focus of 'race' onto white people. This notion of whites receiving a psychological wage due to their 'race', later inspired one of the first works in the field of critical whiteness studies, Roediger's (1991) 'The Wages of Whiteness'. Other early contributions to the field include the work by white scholars such as McIntosh (1988), Ware (2015 [1992]) Frankenberg (1993; 1997) and Dyer (2017). The understanding of whiteness by writers and scholars of colour cannot be overlooked (Roediger, 2002; Dolan, 2006; Owen, 2007) and contributions of writers such as Baldwin (2018 [1985]), hooks (1997), Yancy (2012a; 2015); Hall (1992; 2017) and more recently Eddo-Lodge (2017) have been influential. Gilroy (2002) made a significant British contribution to 'race' scholarship in his analysis of British nationalism, identity and the impact this had on black Britons. Written in the 1980s, he considered the political and structural methods of upholding racism and called for collective community activism to challenge those methods (Gilroy, 2002).

As mentioned previously, Twine and Gallagher (2007) have separated the evolution of critical whiteness studies into three 'waves', with the first being influenced by DuBois (1998 [1935]) identifying that white invisibility upholds white supremacy (Twine and Gallagher, 2007, p. 9). The second wave focused on systemic racism and inequality and was pioneered by critical legal, feminist and black theorists (Twine and Gallagher, 2007, p. 10) and the third wave explores how 'whiteness as a form of power is defined, displayed, performed, policed and reinvented' (Twine and Gallagher, 2007, p. 5). In the development of critical whiteness studies, the indebtedness it owes to writers of colour can be seen in the first two waves. This research falls into the third wave by considering how white trainee counsellors understand 'race', racism and whiteness (and therefore whether they recognise whiteness as being a racialised identity) and how this is displayed and enacted, or 'performed' (Twine and Gallagher, 2007, p. 5).

Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll (2009; Table 10) have presented what they term the 'critical theoretical core of the field'.

Table 10 Summary of Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll's (2009) theoretical core of

Theoretical principle	Description
White Identity	White people are not generally racially self-aware, conscious about their race or its social construction.
Understanding Privilege	Whites are unaware of the status, privileges and advantages that being white affords.
Colour-blind Ideology	Structural racism is not acknowledged, ideas of meritocracy, hard work and being race neutral are dominant narratives. To talk openly about race is to fuel racism.

(Adapted from Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll, 2009, pp. 407-409)

Also aiming to refine critical whiteness studies into key concepts, Applebaum (2016a, pp. 2-7; Table 11) has presented her own three core categories.

Table 11 Summary of Applebaum's (2016a) key concepts of critical whiteness studies

Concept	Description
White Invisibility	Making whiteness visible through explicitly exploring social power and the invisibility of whiteness. Also recognises how whiteness can adapt (as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.1.2).
White Supremacy	Not in relation to far-right groups but to a form of racism that is invisible and expressed through practices and policies that are viewed as normal and even race neutral.
White Privilege	The benefits of belonging to the dominant group (i.e., white) that are unearned and exist despite personal beliefs.

(adapted from Applebaum, 2016a, pp. 2-7)

Comparisons can be drawn from both definitions of the core principles of critical whiteness studies. Central to them are the beliefs that whiteness is invisible to white people, white people generally lack a white racial identity, white people are the recipients of unearned advantages due to their whiteness (and they may be unaware of this) and these all contribute to the upholding a system dominated by principles, policies and practices that are formed through a lens of whiteness being 'normal'. Underpinning this is the idea that to be colour-blind is to be egalitarian, but in actuality this means racism is enacted and overlooked (Chapter 2, Section 2.1.7).

Critical whiteness studies relatively recent arrival on the academic landscape may account for its lack of prevalence in the European academy (Garner, 2006). It has been argued that empirical research into whiteness within a British context has been

'sporadic' and particularly absent is research that is based outside of England, located

rurally and includes women (Clarke and Garner, 2010, p. 59). Consequently, this

research addresses geographical and gender oversights in British research into

whiteness in the specific context of counselling trainees in Wales. Clarke and Garner

(2010; Table 12) have categorised British empirical sociological research into

whiteness by presenting prevalent themes that occur in a British context:

Table 12 Summary of themes in British sociological whiteness research

Theme	Description
Whiteness as Invisibility	Whiteness is a de-racialised identity surrounded by silence and racialised power dynamics remain unexamined.
White Norms and Values in Practice: urban settings	Whiteness is the normalised standard, leading to white people feeling racially superior.
White Norms and Values in Practice: rural settings	Whiteness is the normalised standard, leading to white people feeling racially superior. Additionally, the English countryside represents 'a repository of pure English values' (p. 43)
Cultural Capital and Respectability	Whites perceive 'respectability' in ethnic minorities is demonstrated by their ability to become invisible and thus achieve that status if 'belonging' (p. 45) via their invisibility. Includes white peoples' belief of belonging to a 'tradition of dominance, including empire' (p. 46) Whites assume a position 'of rationality juxtaposed with the irrationality of Others' (p. 46).
Contingent Hierarchies	Whereby ethnic minorities are accepted into whiteness at interpersonal and geographically local levels, despite not having a white phenotype. For example, whites in one local area accept one group of people, e.g., Afro-Caribbean but do not accept another, e.g., Somalian.
Narratives of Disempowerment: Empire as Presence.	White people who experience societal disadvantage attribute this to racialised minority groups. This disadvantage is linked to 'a fragile and threatened slot in the post-empire world order' (p. 55).

(*Adapted from* Clarke and Garner, 2010, pp. 39-58)

Considering the themes Clarke and Garner (2010) have presented, it is possible to

draw parallels with Hartmann, Gerteis and Crolls's (2009) and Applebaum's (2016a)

core themes of critical whiteness studies. Although the latter two write from a USA

perspective, themes of white invisibility and normalisation were also identified by Clarke and Garner (2010) in British research. Where they diverge is with Clarke and Garner's (2010) inclusion of the historical dimension, specifically the role that an idealised nostalgic view of the British Empire plays, and an emphasis on geographical location. Supporting this, it has been argued that 'the collective identity of Britain remains raced', an identity which is embedded yet 'whiteness is not an identity that is often spoken of' (Byrne, 2006, p. 170). This research has sought to challenge this silence around whiteness by foregrounding it in the research questions.

Chen (2017) outlines that critical whiteness studies can take two paths. The first is through an historical perspective by understanding the historical context of whiteness, and the second is an experiential approach whereby whiteness is considered and analysed 'as a social condition of white people that needs to be acknowledged, exposed and ultimately resisted' (Chen, 2017, p. 15). Whilst the purpose of this research would fall into the second, experiential school of critical whiteness studies, the literature review has provided an historical and contemporary context of 'race' and whiteness. Thereby the two approaches to critical whiteness studies have been acknowledged in this thesis, although it is recognised that the emphasis is on the experiential approach.

Helms (2017) suggests that the development of a white racial identity, in line with Helms (1990) model, could be a crucial ethical consideration for the white researcher. To achieve this, she argues that white researchers should understand the white racial

theoretical framework in order to negate any harm caused by their academic pursuits (Helms, 2017). The ethical implications of being a white researcher is considered in Chapter 4 (Section 4.4).

Therefore, a potential limitation of critical whiteness studies appears to be that as a white researcher, there will be things one cannot 'see' due to continuing to benefit from systemic inequality and privileges. It seems paramount that the white researcher holds this awareness and is open to recognising that there will be 'blind spots'. Additionally, the application of critical whiteness studies in research should be done with humility for what is yet to be learned, recognition for what has gone before (particularly from critical race scholars) and to be consistently open to critical feedback.

Critical Race Theory

As previously outlined, critical whiteness studies provides the primary theoretical lens whilst critical race theory offers a complimentary theoretical lens. The intention is not to be dismissive of the history and contribution of critical race theory, but rather it is an acknowledgment of my positionality as a white researcher, researching the white participants understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness. The use of critical race theory comes at a time when the UK Government have denounced it in the Houses of Parliament as an 'ideology' and pronounced that the teaching of it in schools without counter views is 'illegal' (Murray, 2020).

Critical race theory's origins lie in critical legal studies and was influenced by the

radical feminist movement, particularly their ideas around authority and power and

the concept of the invisible patterns of domination (Crenshaw *et al*, 1995; Delgado

and Stefancic, 2017). Critical race theory seeks to transform the connection between

'race', racism and power by contextualising them, for example, into historical, legal

and economic contexts (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). It is in this way that this

research echoes critical race theory through the inclusion and exploration of the

history of 'race' in the literature review (Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2), providing an

historical foundation on which to contextualise the research findings. It is the core

tenets of critical race theory, as presented by Delagado and Stefancic (2017; Table 13),

that provided its main theoretical influence in this research:

Table 13 Summary of the Core Tenets of Critical Race Theory

Core Tenet	Description
Racism	Racism is an ordinary, everyday occurrence for people of colour and not an anomaly.
Interest Convergence	White supremacy offers both 'psychic' (p. 8) and 'material' (p. 9) advantages to white people, meaning there is little incentive to challenge the racial hierarchical status quo. Therefore, it is only challenged when it can benefit white people.
Social Construction	Race is a socially constructed category that is under constant revision and reinvention that 'society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient' (p. 9)
Differential Racialisation	The dominant racial group (white) racialises minority groups depending on the conditions and circumstances that suit them. For example, Muslims are harmless neighbours' pre 9/11 vs Muslims are terrorists' post 9/11.
Intersectionality and anti-essentialism	Intersectionality recognises that a person will have many aspects to their identity (race, gender, class, sexuality etc.) which affect their lives. These experiences cannot be essentialised or reduced and generalised to whole groups.
Unique Voice of Colour	People of colour have more insight about race and historical and current forms of oppressions than white people and will 'be able to communicate to their white counterparts matters that whites are unlikely to know' (p. 11).

(*adapted from* Delgado and Stefancic, 2017, pp. 8-11)

These central tenets form the foundation of critical race theory and some commonalities with critical whiteness studies can be seen. Particularly around the idea that racism is not an abnormal or infrequent occurrence, but is invisible, permeating practices and policies (Applebaum, 2016a). The importance of privileging the 'unique voices of colour' has been emphasised by critical whiteness scholars (Roediger, 2002; Dolan, 2006; Owen 2007) and is a significant factor in employing critical race theory as one of the theoretical lenses in this research. The social construction of 'race' has been presented (Chapter 2, Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2). Differential racialisation has been explored (Chapter 2, Sections 2.1.2) in relation to inclusion into the category of

'whiteness' as experienced historically by the Irish and contemporarily by the GRT community. It is also discussed in Chapter 6 (Section 6.6). Intersectionality maintains that awareness is needed about the intersecting identities of individuals and how these intersections can be sites of multiple manifestations of oppression such as racism, sexism and classism (Crenshaw, 1989; Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016). Admittedly, the focus of this research has been on 'race', rather than intersectional identities. The reason for this is because 'race' is a neglected topic in counselling (as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.2), and the emphasis on 'race' was a way of unambiguously exploring how it is understood by counselling trainees. Similarly, the inclusion of 'unique voices of colour' in terms of the experiences of black counselling trainees has not been included due to an ethical concern about being a white researcher who may induce racial trauma (Carter, 2007) by asking about experiences of counselling training. To address this, the work of scholars and writers of colour have been woven throughout this research in order to have 'unique voices of colour' represented.

A point for personal reflection is that of interest convergence, which was conceived by Bell (1980) in relation to the landmark legal case of Brown v. Board of Education. The notion that white people only participate in racial equality when it is beneficial to them has led to an ongoing conflict between a personal commitment to social justice and equality (of which this research is an example) and the way in which I may benefit from this research (through the PhD and the advantages this may bring). This internal conflict sits as a reminder of the benefits a white researcher can accrue, even when critically researching whiteness.

Although critical race theory origins were in legal studies, it soon became a part of educational research (Taylor, Gillborn and Ladson-Billings, 2016). In the UK, Gillborn (2005; 2006; 2008; 2010) has made contributions to the field of education by doing just this. Solórzano and Yasso (2002) presented a critical 'race' methodology for education research that prioritises the experiences of students of colour, takes an intersectional approach, explicitly seeks liberation from racial, class and gender oppression and places 'race' and racism at the forefront of the research. Although this is a methodological, rather than a theoretical, approach which was created for the purpose of educational research with students of colour, it nonetheless offers a focused use of critical race theory in research. Specifically, the centring of 'race' and racism at the forefront of the research and the unapologetic goal of ending 'race', gender and class oppression can be extrapolated to this research. However, Solórzano and Yasso (2002) also highlight the need to extend 'race' discourse beyond the black-white binary and this research has not done this; this is a recognised limitation of this research and will be discussed further in Chapter 7 (Section 7.8).

However, discussing the use of critical race theory in education research, Howard and Navarro (2016, pp. 259-260) argue that whilst it has had a strong theoretical influence, 'concrete examples of how to use it as an analytical tool…remain a pressing need'. In the same way, Cabrera (2018) argues that the core tenets of critical race theory were not meant to be a theoretical research framework and that a racial theory is required to strengthen the use of critical race theory. To remedy this, Cabrera (2018) suggests that adding the 'hegemony of whiteness' as an additional tenet to critical race theory

in HE research. Arguably, the combination of critical whiteness studies and critical race theory used in this research incorporates the core tenets of the latter and the theory of whiteness (and therefore the hegemony of whiteness) of the former.

On the other hand, it has been argued that adherence to the tenets of critical theory is vital to producing responsible and quality work, and by inference, research (Ladson-Billings, 2013). Moreover, Johnson-Ahorlu (2017) believes that combining critical 'race' research with activism can lead to social justice. It is in that spirit that the core tenets of critical race theory are utilised in this research.

3.5 Methodology: Post-critical Ethnography

Throughout this chapter there have been consistent themes in the chosen research paradigm, namely notions of research being political and emancipatory. This has been demonstrated by the theoretical perspective of critical theory, the ontological and epistemological positions and the theoretical lens of critical whiteness studies and critical race theory. In the same way, the chosen methodology for this research is post-critical ethnography.

Ethnography began during the end of colonialism and imperialism, with early ethnographic work being used by colonial powers as way of understanding the colonised culture and to assimilate them to Westernised expectations (Mantzoukas, 2010). Given the historical link between colonialism and ethnography, it required reconstruction from a once oppressive methodology in order to better understand

systems of oppression. Critical ethnography diverges from its traditional predecessor in its political objective and its emancipatory purpose (Thomas, 1993; Carspecken, 1996) by seeking to challenge systems of power and inequality (Creswell, 2013), as well as developing the understanding of social justice (Madison, 2012; Denzin, 2017). Moreover, critical ethnographers not only recognise their biases but also 'celebrate their normative and political position as a means of invoking social consciousness and societal change' (Thomas, 1993, p. 4). To that end, critical ethnography can be seen as the active application of critical theory (Thomas, 1993; Kinchloe and McLaren; 2000, Madison, 2012). Despite critical ethnography developing ethnography by incorporating critical theory's ideas of emancipation, it has been accused of being 'a form hegemony – patriarchal, Eurocentric, individualistic and white' (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004, p. 15). In this way, critical ethnography has been criticised for failing to allow the researcher to 'problematize' *(sic)* their subjective understanding of the world' (Hytten, 2004, p. 96). Similarly, Lather (1992) has suggested that it is an approach which can position the researcher as the answer to the problem of the participants. Therefore, whilst critical ethnography is the *doing* of critical theory and is concerned with ideas of emancipation, power dynamics and equality, it can potentially reproduce inequality through a lack of researcher reflexivity and even reinforce oppression (Vandenberg and Hall, 2011).

To overcome these shortcomings of critical ethnography, post-critical ethnography was introduced. Central to the methodology is the concern with reflexive exploration of the researcher's position, as well as the purpose of the research (Noblit, Flores and

Murillo, 2004). Although post-critical ethnography adopts the political and

emancipatory core of critical ethnography, where it departs from its predecessor is

the role and responsibilities of the researcher, as 'post-critical ethnographies require

the interrogation of the power and politics of the critic himself/herself as well as in the

social scene studied' (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004, p. 19). Indeed, post-critical

ethnographers usually come to research with a pre-existing commitment to justice

that extends beyond the research itself (Anders and Lester, 2019) and focus their

research on systemic inequalities and injustices (Anders, 2019). Noblit, Flores and

Murillo (2004) outline four central issues to guide the post-critical ethnographer

(Table 14):

Table 14 Summary of the central issues to post-critical ethnography

Issue	Description
Positionality	The researcher's race, gender, class etc. are explored in relation to the ethnography.
Reflexivity	Reflexivity in relation to the researcher and the participants. Whereby the researcher accepts the identity of participants can be variable given the context. The researcher recognises 'the alternative possibilities, identities, juxtapositions and outcomes in any scene studied ethnographically' (p. 22)
Objectivity	Although objectivity is rejected by post-critical ethnography, it is recognised that 'the act of writing inscribes a critical interpretation that exists beyond the intentions to de-objectify' (p. 22)
Representation	This relates to how the research is disseminated and the decisions taken about why the topic is being studied, how the participants are portrayed and to explore the educative aspects of the research.

(*adapted from* Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004, pp 21-24)

These (Table 14) attempt to overcome the potential oppression in critical theory due

to its lack of reflexivity and consideration of researcher bias (Vandenberg and Hall,

2011). Thus, post-critical ethnographers 'address the significance of positionality, and practice reflexivity' (Anders, 2019, p. 2). To do this, the researcher's positionality needs to be:

> accessible, transparent and vulnerable to judgement and evaluation. In this way we take ethical responsibility for our own subjectivity and political perspective, resisting the trap of gratuitous self-centeredness (Madison, 2012, p. 9)

However, 'gratuitous self-centredness' (Madison, 2012, p. 9) is difficult to define, leaving it to the individual researcher to decide what is appropriate to share and what teeters into self-indulgence. This recalls the caution presented about critical whiteness studies, which may give the white scholar permission to centre their story (Byrne, 2006; Dyer, 2017). Therefore, it would appear that the white post-critical ethnographer who uses a critical whiteness studies theoretical lens has a unique dilemma: the methodology demands a reflexive and transparent consideration of their positionality and how this may influence the research, and the theory demands situating the research into discussions of white supremacy without replicating that supremacy through white researchers dominating 'race' studies. To traverse this difficult terrain, I remain open to critical feedback throughout the research about my positionality, particularly in relation to whiteness.

However, being a post-critical ethnographer using reflexivity is not without its difficulties. Anders and Lester (2019) recall how their post-critical ethnographic research with refugees left them with a sense of loss and grief at witnessing

traumatic stories, arguing that complex emotional feelings can become

entangled with the critique. They suggest incorporating these emotional

reactions into the research, noting that 'ideological informed research…tears at

the edges of process, hearts and bodies' (Anders and Lester, 2019, p. 9).

Likewise, McQueeney and Lavelle (2017) have referred to this as the 'emotional

labour' of critical ethnography, moving the emotional reactions beyond personal

reflections by including them as part of the data analysis. This will be discussed

in Chapter 6 (Sections 6.1 and 6.4) and Chapter 7 (Section 7.8). I have also

explored the emotional impact of this research elsewhere (Smith, 2021, see

Appendix vi). This recognition of the emotional toll of research compliments the

epistemological stance of 'theorised subjectivity' (Letherby, 2013) where the

political and emotional impact of the research is acknowledged.

Furthermore, not only is post-critical ethnography a political, reflexive and anti-

oppressive methodology, but it is also one imbued with a sense of morality (Lester and

Anders, 2018). It has been proposed that 'post-critical ethnographies are in an

important sense not designed but enacted or produced as a moral activity' (Nobilt,

Flores and Murillo, 2004, p. 24). In this way, the most important responsibility the

post-critical ethnographer has is to their participants (Lester and Anders, 2018), with

Hytten (2004) arguing that the researcher should make their work accessible to their

participants and the research itself should have an educative purpose. It is for that

reason that participants had the right to withdraw from the research at any time,

were given the autonomy to choose their research pseudonym and were invited to

give feedback to the findings (see Chapter 4, Sections 4.3 and 4.5). It is certainly the case that the topic of this research is one that stems from personal experience (Chapter 1, Section 1.1) and there is a sense of moral duty to both represent the participants fairly and to contribute to discourse about 'race', racism and whiteness in a principled and ethical way. The careful representation of the participants, through choosing their own pseudonyms, using lengthy verbatim interview extracts to represent their voices (Chapter 5), and discussing the findings without condemnation (Chapter 6), all serve to demonstrate the 'representation' and 'objectivity' aspects of post-critical ethnography (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004).

It has been demonstrated how post-critical ethnography fits in with the research paradigm, namely in being an iteration of critical ethnography which itself was influenced by critical theory. It also reflects the epistemological stance of subjectivity in its advocation of researcher reflexivity, as well as encompassing the anti-oppressive, emancipatory ideals of critical whiteness studies and critical race theory. It is for this reason that post-critical ethnography was chosen as the research methodology. As mentioned previously (Chapter 1, Section 1.4; Chapter 2, Section 2.3.3) using post-critical ethnography as the methodological approach for counselling related research in Wales, is also a contribution to knowledge as this combination of methodology, topic and geographical location has not been found elsewhere.

This chapter has outlined the conceptual framework and methodology used in this research. Unifying these approaches, is a belief in research being a political activity, whereby the researcher has responsibility to the well-being of the participants and a commitment to social justice. The following chapter will consider the theoretical and practical application of the methods.

CHAPTER 4: METHODS

The intention of this chapter is to present the theoretical and practical

dimension of the research methods and outline how they are compatible with

post-critical ethnography. The ethical considerations and the trustworthiness of

the research are also presented. The objective of doing so is to demonstrate

research transparency. Therefore, this will be an honest account of the research

procedure and include the difficulties encountered as well as the successes. In

short, this is an account of what I intended to do and how it actually happened.

4.1 Research Procedure

I started the PhD in the Autumn of 2018 and contacted potential FE colleges about my

research in the Spring of 2019. Six colleges and one university in South Wales offering

counselling courses were identified. The university was discounted as I wanted to

focus on FE colleges and one FE College was discounted as it offered only introductory

counselling skills courses. I initially contacted the colleges by telephone and if interest

was shown, I sent a follow-up email. Three colleges indicated an initial interest in

being involved, however one of those colleges did not return two further emails. I

then met with the course leaders from 'Welsh College A' and 'Welsh College B' who

both showed enthusiasm and interest in the research and agreed that once ethical

approval was granted, I could potentially meet with students on their courses, hold

interviews on site and attend seminars. Both 'Welsh College A' and 'Welsh College B'

were located in former coal-mining towns in South Wales.

I was initially reluctant to use 'Welsh College A' as this is where I did my own training and where I worked as a temporary associate lecturer for four months in 2018. Whilst I would be researching a new group of students whom I had never met before, I was concerned that my familiarity with the college, the staff and the course itself may be an ethical consideration. However, developing awareness about ethnographic research, specifically the role of the participant-observer (Angrosino, 2007) and critical theory's notion of immanent critique, or the understanding of a culture through an internalised standpoint (Stirk, 1992; Sabia, 2010; Wrenn, 2016), led me to the conclusion that my pre-existing understanding of the 'culture' of 'Welsh College A' was a solid foundation to conduct the fieldwork. Indeed, it has been suggested that because of temporal and financial factors associated with conducting research, choosing a field site where the researcher has a 'fighting chance of fitting in' (Angrosino, 2007, p. 29) is important; choosing 'Welsh College A' was a means of achieving this. Given my connection to 'Welsh College A', the course leader offered opportunities to attend lectures with the students, give feedback when they practised their counselling skills in training triads, and to join students during breaks. 'Welsh College A' required a Disclosure and Barring Service check and to have a copy of the ethics form I submitted to the university. Additionally, I was required to sign a contract which outlined that a reciprocal relationship between the college and the 'graduate resident' was expected. This entailed the college facilitating the researcher in their research but with the expectation that the researcher would share their experiences with the college students. As I intended to do this anyway as a way of 'giving back' to

the students to thank them for allowing to become a part of their community for eight weeks, I was happy to agree to the terms of the contract.

Information about the participants and more detail about the ethnographic fieldwork will be outlined in Chapter 5 (Section 5.1). However, when I attended 'Welsh College A' in December 2018, the group comprised of 17 students, 16 women and one man (one female student left the course in January 2020). Most of the students were in their 40s, with the youngest member being 29 and the oldest 54. In accordance with the equal and emancipatory aim of the research paradigm (Thomas, 2009; Strydom, 2011; Scotland, 2012), I gave the students the power to decide with their tutor how often I could attend; weekly or fortnightly. They chose for me to attend weekly from the Spring Term of 2020.

Having been given such a rich opportunity for a protracted period of observation, I decided to focus solely on 'Welsh College A', whose counselling courses are BACP accredited. I joined the group in January 2020 to become a part of the culture and held the interviews toward the end of February and the beginning of March. This gave six weeks of observational fieldwork and an opportunity for the group to become familiar with me. It was felt this would allow the group a more informed decision as to whether to participate with the interviews and for those who did participate, the established rapport between us may create a dynamic where they felt 'safe' to share their honest thoughts about 'race', racism and whiteness. The last two weeks were spent conducting the interviews.

4.2 Research Methods

The methods selected for this research reflect these same themes of equality and emancipation found throughout the research paradigm. The method used in this research was participant-observation which encompassed semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Each component of participant-observation will be discussed separately for clarity regarding their application. The participant-observation took place over a period of six weeks and the interviews were conducted over two weeks at 'Welsh College A'. In accordance with post-critical ethnography advocating researcher reflexivity and consideration of positionality (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders, 2019), researcher reflexivity was also understood as an integral method. Reflexivity was woven throughout all stages of the research process, from the initial decision to not interview participants of colour lest it provoke racial trauma (Carter, 2007) to impact of writing the discussion of the findings (Chapter 6, Section 6.1) and the overall emotional impact of the research on my own well-being (Smith, 2021, Appendix vi).

In their book introducing post-critical ethnography, Noblit, Flores and Murillo (2004) have focused on its theoretical possibilities rather than its practical application. Although, it does includes examples of post-critical ethnography that used poetry (Flores, 2004; Glesne, 2004; Peters, 2004) and autoethnography (Patterson and Rayle, 2004). Arts-based methods have been used elsewhere (Anders and Lester, 2015). Similarly, whilst Anders (2019) traces

the theoretical lineage of post-critical methodology, potential suitable methods were not discussed. As a novice researcher uncertain of the appropriate methods that align with post-critical ethnography, I decided to use the traditional triptych of ethnographic research methods: interviews, observation and document analysis (Angrosino, 2007). However, these methods were combined with the principles of post-critical ethnography, particularly the notion of morality, researcher reflexivity and careful representation of the participants (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders, 2019). As Anders states (2019, p. 18), what unites post-critical ethnographic research is the belief that it is a 'moral activity and representations are always partial, positional, and personal'. It was understood that the methods used were partial, in that they would capture a partial representation of the participants at a specific moment in time, my positionality would influence the application of the methods, i.e., I may 'see' and not 'see' things according to my theoretical and personal positionality, and it was personal through the subjective epistemology and relational dynamic between myself and the participants.

Participant-Observation

Traditionally, ethnographic research was seen as an objective research method, whereas current sociological ethnographers are encouraged to consider their role in the research (Angrosino and Rosenberg, 2011). One way of achieving this reflexive stance is through participant-observation, whereby the researcher becomes integrated and engaged with the people they are studying, building

relationships and taking part in activities relevant to the group (Angrosino, 2007). Participant-observation has been termed the definitive ethnographic research method (Murchison, 2010). Supporting this, participant-observation has been called 'the most natural and the most challenging of data collection methods' (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013, p. 75). The former relates the familiar human endeavour of understanding human behaviour, usually through familial and interpersonal relationships, and the latter relates to the challenge of trying to organise this fluctuating process (Guest, Namey, and Mitchell, 2013).

Offering clarity around the method, Guest, Namey and Mitchell (2013; Table 15) present the three key elements of participant-observation:

Table 15 Summary of the Three Key Elements of Participant-Observation:

Key Element	Description
Getting into the location of whatever aspects of the human experience you wish to study	The location where the participant-observation takes place in.
Building rapport with the participants	Being accepted and trusted by the participants
Spending enough time interacting to get the data needed	Give time to building rapport and observing / participating to have various experiences and interactions with the participants. This could be anywhere from days to years.

(adapted from Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013, pp. 76-77)

The objective of participant-observation is that through immersive integration with a group, culture or situation, the researcher will be able to identify patterns of behaviour that may first appear as indistinguishable actions (Spradley, 2016).

The need for rapport and time for this to happen is important. For this research, I spent eight weeks with the trainee counsellors in 'Welsh College A' and the intention was that relationships would build through sharing my experiences of being a trainee and then qualified counsellor.

Although taking an anthropological stance, Shah (2017, p. 46) argues that participant-observation is a 'potentially revolutionary praxis'. By this, it is meant that it challenges the researcher's assumptions through 'democratic' (Shah, 2017, p. 47) engagement with participants. This can facilitate ways to confront power and authority (Shah, 2017). As this research is located in a critical theory research paradigm, which questions notions of power and is concerned with equality, emancipation and transformation (Thomas, 2009; Strydom, 2011; Scotland, 2012), the concept of participant-observation as a democratic and revolutionary method (Shah, 2017) corresponds with the chosen critical paradigm of this research (Chapter 3).

Supporting this notion of participant-observation being a 'democratic' method (Shah, 2017, p. 47), Katz (2019, p. 16) also refers to it as 'democratic', giving the researcher a sense of freedom in their approach. However, this sense of autonomy can leave the novice researcher experiencing challenges in deciding who they are in the field, how they should interact with participants and how to understand the work they are producing (Katz, 2019). Consequently, prior to embarking on the role of participant-observer, I decided that I would answer

participants' questions openly and honestly, interactions would be done based on the principles of equality, empowerment and kindness and the research was understood as an emancipatory, political activity centred around social justice.

This intention of transparency toward the research participants in my role of participant-observer, stands in accordance with an overt position through explicitly stating the reasons for my presence, in contrast to the covert stance of concealing the purpose of the researchers' presence and the focus of their research (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011). A covert approach to participant-observations has been called unethical (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011) and as the methodology is understood as a 'moral activity' (Nobilt, Flores and Murillo, 2004, p. 24), with responsibility toward the participants (Lester and Anders, 2018), it was felt an overt participant-observer role was ethically compatible to the methodology used.

Therefore, whilst participant-observation is not a straightforward method given the seeming ambiguity in regard to practical application, it does allow for 'the most direct understanding of the phenomena under study' (Murchison, 2010, p. 91). This direct connection to the participants, its compatibility to the research paradigm meant it was an appropriate method for this research.

Semi-structured interviews

The research interviews were conducted by using semi-structured interviews and was influenced by feminist research theory. Whilst feminist research is not the theoretical lens used in this research, it does provide relevant interviewing principles based on equality, which echo the critical research paradigm. The suitability of using semi-structured interviewing, as influenced by feminist theory, in post-critical ethnographic research has been recognised given that both approaches seek to challenge power, oppression and call for researcher reflexivity (Anders, 2019, pp. 5-6). At the forefront of feminist research interviewing was Oakley (1981), who argued that research interviewing was traditionally based on a masculine paradigm, where objectivity prevailed. To overcome this, Oakley (1981) suggests a non-hierarchical, collaborative dynamic between researcher and participant, as well as personal investment by the researcher. In the same way, feminist theory advocates equality between researcher and participant (Ormston *et al*, 2014) and is conducted reflexively and relationally (DeVault and Gross, 2007). To achieve this, I was able to transfer my training as a counsellor to the role of researcher and interviewer. This was done using active listening skills, whereby one listens to what is being said and what is not being said, and the ability to ask questions that deepened the conversation whilst keeping the participant emotionally safe. Indeed, it has been suggested that 'the gathering of stories through conversation (or other means) is familiar and comparatively easy' for counsellors turned researchers (Etherington, 2004, p. 80).

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In this research, semi-structured interviewing was understood as a method which would allow the participants voices to be heard and I would 'follow' their answers to ensure relationality and equality. Similarly, when reproducing the excerpts from the interviews in Chapter 5, the decision was made to use lengthy verbatim extracts from the interviews to represent their voices accurately, in line with post-critical ethnography's idea of representation (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders 2019). This meant that the interviews were situated as a significant method to ethically represent the participants. In addition, reflexivity (see below), was used in the semi-structured interviews to consider the role I was playing in the interview process. For example, my own reaction to one participant's use of discriminatory racial language (Chapter 4, Section 4.4) and some participants' hostility to being asked about being white (Chapter 6, Section 6.4). This reflexive consideration of my role in the interview process also falls in line with post-critical ethnography's emphasis on the researcher positionality and reflexivity (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders 2019). In this way, the methodological principles have been applied to the method.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a core part of post-critical ethnography (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders, 2019) as well as an essential component of counselling training, when the trainee is expected to work through personal difficulties and consider their position in relation to theory and practice (Hedges, 2010). Therefore, becoming a reflexive researcher and articulating this reflexivity, felt a natural extension of a process I have been engaged in since 2013. Etherington (2004), herself a trained psychotherapist

turned researcher, recognised this transferable skill across seemingly disparate disciplines. Similarly, Kara (2015, p. 72) acknowledges that the practice of reflexivity can connect social research and reflective professional practice.

Reflexivity has so far been demonstrated by outlining the personal background to this research and my positionality (Chapter 1, Sections 1.1 and 1.5), the reasons for selecting the research paradigm (Chapter 3) and will also be expressed in Chapter 6 (Sections 6.1 and 6.4) when reflecting on the socio-political context of the research and the feelings which ensued from participants' reaction to being asked about whiteness. It has also been expressed elsewhere when considering the emotional impact of conducting research (Smith, 2021; Appendix vi).

Reflexivity has been referred to as 'the capacity of the researcher to acknowledge how their own experiences and contexts (which might be fluid and changing) inform the process and outcomes of inquiry' (Etherington, 2004, pp. 31-32). Further, reflexivity is not simply self-reflection, which relates to thinking about our actions, but refers to a critical examination of our experience (May and Perry, 2017). Therefore, the use of reflexivity in this research relates not only to an ongoing critical consideration of how my positionality relates to this research, but also to being unambiguous about the biases that I brought to this research. In Chapter 1, I explained my theoretical and personal positionality (Section 1.5), as well as the circumstances that led to this research project (Section 1.1). The continuing examination of this position is interspersed throughout the research. Emirbayer and Desmond (2015, p. 43) state the

researcher's intellectual biases need to be exposed. It is this spirit and in the quest for

researcher reflexivity that I outline the conscious biases that were brought to this

research.

This research commenced during a period of dealing with vicarious traumatisation

(McCann and Pearlman, 1990; Smith, 2021, see Appendix vi) and the decision to stop

counselling practice indefinitely. This was a challenging time and my feelings toward

the counselling profession were that of disillusionment (Smith, 2020). However, by the

Autumn of 2019, these feelings had dissipated and whilst I felt I could not participate

in the profession anymore, the negative feelings toward the profession had subsided

as the fieldwork commenced. This coincided with my self-perception developing:

> *I am no longer a counsellor who is doing research. I am now a researcher*
> *who is researching counselling* (Smith, 06.06.19)

The change of self-perception was integral in the approach toward the research.

The epochal realisation that I am a researcher who was once a counsellor

allowed a feeling of insider/outsider status to the counselling profession,

whereby I understood its culture, practices and norms but did not feel invested

in it or a representative of it. Therefore, this allowed a critical approach whilst

recognising the subjective experiences brought to this research.

Another potential bias is that my counselling training was undertaken at the

college researched, meaning there is a familiarity with the environment, staff,

course and the process of training itself. My time there was a largely positive

one, as it fostered my interest in academic learning and facilitated leaps in personal growth. Considering the notion of immanent critique, which encourages the understanding of a culture by using the resources from within it (Sabia, 2010), in line with my epistemological stance of subjectivity allows this potential bias to be embraced through utilising my internalised position as a way of understanding the culture.

As 'race' is the focus of the research question, it is pertinent to consider reflexivity in relation to racial positionality. Milner (2007) put forward a non-linear framework for researchers in relation to racial and cultural positionality, influenced by critical race theory. This framework is intended to alleviate 'dangers seen, unseen and unforeseen' (Milner, 2007, p. 388; Table 16) that may occur in the research process if the researcher does not consider their own positionality:

Table 16 Summary of the Framework for Race, Culture and Researcher Positionality

Feature	Description
Researching the Self	Researchers question their own racial positionality by asking racially framed questions. These include considerations of how their positionality, racial understanding and beliefs can impact the research.
Researching the Self in Relation to Others	Researchers reflect about how they relate to their participants and recognise the multiples identities that both researcher and participants bring to the research. Power relations between the researcher and participants are contemplated.
Engaged Reflection and Representation	Researchers and participants reflect collaboratively and both voices are represented in the findings. If the researcher and the participants disagree, it should be included in the findings.
Shifting from Self to System	The research findings are contextualised into historical, racial and socio-political realities. This allows for the awareness of the systemic racism.

(*adapted from* Milner, 2007, pp. 395-397)

Applying Milner's (2007) framework to this research, it can be seen that 'researching the self' (p. 395), in terms of my positionality is evident in Chapter 1 (Section 1.1) with a clear recounting of my largely de-racialised life pre-2015, the journey to this research topic and the continued reflections upon my positionality are woven throughout the thesis. The dynamics between myself and the participants will be shown in Chapter 6, particularly in relation to the question of whiteness (Section 6.4). The collaborative nature of 'engaged reflection and representation' (Milner, 2007, p. 396) mirrors post-critical ethnography's central issues of representation and objectivity as they are concerned with how the participants are represented in the findings and the process of writing-up the findings. This was done with care, with the principle of 'no-harm' toward the participants at the forefront of the process, in line with the morality of post-critical ethnography (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004). Finally, 'shifting from self to system' (Milner, 2007, p. 397) has been demonstrated in (Chapter 2, Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2) where historical and contemporary understandings of 'race' were presented, and the research findings which will be placed into a wider historical and socio-political context (Chapter 6). Nevertheless, despite these intentions of racial reflexivity, D'Arcangelis (2018) argues that as a white researcher she was unable to fully appreciate how her subjectivity and power would influence her research despite her efforts to the contrary. For that reason, reflexivity may only be possible if one accepts that it is a fallible process and can only work if the researcher is engaged and open to feedback.

Document-analysis

The final method used was document analysis. It has been argued that 'good' ethnographic research requires the combination of observation, interviews and what can be termed as 'archival sources' (Angrosino, 2007, p. 51). As mentioned above, this triptych of methods was used in this research. The primary advantage of this method is that it can allow quick and easy access to data (Braun and Clarke, 2013). This was my own experience as I asked the course tutor for copies of the student handbook (Student Handbook 2019/2020) and assignment briefs which he immediately gave me. I was also given handouts for the seminars I observed. However, despite the use of documents being a part of social science research, it is seldom emphasised (Prior, 2008). Despite this, 'documents gain purchase through the work of people in context who create, interpret and promote them in specific ways' (Wells, MacLeod and Frank, 2012, p. 120). This can be achieved through questioning the purpose of the document, as well as what has been included or excluded in it (Angrosino, 2007). The way in which the documents analysed in this research excluded 'race', racism and whiteness, particularly the Student Handbook 2019/2020, is discussed in Chapter 5 (Section 5.5) and in Chapter 6 (Section 6.6).

On reflection, it is recognised that less emphasis was placed on the use of document-analysis in comparison to participant-observation, semi-structured interviews and reflexivity. The reason for this is that the focus of the research was on the personal experience of the participants' understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness. This aligns with post-critical ethnography's concern with participant representation (Noblit,

Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders, 2019) which participant-observation and semi-structured interviews permitted. However, the fact that document-analysis was de-emphasised as a method is a potential limitation of this research as an equal balance to the traditional triptych of ethnographic methods was not observed.

4.3 Data analysis

The method used to analyse the data was thematic analysis. The method is most associated with Braun and Clarke (2006) who present it as an accessible and flexible method of data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In the same way that participant-observations seeks to make patterns out of information being witnessed (Spradley, 2016), thematic analysis is also concerned with identifying patterns, termed themes, in the data:

> A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 82)

Another definition of a theme is that it is an evocation of the participants experience (Nowell *et al*, 2017). To capture and represent the participants experience through themes, a thematic analysis of the data is conducted, which comprises of six steps:

Table 17 Six steps of Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.

4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating the analysis back to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

(*taken from* Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

Despite Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step process, Nowell *et al* (2017) state that the data analysis process must be clearly outlined to demonstrate trustworthiness yet they recognise that there is a lack of literature delineating the practical process of how to do a thematic analysis, thus potentially missing the standard trustworthiness. Research trustworthiness will be considered later in this chapter (Section 4.5)

Arguably, one way to demonstrate research trustworthiness is through Braun and Clarke's (2006) emphasis on the importance of explicitly stating the theoretical assumptions of the research in which thematic analysis is being used. Chapter 3 achieves this. Specifically, this relates to the concept that this research is located in principles of emancipation and transformation (Strydom, 2011; Scotland, 2012). Additionally, the methodology is seen as a 'moral activity' (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004, p. 24), with responsibility to the participants' welfare (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Lester and Anders, 2018). An example of this is the feeling of responsibility brought to transcribing the research interviews, a process referred to as 'arduous and time-consuming' (Magnusson and Marecek, 2015, p. 73). Despite the laborious nature

of transcribing the interviews, it was felt that it was not merely the first step of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87), but accurately capturing the participants' words was an ethical necessity through which responsibility to the participants would be demonstrated (Lester and Anders, 2018) in regard to their representation (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004). Further, the participants' voices were privileged through using accurate verbatim extracts when disseminating the findings in Chapter 5. Analysis followed the process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), as described above (Table 17). The data analysis was done by hand. Initially, the interview transcripts and fieldnotes were coded by highlighting interesting statements, then those statements were then grouped together into categories, such as 'learning', 'race', 'whiteness', 'racism'. These were then given temporary thematic names, for example, the code 'whiteness' was given the name 'controversial whiteness', which fell in line with generating themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This process was then repeated to ensure that the data was thoroughly analysed, and the initial codes were refined, with 'controversial whiteness' being divided into 'white racism', 'newness' and 'identity'. The initial themes were then reviewed and refined (Braun and Clarke, 2006) by identifying whether the themes supported and represented the data. Next, themes were 'defined and named' (Braun and Clarke, 2006) with 'controversial whiteness' becoming 'White (Un)Awareness', and subthemes 'newness' and 'identity' being recategorized into 'whiteness as meaningless', 'reverse racism' and 'complicated recognition of whiteness' (see Chapter 5, Table 18 for research themes).

Once these themes and subthemes were generated, named, and defined, the process was repeated (except for the coding process) to ensure rigour. Finally, 'producing the report' (Braun and Clarke, 2006) could take place; this is outlined in Chapter 5 (analysis of findings) and Chapter 6 (discussion of findings).

Additionally, after the data analysis was completed and the themes had been produced, it was intended that 'member checking' (Stake, 1995) would take place. This was envisioned as a way to demonstrate responsibility and care towards the participants (Lester and Anders, 2018). However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic it was not possible to do this in face-to-face, as originally intended. Instead, I produced a report of the findings which summarised each theme and gave brief notes on the supporting literature to provide the participants with a wider theoretical context (Appendix ii). The participants were given four weeks to respond. Member checking is discussed in relation to research trustworthiness (Section 4.5).

4.4 Research Ethics

For this research, ethics were understood by separating them in terms of the procedural and the practice (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). The former refers to formalised ethics procedures through university ethics committees and the latter to 'microethics' (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004, p. 265) or the everyday ethical moments of research.

The procedural ethics were guided by the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David

(UWTSD). This was achieved through gaining ethical approval for the research and

then through adherence to the 'Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice', in

particular the fundamental principles for research (UWTSD, 2017, pp. 3-4). In essence,

the research principles maintain that no harm should be done to participants and their

well-being is at the forefront of the research process, this includes the right to

withdraw from the research at any time (UWTSD, 2017). The first step to ensuring this

is to gain informed consent from the research participants. Informed consent requires

giving participants relevant information about the research, ensuring it is uncoerced

and is given by someone who has the capacity to do so (UWTSD, 2017, p. 15).

To enable informed consent, I gave a PowerPoint presentation to the group of

potential research participants at 'Welsh College A' one month before the participant-

observation fieldwork was due to commence. In that presentation, I described:

- What a PhD was.
- My background as a counsellor and former member of the course.
- The research questions.
- The principles of the research.
- How confidentiality and anonymity would be assured.
- The potential pros and cons of being involved in the research.
- The right to not take part and the right to withdraw at any time.

I also handed out consent forms and information sheets (Appendix i). It was

made clear to students that they could withdraw consent at any time. It was

reiterated that if they were to allow me to take part in any lectures, skills

practice and join them on breaks etc., that they had the right to ask me to leave

and I would respect that. After the presentation, I spent time answering the students' questions, most of which were centred on my work as a trauma counsellor. I then spent the rest of the day with the class helping with their counselling skills practise on the understanding that this was a 'getting to know' one another opportunity and I would not be conducting informal interviews and recording any conversations. This was viewed as a part of gaining informed consent as the students had an opportunity to experience what it may be like to have me present and what I could 'give back' to them in terms of sharing my counselling experience and knowledge.

However, gaining informed consent may not be as straightforward as it appears. Alldred and Gillies (2012) argue that obtaining informed consent is predicated on a rationalist basis, in that it is assumed the potential participant is able to make a rational and purely cognitive decision about whether to take part in the research. This solely intellectual approach can neglect the emotional and contextual factors that may influence the potential participants' decision (Alldred and Gillies, 2012). Indeed, I was aware that the group of trainees being asked to participate were a relatively new group of students who may want to impress their tutor by agreeing, and perhaps felt peer pressure to take part in the research. To assuage this, the consent forms (Appendix i) were given in early December 2019 but were not required to be signed and handed in until one week later, thus giving the students time to decide whether to participate. However, all of the students in attendance on the day of my presentation signed

and returned the forms. Consent forms were taken by other students to give to those absent and I returned the following week to collect those forms, however these students were not in attendance. Consequently, on my first day of fieldwork, I spoke to the two students and explained the research, I said they could take their time deciding whether to participate and I would not record anything they said or observations I had made until I had the consent forms. Whilst they both immediately verbally consented, I waited until the forms were signed and returned the following week before recording data relating to them.

To employ the 'practice' element of Guillemin and Gillam's (2004) understanding of research ethics, or dealing with mircoethics, the use of reflexivity is recommended as an important part of ethical decision making:

> Being reflexive in an ethical sense means acknowledging and being sensitized (*sic*) to the microethical dimensions of research practice and in doing so, being alert to and prepared for ways of dealing with the ethical tensions that arise (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004, p. 279)

As reflexivity is an integral component to the methodology used in this research (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders, 2019) it therefore seems appropriate to take a reflexive stance to research ethics, particularly in relation to the everyday interactions with the research participants. Supporting this, Lincoln (2009) also states that reflexivity is a facet of contemporary qualitative research ethics.

Whilst being a reflexive researcher is the recommended method of ethical research, Guillemin and Gillam (2004) do not provide a practical solution in how to tackle 'ethical moments' in research. However, Ryen (2009) argues that the research paradigm and research ethics are linked, with solutions to ethical dilemmas being found in the epistemological stance. The epistemology of this research is subjectivism (O'Reilly and Kiyimba, 2015) which allows various perceptions of the factors which shape a person's reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Specifically, theorised subjectivity (Letherby, 2013) echoes the importance of researcher reflexivity and awareness of both politics and the emotional impact of research. Moreover, critical research is predicated on principles of equality, justice and mutuality (Thomas, 2009). Therefore, when describing the underlying principles of this research to the potential participants, they were told that they were 'ethical, equal, reflexive and relational'. This maxim was the 'solution' (Ryen, 2009) to the practice ethics of this research.

To complement the use of reflexivity and research paradigm in ethical research practice, the 'ethics of care' (Gilligan, 1982) was an influence in the day-to-day interactions with the participants. This was developed by Gilligan (1982) who argued that women make ethical judgements based upon relational dynamics rather than purely intellectual rules. Thus, rendering empathy and compassion as integral to ethical decision making. Developed by feminist theorists, it emphasises that ethical decisions are based upon what is right, what is good and takes into consideration the relationship between the researcher and

participants (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012). Therefore, ethics of care in relation to research is not driven by a set of rules but are guided by notions of care, compassion and acting in ways that are most beneficial to the participant(s) (Wiles, 2013). An example of employing ethics of care to a mircoethical situation (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004) occurred when talking to Bella and Jayne about a group discussion that had taken place. Bella became upset about what she felt were exclusionary statements made by some members of the group. Bella was able to recognise that her strong reaction was linked to a recent bereavement. I decided to stop taking fieldnotes, despite the conversation being relevant to my research, and gave time for Bella to talk about her bereavement. This approach echoed the ethical maxim of this research: ethical, equal, reflexive and relational.

Ethical considerations specifically related to 'race' research were also relevant. It has been questioned whether shared whiteness is enough to form a connection between participant and researcher, thus allowing racial similarity to transcend differences such as class and gender (Gallagher, 2008). In doing so, it is open to debate whether the white anti-racist researcher is truly challenging racial hierarchy or simply reproducing it (Gallagher, 2008). Moreover:

> one's whiteness becomes a form of methodological capital researchers can use to question whites about the meaning they attach to their race (Gallagher, 2008, p. 170)

As both myself and the participants were white, this contention was relevant. Before starting the fieldwork, I was concerned that I may hear views about 'race' and racism that were offensive, and whether my whiteness and not challenging racist comments would be viewed as complicity based upon a shared skin colour. Lester, Anders and Mariner (2018) have discussed their own experiences as white post-critical ethnographers by taking on board Bell's (1992) argument that white people need to work with other white people in the fight against white supremacy. Consequently, the 'methodological capital' (Gallagher, 2008, p. 170) of whiteness was understood in terms of researcher and participants shared whiteness providing the participants with an opportunity to discuss 'race', racism and whiteness relationally, in a way that they may not feel able to do with a researcher of colour.

One such example was Phil's use of, and etymological misunderstanding of, the word 'Paki'. This was something which felt uncomfortable in the moment, when transcribing it and even its inclusion here in the thesis. However, I have decided to include it as an example of how a white researcher, interviewing a white person about 'race', may encounter such moments and the effect they have on the researcher.

> **Phil:** …So, I looked into it years ago, the term 'Paki', if you were called a 'Paki' as a Pakistani, it was a kind of dignified title for the Pakistanis who were referred to as 'Paki', there was a sense of they've achieved something, they've got some kind of status. Whereas now it's become a derogatory term and it's become offensive. So, it's twisted on them. So, it's like, well, it's twisted. So, was it derogatory back then? While they saw it inside as a status.

RS: How do you know that? That they saw it that way?

Phil: I researched it. I Googled it. I think it came up on a question, on something like University Challenge originally, and I was like 'that can't be true, physically, that can't be true' and I then Googled it and a couple of sites come up and I'm quite… what's the word? I'm quite…a curious sort of person.

In the moment, I felt shocked at the unabashed use of the word. In hindsight, I wish I challenged the notion that such an offensive word would have been used on a primetime quiz show and also asked about the websites that made the claims Phil said they did. Instead, I allowed the interview to continue. I have toyed with its inclusion in the thesis; however, it illustrates a part of the interview process where I felt complicit in a conversation that was racially offensive and inaccurate, whilst simultaneously recognising that our shared whiteness may have allowed Phil to be open and forthright with his language. It also shows how white researchers may have a place in researching 'race' with white participants, in that participants may reveal more in an 'unfiltered' way and while we may vehemently disagree with the language and sentiment, we may not experience such statements in an emotionally painful way. This stands in comparison to Jayakumar and Adamian's (2017) experience, who found that they had to take breaks when analysing their data about white participants' colour-blind attitudes, as it was triggering for them. Further, Phil's language did not result in personal racial trauma (Carter, 2007; Hemmings and Evans, 2018). This exchange with Phil shows how the 'methodological capital' (Gallagher, 2008, p. 170) of whiteness can produce powerful and challenging comments.

One way for the white researcher to use their whiteness ethically and effectively, is through being aware of their racial identity. Helms (2017) argues that the development of a white racial identity is an ethical component to 'race' research, as white researchers can neglect the role of their own whiteness. Locating my own white racial identity by using Helms (1990) framework, is an example of ethical reflexivity. At the start of the PhD, I feel I was in the 'pseudo-independent' phase (Helms, 1990, pp. 61-62), particularly through the process of self-examination. Reading and writing the literature review (Chapter 2) facilitated a transition to the immersion-emersion phase (Helms, 1990, p. 62), as I had engaged in a deep self-re-education about 'race', racism and whiteness. However, these were not static phases, as I felt that I would transition between the two as I questioned my own whiteness and learned more about 'race', racism and whiteness. Nonetheless, the awareness of white racial identity theory (Helms, 1990) and the self-perception of being in the immersion-emersion phase (Helms, 1990, p. 62) when starting the data collection, meant that I entered the field self-aware of my own white racial identity. However, the fluidity of developing white racial awareness was demonstrated when commencing the writing of Chapter 6 and the reflexive exploration of that period is seen as an expression of research ethics (see Chapter 6, Section 6.1)

There were no serious ethical concerns raised during the research. However, there were ongoing microethical (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004) decisions that I took during the eight weeks I spent with participants. As previously explained, I

stopped a conversation with Bella and Jayne about their feelings around statements made in class discussion when Bella became upset, despite the conversation being related to the research. If a participant mentioned something private about another participant, I did not record it as the information did not come directly from the student concerned. On one occasion, something was said by a participant about a sensitive issue during class discussion and I was concerned that it may have affected another participant who had previously disclosed their personal experience related to that issue. During the break, I spoke to the student to see how they were feeling and assured them that whatever they said would not be recorded. On another occasion, I asked Marie, as the youngest member of the group and the person who had mentioned 'race' in class (see Chapter 5, Sections 5.1 and 5.4), whether I could interview her for the research, as she had previously given her consent. Marie agreed to this and we decided I would interview her the following week. However, Marie then became tearful and asked to speak to me privately about her challenging personal circumstances. We spoke at length and I gave Marie details of the college counselling service. Later that day, I took Marie aside to check how she was and said that whilst I appreciated her willingness to participate in an interview, I recognised that she was under a lot of pressure in her life, and I did not want to add that by interviewing her. Marie agreed and thanked me for prioritising her feelings. These ongoing decisions could not have been anticipated prior to the fieldwork, were taken in the moment and are examples of microethics in action (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). The decisions

were motivated by care and compassion for the participants in line with ethics

of care (Gilligan, 1982) and were done so through prioritising what was most

beneficial to them, rather than the research (Wiles, 2013).

4.5 Trustworthiness

Evaluating the quality of qualitative research can be challenging as a definitive

criterion does not exist (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Further, the criteria used to judge

quantitative research: reliability, validity and generalisability, are not suitable for

qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Instead, the notion of 'trustworthiness'

provides a way for qualitative researchers to demonstrate the value of their work

outside of 'ill-fitting quantitative parameters' (Given and Saumure, 2008, p. 896).

Indeed, trustworthiness has been called the 'bedrock' of qualitative research (Birt *et
al*, 2016, p. 1802). One way trustworthiness can be established is through detailing

the research process and being honest about any dilemmas that transpired during the

research (Saldaña, 2014); in essence one way to be trustworthy is to be transparent.

This research has outlined the research paradigm (Chapter 3), providing a rationale for

its selection. Researcher reflexivity, particularly around positionality and bias, is

demonstrated throughout, as are any encounters with dilemmas or challenges related

to the research. This is one way in which trustworthiness has been established in this

doctoral research. I will explore a personal challenge that I faced during the research

in Chapter 7 (Section 7.8 and Smith, 2021, see Appendix vi).

Member checking can be another way to achieve trustworthiness. Braun and Clarke (2013) suggest that it is a frequently used method in qualitative research to demonstrate trustworthiness. However, whilst this is a common approach to ensure that the research is trustworthy, Richards (2015) recognises that it can also be complicated. Therefore, and in line with research transparency, member checking was used in this research alongside the use of triangulation and crystallization (Richards, 2003; Ellingson, 2009, see below).

Member checking refers to the researcher returning to participants to check their analysis with them to ensure that their views have been represented fairly and can be done through a written report or an oral presentation (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Member checking can be seen as an ethical decision, rather than a solely epistemological one (Schwandt, 2007, p. 188). It is this notion of member checking as an ethical consideration that underscored its use in this research. To that end, member checking can be viewed as an expression of the critical research paradigm, with participants' voices and opinions being empowered through the opportunity to give feedback, demonstrating the principles of critical theory such as equality, justice and mutuality (Thomas, 2009). Similarly, it was also viewed as an extension of the 'representation' in post-critical ethnography (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004, p. 24), or how the participants are portrayed in the research, by giving them a 'right of reply' before the findings were submitted for examination. Accordingly, 'member checking' was seen in light of Tracy's (2010, p. 844) preferred term of 'member reflections' which departs from a seemingly positivist idea of checking for one truth and allows

space for multiple realities and '*collaboration* and reflexive *elaboration*' (Tracy, 2010, p. 844) between researcher and participants.

A way of achieving this collaboration is through using jargon free language in any discussion of the findings, asking for open comments and integrating feedback into the findings (Birt *et al*, 2016). Therefore, the participants were first told about member checking at the initial presentation in December 2019. This was done so potential participants would be fully informed about the overall research process and because I felt that knowing they had a 'right of reply' would help establish feelings of equity between us. As discussed previously (Section 4.3), a face-to-face member check was not able to take place due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, I emailed a report of the findings to the participants and the course tutor (Appendix ii). For three participants, their email addresses were illegible on their consent forms, so I asked the tutor of the course to forward the report to them. In line with Birt *et al's* (2016) recommendation of jargon free language, I tried to be succinct but also include brief notes about the relevant literature to provide the participants with a context and rationale for the themes I had identified. The participants had four weeks to respond to the research findings. However, whilst I received two replies thanking me for the email, I did not receive feedback from the participants. This may be due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, whereby the participants had more pressing concerns to deal with than providing feedback. It could be because the report was not as accessible as I had intended it to be, or perhaps because they might have disagreed with the findings and did not want to express this. It is a regret that the member check did not happen in

the way it was intended, particularly as I had always perceived it as integral to ethical and methodological sound research.

Triangulation is the use of two or more methods of data collection to consider the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2013). It has been argued that 'good ethnography is the result of triangulation' (Angrosino, 2007, p. 51). Three methods of data collection were used: semi-structured interviews, participant-observation and document analysis. In this regard, triangulation was used to meet Angrosino's (2007, p.51) standard of 'good' ethnography. Triangulation is used in qualitative research as it is believed that the use of multiple data collection methods, sources of data and theories will reduce bias (Denzin 2009). To that end, there are four types of triangulation: data, investigator, theory and methodological (Denzin 2009, p. 301), with each type advocating multiple perspectives be they practical, such as employing various data gathering techniques in various spaces, or theoretical through combining different theoretical approaches to understand the data. In that regard, the use of semi-structured interviewing, participant-observation and document analysis to collect the data, and the combination of critical whiteness studies and critical race theory for the theoretical lens, can be viewed as examples of triangulation.

One way of demonstrating trustworthiness that allows for subjective perspectives is that of crystallization. Introduced by Richardson (2003) as an alternative to the more positivist approach of triangulation, it uses the metaphor of looking at research

findings as if one is looking through a crystal with its fractured, multiple perspectives

as a way to understand the 'truth' of the research findings. Thus offering 'a deepened,

complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic' (Richardson, 2003, p. 518).

This has been further redefined by Ellingson (2009) as a way of combining various

forms of analysis and representation into a clear text, and/or texts, by:

> building a rich and openly partial account of a phenomenon that
> problematizes its own construction, highlights researchers' vulnerabilities
> and positionality, makes claims about socially constructed meanings, and
> reveals the indeterminacy of knowledge claims even as it makes them.
> (Ellingson, 2009, p. 4).

Ellingson (2009) argues that this approach is adaptable and fits well with critical

paradigms, thus making it appropriate for this research. Considering Ellingson's

(2009, p. 4) definition, the use of crystallization as a way to critique the research,

openly discuss my own positionality and the questioning of social constructions,

reflects the transparency of this research. It does so through highlighting the

challenges and limitations in the research, the use of reflexivity and the stance

that 'race' is socially constructed. It is also acknowledged that the research

findings are not necessarily *the* truth, but *a* truth found in a particular context

and time, i.e., white trainee counsellors in one college in South Wales in 2020.

Trustworthiness can be located in this research through the use of transparency

in outlining the research process (Saldaña, 2014). Member checking was

undertaken as an ethical activity (Schwandt, 2007), not a perfunctory step (Birt

et al, 2016) and one that was undertaken based upon critical research paradigm

and notions of equality and emancipation (Thomas, 2009; Strydom, 2001).

Triangulation was used through the research methods of semi-structured

interviews, participant-observation and document analysis (Denzin 2009 [1970];

Braun and Clarke, 2013). Crystallization (Richardson, 2003; Ellingson, 2009) was

used in relation to understand the multi-faceted perceptions of 'truth' by

acknowledging that the subjective understandings of the participants answers to

the research questions may contain multiple 'truths' that are valid.

Limitations of the research are presented in Chapter 7 (Section 7.8). However, it

is acknowledged that there are limitations of the methods used. The primary

limitation is a lack of clarity around the most appropriate method(s) to use in

post-critical ethnographic research. As a novice researcher, I took the decision to

apply post-critical ethnographic principles (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004;

Anders, 2019) to traditional ethnographic methods (Angrosino, 2007) (Section

4.2). This may account for the lack of emphasis on document-analysis, as

outlined above. Therefore, the personal decision to combine the methodology

and methods used in this research may mean that a more suitable combination,

that an experienced researcher would have identified, was missed. Participant-

observation was undertaken over a six week period, arguably in order to

become embedded in the culture of 'Welsh College A', this could have been

done over a longer period of time. However, given the re-emergence of my

vicarious traumatisation (Smith, 2021, see Appendix vi) and the beginning of the

Covid-19 pandemic, this would not have been possible. In addition, reflexivity

and consideration of positionality are core components to post-critical ethnography (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders, 2019) and as a method was applied during all stages of the research. However, researcher reflexivity risks 'gratuitous self-centredness' (Madison, 2012, p. 9). In that regard, the success of walking the line between critical reflexivity and egotism cannot be determined by the researcher themself. Therefore, I am open to critical feedback about the use of reflexivity in this research. Another limitation, and one imbued with regret, is that a face-to-face member check was not able to take place due to Covid-19. Inclusion of the participants' responses to the research findings (Chapter 5) was intended as an expression of ethical research and a way to ensure full representation of their voices, in alignment with post-critical ethnographic methodology (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders, 2019).

The analysis of findings will be presented in Chapter 5 and are done so with the understanding that they are my perception of the 'truth' and embraces the idea that the reader may find their own 'truth' and meaning, thus falling in line with the concept of crystallization (Richardson, 2003; Ellingson, 2009). Likewise, reflexivity is used in the discussion of the findings (Chapter 6) to express researcher positionality and not as a means to centralise myself in this research.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The findings of the research are presented in this chapter and are based upon the post-critical ethnographic approach adopted in this research. Specifically, the interview extracts presented in this chapter were chosen with care and in line with post-critical ethnography's notion of considered representation of the participants' contributions (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders, 2019). It is also acknowledged that these verbatim extracts are 'personal, partial and political' (Anders, 2019, p. 18). They are the personal thoughts and feelings of the participants and my own personal experiences and knowledge. Additionally, my political beliefs in racial equality will be a subjective filter through which I heard and understood what they were expressing, and subsequently presented in this chapter. The findings are partial as they capture the participants understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness at a particular moment in time, but it is accepted that these understandings may evolve and change. Therefore, this research does not claim that the participants' understandings presented below are static and finite. Finally, it is political through the use of long verbatim extracts, which is seen as a political act in that it gives a 'voice' to the participants.

The findings of this chapter will address the overall research question, which is:

> *How do white trainee counsellors in South Wales understand 'race', racism and whiteness?*

This question was explored by asking the following research questions:

- How do white counselling trainees understand 'race'?
- Do they understand 'race' to be a social construct?
- How do they understand racism?
- Do they perceive whiteness as a racialised identity?
- How do they feel discussing 'race' and racism?

The questions asked in the research interviews are presented in Appendix v. The findings suggest that the participants lacked contemporary understanding of what constitutes as 'race' and racism and were missing an historical or contemporary socio-political understanding of 'race', racism, and whiteness. Similarly, whiteness was a de-racialised identity and a belief in reverse racism was expressed by some participants. The consequences of a lack of understanding about 'race', racism and whiteness combined with a disconnection to the socio-political context may explain how some participants could simultaneously hold colour-blind attitudes i.e., 'race' does not matter, and believe that the questioning of whiteness is racist.

Through participant-observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, four themes were identified:

1. (Mis)Understanding 'Race' and Racism
2. White (Un)Awareness
3. Barriers to Racial Discourse
4. Socio-political (Dis)Connection (Table 18).

A discussion of how the findings answer the research questions and what the findings may indicate in the bigger theoretical picture, will follow in Chapter 6.

Eddo-Lodge (2017, p. xi) refers to the avoidance techniques that white people perform when talking about 'race' as 'mental acrobatics'. The themes presented in this research may offer some insight into the specific forms those mental acrobatics can take and the reasons why they are being performed. The first theme identified was '(Mis)Understanding 'Race' and Racism', in which the participants found talking about 'race' and racism difficult, the reasons being: a lack of understanding of the semantic meaning of 'race' and racism, feeling self-conscious and a focus on distancing themselves and/or others from racism. The second theme, 'White (Un)Awareness' identified that difficulties in talking about whiteness, specifically the perception of whiteness as meaningless, a belief in reverse racism and a complicated recognition of whiteness. The third theme, 'Barriers to Racial Discourse' outline the difficulties in talking about 'race', racism and whiteness, through having a lack of contact with people of colour, having contact with people of colour, colour-blind attitudes and what I have termed the 'Good White Counsellor'. The final theme 'Socio-Political (Dis)Connection' considers the disconnection, and points of connection, the participants and the counselling curriculum had to the socio-political context. Within this theme exists the perception that 'race' education, that is the teaching and learning about 'race', was potentially racist.

Each theme and subtheme will be presented, described, and supported by using verbatim extracts from the participants to represent their voices and is done in accordance with post-critical ethnography being a 'moral activity' (Nobilit, Flores and Murillo, 2004, p. 24). For the participants who were interviewed, talking about 'race'

and racism proved challenging, as it required engaging with a topic that they had not spoken openly about before. It is recognised that great trust was put into my role as a researcher, and as someone they had got to know over eight weeks, to treat their thoughts and feelings with care. As Vix commented in her interview:

> I don't want to say something that's going to be able to be quoted, not like you would do, for sensationalism or anything like that, but could be quoted and then not understood.

Therefore, this chapter will use quotes to support the veracity of the themes found. The discussion of findings (Chapter 6) will seek to understand what the themes may mean in relation to theory and research. The findings are presented below (Table 18):

Table 18 Chapter 5: Research Themes

Theme	Subthemes
(Mis)Understanding 'Race' and Racism	- Semantic understanding - Self-consciousness - Distancing self (and others) from racism
White (Un)Awareness	- Whiteness as meaningless - Reverse racism - Complicated recognition of whiteness
Barriers to Racial Discourse	- Lack of contact with People of Colour - Contact with People of Colour - Colour-blind attitudes 'Good White Counsellor'
Socio-Political (Dis)Connection	- Student and curriculum disconnection - Student and curriculum connection 'Race' education: Is it racist?

5.1 Description of the fieldwork

Before the findings are presented, the context of the post-critical ethnographic fieldwork will be outlined, thus illustrating how the story of the research was constructed.

The research was carried out at 'Welsh College A', located in a semi-rural former coal-mining town in South Wales, from January to March 2020, before the first 'lockdown' of the Covid-19 pandemic. The group comprised of 16 students: 15 women and one man, with the youngest participant aged 29 and the oldest 54, with most students being in their 40s (Table 19). All the students and both tutors were white. They were in the first year of a Foundation Degree in Counselling. The demographic make-up of the class mirrors the Welsh Government's (2019; 2020b) statistics of FE learners in that it was made up of mostly part-time, female learners who were aged from 25 to 49. In that regard, the participants in this research were representative of HE learners in FE colleges in Wales.

Table 19 Participant information

Pseudonym	Gender identity	Age
Anne	Female	47
Bella	Female	45
Betty	Female	46
Ceri	Female	37
Clare	Female	44
Elizabeth	Female	31
Emily	Female	36
Jayne	Female	40
Kate	Female	44
Lee	Female	43
Maria	Female	29
Mary	Female	54
Phil	Male	42
Poppy	Female	29
Sian	Female	44
Vix	Female	31

To uphold confidentiality and ensure anonymity, I suggested to the male student that he might like to choose a female or gender neutral pseudonym. However, the student felt that in a female dominated class, it was important that a man was represented,

and he chose a male pseudonym accordingly. The whole group gave consent to be observed and fourteen students agreed to be interviewed. During the fourth week of my participant-observation, the two students who did not consent to interviews explained it was because they initially felt intimidated by the research being at PhD level, with Ceri thinking *'what have I got to offer'*? (31.01.2020). However, during that conversation both Ceri and Clare said that they had changed their minds and would be happy to be interviewed. During my last week, Poppy asked if she could opt-out of the interview. I explained that the interviewees had already been chosen and she had not been selected as I was aware that she was going through some difficulties, for which she thanked me. However, I took it as a positive sign that Poppy felt she could directly ask not to be interviewed, as this indicated that a level of trust and approachability had been engendered in my role as researcher. Poppy's decision to change her mind about being interviewed also reflected the implementation of the ethical guidelines used in this research (UWTSD, 2017) where participants have the right to withdraw their consent.

The course had two tutors: one (male) who was present all day and had been teaching counselling courses for over twenty years, and the second tutor (female) was present for two hours in the afternoons to give feedback on skills practice and facilitate one of the personal development groups. The second tutor would also mark assignments and was new to teaching. Both tutors were trained counsellors. My interactions with the second tutor were minimal as they were starting their teaching as I was either giving skills feedback to students or leaving for the day.

For six weeks I joined the group as participant-observer. The class met once a week and the teaching day lasted from 9.30am until 4.30pm. The day was structured accordingly:

- 'Check-in' where students reflect on their week and how they were feeling that day.
- A seminar on a counselling related topic which involved pair work and group discussion.
- Break.
- Continuation of seminar.
- Lunch break.
- 'Admin slot' where students could ask any administrative questions such as accessing Moodle, submission of assignments, referencing questions, etc.
- Skills Practice where students practised counselling skills in groups of three, with one being the counsellor, another a client and a third who observed.
- Break.
- Personal Development Group where the group was separated in two groups and together explored personal issues and the group dynamics. These began in week four, prior to this, skills practice was done for the whole afternoon.
- 'Check out' where students reflected on the day before leaving.

I decided prior to starting the participant-observation that I would not be present for 'check-in', 'check-out' and for the personal development groups. This is because highly personal information can be disclosed by the participants and I did not want my presence to inhibit students from sharing their feelings with one another. However, some did suggest that I would be welcomed to stay for 'check-ins' and others asked whether I could facilitate a personal development group. I explained my original rationale to those participants who understood my decision to opt out of those parts of the day and why it was not appropriate to teach them. On reflection, I feel that staying for at least 'check-in' would have given more insight into what was happening

for the students during the time I was doing the participant-observation. Nevertheless, I feel that being absent for those parts of the day was not a barrier to learning more about the participants' lives, as many openly shared their personal circumstances with me. I would arrive at college for 9am, often having informal chats with participants about their week, and then wait outside the classroom whilst the group were 'checking-in'. I would then be present for the seminar, join in with pair work, speak to people during lunch and break times and in the afternoon give feedback on skills practice. For the first three weeks I stayed until 4pm, leaving just before 'check-out' began. Due to an unforeseen change in my childcare arrangements, during week's four to six, I stayed until 2.30pm. However, during these weeks personal development groups started so I would have left at this time anyway.

Due to lack of room availability, the classroom where the students learned was not one of the designated counselling teaching rooms, but was a room normally used for teaching childcare students. Therefore, the room was adorned with posters, presentations and information related to the childcare course. There were five tables in the classroom, the students used three of the tables and sat in the same place every week. For the first week I sat alone toward the front of the class, however this felt too conspicuous, and I felt separated from the group. For the rest of my time doing the participant-observation, I rotated weekly between each table which enabled me to feel a part of the group. During seminars, I would sometimes share my experience of client-work, such as working with suicidal clients, issues of client-counsellor boundaries and writing notes of counselling sessions. Throughout my time I was

concerned whether I should be sharing in this way, however I reconciled this with the 'participant' part of the participant-observation. Several students thanked me privately for my contributions, with Kate saying she *'valued'* (10.01.2020) my input and Ceri commenting that a few students had said that they would like me to stay after the research was completed and to teach the class. However, it is not possible to conclude whether the whole group felt this way as it would be unlikely that they would tell me if they would prefer me not to share my professional experiences. I will reflect on the personal impact of the research in Chapter 7 (Section7.8 and Smith, 2021; Appendix vi).

I wrote notes in my journal during the seminars and, if possible, during break-time conversations. If it was not possible to write down immediately what was said, I wrote it as soon as possible, usually within minutes of the exchange. I tried to capture verbatim exchanges and if I could not (e.g., the conversation moved too quickly) I would write down the content of what was being said. If sensitive information were shared, I would seek ongoing verbal consent to write down what had been said.

When the group were required to do skills practice, I would join a counselling triad as an additional observer or if a person were absent, I would make up the third person in the triad, again taking the observer role. I would then give feedback to students on their counselling skills. During the first four weeks with the group, an assignment was due whereby students were required to submit a video recording of themselves counselling in their triads and then write a reflective piece to go alongside it.

Therefore, several students asked me to watch their video recordings and give feedback, which they planned to use in their assignments. The tutor encouraged students to do this. I felt that giving feedback was a way of 'giving back' to the students for sharing their time and space with me. It also helped build relationships with people and to get to know them better. Watching these videos meant that I was also seeing students in the client role, where they would share their personal problems with their fellow student as the counsellor. I have not included the content of what the students discussed as clients in their triads as part of my participant-observations as this was not part of my original research focus for this PhD. This is an ethical decision because it was the 'counsellors' in the triads who asked for my feedback and not the 'clients'. Therefore, it would be unethical of me to share what the 'clients' spoke about in confidence within the triad.

After the half-term break, I began the semi-structured interviews. As mentioned previously, 14 students initially agreed to be interviewed with two more also later agreeing to be interviewed. Given the number of students who had agreed to being interviewed, I did consider holding two focus groups instead of semi-structured interviews. However, my time observing the group had indicated an unease and avoidance around diversity issues (outlined in Theme 4: Socio-Political (Dis)Connection, Section 5.5) and I felt that a focus group may inhibit students from openly sharing their thoughts and feelings on a sensitive topic like 'race'. I selected seven students and the rationale for doing so, as well as a brief biography, is outlined below:

Anne (47) – vocal member of the group and has a BA. Anne grew up in London and worked for many years in the NHS in a medical role. Now lives in West Wales.

Betty (46) – a quiet member of the group who did not share or speak in class discussions and has not studied at degree level before. Betty is from South West Wales and runs her own small-business. Moved to London as a teenager.

Elizabeth (31) – one of the youngest members of the group and holds one of the highest qualifications (MA). Elizabeth is from South West Wales but enjoys travelling internationally and works with children and young people.

Emily (36) – one of the quietest members of the group who shared once in class discussion and has not studied at degree level before. Emily is from South East England and has mostly been a full-time mum and worked in retail. Moved to London as a teenager.

Mary (54) – the oldest member of the group and has not studied at degree level before. Mary is from South West Wales and works for the NHS in a managerial role.

Phil (42) – the only man in the group and has not studied at degree level before. Phil is from Mid-Wales and works in the NHS in a medical role. He has worked internationally as a holiday rep and lived in Europe for 3 years.

Vix (31) – holds one of the highest qualifications in the group (MA). Vix is from South East Wales and hoped for a career in academia. Currently working in an advocacy role for a health board.

This selection of participants represent the spectrum of students within the class, from gender (Phil), age (Elizabeth and Vix two of the youngest and Mary the oldest) educational attainment (Anne has a BA, Elizabeth and Vix have MAs, the others have not studied at degree level), presence within the group (Anne, Elizabeth, Phil and Vix contributing often, Emily contributing once during my six weeks of observations and Betty not at all). Although it was not known prior to the interviews, the students also represent a mix of geographical regions: England (Anne and Emily), South West Wales (Betty, Elizabeth and Mary), Mid-Wales (Phil) and South East Wales (Vix). Three

participants have lived in London (Anne, Betty and Emily) and two have extensively travelled internationally (Elizabeth and Phil). This information is important as although the research was carried out in South Wales, the range of the participants geographical experience means it is not parochial.

I approached the students individually and asked whether they would like to be interviewed and openly shared my reasons for selecting them. They had the right to refuse and were reminded that with could withdraw consent at any time, either before, during or after the interview took place. Interviews were held in a small, unused office adjacent to the classroom, over two weeks. The length of the interviews varied from over an hour (Vix) to 23 minutes (Elizabeth). Participants were given an interview schedule, a debriefing sheet and a list of contact numbers should they feel they need emotional support after the interview. My university email address was also included in case they wanted to withdraw consent after the interview (Appendix i). In addition to the participant-observation and semi-structured interviews, I also had copies of teaching handouts given during seminars and copies of two student handbooks, one which outlined the assignment briefs for the first year of the course and the course handbook (Student Handbook, 2019/2020). The latter was written in accordance with the BACP's ethical framework (BACP, 2018a) and training guidelines (BACP 2012).

It is important to note what has been excluded in the data collection and analysis. As explained above, I did not include sensitive information I heard during counselling

skills practice as this was shared between students on the understanding of confidentiality. This decision was taken in line with both procedural and practice ethics (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004, p. 265). In regard to the procedural ethics, or institutional ethics committees, UWTSD state that no harm must be done to participants (UWTSD, 2017, p. 3-4) and I felt that to include information shared between students during their skills practice, could cause emotional harm to the participants. Further, practice ethics, or ethical decisions made in the moment, meant that I negotiated this dilemma as they were encountered. For example, the decision to not make notes each time I was asked to observe skills practices. Likewise, when a participant wanted to speak privately about challenging personal situations, I did not write down what we spoke about. Therefore, the content of the themes and subthemes is from data gathered during the participant-observation and semi-structured interviews and were recurrent and present within the majority of the group. Additionally, the aforementioned student handbooks were used (Student Handbook, 2019/2020). However, the formation of the first three themes relied heavily on the interviews. This was because as a group, 'race' and racism was not openly discussed, whiteness was not mentioned at all, and generally, diversity as a topic was avoided; this is detailed in the fourth theme presented (Section 5.5).

5.2 Theme 1: (Mis)Understanding 'Race' and Racism

This theme refers to the difficulties the participants faced when talking about 'race' and racism. Simply put, this theme relates to the consistent stumbling blocks that the participants seemed to face when asked directly about 'race' and racism. The first difficulty was uncertainty about what 'race' and racism actually meant and has been termed 'semantic understanding'. Secondly, for most participants, there was a self-consciousness when trying to talk about 'race' and racism, centred around concerns about being offensive or misconstrued. Finally, there was a focus on insisting that they were not racist. Likewise, when some participants described the racist behaviour of loved ones, they were also quick to explain why that person was not a racist. Each difficulty will be considered individually, and then how they may inter-relate.

Semantic understanding

The first difficulty encountered was that the participants were not certain about what 'race' actually meant, but there seemed to be an unarticulated understanding of it as a biological concept, signified by colour. Interestingly, the participants knew that the research was looking at 'race' and racism 12 weeks prior to the first interview taking place. The answers given to the question *'can you tell me how you understand 'race'?'*, would suggest that none of the participants looked-up the definition of 'race' in those 12 weeks, thus indicating that either they were confident in their understanding (although their hesitancy in answering would belie this) or it was not deemed important enough to consider. The possible reason for this will be explored in Chapter 6 (Section 6.3).

For Anne, Betty, Elizabeth, Emily, Mary and Phil, their answering was marked by a

hesitancy before attempting to answer the question:

> Anne: Well, um, wow. It's something that we use every day isn't it? But to describe it…, it's where you're from. It's about what your background is, what your ancestry is, where you're from, colour, male or female..., that's not race, is it? No. [Rhetorical]. I think, for me, race is different backgrounds, ethnic backgrounds, your Chinese and your coloured people and then your white people, if you're allowed to say that [white people].

> Elizabeth: OK, so race to me is where your ethnic [*sic*] originates, I suppose. Race can sometimes be the colour of your skin or where you're from and…, I'm not sure what else really…, what is your identity of who you are, where you come from and your history perhaps. But it's unique to everybody. Yeah, although it can be bounded by groups.

> Emily: I think of different, different colours, different belief systems, different backgrounds, completely different background. Yeah. Diversity. Yeah. I think that's what I really think of.

Betty felt unsure of the correct words to use when talking about race which she

attributed to her dyslexia and needed extra prompting:

> Betty: I'm not very good on this topic. I know it raises, different cultures and countries. Race, you know, I just can't explain it very well. I kind of understand what it is.

> RS [Ruth Smith]: …if I say the word race to you, what thoughts, feelings, images, do you have?

> Betty: I do see images of groups of coloured…, is it ok to say coloured or black? See, there, like with dyslexia, because at one point you were allowed to say coloured and not black, and then it flipped, for me with my dyslexia, it's logged the wrong way. So, I get confused...

Whereas Mary and Phil immediately admitted that they were uncertain about how

they understood 'race' because it was something they do not consider:

> Mary: …what I see is a different race isn't it, there's different races, that's the, well, the white, the black, just…, I don't…, if I'm honest, I don't really look into it that much. I just know there are lots of different

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> races and I've had experiences that…, [doesn't finish]. But, where I…, I'm not particularly…, I don't think about race.
>
> RS: So, can you tell me how you understand race?
>
> Phil: I don't truthfully

What is interesting, is that however the question was answered, be it an attempt at a full answer, a need for clarification or an immediate admittance to not knowing, the consistent understanding of 'race' was primarily colour-based, with the addition of culture and nationality as adjunct, albeit inconsistent, descriptors. This indicates that while there was a lack of certainty or assurance in trying to define 'race', a colour-based understanding threaded through the participants' answers. Using Fernando's (2010, p. 8) definition of 'race' as something which is characterised by physical appearance and assumed to be genetically determined, the participants' answers seem to suggest that there was an underlying belief that 'race' was biological and signified by phenotype. This is reinforced by an absence of an historical and contemporary socio-political analysis in their answers, thus inferring that they were not aware that 'race' is a socially constructed category. Thus, the argument that 'race' persists as a form of classification which is difficult to displace (Hall, 2017) is supported by the participants understandings.

This was not the case in all of the participants, however. Vix gave a fuller answer to the question, based on her time as an undergraduate student where she took an archaeology class in which three skulls, ranging from heavy set to finer set, were presented to the class and students were asked to put them into chronological order.

The '*joke*', as Vix called it, was that all of the skulls were contemporary, but one was African, one European and one Asian. From this, Vix stated that:

> I don't know if you want the completely PC answer that everyone's working on at the moment is that there's no such thing as race and we're all part of the human race and there's no difference. So that's the PC answer out of the way. I think that there are physiological differences which, you know, shouldn't be ignored.

This allusion to skulls as markers of racial difference brings to mind the 18th century scientist Blumenbach whose contribution to 'race' as a scientific concept included the study of skulls (Bhopal, 2007; Painter, 2010). Vix also delineates her answer into the 'PC' answer, or politically correct, and the 'non-PC' answer in that the former argues 'race' does not exist and the latter that 'race' is bounded by physiological difference. However, she does not apply further analysis as to why one answer might be 'politically correct' and another not. Therefore, although Vix's answer did not explicitly use colour as a basis for describing 'race' and was more self-assured in the delivery than the other participants, there was still echoes of the biological definition of 'race' within her answer. Vix also referred to 'race' and culture, which she described as *'intertwined'.*

Therefore, it was found that the semantic understanding of 'race' was largely uncertain, with six of the participants trepidatious in answering the question (the reasons for this trepidation will be explore in Theme 3, Section 5.4 and Chapter 6, Section 6.3). However, Vix felt more confident in her answer which was based on her experience with the skulls as an undergraduate student. What connected all of the

answers together was an unspoken understanding of 'race' as being biologically determined and identified through skin colour and physiological difference. There was an absence of social commentary and a lack of awareness that 'race' is a socially constructed concept. Similarly, the historical consequences of 'race' or its current socio-political implications were also notable by their absence. Therefore, it seemed that that the meaning of 'race' was not understood with confidence and the default interpretation was of physiological difference, with skin colour being the explicit and regular answer. This was supported by Anne, Betty, Mary and Phil consistently referring to '*coloured people*' throughout their interviews. Although Betty recognised that she was confused by what consisted as appropriate language. While this could be generational, as they were the oldest members of the group, it also indicates that that they have not modified their language as the accepted terminology has evolved over the decades. This suggests a disengagement with 'race' altogether. It also leads one to ponder how effective 'race' discourse and education can take place if the basic semantic understanding is incorrect; this will be furthered in Chapter 6 (Sections 6.3 and 6.6). Reasons for the difficulties in talking about 'race' will be considered in Theme 3 (Section 5.4).

In the same way that there was a lack of clarity around the semantic meaning of 'race', there was also uncertainty around the meaning of racism. The participants largely understood it as an individual act of hostility, and for some it also encompassed other forms of discrimination. As 'race' was divorced from an historical and contemporary context, racism was divorced from its covert and systemic forms.

For some participants, racism was an individualised action:

> Emily: When I think of it, I think of it as really harsh, like bullying and perhaps even quite violent, there's a violence to it as well. I think it comes from a place of ignorance and hate, and so a very negative, very negative place.
>
> Phil: I suppose a broad term is any kind of a hate, crime for a word because it is a crime, whether it's a remark, a derogatory comment or any kind of off-the-cuff banter towards someone that could make them feel ashamed or in…, to make them feel different to everyone else.
>
> Anne: An unnecessary hate towards another individual just because of the colour of their skin.

Anne then said that her husband was *'unfortunately racist'* but quickly clarified that he was verbally racist (this will be discussed further in this theme) and *'not really'* a racist, she then adjusted her definition of racism away from emotional antipathy to physical violence:

> Anne: That's what racism is, when you physically hurt somebody… in that context, racism is when someone goes out deliberately to hurt somebody.

Although it could be argued that Emily and Anne had simplistic definitions of racism which were based on overt forms of racism, expressed through hate and physical violence, they seemed to be clear in their minds as to what it meant. Similarly, Phil also initially seemed to understand racism as an individual one-on-one act of verbal hate and was the only participant to recognise it as a criminal act; this could be due to his role as a frontline health worker.

On the other hand, Betty and Elizabeth understood the historical tension between

Wales and England as racism, rather than xenophobia. This suggests a lack of certainty

in what racism meant, which was supported by Betty's need for clarification when

answering the question:

> Betty: ...can white people, be racism [*sic*] against the English? Or is that not racism?
>
> RS: What do you think?
>
> Betty: To my understanding, I will research this, yeah, racist toward the English. I think the Welsh people are some…, like the rugby, don't want to, like generalise here, but you hear it in pubs. I mean, you know, I think some Welsh people are… if it's a Welshy village, you know, there's an English person that comes in, they can be quite racist to the English. Is the word racist right there? [Asking me directly]
>
> RS: It's up to you.
>
> Betty: So, yes, racism.
>
> Elizabeth: …There's often different types of racism, which is not always classed as racism, but I think it is, as I said, the rivalry between English and Welsh, I think that is racism because it's defining you of who you…, where you're from.

Despite Phil's initial clarity about 'race', he also included xenophobia in his definition

and, perhaps unexpectedly, his dogs:

> Phil: …when we think of racism, we think of colours and stuff. But racism, race. So, the English are a race, the Welsh are a race, the Scottish are race. So, when you think of racism it's any race, so it's like a dog versus cats so to speak, they're different species, different races so to speak. It's the same sort of thing. My Frenchie [French Bulldog] and my Bichon [Bichon Friese] are different races of dog. So, yeah.

The inclusion of dogs into a question about racism, based on being a '*different species*'

is interesting as it indicates a misunderstanding as to what 'race', and therefore

racism, is. It is possible that perhaps underlying Phil's rationale of racism is that there

is a naturalistic animus between 'races' be they based on nationality, dog versus cats

or within different dog breeds. In any case, it would suggest a confusion as to what

racism, and by extension 'race' means. For Elizabeth and Mary, racism encapsulated

other forms of discrimination:

> Elizabeth: Yeah, OK, so I think it's, it can be down to anything as to where, where you're from, the family you're from, and the colour of your skin, to your identity or your sexual identity, orientation, it's just unique to that individual. I think its…, racism is not…, I think it's often seen as just white, black kind of, kind of bullying I suppose, but I think there's far more to it.

> Mary: Racism to me is somebody that's not very nice to coloured, black, lesbian, anybody that's not… Is that right?

Later, I clarified how Mary understood racism:

> RS: So, racism, am I right, would be, what you said, against a person's skin colour or…

> Mary: Anything. Their disabilities, I suppose comes into it. Their sexuality. Is that racism or is it just a coloured thing?

Again, this demonstrates that there was uncertainty around what constituted as

racism. Mary's answer also encapsulated all of the participants' answers through

being unsure by asking *'is that right?'*, to believing that racism was individualised

hostility and through the inclusion of other forms of discrimination in her definition.

When asked about racism, Vix immediately talked about reverse racism, this will be

detailed in Theme 2 (Section 5.3). However, she then described racism as:

> Vix: …I think, you know, for me at least, racism is being generally unpleasant based on a cultural or physiological difference.

She also talked about 'race' and culture being *'intertwined'* and considered how this combination may lead to racism:

> Vix: it's like when you talk about black hair, for example, and, you know, we've got a culture where we want hair to be more controlled. And then this is clashing currently. It's one of the current things in the media at the moment where black people say, 'well, I want to wear my hair naturally, I want it…I want to be able to wear my hair in a 'fro [afro] in school' And it's like everyone, you know, has to have their hair tied back and they're saying it's not natural. And there's this clash and they're saying, 'this is racist'. Well, I can see you want to wear your hair like that, but it's also quite big [laughs]. And everyone else is having to have their hair tied back.

It seems that in this statement, Vix is delineating 'race' with 'black people' and culture with black hair. Rather than recognising the socio-political stance young black people may take by not conforming to Eurocentric beauty standards, and that the strict implementation of those standards is a form of racism, Vix seems to be suggesting that expectation of beauty conformity is not racist, just merely in line with what others are doing. In other words, aligned with the dominant racial (i.e., white) group. This suggests that Vix's understanding is more nuanced but nonetheless complicated, as she does use a contemporary example in her understanding of racism whilst at the same time refuting what is perceived by the black community as racist (the Eurocentric standards of hair and beauty, see Chapter 6, Section 6.4) and implies that it is not racist. Therefore, Vix seemed to simultaneously understand racism as cultural discrimination whilst seemingly advocating conformity with the dominant culture.

Consequently, the semantic understanding around both 'race' and racism is unclear and not in line with current definitions. With the former understood primarily in colour-based terms and racism as individual acts of hostility based on various forms of discrimination including xenophobia and homophobia. The implications for the lack of semantic understanding of 'race' and racism will be considered in the discussion of findings (Chapter 6).

Self-consciousness

Most of the participants admitted that talking about 'race' and racism was challenging. This was evident in the interviews, which were marked by pauses and asking for clarification, such as Betty and Mary asking me *'is that right?'* after answering a question. It seemed that the participants did not want to cause offence or say 'the wrong thing':

> RS: …I'm sensing that you're a bit cautious.
>
> Emily: Yeah, I am a little bit actually because I don't, I don't like the thought of I might offend somebody. That's…, my…, I don't know when the subject of race comes up. It's, yeah, it's a bit of, not taboo, but it seems like you sort of need to be careful about not upsetting people and offending people… So that's it, I guess, I don't want to seem derogatory to other people, people of different races.
>
> Emily: I feel, it's like, I almost want to [exhales] sigh, because I've, I've been able to delve into things that do, obviously make me uncomfortable and I hadn't realised.
>
> Elizabeth: I'm quite aware that I don't want to be offensive. I think that's what I'm really concerned [about], 'does that sound bad?'. Do you know what I mean? I just wouldn't want to be seen, do you know what I mean, to be saying the wrong thing about race… So, I'm quite aware that I'm worried that I'm letting them or me down.
>
> RS: 'I'm worried', you said. Can you tell me more about that?

> Elizabeth: Worried, as in, I would offend and that, and make myself look like an idiot, I don't know. That I'd say the wrong thing or upset, or not [be] considerate.
>
> Vix: …in the back of my brain going [makes whirring sounds] the motors whir a bit, going: 'how can I say this in the best possible way, that's clear and this isn't going to be misconstrued?'.

Betty's self-consciousness stemmed from her lack of knowledge about 'race' and racism:

> Betty: I wish I had more understanding of it, basically. I feel, not shamed, that's a big word, but I can't think of another one. Shamed I don't know more.

Anne found talking about 'race' was *'…really, really difficult. Really difficult'*. As will be explored during Theme 2 (Section 5.3), Anne had a strong reaction to being asked about 'race', racism and specifically whiteness. Whereas the other participants were concerned with causing offence to black people, or their answers being misunderstood by others, Anne seemed to feel that even talking about this topic was in itself offensive; hence the '*difficulty*':

> Anne: …it's something that I don't ever think about, is race. So, to be asked specific questions about that, it's interesting because of the feelings it brings up, so I can sit and answer the questions, but the feelings I've got are important to me as well, because I don't, I don't distinguish between anybody.

Anne had strong colour-blind attitudes, so she seemed to perceive my direct questions about 'race' as offensive which caused her discomfort. In this research colour-blindness was understood as one of the reasons for difficulty in talking about 'race', racism and whiteness (Theme 3, Section 5.4).

Although most of the participants felt some sense of discomfort and self-

consciousness in the process of the interview, Phil and Mary insisted they did not. For

Phil, this was due to feeling confident in what he was saying:

> RS: So how has it felt? Talking about race in this way.
>
> Phil: Fine. You know, as I said none of my opinions are anything to be
>   ashamed about, I'm quite happy of where I am, of my beliefs.

Mary also insisted that she felt comfortable when answering the same question,

although like Betty she was aware of her lack of knowledge on the topic. This was also

tempered by a concern that she was not giving me the 'right' answers:

> Mary: I'm comfortable with it. I might not look comfortable, and I think
>   that's because of my lack of education or…, on the subject. I
>   shouldn't say education, my lack of experience, my lack of…, so,
>   yeah, the conversation doesn't…, and I'm probably wary that I can't
>   answer your questions properly or I'm thinking I'm not giving you
>   the answers that you're looking for.

However, this claim of feeling comfortable in talking about 'race' and racism did not

synchronise with Mary's changing demeanour during the course of the interview. In

the beginning, when asked generic questions about the course and counselling, Mary

was articulate, expansive, and engaged. When the questions became focused on the

research topic, her answers became shorter, and she became quieter. Significantly,

this increased when asked about whiteness and this will be discussed in more detail in

Theme 2 (Section 5.3). Therefore, despite feeling that she was *'comfortable'* in talking

about 'race' and racism, Mary's demeanour strongly indicated otherwise.

Talking about 'race' and racism was challenging for most of the participants and led to a sense of self-consciousness. Emily, Elizabeth and Vix's self-consciousness was rooted in not wanting to cause offence or be misconstrued, for Betty it was due to her awareness she had a lack of knowledge and for Anne it was because the topic itself seemed unnecessary. Whereas Phil did not experience self-consciousness due to feeling confident in his opinions. Despite Mary insisting that she felt *'comfortable',* the progressive change in her demeanour suggested otherwise. Perhaps these feelings were down to awareness that it was indeed a difficult topic, with Emily feeling that while 'race' was not a *'taboo'* subject, she did not want to appear derogatory when discussing it. The use, and rejection, of the word '*taboo*' was similar to Vix's assessment:

> Vix: …I feel like, you know, I want to be guarded because it is such a 'on'
> topic, like kind of an explosive subject, you know?

Developing Vix's use of the word *'explosive'* into a metaphor, it seemed that talking about 'race' and racism was a minefield for the participants, with the explosives being their own words, which would detonate at any time causing harm to themselves and others. Further, when combined with their semantic understanding, they were also unclear where it was safe and dangerous to tread in the minefield. It was this fear that seemed to be at the root of their self-consciousness. It is the position of this research that the lack of semantic understanding about 'race' and racism and general disengagement with the topic is the root cause of the self-consciousness. The self-consciousness identified in this research also supports the argument that white people feel uncomfortable in racial discourse (Chapter 6, Section 6.3).

Distancing self (and others) from racism

The final difficulty the participants had when trying to talk about 'race' and racism was their focus on trying to distance themselves and others from racism. This may seem ironic as it has been shown that they were reticent in talking about these topics and were unclear as to what the terms actually meant. Despite there being a lack of clarity in their semantic understanding and a self-consciousness in not wanting to offend or being seen as offensive, there was a stronger conviction in not being seen as racist.

Betty and Phil expressed this in straightforward self-assessments of themselves, despite their previous confusion over what constituted as racism:

> Betty: …I know I'm not racist. I don't have any sort of, racism in me, I don't
> think.

> Phil: …But as I said, I'd come up with an upbringing where I'd never
> consider myself racist.

Mary, who had become progressively more withdrawn throughout the interview, and was unable to give a clear definition of 'race' as well as being unsure as to what constitutes as racism, was adamant that she was not a racist. This is something she repeated five separate times. Given the repetition and conviction of her statements, which were in contrast to her general hesitancy with the 'race' and racism part of the interview, it seems relevant to include each statement:

> Mary: Racism…, I'm not racist, I wouldn't say I was.

> Mary: I'm certainly not racist and I haven't got any strong views either
> way.

> Mary: My opinion is just, I'm not racist, and I hope I wouldn't offend
> anybody.

Mary: I probably don't fully understand that [racism]. All I know is that I wouldn't be racist.

RS: Ok. So, you're not sure what it is, but you know you're not it?

Mary: Yes. I don't say racist things.

Betty, Phil and Mary's distancing from racism was unambiguous; their statements were clear declarations of the self as non-racist. Whereas Anne, Elizabeth and Vix sought to distance other people from accusations of being racist. For Anne and Elizabeth this was loved ones and for Vix it was an acquaintance.

As mentioned previously, Anne said that her husband was *'unfortunately racist'* but then amended her definition of racism away from emotional antipathy to physical violence. This process was interesting as Anne sought to distance her husband from accusations of racism, despite his self-declaration as a racist:

Anne: And unfortunately, my husband is racist, not 'racist', that's a bit strong. But he's got this 'I don't like coloured people'. But he can't agree on why because they've never done anything to him.

RS: So, you're saying that your husband, well first of all you said your husband is 'unfortunately racist' and then you said 'Oh, no, that's a bit strong'

Anne: Yeah, because he says to me that he's racist. But then, he doesn't [long pause], he doesn't talk like a racist if that makes sense. I think he's just very old school. Very, very old school. And he's never, ever had to, well he's never come across any of them. So, he doesn't understand them. I think what he's done, he's picked up that negativity somewhere along the line of black people, coloured people. But I do have debates with him and arguments where he can't back it up. So, I keep saying to him 'so you're not really racist, you wouldn't go out and hurt somebody'. He said no. So verbally, he's, he, he says things. But then I would challenge him on that.

It is possible to see that for Anne, who had the strongest colour-blind attitudes of the interviewees, (Theme 3, Section 5.4), and who was the most offended at being asked about whiteness (Theme 2, Section 5.3), could not tolerate the thought of her husband being racist despite his insistence that he is. This is similar to Elizabeth, who remembered that as a child her dad would say homophobic and racist things but whose current management role means he works with a group of diverse people. She felt that he has *'matured'* with age:

> Elizabeth: You could never imagine him saying the things that he used to say. And I wouldn't want to remind him either because I think he'd be quite embarrassed.

In the same way, Mary felt that her father and grandfather's racism was due to generational attitudes:

> Mary: So, I suppose for me, my, my older generation, my people, my father bless him, or my grandfather, they probably were quite racist.

It seems that Anne, Elizabeth and Mary had a sense of wanting to protect their loved ones from accusations of being racist. That although they recognised their behaviour as racist, they were able to develop a rationale for why their loved ones thought that way. Anne differentiated between verbal comments and physical violence, Elizabeth blamed her dad's immaturity and Mary cited generational attitudes. It was as though there was an acknowledgement of racism, followed by a retraction which was supported by a justification (too young, too old and non-violent).

Racism was mentioned just once during the class participant-observation, but something similar also happened. Bella stated that she would feel *'uncomfortable'* working with a client who was racist or homophobic. Marie disagreed, feeling that a lot could be learned from racists and homophobes, as it could be an *'educational experience'* and *'fascinating'* to hear challenging viewpoints. Vix supported Marie by stating *'behind the language could be a reasonable person using that language to hide something'*. The tutor then commented that *'behind racism and homophobia is fear'*. Mary, who in the interview was unsure what racism was, stated that racism and homophobia are due to *'a lack of education'*. The conversation then stopped.

Again, we can see that there was a distancing of fictional future clients from racism, almost an acceptance of it, by framing it as an educative experience or a mask worn by an otherwise *'reasonable'*, frightened or uneducated person. Bella was a lone voice in disagreeing with this, but her objection was not picked up by others in the class or the tutor. The reason for this may be due to the self-consciousness in talking about 'race' and racism as described above and a general disconnection from socio-political discourse (Theme 4, Section 5.5). However, it is also recognised that within this discussion, the students may have been expressing what they believed a counsellor should do when faced with a racist client, specifically remaining non-judgemental, in line with their perceptions of a 'Good White Counsellor' (Theme 3, Section 5.4).

In the interview, Vix talked about her best friend's mum who is Jamaican. Describing an occasion when she was driven by her friend's mum, a conversation took place in

which Vix's friend's mum said that she had failed her driving test multiple times

because in her opinion, she was a woman. It is important to know that Vix feels her

friend's mum is a dangerous driver. Vix commented:

> Vix: …In my head, I'm just like, *'no'.* But there was this kind of unspoken, also phrase, 'and because I'm black'. And that to me, I don't know, never sat well with me because I was sitting in the car [laughs], fearing for my life. But yeah, it was, it could be because you're a woman, mainly because of your driving, to be honest [laughs].

I then asked Vix if it was possible that there were two simultaneous truths, that her

friend's mum was a bad driver but also discriminated against by her driving examiner

for being a black woman. Vix answered the question by giving a brief history of her

friend's family's move to the UK:

> Vix: And I think this you know, this kind of you know, she, she went into that poor area in [Welsh city] and people could see that she suddenly had a house, she had kids. She, she was getting benefits. She never worked. She did loads of courses but never worked, you know. And I think, you know, it's sometimes for people like that, it's very easy to see something as racism or it's very, very easy for people to go: 'oh, that black family' when really, I mean, she came into this area and then just took resources… you know, there probably was discrimination because she was black. But I think one of the overriding things was she came into an area with that many children and then just had what people perceived as all these benefits thrown at her… It's all these kinds of things compounded that I think was maybe easier for the mother to kind of go 'it's because I'm black', not because there were lots of other factors as well.

In this statement, Vix distances a black acquaintance's experience of racism through

taking the position of what her white neighbours *may* have felt. There is a brief

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acknowledgement that she may have experienced discrimination, but this is inserted between a rationale for why the discrimination may have occurred.

Therefore, distancing oneself or others from racism can be an unambiguous declaration of *'I'm not a racist'*. Or it can be more complicated through justifying the behaviour of friends, family or fictional strangers. More complicated still, it can also involve distancing the lived experienced of a black person from racism by trying to understand the position of the racist. In short, there seemed to be a seeing and then an un-seeing of racism.

In this first theme, difficulties in talking about 'race' and racism, a triptych of difficulties has been presented. Firstly, a lack of accurate semantic understanding as to what 'race' and racism mean. Secondly, a pervasive self-consciousness in talking about 'race' and racism, notably in not wanting to offend others or be seen as offensive. Thirdly, a need to declare oneself as not racist or excusing the racist behaviour of others. It is possible to see how these may inter-relate: a lack of semantic understanding could be foundation of self-consciousness, of knowing that one does not have the vocabulary to discuss 'race' and racism, consequently, declarations of 'I'm not racist / nor are the people I know' are used as a form of self-assurance.

Similarly, the participants also faced difficulties when talking about whiteness. This will be explored in Theme 2.

5.3 Theme 2: White (Un)Awareness

The second theme refers to the lack of awareness, and moments of awareness, the participants faced when talking about whiteness. For most of the participants, thinking and talking about whiteness was something they had never done prior to the interview. Consequently, their answers were being processed and articulated in the moment. It is worth re-iterating that the interviewees knew the title of the research 12 weeks in advance. Given the surprise with which all participants reacted with when asked *'what does being white mean to you?'*, it would suggest that whiteness was not seen as racialised. This is reflected in the first difficulty where whiteness was seen as meaningless. Secondly, some participants seemed to perceive that the questioning of whiteness was itself racist, this is referred to as 'reverse racism'. Finally, there were points when some participants recognised the significance whiteness may hold, often in the interview itself, this is referred to as 'complicated recognition of whiteness'.

Whiteness as meaningless

For many of the participants, being a white person was something that they had never considered before the interview took place. The question *'what does being white mean to you?'* was met with shock and then a dismissal that it meant anything at all.

> Elizabeth: It's interesting, because [I've] just never thought about it, about what it means to me. Sometimes, you know, I want to catch a tan [laughs], but other than that, I don't think it has any kind of sentiment to me. It doesn't give me any identity. I think it, it's very much just my appearance and that's what skin I have.
>
> RS: So, it just is?
>
> Elizabeth: It just is. Yes. Just my skin.
>
> RS: So, can I ask you, what does being white mean to you?

Phil: Nothing. I don't think it does, I don't believe there's any such thing
        as a colour as such. I can't say anything.

RS: Has anyone ever asked you that question before?

Phil: No. It's not something I ever think about and I think the answer will
        always be nothing.

Emily: …I don't think of myself… well, obviously, I'm clearly [laughs], I
        don't actually think to myself, 'oh, I'm really white', unless it was
        like that situation, where I was very aware that I was a white
        woman walking through certain areas, but no, not really something
        that I've considered.

Betty: No, I've never really had to think... I wasn't taught this much in
        school. We didn't have to go there.

Emily's answer did acknowledge that at some point in her life she was aware of her

whiteness and this will be expanded upon in Theme 3 (Section 5.4). However, her

answer also stated that it is not something she generally thinks about or has

considered in any depth. For Elizabeth and Phil, whiteness was meaningless and not a

part of their identity. Similarly, Betty noted that she has never had to *'go there'*, in

other words think about being white. When asked about her comment that whiteness

was not a part of her identity, Elizabeth reiterated that *'so, it is what I am, this is just*

what it is. It's just my skin'. However, she was able to start to contemplate what skin-

colour may mean:

    Elizabeth: …How else would they look at their skin? I'm not quite sure how
            anybody else would look at it other than just what this [gestures to
            body], what their body's covered in, I suppose, isn't it? And
            obviously the colour of it as well does that matter to people? I
            suppose it does to some. I don't, I don't think it would matter to me
            what colour I was, but then it's hard to say that because I've not
            been any other colour… So, it's nothing to me. I could imagine
            perhaps for a black person it might be more of an identity, it might
            be more of a stand or a kind of, yeah a, a part of their background.

In comparison to the more straightforward dismissal of whiteness, Anne and Mary had

more complicated reactions. Despite their answers being similar to the other

participants, it was the emotion which accompanied their answers which marked their

answers as different. As mentioned previously, Mary became more withdrawn as the

interview progressed, but it changed notably after the following question:

RS: OK. So, what does be white mean to you?

Mary: [quiet laugh] Being white or black doesn't really make any
       difference. I wouldn't say there was any difference, to me.

RS: So, there's no difference between black and white?

Mary: No.

RS: Has anybody ever asked you that question before?

Mary: No, I've never, ever had this. This question is… because there is,
       there's no difference is there?

RS: What's it like being asked that question about being white?

Mary: [very quietly] Fine. Fine.

The interview moved on, but such was the change in her demeanour I felt compelled

to ask about it:

RS: I've noticed, and you can disagree with…, you're welcome to disagree
     with me, but from the point I asked you about, 'what does it feel
     like to be white?', something seemed to shift slightly. I wonder if
     it's just me to pick up on that.

Mary: Shifted as in?

RS: You seem to have gone a bit quieter and your energy seems to have
       gone a bit lower.

Mary: I don't know. I don't know. I don't appear to feel any..., you might
        pick up something I've not.

At the end of the interview, when asked if there was anything she would like to say or

add, Mary said that she was *'intrigued'* to see what I meant by the shift in energy and

reiterated that she had not noticed it. This may suggest that Mary's reaction to the question was unconscious. Nonetheless, being asked about whiteness did provoke a reaction that led to a change in her demeanour. Whereas Mary's energy seemed to reduce when asked about whiteness, Anne's seem to increase with an anger that she had been asked the question. This is discussed in the next subtheme 'reverse racism', but in regard to whiteness being meaningless, Anne felt:

Anne: Well, I just, I don't get up in the morning and look and go, oh, 'I'm a white person', I just see the reflection. I don't see…, I don't know, I just, I just I don't, I don't notice people's skin colour. I take the person as they are, then I'll make my own mind up about that person. So, to be asked what it's like to be white is, one is, it's all I know. And secondly, that I'm no different to anybody else just because I'm white… I'm a white person that does what I have to do on a daily basis, and I get on with the people that I meet on a daily basis and it's completely irrespective of age, race, colour, ethnic background. It's just we're all, we're all human beings, but we're differentiated by colours of skin. And that's, that's how I see it.

As with being asked about 'race' and racism, being asked about whiteness seemed offensive to Anne as this contradicted her colour-blind beliefs that 'race' was not important. Although the whole line of interview questioning seemed to clash with her personal beliefs, it is important to highlight that the question of whiteness prompted a stronger reaction than when asked about 'race' or racism. This will be considered in the next subtheme.

In contrast to other participants, Vix had the clearest understanding of what being white meant, and this could be due to her whiteness being highlighted to her negatively as a teenager. This is explored more in the subtheme 'complicated

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recognition of whiteness'. However, her understanding of whiteness has been

included here because despite whiteness being something she had thought about

prior to the interview, unlike the other participants, she still refers to it as a *'toughie'*

of a question:

> Vix: Gosh, yeah. Yeah, actually it is a toughie, isn't it? I don't know. It
> means, I suppose, first physiologically, I have a certain range of
> traits, although Caucasians are one of the most diverse… Yeah,
> we're diverse, generally European, although obviously that's
> different. European initially, I guess.

Therefore, whiteness was largely meaningless to the participants and for most it was

something that they had never thought about prior to the interview. Although

considering whiteness elicited a strong emotional response in Anne and Mary, it was

still meaningless to them. Even Vix, who was aware of her whiteness, perceived it as a

difficult question to answer.

Reverse racism

Reverse racism is the belief that white people can be victims of racism and it is a

concept that arose during the interviews. Vix felt it was something she had

experienced. Although Anne and Phil did not use the phrase 'reverse racism', they

both seemed to feel that the questioning of whiteness, specifically my research title

and interview questions, were at best *'insulting'* and at worst racist. Although only

three of the participants felt this way, or at least were the only to express it, the

strength of their convictions that the questioning of whiteness was discriminatory,

meant that it is a valuable contribution to the theme of whiteness. This subtheme will

rely on lengthy interview excerpts; however, it is believed that doing so will give an

incisive picture of how white people understand reverse racism.

As alluded to before, when asked how she understands racism, Vix immediately

brought up the concept of reverse racism:

> Vix: Racism is another quite fun one actually… because you know, there's a
> lot of conversation at the moment about what, you know, what
> constitutes as racism and whether there's such a thing as reverse
> racism, whether a black person can be derogatory towards a white
> person and it [be] considered racism because of that kind of,
> people are kind of… conflate power with racism, whereas, you
> know, can someone be generally unpleasant and derogatory about
> a white person and can it be called racism in that regard?

At first, I was unsure as to whether Vix mentioned reverse racism as a theoretical

concept or as something which she felt existed, so I asked for clarification. Her answer

offers an interesting insight into reverse racism from a person who is highly educated,

articulate and whose best friend is biracial:

> Vix: I think it is. Yeah, I think I think, you know, hiding behind, you know,
> this specialness, if you will, that 'we've been persecuted against,
> the white person has more power, thus I can be unpleasant, or I
> can call out bad behaviour, but behave badly myself'. But I believe
> that it does exist. Maybe it needs a different word, but I don't think
> that there is a term that's you know, I think it's one of those kind of
> scary areas where you've got to kind of, you know, and it will come
> about where you, you, kind of have to say, 'look, you know, this
> kind of language towards white people is not acceptable either'
> because, you know, you can have a white person in poverty as well
> who is, you know, whose family has never been involved with the
> slave trade, you know. And they, they, they, you know, at the same
> level, if you will, in their kind of economic and societal level, as, you
> know, a black person. But then, you know, there have been cases
> of, you know, black youths kind of going, 'oh, your ancestors are
> this or your ancestors are that', that, that person is not you know,
> this white kid is not reaping any benefits. You know what I mean?

So why just because there's no historical pain to the insult doesn't mean that it isn't racism. You know, like if you know, a white person like turns round to, to a black guy or something, and goes, 'you're nothing because your ancestors were slaves', well, that's, that's racism. If a black person turns to a poor white kid or white, white man or whatever and goes, you know, 'you're a piece of dirt because your, your ancestors or your, your race enslaved mine', well it's like, what's that guy done? Nothing, you know. So, is that racism? Yeah, I'd say it was, you know.

It is relevant to recognise that despite Vix's answer alluding to slavery as *'historical pain',* there is no acknowledgement of how these factors may impact and influence contemporary understanding of 'race' and underlie systemic racism. There is a socio-political disconnection in her understanding of reverse racism. Vix refers to a *'specialness'* that she feels black people can hide behind. Later in the interview, she argued that:

Vix: …currently white people are being vilified regardless just because they're white, and I'm not saying this is this kind of victim thing, I don't consider myself…, and it's not a big deal, but I, I feel…, yeah, but it's awkward to say.

The reasoning behind Vix's belief in reverse racism is that she feels she has been the recipient of it. As someone who will style her biracial friend's hair, Vix has been called a *'white fetishist'* by other black women:

Vix: I just enjoy doing hair and plaiting and things like that. And, you know, [you] have stuff like directed at you then like, 'oh, you why are you doing it? Why, why isn't she going to a black salon? Why is a white girl doing it? You know, you're just obsessed with black hair. That's really disgusting' And that kind of thing is like, well, what? She's asked me to do it. She's my, she's my best friend, my closest friend. And she's asked me to do it. And then you've got these you know, you've got these, these black women who are coming back going, 'you shouldn't be doing this. This is our domain'. Is that racist?

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Certainly prejudiced. And if racism is prejudice, then yeah, you know?

Again, an understanding of the historical or socio-political connotations of what a white woman doing a black woman's hair might mean to the black community is missing from Vix's comments. Rather, the white person has been perceived as being *'vilified'* and re-positioned as the recipient of racism.

Anne reacted strongly to being asked about being white, and although she did not use the words racism or discrimination in reference to the question itself, the underlying connotation of her response seemed to imply that was her feeling. The exchange started when Anne remarked that being asked about being white was *'a very difficult question'* and I commented that it is a question that is not usually asked. This is what followed:

Anne: No. And I think if you were to ask that, you want to know why you're asking it, what does it matter what it's like to be white? I think it's quite an insulting question 'what's it like to be white?' I find that quite insulting actually.

RS: Yeah. So, are you feeling insulted now, that I've asked you that question?

Anne: Yeah.

RS: Yeah, ok.

Anne: It, it doesn't.. that doesn't sit comfortably. Does that make sense?

RS: It does. Yeah, I can see the colour in your cheeks has raised a bit, slightly, as well, so I can see that me asking that question has perhaps annoyed you.

Anne: Yeah, because it doesn't matter. I'm white because my mum and dad are white. My best friend was Indian because her mum and dad are Indian. You know it's... [doesn't finish sentence]

RS: It sounds like you're questioning what is the purpose of me even asking that question?

Anne: Exactly. There is no purpose to it. I don't think there is. It's not a question that needs to be asked.

RS: And yeah, I just want to unpack that a bit more because I feel, if you feel comfortable with it? …

Anne: Oh, yeah

RS: …because that's quite a strong reaction, because sometimes people think, well, 'oh, I've never had to think about that before', but to feel insulted. And I feel, and I have a feeling, something has shifted between us at the moment.

Anne: It's a very uncomfortable question.

RS: Yeah, I'm feeling maybe you're being a bit more defensive right now than you were before I asked that question.

Anne: Yeah, I feel it because like you said, I've never been asked that question. So, it's, but to me it doesn't, it's a question that doesn't need to be asked because I'm who I am, not because of the colour of my skin. I mean, I could say or, you know, I don't get stopped by the police as much as a black person does. But it is not a question that needs to be asked to be honest, I don't think. Sorry.

In this exchange, Anne became more defensive and animated. As I remarked to her, the colour in her cheeks became raised and I felt she became annoyed with me. In fairness to Anne, she was happy to continue to talk about it and was able to articulate that she felt asking about whiteness was *'a question that doesn't need to be asked'*, had *'no purpose'*, and was considered *'uncomfortable'* and *'insulting'*. Whilst Anne had reiterated throughout the interview that 'race' was irrelevant, it was whiteness that caused the strongest reaction. Perhaps Anne felt what Vix called *'vilified'* and was defensive as a result. Although she recognised that potentially she would not get stopped by the police as much as a black person, she did not critically analyse this further; again, the socio-political disconnect was evident.

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Less defensive in manner but nonetheless direct in sharing their thoughts, Phil also connected the questioning of whiteness to racism. This became personal as Phil felt that the working title of this thesis *'how do white trainee counsellors in South Wales define 'race' and racism?'* was racist:

> Phil: …I was quite curious coming in [to the interview] knowing the title from when you first said, it was like 'well the title's racist in itself'.
>
> RS: Yeah. So, the title of my research, 'how do white trainee counsellors define race and racism?', for you, that in itself is racist because I used the word 'white'.
>
> Phil: Yeah, yeah. Because the fact it says white, it's like, what if there was a coloured person in that classroom? How would that then perceive to them if you used that same title in that classroom? To me they would just be a fellow student with me. However, to them it could knock them for six or open a whole thing of 'is there racism in there?'

Phil felt that asking about whiteness was racist because it may exclude *'coloured'* people in the classroom. Thus, questioning whiteness was equated with racism and reinforced with colour-blind attitudes: *'to me they would just be a fellow student'*. I then asked Phil why he had not questioned me about the wording before, especially as he had previously described himself in the interview as a *'challenging'* person who was comfortable in questioning others. Phil felt that he would mention it when the right opportunity presented itself but noted that after my first visit to the college in December 2019:

> Phil: As soon as you walked out the room, we all discussed it.
>
> RS: Did you? Right, Okay. You're the only person that's told me that.
>
> Phil: Several of the group said: 'well is that title not racist itself?'
>
> RS: Ok, so that's really interesting. Could you tell me more about that? Because that's really important for me to know. The title of my thesis, the inclusion of the word white…

Phil: Because you put the stereotype in it sort of makes it stand out. So, if you didn't... if you put the racism in trainee counsellors, that would've left it open to what does that racism encounter? Because when we think of racism, we always tend to think of a white being nasty to another colour. However, it works both ways.

RS: So, racism can work with... [didn't finish sentence]

Phil: Totally. So, you hear the media all the time, and social media's terrible, plenty of black power but you start shouting 'white power' it would be a whole different ball game, you'd be arrested for it. So just the term of that colour makes it a bolder statement and stereotypes it. I think it was just that, 'isn't that title racist itself?'.

RS: Yes. So, the inclusion of the word white seemed racist...

Phil: Yes.

RS: ...to the class?

Phil: Yeah, small little groups in the class. And I think when you put the forms out and asked us to sign them and stuff, you gave us the instruction [information packs], and everyone was like 'isn't that racist?'

The last question I asked in all of the interviews was *'is there anything you would like to add to a question I have already asked or mention something that you think might be important?'*, Phil asked:

Phil: I suppose I'd like to question the title. What was the title about?

I then explained to Phil about my reasoning based upon the theoretical perspectives of critical whiteness studies and critical race theory and how researching whiteness was an act of anti-racism. Phil said he understood.

To Phil, mentioning whiteness equated to racism. He mentioned that racism *'works both ways'* and that Black Power can be mentioned on social media but if 'white power' is mentioned then there are legal consequences. Again, an historical or socio-

political understanding of what Black Power and white power represents was missing. Also, his suggestion that several members of the group felt my research was racist is important as Phil was the only person to say this to me directly, meaning it is possible to infer that those who felt similarly to him were unable to express how they felt. This stands in contrast to the relationships I felt I made with the class, some of whom would share personal struggles, ask counselling theory related questions or ask for my feedback on their counselling skills. This would suggest a discomfort in talking about whiteness openly.

What linked Anne, Vix and Phil's feelings of reverse racism was the overt questioning of whiteness combined with an absence of historical or contemporary socio-political analysis. This socio-political disconnection was also witnessed amongst other participants and is discussed in Theme 4 (Section 5.5).

Complicated recognition of whiteness

Although whiteness was something that most of the participants had not considered before the interview, Betty, Emily and Vix did begin to question what it might mean during the interview itself. Perhaps what made this complicated recognition of whiteness possible for these three participants is that they had considered their whiteness in the past, however briefly. In the interview, Betty and Elizabeth reconnected to forgotten memories of feeling vulnerable as young white women when walking past *'gangs'* of young black men (explored in Theme 3, Section 5.4 and

Theme 4, Section 5.5). Vix's awareness of her whiteness was located in the negative

nickname given to her as a teenager (see below) and as an adult when her whiteness

was made apparent to her by black women criticising her styling black hair.

When initially asked what being white meant to her, Betty replied:

> Betty: [long pause] What does it mean to me? I like being white. If I had a choice of being a different race, I would choose to be white.
>
> RS: Why would you choose to be white?
>
> Betty: I like, I just like it. I don't know why. I'm just thinking, you know what I like…? Why…? You know if I had a choice of being black or Pakistan [*sic*]… I think because I like my life. So, yes, that's all I can say, I just like my life.

At first, Betty was unable to answer why she preferred to be white beyond *'liking her*

life'. After the interview and when the recording device was turned off, Betty went

back to the question of whiteness. With her permission I turned back on the recording

device to capture her thoughts. These were very much being thought through in the

moment and it is recognised that it took a lot for Betty to verbalise these feelings:

> Betty: When you asked me 'how does it feel to be white?' I don't know what it was. I asked, I asked the question because I was trying to imagine being white as opposed to having the choice to be black or Pakistan [*sic*] or Indian, whatever. I did question whether I was being, not racist, I think there was a preference to be white and I don't know the essence of that, what is that? Why? Why? Is it actually, I don't know, it's quite hard to explain. The preference to be white and as much as I didn't want to possibly admit, is it racism that I'm thinking the preference…? That it crossed, sort of maybe a crossing there which I didn't really want to admit why. I haven't explained that… I'm sorry. There could be like a slight bit of...
>
> RS: A slight bit of racism?
>
> Betty: Possibly, and I don't think I wanted to admit to it when you asked me. And it is what it is. But there could be a question and a slight:

'Betty, actually, why are you preferring to be white?' There is something very slight there, I think.

RS: Yeah. You've been very honest with that.

Betty: I don't think I wanted to admit it when I was thinking it, because it's not right

In this excerpt it is possible to see the process that Betty went through in questioning her preference of being white, from saying that it was not because of racism, then thinking that it may be due to racism, the questioning of herself, the admittance to a *'slight'* bit of racism and then admitting it was difficult to disclose those feelings. After the interview was completed, Betty asked me for book recommendations so she could learn more about 'race' and whiteness.

Similarly, Emily also started to think about the potential impact her whiteness could have in relation to a cross-racial counselling relationship:

Emily: …You know, maybe that I would now perhaps think maybe if I was [*sic*] to counsel someone, would they be thinking: 'what can she teach me?' You know, this woman who's a different race to me, 'what does she know about where I've come from or what I've grown up with?' Or maybe there would be a bit of a block there.

RS: And is that a revelation you're having just now?

Emily: It is actually, weirdly.

Emily also believed that white people had access to more opportunities and although she disagreed with it, she felt that white people tended to think of themselves as a *'superior race'*:

Emily: …that we're something better somehow. Yeah. I don't know. Strange actually. Yeah. It's not something I think about.

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In contrast to Betty and Emily, whose realisations about whiteness were so new they were captured in the interview, Vix was the most aware of her whiteness. In part, this was perhaps because she felt that she had been targeted as a white woman who enjoys styling black hair, as outlined above. But also because of the negative nickname her Chinese friend's mum had given her as a teenager, 'fat ghost girl', which was in relation to her size and whiteness. Eventually her friend's mum learned her name and Vix felt that she was not affected by it. However, despite Vix feeling that she had experienced reverse racism as an adult and her whiteness was brought to her attention as a teenager, she was able to see that white people did benefit from their whiteness in some ways. She did this by comparing herself to her Chinese friend and recognised that she didn't have to live up to the same racial stereotypes as her friend who was expected to be good at piano and maths and inherit the family business. Additionally:

> Vix: …there are things that I haven't had to cope with because I am white…
> White people have that kind of ability to move between areas, they
> can be anything. They don't have that preconceived position.

Vix was also able to acknowledge that:

> Vix: And I guess, you know, yeah, does white have privilege? Yes, it does
> because of obvious reasons. Does it necessarily give you an
> economic advantage? Not necessarily.

Therefore, Betty and Emily's complicated recognition of whiteness was brand new. For Betty this was particularly challenging as she realised that her preference to being

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white might be rooted in *'slight'* racism. Vix's complicated recognition of whiteness was her simultaneous belief in reverse racism and her acceptance that whiteness could be advantageous, even privileged.

These three subthemes identify that the participants were largely unaware of their whiteness and identified the challenges that emerged when they did become aware. Initially, whiteness was something that had little resonance for most of the participants which was signified by it being something that held no meaning and its consideration was a new concept to them. This may account for the strong reactions felt by some when directly asked about whiteness: emotional withdrawal, anger and accusations of reverse racism. Finally, for those who were aware of what their whiteness may mean, be it prior to the interview or in the interview itself, it still brought up complex emotions.

5.4 Theme 3: Barriers to Racial Discourse

The third theme considers the barriers to engaging with racial discourse that the participants faced when talking about 'race', racism and whiteness. For some, this was due to having a lack of contact with people of colour (be it friendships or acquaintances); therefore 'race' did not seem relevant to their daily lives. Conversely for others, their contact with people of colour in the form of past and present friendships seemed to give them more confidence in what they were saying, but not necessarily more accuracy. It was also found that colour-blind attitudes (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Burke, 2019) also created a barrier as it seemed that talking about 'race' was

perceived unnecessary as 'race' was irrelevant. Finally, it was found that the

participants had a similar perception of the attributes of a counsellor; it is argued that

this may create a profession specific barrier in talking about 'race', racism, and

whiteness. Each difficulty will be considered individually, and then how they may

inter-relate.

Lack of contact with People of Colour

Betty, Elizabeth, Emily and Mary each described their upbringings as *'sheltered'* in

regard to the location they grew up in and their general lack of contact with people of

colour:

> Betty: I've lived quite a sheltered little life… so, I don't have a lot of
> experience with this [race] really.

> Elizabeth: I've lived in a small community, Welsh community, which had
> very much the same people that lived there for centuries… I've
> travelled, I've travelled a lot, and I've seen different cultures and
> I'm grateful for that. But I don't believe that I am cultured, I don't
> think that I have a good understanding of different races and
> different cultures because I've lived the way I have, which is almost
> a bit sheltered.

> Emily: I think I'm from [county in SE England] and I think that my
> upbringing was almost quite sheltered from when I was young, in it
> was very much just white working class people.

> Mary: …I've had no… I've been brought up quite sheltered. We've never
> had, you know, any… [Doesn't finish sentence]

Having a *'sheltered'* upbringing and therefore limited-to-no contact with people of

colour meant that these participants had never thought or talked about 'race', racism

or whiteness before:

> Betty: This [race] hasn't come into my, sort of, life, nobody's asked me to
> speak about it.

> RS: Is race something you've ever really thought about before?

Elizabeth: I wouldn't say so.

Emily: I've never been asked about race before. So, I think it's not something I've consciously thought *'how do I feel about that?'* or *'what do I think?'*

Mary: [Exhales] Race. I see it as, I don't really think about it, to be honest.

The consistent use of the word *'sheltered'* by all of the participants who had a lack of contact with people of colour is interesting. Whilst the word may be interpreted in various ways, such as one being unworldly or isolated, a relevant understanding of *'sheltered'* is that of protection. This is notion of *'sheltered'* meaning protection may be found in Betty and Emily's strikingly similar experiences (see below). Whether this is protection from having to think about 'race' as a concept or protection from people of colour themselves is not clear.

Despite both living *'sheltered'* lives in white dominated communities, Betty in Wales and Emily in England, both women moved to London as teenagers. Betty in the early 1990s and Emily in the early 2000s. Although their London experiences were a decade apart, they both related similar anecdotes. It is relevant to note that Betty and Emily were interviewed straight after each other, so they would not have had an opportunity to discuss what they shared in the interview. First of all, moving to London meant interacting with black people for the first time, for Betty this was other students on her course and for Emily, people her then partner knew:

Betty: I got on with everyone like, treating them, everybody the same way. Who I connected with, I connected with.

Emily: …Like my ex-partner, and he had so many different friends of many different races. So, it was, it was completely different. I didn't find

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we interacted with them any differently, but it was just very different…, it wasn't something I was used to.

This interaction with people of colour and the discovery that they were no different to them, was tempered by the fear both women recalled they felt as teenagers on seeing groups of black *'gangs'*:

> Betty: [There was a] block of flats opposite and I think I remember being scared because we have to possibly walk through it, and there was like with those gangs of some, some of them were black men, young men, some were mixed race maybe, not really sure. But I remember being scared in that situation. But then again, they could have just [been] the same as being a white group of young men. Both, either would have given me the same reaction, it wasn't because, because they were black or whatever the race they were. It was just a frightening situation.

> Emily: …I wouldn't walk to certain areas at certain times or if I had to cut through a set of flats or something, I would feel really uncomfortable and think is this because, you know, almost, would it be that if 'I was a young black woman, would I be safer to walk through here?'. Which is a horrible thing to think, but I definitely felt because of my colour, because of my race, I was a bit more of a target.

Like Betty, Emily maintained that even though she felt *'very, very unsafe'* walking past the *'gang'* of black boys, if the gang had consisted of white boys, she would have felt the same:

> Emily: …I did feel it also, like walking past groups of young white boys as well. But I think because I'd grown up with a thing, that young black boys were trouble. So, I was more fearful of them. So that was my own fear.

Although as teenagers they both felt scared of black gangs and insisted that they would have felt the same if the gangs were white, their feelings as adults did contrast. Emily felt that as an adult she had come to realise that:

> Emily: …it doesn't matter if people have got that [violence] in their hearts and that's what they're going to do. It doesn't matter what colour the skin is, there could be more hate in the white boys than in the black boys.

However, for Betty, that fear still remained. After the recording device was switched off the second time, Betty reflected on what she had said about her time in London. Saying that today:

> Betty: …if I was [*sic*] sitting on the tube in London, I'd be more scared of sitting opposite a big, dark coloured man in the carriage than a white man…or if they [black men] were in numbers… a big dark man would frighten me more than a big white man.

I asked her permission to write down what she had said and read it back to her to clarify I had written her words correctly. Betty felt like these were *'wrong'* thoughts to have but admitted that was how she felt. Perhaps this is why she could only articulate them when the recording device was switched off. Both Emily and Betty were able to recognise the source of their fear emanated from what they had seen in the media; this is considered in Theme 4 (Section 5.5).

Having a lack of contact with people of colour and the perception of a *'sheltered'* upbringing appears to be one barrier to talking about 'race', racism, and whiteness. Betty, Elizabeth and Mary were all incorrect as to what racism was by including

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different forms of discrimination, believing 'race' to be colour-based and felt

uncomfortable talking about it. It was because of this lack of contact that they had

never talked about 'race' before and was possibly the source of their uncertainty and

self-consciousness. Even though Betty and Emily did have some limited contact with

people of colour as teenagers, it was undermined by feelings of fear; thus, creating

another barrier to meaningful contact with people of colour. Therefore, a lack of

contact with people of colour led to Betty, Elizabeth, Emily and Mary feeling

unconfident and uninformed, thus creating one barrier to talking about 'race', racism

and whiteness.

Contact with People of Colour

In contrast to the previous four participants, Anne, Vix and Phil had contact with

people of colour in their childhoods in the form of friendships. This continued for Anne

and Phil in their working lives in the health service and Vix's her childhood friendships

were maintained into adulthood:

> Anne: I mean, where I grew up in London was it was a huge, huge Indian population... But for me that was, I enjoyed that because I had a bigger experience with food, with taste, smells. And it was just like, I did it. So, it opened my eyes, and my best friend was Indian.

> Phil: Going on to through school one of my best friends would have been a coloured boy, it was just a boy. To, I don't know, working abroad or working at [holiday camp] I worked with several different races, but were they races? No. Colleagues.

> Vix: When I was a tot [laughs] probably, probably like eight, eight or nine, I met my first black girl in a camp site in North Wales and her hair, I had never seen anything like it. And I remember asking, 'can I touch your hair?'.

Although she grew up in a predominantly white town on the Welsh-English border, Vix had an early interaction with a black girl on holiday, her best friend as a teenager was Chinese and in university, she met her other best friend who is biracial.

Additionally, Vix and Phil both used the opinions of their friends and colleagues as an opportunity to learn more or to help form their own opinions. Phil gave an example of working with a female Muslim colleague who criticised another Muslim woman for wearing a burqa and using a smartphone. Phil's colleague felt wearing traditional dress whilst using a smartphone was hypocritical, which took Phil *'aback'*:

> Phil: …I was like, 'okay, I didn't really understand' and that intrigued me. I was like, 'tell me more, explain these things to us [Phil and another white colleague]'.

> Phil: …I've worked with many, many different people and then treated different people… if you're something I don't know, I'll ask, I'll question it.

Vix said that she will ask her biracial best friend for her opinion:

> Vix: It's interesting because I often like trial out my views or something that I've heard. Like, 'what do you think about this? What do you think about this song?'. I'm always kind of like testing, like, 'what's this like?'. Because I think she's quite reasonable. You know, she's not going to like, she's not one of these militant people.

However, Vix also conceded that the combination of her own opinions and speaking about her friendships may mean that:

> Vix: People could take it as far as saying, you know, she's just trying to justify her views because she's had, she's got a best friend who is mixed race or she had a friend or has a friend who is Chinese. So, you know what I mean? But she's just trying to justify her views and make herself sound better and that her views are more

> justifiable because she's had these friends, different ethnicities
> from her, which isn't the case.

It would seem that Vix and Phil's contact with people of colour was an opportunity to learn more, but perhaps without thinking of the consequences being asked to explain 'race' to a white person may have on their friend or colleagues. For Vix, there is also the added parameter of her friend not being *'militant',* suggesting that strong opinions on 'race' might be difficult to hear. Although Vix is aware that her friendships could be misconstrued as justification for her strong opinions on 'race' and racism.

Despite this contact with people of colour, Anne, Phil and Vix had similar understandings of 'race' and racism as those who had little-to-no contact. They still understood 'race' as colour based or signified by physiological difference, and their understanding of racism was that it was a one-on-one form of discrimination. Where they differed to Betty, Elizabeth, Emily and Mary was the confidence with which they made their statements. It seemed that their past and present interactions emboldened them in racial discourse, if not in accuracy. Moreover, they were the three participants who brought up reverse racism. In addition, Anne and Phil had the strongest colour-blind attitudes of the participants. This belief in reverse racism and colour-blind attitudes (discussed below) indicate that their friendships or acquaintances with people of colour had not led them to critically engage with 'race', racism and whiteness at an historical or socio-political level. Contact with people of colour without critical engagement was found to be another barrier to talking about 'race', racism and whiteness because these connections with people of colour seemed

to imbue Anne, Phil and Vix with a confidence that suggested they felt they were

already well-informed, and that further engagement was not necessary.

Colour-blind attitudes

Colour-blindness, or white people not acknowledging 'race' under the misconception

that to do so is racist (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Burke, 2019), was present in all of the

participants interviews. For some, it manifest in the insistence that they do not see

'race' or that everyone is equal, regardless of 'race':

> Betty: I, I, sort of don't judge people for their colour of skin or religion. I
> don't judge people. You know, they are who they are.

> Elizabeth: I think it should be, you should all be equal and seen to be
> equally [*sic*].

> Mary: I suppose if you're talking about race in terms of the counselling
> environment, I wouldn't even think about it. And I don't know if
> that's right or wrong, but if you were a different race to me, I
> probably would, I wouldn't go in consciously thinking 'I can't say
> that I can't say this'.

> Vix: [in relation to 'race' in counselling] Because, you know, that person is
> not the culture or not the race. It's the person that needs help.

Although during the interview, Emily began to consider the relevance of 'race' and

whiteness within a counselling context, she also felt that:

> Emily: I would like to hope it wouldn't be [an issue], in the sense that
> we're all human beings. And I'd like to think that even though our
> backgrounds are different that in some way, we could kind of help
> each other and still, that wouldn't be a barrier. But I see that I think
> it might be. I think it could possibly be.

This perception of 'race' not being fully acknowledged and believing it would be

irrelevant in a cross-racial counselling scenario, also occurred during the class

participant-observation. On my first day with the class, they were shown a YouTube

video of a counselling session with a black female client and white male counsellor,

the purpose of this was to watch how to 'contract' a counselling session. After

watching the video, the whole group discussed the video. The class talked about what

they thought was good or bad about how the session was structured, but neither the

class nor tutor mentioned the racial or gender difference of the client and counsellor

or discussed what this could mean to the counselling relationship. It seemed the

whole class were 'blind' to the racial difference and the implications this could have.

Indeed, on my second week of participant-observation, when the group were

discussing a fictional case vignette of a male counsellor wearing make-up, Marie made

the statement that:

> Marie: In this politically correct world we're obligated to pretend we don't
> notice people are Trans[gender] or their race.

This suggests that Marie had some awareness that there is an expectation not to 'see'

colour and her use of *'politically correct'* echoes Vix's *'PC and non-PC'* answer about

'race'. However, neither the tutor nor the group picked up on this statement or

furthered it. The previous colour-blind statements were isolated expressions of

colour-blind attitudes for the participants. Likewise, the example of the YouTube video

and Marie's comments was one of only two occasions when 'race' was mentioned in

the classroom (the other being the brief discussion after Bella saying she could not

work with a racist or a homophobe). This indicates that colour-blindness can also

reveal itself in the silence about 'race'. However, Anne and Phil were more

forthcoming in their colour-blind beliefs. As detailed previously, Anne had a strong

reaction to the interview questions and seemed to find the focus of the interview

offensive (Theme 2, Section 5.3). This is possibly due to her belief that 'race' is

irrelevant and therefore my research topic, in which I was actively 'seeing' and

speaking about 'race', racism and whiteness was offensive and/or racist:

> Anne: …to start 'what does it feel like to be white? Do you think that it should be integrated?' All that doesn't sit right with me. It's a very uncomfortable feeling because I'm a firm believer that everyone's individual and should be treated the same.

This is supported by her insistence that she does not see skin colour:

> Anne: …So, I see people as a person, not necessarily what colour skin they are, what country they're from, what they believe in. So, I don't really think about race. I make my judgment on the person, not on their colour.

> Anne: I don't know, I just, I just, I don't, I don't notice people's skin colour. I take the person as they are, then I'll make my own mind up about that person.

> Anne: …I take people on an individual basis.

The combination of Anne's colour-blindness and the research questions she was being

asked, in which I explicitly asked about 'race', racism and whiteness, resulted in her

feeling protective of people of colour whom she felt I was *'targeting'*:

> Anne: I just I find myself feeling quite defensive for the coloured people… because why, why should they be? Why should they be targeted?

Moreover, Anne took pride in the fact that she did not see colour and *'defended'*

people of colour in the research interview:

> Anne: I feel quite proud of myself that I don't have them [*sic*] kind of judgments, especially in the world we're living in now, I think that could be quite a rare thing.

The insistence on not seeing racial difference was also evident in Phil. As a healthcare

worker in the NHS, Phil is expected to record, or 'code', the ethnicity of patients as

some ethnicities are more prone to certain health conditions. Phil has refused to do

this in the past as he believed this was racist:

> Phil: Yeah, I've never been raised to pick up someone as a different
> origin or anything. So, it was a struggle for me to understand the
> way we code and why we code, to the point I had to be pulled
> aside by seniors to say, 'look, you're doing this, you've got to do it'.
> It's like 'I don't have to do anything' and then they explained the
> rationale behind that. I was like, 'OK, I'll start'.
>
> RS: So, so for you race doesn't matter to the point that you weren't, at
> one point, filling in the forms at work.
>
> Phil: Because I thought it was for that reason. I thought it was a form of,
> not full racial stereotyping, but because I didn't understand what it
> was for. It was like it's not important, I treat a patient, I don't treat
> a black patient, I treat a patient. So straightaway I just thought 'no',
> they didn't give a reason for why. And so, I'm not filling this in.

In this example, it is possible to see how Phil's colour-blindness, *'I treat a patient, I*

don't treat a black patient, I treat a patient', led him to the decision not to record vital

patient information and resulted in being reprimanded by his senior colleagues. This

illustrates how embedded, and potentially dangerous, colour-blindness could be when

considered in a medical context. This is because, colour-blindness could lead to certain

medical conditions being overlooked by staff who feel 'race' was irrelevant to

diagnosis.

Colour-blindness is understood as one reason for the barriers encountered in talking

about 'race', racism and whiteness. For the participants, there was a belief that

everyone is equal and that 'race' is irrelevant and therefore, does not need to be

discussed. Moreover, for some, even seeing or speaking about it was offensive and perceived as *'targeting'* people of colour.

'Good White Counsellor'

I will introduce my concept of the 'Good White Counsellor' in Chapter 6 (Section 6.5). However, its conceptualisation originates in the participants understanding of a counsellor as a 'good' person, combined with their colour-blind attitudes and the implication that 'bad' people see/talk about 'race'.

When asked to describe a typical counsellor, each of the participants provided positive characteristics that they felt made a counsellor's personality. This positive perception is understandable as they were in the early stages of their training as counsellors when enthusiasm for the profession is to be expected. Further, the notion of the counsellor as a benevolent person is possibly what drew them to the role. The reason for its inclusion here as a barrier to racial discourse is that it was felt that the participants' self-consciousness stemmed from not only their semantic misunderstanding, (lack of) interactions with people of colour, but also from not wanting to offend or be seen as offensive. This concern about not wanting to offend, coupled with the perception of what a counsellor is, or what they are aiming to be, may have influenced their self-perception and how they wanted to portray themselves in the interview. As such, a counsellor is a 'good' person, and 'good' people do not see 'race'; this may account for the colour-blind attitudes and hostility when asked about whiteness. The participants understood a counsellor as:

Anne: …They have to, for me, they have to create that safe, that safe place
   that the person who's talking feels that they can talk in that space…
   it's got to be, warm, welcoming, safe, easy to talk to and try and
   put themselves in the client's position.

Betty: …it's just somebody sitting there listening to, to what you say and,
   you know, not give an opinion, but they just guide you through
   your thinking… So, yeah, it is just giving the person space to voice
   their troubles.

Elizabeth: … For me, I would like to have somebody that's quite laid back
   and easy going, and open and honest, and easy to talk to. Just got
   that openness about them and softness, I guess.

Emily: I think, I'd like to hope, the majority…, the underlying thing is that,
   is that our aim is that we want to help people to live the best life
   that they can… So, I think to me, that's the underlying universal
   thing, the majority of people want to help others.

Vix: OK, first thing that springs to mind, someone who is probably naturally
   empathic, someone who's drawn to helping people and wants to
   make a difference in someone's life or for someone.

Mary based her answer on the counsellors' she has met and felt:

Mary: …they're all lovely and sweet people…and I know they're
   genuine…and I think they're truthful… But I think a counsellor, you
   can't train if it's not in you, it's not in you. Is it?

Therefore, if talking about 'race', racism and whiteness is uncomfortable and colour-

blindness is equated with being non-racist, the counsellor who is a 'good' person

would not 'see' or speak about 'race', racism and whiteness. Thus, a profession

specific barrier to racial discourse has been identified.

The reasons for the barriers to racial discourse were a combination of contact and lack

of contact with people of colour, with the former instilling the individual with a sense

of confidence and the latter with a lack of confidence. However, levels of confidence

did not lead to greater accuracy as to what 'race' and racism are, or greater awareness of their whiteness. Whether a person had contact or lack of contact with people of colour, all participants made colour-blind statements, although two of those who had contact with people of colour made the strongest colour-blind statements. This also occurred during the participant-observation where racial difference in a counselling YouTube video was not mentioned by the class or tutor. Perhaps underlying these barriers is a profession specific reason, that a counsellor is a 'good' person, imbued with positive qualities. The implication being that 'good' people do not see or speak about 'race', racism or whiteness. I have termed this the 'Good White Counsellor' (Chapter 6, Section 6.5).

5.5 Theme 4: Socio-political (Dis)Connection

The final theme considers the socio-political dimension of the participants in their learning and in the curriculum itself. It has been shown in the previous three themes that there was a disconnection from the historical and contemporary socio-political context. This included not understanding how Eurocentric beauty standards may impact black people, what whiteness may represent to a person of colour or the difference between black power and white power. This theme found that there was a general disconnection to the socio-political context in all of the participants and the curriculum.

This first subtheme draws from the six weeks of classroom participant-observation, document analysis of the course handbook and assignment briefs as well as the

interviews. A general disconnection toward a bigger socio-political context was identified. However, there were points of connection found in the participants and curriculum in terms of awareness of the role to the media and an awareness about cultural difference. Finally, the previous 3 themes and this theme culminate in the final subtheme ''Race' education: is it racist?' where some participants felt that to learn about 'race' during counselling training meant learning about blackness (not whiteness) and was potentially racist to both white and black trainees.

Student and curriculum disconnection

I had considered separating this section into two subthemes. However, it is felt that they worked symbiotically: students do not engage with socio-political issues and the curriculum reflects that; the curriculum does not engage with socio-political issues and so the students reflect that. This was manifest when observing the morning seminars when at times the tutor would mention something related to diversity (outlined below) and the students did not question or engage with it. Likewise, a student would mention something, and the rest of the class and tutor did not engage. The tutor was aware of this; in a private comment to me he reflected that diversity was taught at a *'superficial level'* due to the amount of content that needed to be covered in the counselling curriculum. He also stated that early in the course students had come in *'guns blazing'* with each other which *'scared'* them in relation to forthright exchanges, which possibly made them cautious about discussing challenging topics.

It was outlined in the previous themes that 'race' and racism were mentioned only twice during the six weeks I was observing the class, and these conversations were brief. This may have been because the participants were aware of the research title and were trying to be helpful in mentioning it. The possible reasons for lack of engagement with it is explained in the previous three themes (Sections 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4). Over the six weeks, other diversity topics were brought up in a brief comment or aside, often an anecdote which was embedded within a seminar. Instances included the tutor sharing the following: the experiences of a former student who is disabled and their clients reaction to them; having good resources available for working with autism; discussing his experience of working with a client who spoke a different language; and sharing his experience of working with an Indonesian client. In each of these instances, the class did not enquire further and there was no discussion about how disability, language or cultural differences may impact the counselling relationship. Nor were the socio-political aspect of these topics explored, for example, by looking at ableism and Eurocentrism.

A powerful example of this disconnection of student's socio-political awareness occurred in week five of my observation. This was prompted by a fictional case vignette that the students were given (Appendix iii). The purpose of the task was for the students, in pairs, to assess the risk a fictional client posed to themselves. After the pair work, the group were brought back together to discuss their thoughts. Phil, the only man in the class bar the tutor, went through the case vignette (Appendix iii) stating what he believed was the psychological state of the male client. In reference to

the fictional client self-harming by punching walls, Phil felt he was *'turning their* [fictional male client] *anger from punching her* [fictional ex-girlfriend in the vignette] *to punching walls'*. Domestic violence was not mentioned or intimated in the case vignette (Appendix iii). The class of women did not pick up on this or challenge it, although Bella, who I was sitting nearby, quietly commented that Phil was making *'a lot of assumptions'*. The conversation moved on to the use of anti-depressants, when this petered out, the tutor went back to the case vignette, and reflected that it is *'gender maybe'* but he did not see the fictional client punching walls as threatening but as an act of self-harm; the class remained silent. Vix then shared an anecdote about a male friend who was abused by his girlfriend and said she did not like people *'casting aspersions'* because *'aspersions are cast on men and if we're all feeling threatened* [in a female dominated profession] *men may not access help'*. Sian then posed the question *'what if a woman punched a wall?'*, to which Mary replied, *'it's not acceptable'*. Jayne [sat next to Bella] remarked that *'we're making a lot of assumptions here'*, to which the tutor commented *'it's important* [to know] *how we feel when we're with this client'.* Mary then talked about her personal experience with a client where she felt uncomfortable. The conversation did not return to Phil's comment. What was interesting was that Phil made a throwaway comment about gender-based violence to a room full of women and that (a) he felt comfortable to do so, (b) the women did not challenge him, (c) Vix did question him, but in defence of men, (d) the tutor mentioned gender, but he and the class did not further it. This would have been an opportunity to discuss gender based violence, gender inequality, gender stereotypes, and domestic abuse. However, this opportunity was missed and the

disconnection between the class, tutor and the socio-politics of gender and violence was apparent.

This was also evident during week four of the participant-observation which fell on 'Brexit Day', the day Britain left the European Union. This was something which went unremarked on by the class. The tutor did reflect that it was Brexit Day which was met with some groans in the class but mostly silence. The tutor then said, *'we're in a country that has two ways of seeing something and they've stopped listening to each other'* and used this as a metaphor for what is spoken and unspoken in the counselling process. The class did not respond. Later, the class were given a list of short case vignettes about personal therapy, with one scenario being: 'During the election your counsellor prominently displays a poster for a political party whose politics you feel very uncomfortable with'. When the class came together to talk through the vignettes, this scenario was avoided, again indicating a disconnection from politics. However, some insight was gained through listening to the exchanges about this scenario during pair work. Lee and Mary both said that they were not engaged with politics so a political poster would not put them off a counsellor unless it was, as Lee described, *'something extreme'*. In reply, Mary said *'I don't know about politics so I wouldn't know'* [what something extreme would be]. In reference to the case vignette, Ceri quietly said to the tutor that politics is a *'definite no-no'*, as you're meant to be *'neutral as a counsellor'*. Therefore, a general disinterest in politics and the idea of the counsellor being *'neutral'* may be a reason for the participants' disconnection with socio-political topics.

This disconnection is also mirrored in the curriculum. The handbook of assignment briefs, which outlined the assignments expected in the first year, showed that none of the assignments required the consideration of the socio-political implications of counselling practice or theory. Admittedly, they are first year students, so an understanding of counselling theory and the development of skills is probably prioritised to prepare them for their practice placements. The first assignment, a group poster presentation on practice issues did require the students to 'evaluate key ethical and diversity issues in counselling' (Assignment Brief Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 2). However, this presentation occurred before I started the participant-observation, therefore, how the participants approached this requirement, and how it was assessed, is not known.

While there was a disconnection to the socio-political context in the participants and the curriculum, there was also a dissonance between the participants perception about their ease with talking about diversity and what I had witnessed during the participant-observation. In the interviews, I asked the participants whether they felt the group was comfortable talking about diversity issues. I defined 'diversity' to include culture, gender, gender identity, disabilities and sexual orientation:

> Betty: I think they would be. We've not had a lot of discussion on it, but I can't, nothing stands out that I think some would have a huge issue with any of those.
>
> Elizabeth: Very. Very comfortable. I think there's a lot of different back..., different kind of experiences within the group that is comfortably shared, very open. I think even with the ones that haven't mentioned anything there is still a level of understanding.
>
> Emily: I think they seem quite comfortable.

> Mary: I would say that they are comfortable, in general. Yeah. Yeah, I think it's quite comfortable around the subject.
>
> Phil: ...I think we're quite an open group, I think we're quite a mixed bag of professionalism within the group. I don't think anyone would have any issues or anything.

Whereas Vix felt although the group did seem comfortable, they would be unlikely to express controversial opinions in a group environment:

> Vix: ...I think, I think they're OK speaking about that kind of thing... and if they do have any views that are different, though, I doubt whether they'd be aired.

Despite Elizabeth, Emily and Vix feeling the group were comfortable, they personally did not feel that way in regard to themselves:

> Elizabeth: ...Sometimes I feel like, I don't know, maybe that I should say more, but no, I suppose it's not something I'm comfortable talking about.
>
> Emily: ...I tend to sit back and watch and listen. And I think it would be..., I think there would be very different, there are definitely stronger opinions than others. I think that could be potentially, could become quite confrontational.
>
> Vix: Yeah, I wouldn't, I wouldn't probably talk within the group of some of my own views because they may not be a view that people would find... not palatable, that's the wrong word, but it's not worth the fight.

Perhaps Elizabeth, Emily and Vix's feelings of discomfort and concern about the consequences of the group talking about diversity openly may be a reason why the participants seemed disconnected to the socio-political context of their learning. This is supported by the tutor's observation that the group were cautious after an early difficult exchange. Perhaps too, the difficulties in talking about 'race', such as not

having a strong semantic understanding, self-consciousness and not wanting to offend

are also relevant to their socio-political disconnection. However, further research

would be needed to ascertain this.

Student and curriculum connection

Although it was found that the participants and the curriculum were largely

disconnected with the socio-political context, there were indications of connection.

However, whether the participants understood their awareness of cultural difference

and the role of the media as socio-political is unclear. Likewise, how the curriculum

connection was embedded, assessed and understood as socio-political is also

ambiguous.

The first connection occurred during the second week of participant-observation.

There was a group discussion about a case vignette involving a fictional male

counsellor wearing make-up. Many of the group referred to them as a *'cross-dresser'*

in the discussion and an opportunity for engagement with gender identity was missed.

During the break, Bella felt that *'we have to let people be inclusive and express*

themselves', to which Jayne agreed and said, *'what we've experienced is people* [the

class] *not being accepting and judgemental'.* It seemed that Bella and Jayne felt

frustrated by what they saw as a lack of inclusivity and were aware of the need for

diversity acceptance.

However, in the participant interview, both Anne and Betty expressed a curiosity to

learn more about gender identity:

> Anne: It makes me curious because I want to know because not presenting
> as anything, what are they? So, but, you know, my generation was:
> boy, girl, man, wife... but we just need that, we need more
> education and understanding.

> Betty: ...something I need to read up on is the gender and the LGBT [*sic*].
> And there's courses on it... I don't have any problem, issues with it.
> But there is, I've learned, a sort of a language and there's words I
> need to know. So, I am definitely going to do a course on it.

Despite there being a disconnection to gender identity in the seminar, to Bella and

Jayne's dismay, Anne and Betty did express their interest in learning more. Betty's

comment about needing to learn the correct language is analogous to the participants

incorrect and confused semantic understanding of 'race' and racism.

For others, there was an awareness that cultural differences with the Muslim

community may impact the counselling relationship. Whilst this could be problematic

in itself, as the Muslim community is being stereotyped in these answers, it does show

some connection and awareness:

> Emily: So, for example, if it was men of, not to be using Muslims, but if it
> was a Muslim man, because they have very different views on
> women, that might create, and they might not feel comfortable at
> all, talking to a woman.

> Phil: ...So, if I was [*sic*] to work in a Muslim country, I couldn't treat a
> Muslim woman because of their beliefs. So, by the same thought I
> would have thought a Muslim woman wouldn't want to come in
> and open up to me as a counsellor, whereas a Muslim male might
> not see me as an equal because they're a very closed race. So, they
> might want to speak to a fellow, fellow person of the same belief.

Mary: …they have different relations [*sic*], religions when it comes to burial and death and grieving and things like that. So yeah, it's not so much their race, their colour or whatever, it's their… their religion, I suppose isn't it? I wouldn't treat them any differently, but you'd have to… have to respect their opinion, their grief, wouldn't you? … Because a black person might be a religion of, you know… they must have different ways of grieving because they do things differently, don't they?

Whilst Vix questioned the value of 'race' education (see next subtheme), she did see some benefit in learning about cultural difference:

Vix: …but if you are asking culturally, is it going to be a thing? Is that going to be an issue? You know, if I'm going to be listening to someone talking about their Chinese culture, for example, am I going to understand where they're coming from? I'm not going, going to be able to prod them in the right way or am I going to be offensive?

In the same way that there was a connection to cultural difference, there was also an awareness that the media may influence people's opinions. Reflecting back to Betty and Emily's experiences in London, where they both felt afraid of '*gangs*' of young black men, I asked where they thought this fear came from. Both gave a similar answer:

Betty: … I think, the things you do hear on the news and it's like groups like, you know, the gangs and a lot of its kind of black men. So, I'm, the stuff that is on the news, you know, I suppose I was a... Yeah, I was a little bit slightly more worried because of that, thinking that they were a little bit more dangerous only because what was on the news.

Emily: I do think there seemed to be, when I think about it now, as I was growing up, stuff on the TV quite a lot about stabbings and things like that, in London, of like young black boys. So maybe that was that message. I mean, I'm sure there was [*sic*] just as many white boys that were doing the same thing. But it just seemed to be when I was growing up at that time in school, that was what the

boys…, that was the attitude and then on TV, it's like amplified because that's what we're shown a lot.

This is also supported by Anne's statement about the attitudes of people in her community, in rural Wales:

> Anne: I think they've got the attitude from the media, so that they're very much, because they haven't had that one to one, or… 'hands on' is the wrong word, but they haven't actually dealt with them in person face to face. I think the media has tainted it and I think their perception is that all black people are drug takers or carry knives and, that's, this is a very naive impression of them.

Betty and Emily's experiences were a decade apart, but both felt the media representation of black boys shaped their perceptions and influenced the fear they experienced. Likewise, Anne felt that her community's opinions were shaped by the media. This indicates that the perception of the influence of the media in racial attitudes has not changed over three decades.

As the students had points of connection to the socio-political, the curriculum did too. The student handbook (Student Handbook, 2019/2020) is given to all students and provides information about the course, such as course structure, coursework and placement guidelines. The handbook explains that the course is accredited with the BACP and lists the admissions criteria in line with the BACP's conditions. These ten criteria include that those chosen should have 'awareness of the nature of prejudice and oppression' and 'awareness of issues of difference and equality' (Student Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 20). The handbook also states that readiness to begin

practice as a trainee counsellor includes the trainee having 'the capacity for sensitive responses to a wide range of people and issues' (Student Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 53) an 'absence of social prejudice, ethnocentrism and authoritarianism' (Student Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 53) and a 'sensitivity to the social worlds of clients who may be from different gender, ethnic, sexual orientation, different abilities, first language or age group' (Student Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 54). In the same way, trainees are expected to know how to 'work with difference as it impacts on the therapeutic relationship or the process of therapy' which is assessed through various means including workshops on diversity, skills practice, and course work (Student Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 60). Moreover, a trainee will be considered incapable of counselling practice if they 'show signs of prejudice and discrimination but is unable to change their attitudes or behaviour and this leaves the client at risk' (Student Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 66). However, it does not state how signs of discrimination are recognised, i.e., what constitutes as discriminatory opinions and how a change in attitude is measured. This will be considered in Chapter 6 (Section 6.6). Another aspect of the curriculum's connection is that the library is well-stocked with books relating to culture, counselling and mental health, meaning that although such a module is not taught on the course, students have access to these resources should they wish to engage (see Appendix iv for a full list of library resources).

Therefore, while there were signs of socio-political connection in the participants, it is not clear if it was understood as such by them. Although the student handbook emphasises a need for trainees to be 'sensitive' to difference and incapable of practice

if they exhibit discriminatory or prejudiced behaviour that they do not change, the parameters and evaluation of such behaviour is unclear.

'Race' education: Is it racist?

The final subtheme draws together the previous themes and subthemes. Feelings toward 'race' and whiteness were evident as were the maintenance of colour-blind attitudes in relation to understandings of 'race' education. 'Race education' refers to the teaching of 'race' in the counselling curriculum. Underpinning the participants' understandings is a disconnection to the socio-political reasons why teaching about 'race' may be relevant to white people.

The participants were asked whether they felt 'race' was relevant to counselling training. It should be noted that I forgot to ask Phil this question, so this subtheme is drawn from the other six participants. Anne's answer encapsulated her thoughts and feelings throughout her interview:

> Anne: …Why should they be targeted and like, when you said the question, 'do you think we should be taught that in college, should it be integrated?' But why would you? You wouldn't integrate it, 'how to counsel a white person'. So why would you want to integrate it as a coloured person? Because the only difference is the colour of the skin. They've got a brain. They've got the same internal organs, eyes. They breathe the same air as us. It's just a colour of skin. So yeah, I feel a bit defensive [laughs]

Her colour-blindness is evident in her answer, as is the belief that talking about 'race' is equivalent to *'targeting'* people of colour and feeling defensive. Underlying that, is the assumption that the teaching of 'race' would mean teaching about *'coloured'*

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people, and not learning about whiteness. This was a misconception that all of the

participants had whether they thought teaching about 'race' on a counselling course

was a good idea or not.

> Betty: Yes, I do because I would… the bits I've sort of looked at… I've
> noticed there's quite a lot written up on diversity, being a black…
> so it's from there I've seen that it is important for me to learn.

Elizabeth could also see the benefits, although she felt the likelihood of ever having a

black client was low because:

> Elizabeth: I always picture my life having the same people, the same
> background, the same race. I don't imagine having those kind of
> complications or difficulties.

She nonetheless felt there would be value in learning about 'race':

> RS: So therefore, it might not be necessary for your training?
> Elizabeth: No, but I think it still would be suggested, because I think it
> shouldn't be like that. It shouldn't be so kind of restrictive in a way,
> where I live or how many people are in my kind of life, [it] shouldn't
> determine that I should never be prepared to be able to think
> about supporting certain people from a different background.

Emily felt that learning about 'race' would be useful in opening up students minds, but

felt the 'race' of the tutor delivering the teaching would be important:

> Emily: I don't know, it depends. Again, it's more like it is, it feels wrong to
> say that if, if it was delivered by somebody of a different race, then
> it would almost be more acceptable. It feels wrong to say that
> though.

> RS: Yeah. So that if it were a white tutor or lecturer talking about race,
> you would feel uncomfortable or…?

> Emily: Not, not uncomfortable. It depends [on] who the audience is, I
> think. I think if, I think it's almost better to have, if it was going to
> be delivered, of having a different race tutor giving the, giving the
> talk or something, yeah.

Although Emily was expressing sensitivity, that 'race' should be taught by people of colour, again, it seemed the implication is that 'race' education does not include learning about whiteness (where according to Emily's answer, a white tutor would be more acceptable). This mirrors Anne, Betty and Elizabeth's understanding. Although Vix also felt that teaching about 'race' would mean learning about blackness, not whiteness, she strongly felt that it would be insulting to white students:

> Vix: People would be resentful about being told that they have to be this way or aware of something. And that will happen in like any educational setting where they're like, 'this is obvious. Why, why are you telling me this?' And then people resent it. And they're like, well, where's that resentment going? Is it going to be against the people that they're supposed to be being more mindful about? Yeah, possibly. Because why should they have special treatment? Why am I spending a whole module of stuff on awareness here?...
> …I think, I think especially if it was an all-white group of counsellors. Like, for example, the class we have. Because it feels like you've been singled out then and I think in the current climate that that's more problematic. Whereas if we had a couple of black or ethnic students in the group and they had to take the course as well, then that would probably modify [attitudes].

I then asked Vix to clarify what she meant by the *'current climate'*, she referred to what she felt was the vilification of white people and:

> Vix: … Learning about something as if you're in the wrong, as if it's something that only you need to consider because you're white, could be quite difficult and could actually, I feel, could actually do more damage than good.

Therefore, 'race' education was understood through the filter of the understanding the participant already held about 'race', racism and whiteness. To Anne, Betty, Elizabeth and Emily, for whom whiteness was meaningless, learning about 'race'

meant learning about 'Others' and did not include whiteness. Anne's strong colour-blind convictions deepened her resistance to it, seeing it as a *'targeting'* of black people. Whereas Vix's belief in reverse racism meant that she saw 'race' education as discriminatory against white people, placing them in a position of blame while people of colour were situated in a position of *'specialness'*. In addition, the people who had least contact with people of colour, Betty, Elizabeth and Emily, were receptive to learning about 'race', whereas Anne and Vix who had contact (i.e., friendships) with people of colour, were resistant. Thus, participants' lack of confidence/confidence in their understanding of 'race' and racism may have also influenced how they perceived 'race' education.

5.6: Summary of the Research Findings

This research identified four themes: (Mis)Understanding 'Race' and Racism, White (Un)Awareness, Barriers to Racial Discourse and Socio-political (Dis)Connection. The first, (Mis)Understanding 'Race' and Racism, found that the participants encountered similar difficulties when talking about 'race' and racism. The first was semantic understanding, in which the participants understood 'race' as colour-based and marked by physiological difference. Racism was understood to be an individual act of hostility. Knowledge of 'race' as a socially constructed concept and racism as a multi-faceted act which can manifest in systemic or covert ways was not found. The second difficulty was a feeling of self-consciousness rooted in a fear of causing offensive or being perceived as offensive. The third difficulty was a focus on distancing the self and others from racism. This could be an unambiguous statement of *'I'm not a racist'* to a

more complicated process of recognising racism in another, a retraction and then a

justification for the racism (the person was too young/too old/non-violent). More

complex still, this also involved distancing a black person's experience of racism by

trying to understand the racist's position.

The second theme, White (Un)Awareness, identified difficulties when talking about

whiteness. For most of the participants, whiteness was meaningless, to the extent that

they had never thought about it until asked in the interview. However, for some the

acknowledgement and questioning of whiteness equated to reverse racism. Although

other participants were able to recognise what whiteness may mean, such as

internalised racism, privilege and access to opportunity, it was nonetheless

complicated and challenging.

The third theme, Barriers to Racial Discourse, identified reasons for these difficulties in

talking about 'race', racism and whiteness. Perhaps paradoxically, having a lack of

contact with people of colour due to geographical location, and having contact with

people through past and present friendships were both found as barriers. The former

meant that the participants had not thought about 'race', racism and whiteness due to

'sheltered' upbringings. Even if they did have limited contact as teenagers, the

influence of media representations of black boys led to feelings of fear which further

inhibited contact. On the other hand, those who had past and present friendships with

people of colour were imbued with more confidence, but not accuracy, when talking

about 'race', racism and whiteness while simultaneously possessing strong colour-

blind attitudes and a belief in reverse racism. It seemed that their friendships meant

they did not need to consider 'race', racism or whiteness. Possession of colour-blind

attitudes were also found as a barrier, specifically the notion that 'race' does not

matter, that everybody is equal and therefore talking about 'race' is unnecessary at

best and offensive at worst. A profession specific reason was also found in that the

participants perceived counsellors as having solely positive attributes; simply put, the

counsellor was a 'good' person. Talking about 'race', racism and whiteness was

understood as difficult, eliciting self-consciousness or clashing with colour-blind

attitudes, in short it brought up 'bad' feelings, which may conflict with the notion of

the professional self as a 'good' person. Hence there could be the potential for a

'good' counsellor to avoid the 'bad' feelings elicited in racial discourse. I have termed

this the 'Good White Counsellor' (Chapter 6, Section 6.5).

The last theme, Socio-political (Dis)Connection, found there was a general

disconnection from the socio-political context in both the participants and the

curriculum. This was witnessed during the participant-observation when opportunities

to discuss socio-political issues such as racism, gender-based violence, politics and

disability were not taken. This disconnection contrasted with the participants

perception of the group being *'comfortable'* in talking about diversity, suggesting a

dissonance between how the participants perceived the group's ease with talking

about diversity with what was observed. This disconnection was replicated in the

assignment briefs for the first-year students, where a critical exploration of

counselling practice and theory through a socio-political lens was not required.

However, points of connection were found, such as the participants' awareness of the role the media could play in shaping racial attitudes and how cultural difference could affect the counselling relationship. Likewise, the curriculum handbook stated that trainees would be viewed as incapable of counselling practice if they held and did not change discriminatory or prejudiced behaviours and attitudes. How this would be measured was not outlined. Whether the participants and the curriculum understood these points of connection as socio-political was not identified. Lastly, teaching and learning about 'race' was seen as potentially racist by some participants, as it was understood as either targeting students of colour or white students. Even for participants who could see the merits in learning about 'race', it was understood by all participants that it would involve teaching about blackness and not whiteness. This indicates that whiteness is seen as de-racialised.

The following chapter will consider how the research findings relate to theoretical understandings of 'race', racism, and whiteness, and present original contributions to knowledge in the form of 'White Ignorance Disruption' and the 'Good White Counsellor' (Chapter 6, Section 6.2).

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter will consider the four themes which were identified in this research:

1. (Mis)Understanding 'Race' and Racism
2. White (Un)Awareness
3. Barriers to Racial Discourse
4. Socio-political (Dis)Connection.

It will also consider the theoretical and practice implications of those themes (Table 20). The research questions were:

- How do white counselling trainees understand 'race'?
- Do they understand 'race' to be a social construct?
- How do they understand racism?
- Do they perceive whiteness as a racialised identity?
- How do they feel discussing 'race' and racism?

In this chapter, the findings will be discussed by contextualising each theme (Table 20) in relation to existing literature on 'race', racism and whiteness. In Chapter 7, I will address the overall research question of how white trainee counsellors in South Wales understand 'race' (Section 7.4), racism (Section 7.5) and whiteness (Section 7.6). The discussion presented in this chapter considers how whiteness was displayed or 'performed' (Twine and Gallagher, 2007, p. 5) by the research participants when asked about 'race', racism and whiteness. Thus, this research falls into the 'third wave' of critical whiteness studies (Twine and Gallagher, 2007). As mentioned previously (Chapter 3, Section 3.4), performative expressions of whiteness can be seen in participants attempts to distance themselves from racism (Section 6.3) and in their reactions to being asked about being white (Section 6.4). Further, my original concept of the 'Good White Counsellor (Section 6.2) could be understood as a way of

displaying moral goodness as a white professional through the use of colour-blind ideology. Colour-blind attitudes and its significance to my concept of the 'Good White Counsellor' is discussed below (Section 6.5).

The findings were clear from the research and the four themes identified were:

Table 20 Chapter 6: Research Themes

Theme	Subthemes
(Mis)Understanding 'Race' and Racism	• Semantic Understanding • Self-consciousness • Distancing self (and others) from racism
White (Un)Awareness	• Whiteness as meaningless • Reverse racism • Complicated recognition of whiteness
Barriers to Racial Discourse	• Lack of contact with People of Colour • Contact with People of Colour • Colour-blind attitudes • 'Good White Counsellor'
Socio-Political (Dis)Connection	• Student and curriculum disconnection • Student and curriculum connection • 'Race' education: Is it racist?

To preface the discussion of findings, I will outline the socio-political context this chapter was written in (Section 6.1) and then introduce my concepts of 'White Ignorance Disruption' and the 'Good White Counsellor' (Section 6.2). I will then discuss the four themes outlined in Chapter 5 (Table 20) by explaining how White Ignorance Disruption relates to each one. I will also contextualise the themes within established theory and research. To do this, I will be drawing upon Chapter 2 of this thesis as well as including additional literature that is relevant to the findings. Furthermore, the methodology of post-critical ethnography used in this research, places value on researcher reflexivity (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders, 2019), therefore the

role of the 'disruptor' is also considered. Whilst this concept will be applied directly to

the research themes, in Chapter 7 (Section 7.8), it will be explored how White

Ignorance Disruption may be applied to counselling pedagogy through the

recommendation of 'Critical Whiteness Counselling Studies'. It is envisaged that

Critical Whiteness Counselling Studies will use White Ignorance Disruption as the

'springboard' for profession specific approach to critical whiteness studies and thus

makes a significant contribution to practice.

6.1 Contextualising the Discussion

The methodological approach used was post-critical ethnography (Noblit, Flores and

Murillo, 2004; Anders, 2019) and the method used to gather the data was participant-

observation, which included semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

Consistent with the whole thesis, post-critical ethnography's notion of research being

a 'moral activity' (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004, p. 24; Lester and Anders, 2018) has

been carried into the discussion of the research findings. This is demonstrated through

careful consideration about how the participants may feel reading their words

disseminated and explored theoretically. Post-critical ethnography rejects objectivity

whilst acknowledging that:

> writing inscribes a critical interpretation that exists beyond the intention of
> the author to de-objectify, dereify, or demystify what is studied (Noblit,
> Flores and Murillo, 2004, p. 22).

One way I will seek to minimise objectivity through critical interpretation is to employ

the notion of crystallization, which refers to research containing multiple perspectives

and truths (Richardson, 2003; Ellingson, 2009). Therefore, this discussion chapter is presented with the acknowledgement that the understanding of the data is my interpretation and accepts that it may not be the only possible interpretation of the findings. The epistemological approach of 'theorised subjectivity' (Letherby, 2013) is used in this research and posits subjective understanding is influenced by political beliefs and takes into consideration the emotionality of research for both researcher and participants. This permits an acceptance that extenuating factors may also influence the interpretations of findings. The potential impact of my vicarious traumatisation on the research, the emotional impact of the research and its effect on this research has been considered (Chapter 7, Section 7.8; Smith, 2021, see Appendix vi). It is also acknowledged that this topic elicited complex emotions for the participants (furthered in this chapter). Additionally, my own belief in racial equality and social justice cannot be neatly separated in this discussion and to claim otherwise would be disingenuous. Similarly, when talking about 'race', white people will modify their 'race' speech and expressions of racism depending on the environment they are in and the company they are with (Picca and Feagin, 2007). Therefore, it would be difficult to ascertain how honest the participants felt they could be in answering the research questions. Thus, the discussion of the findings is predicated on what the participants felt able to share. Hence it would be impossible to make conclusive interpretations about how they *really* understand 'race', racism and whiteness.

In regard to the political aspect of theorised subjectivity (Letherby, 2013) and because one of the themes found a socio-political disconnection amongst the participants and

counselling curriculum, it seems appropriate to connect the socio-political context that the writing of this chapter took place in, lest I reproduce the same disconnection found in the research. I began writing this discussion of findings before Black Lives Matter protests began globally in June 2020 (Reuters, 2020). This was at a time when familiarity of the literature and my own research meant that I felt comfortable in my knowledge of whiteness whilst simultaneously trying to expand it through self-education. From this position, I found that in the initial attempts at this chapter I was trying to wrestle the participants' experiences into neat little theoretical boxes to be analysed. However, with the global events of the Black Lives Matter protests, I witnessed what I understood as a global happening of White Ignorance Disruption, which I introduce below (Section 6.2), whereby white people's white ignorance (Mills, 1997; 2007, Chapter 2, Section 2.1.5), was disrupted with white people becoming aware of the scale of racial injustice. One way this manifest itself was through some white people supporting calls to remove statues of historical slave holders, whereas other white people defended those statues, seeing their removal as an erasure of British history (Parveen *et al*, 2020). In this way, a similarity can be seen in the third theme of this research 'White (Un)Awareness' (Chapter 5, Section 5.3), whereby the participants responded to the question of whiteness either with a burgeoning realisation of what whiteness may mean or countered it with the argument that reverse racism exists and the assertion that it was an irrelevant question. On a personal level, despite being someone who had spent the last five years thinking about 'race' and whiteness (Chapter 1, Section 1.1) I felt woefully inadequate to offer advice or guidance to my fellow whites. On social media, I saw white people offering

advice and sources of education and although I offered my own reading list, I was

surprised by my own hesitancy in doing so. In short, I was afraid of 'getting it wrong',

of my whiteness monopolising a conversation about blackness, and of offending

people. In this way, I was not so different to some of the participants who also feared

causing offence to people of colour through their answers to my interview questions

(Chapter 5, Section 5.2; Appendix v). Reconnecting with my own trepidation about

'getting it wrong' helped deepen my empathy toward the research participants. If I felt

like this, someone who had been thinking, reading and researching about 'race',

racism and whiteness for 5 years, then the participants must have felt it acutely in the

interviews as they approached a topic they had never thought about before. I realised

that perhaps I did not fully appreciate that at the time of the interviews, as possibly

my intellectual development meant that I had in some way lost contact with the

emotionality of not knowing. As Scotland notes (2012, p. 14), critical theory's quest for

social justice can lead to a 'despondency' as 'blissful ignorance is shattered' for

research participants. This observation is relevant as in this chapter I introduce the

concept of White Ignorance Disruption, which refers to the intellectual and emotional

process of white ignorance (Mills, 2007) being disrupted. In this way, the participants'

reactions perhaps speak to the bigger context of being white and living within white

supremacy, in that white people are not taught about 'race', racism and whiteness, we

do not need to think about it and when pushed it can elicit a myriad of emotional and

intellectual responses. Arguably, we are engaged with the racial contract (Mills, 1997)

and even for those of us trying to find a way out, it can still bind us. By which I mean, I

began writing this chapter aware that were limits to my own racial awareness, that

this would be a lifelong learning process and would not simply finish at the end of this PhD. Yet, along the way I had acquired a sense of surety that I was making progress in this process and I knew the tools needed to continue, i.e., continual self-education. This surety was knocked when racial discourse became globalised and fears of causing offence, lack of confidence in my knowledge and general uncertainty of what I could offer and how to offer it, surfaced. This uncertainty also foregrounded the realisation that had I been interviewed at the same stage of my counselling training, I too would have expressed many of the same understandings and attitudes around 'race', racism and whiteness as the participants did. Specifically, I had also once believed that colour-blind attitudes were an expression of a belief in racial equality.

The impact of this realisation means that a certain humility is brought to this discussion of the findings. In line with the epistemological perspective of subjectivity (Letherby, 2017), with critical theory as research as an emancipatory act (Thomas, 2009; Strydom, 2010; Scotland, 2012; Bonner, 2017) and with the methodology (Nobilt, Murillo and Flores, 2004) it was always intended that this research would not proport absolutist claims to knowledge. However, in the wake of Black Lives Matter 2020, this took on less of an intellectual, political and moralistic stance and more of a personal one. Simply: I feel I cannot stand in judgement (and at first, this chapter felt like a judgement) of other white people's understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness when I have so much to learn myself. Trepagnier (2016, pp. 86-102) argues that 'race' awareness exists on a continuum, ranging from very low awareness to very high awareness. The Black Lives Matter protests of 2020 taught me at a visceral level

that regardless of levels of intellectual and emotional understanding, moments of White Ignorance Disruption will continually come along and knock the scale back down from 'more aware' to 'less aware', and so the learning process to understand 'race', racism and whiteness never ends. Thus, as a white PhD researcher whose interest and focus lies in critical whiteness studies, I felt 'more aware' than the participants but the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, knocked my awareness back down to the continuum to 'less aware'. This is an example of White Ignorance Disruption as it describes the moments in between ignorance and response (even if that response is misinformed). Therefore, this discussion of findings is presented from a place of intellectual humility and the realisation that an uncertainty around 'race', racism and whiteness can exist within all white people, however well-intentioned and eager to learn.

This chapter will discuss the four themes found in this research through using the theory presented in Chapter 2 and additional literature. Theory will be used to connect the research findings to wider academic discourse, but it will not seek to make positivist claims of an absolute 'truth'. Instead, this chapter can hold a mirror up to show how white trainee counsellors in South Wales understand 'race', racism and whiteness at a particular point in time, and consider how this correlates with historical and contemporary understandings. It does so comfortable in its uncertainty and is done without judgement as it is acknowledged that the participants' understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness is representative of how these issues are perceived in counselling and society (Chapter 7, Section 7.7 explores this further). This stance aligns

with post-critical ethnography which 'work(s) against unified and final

representations' in research (Anders, 2019, p. 2) and accepts 'that we cannot capture

a totality' (Talburt, 2004, p. 121). In this way, the ambiguity in the discussion of

findings reflects that racial discourse is not a simple exchange of ideas. As outlined in

Chapter 2, it is embedded in our history and our present, it is in the main

unacknowledged by white people and when it is, historical fact and contemporary

experiences become enmeshed with emotional responses.

It is also presented knowing that I have taken it as far as my own knowledge and

understanding allows at this time. This is because my own white ignorance (Mills,

2007) may be blocking further insights that may seem apparent to the reader and to

my future self. I openly receive critical feedback to facilitate both intellectual and

personal growth.

6.2 Original Contributions to Knowledge: 'White Ignorance Disruption' and the 'Good White Counsellor'

The empirical findings of this research have allowed me to identify and introduce the

concept of 'White Ignorance Disruption'. White ignorance (Mills, 2007) was outlined

and discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.1.5) and understood as white people's wilful

not-knowing about 'race'. It can be a basic ignorance, exhibited by an absence of

beliefs or the presence of false belief (Medina, 2013). Alternatively, it can be advanced

with various affective, cognitive, bodily and discursive resistances to knowledge

(Medina, 2013). It is argued that this ignorance is used to maintain white racial

dominance (Sullivan and Tuana, 2007). White ignorance (Mills, 2007) is a theory that unites the four themes identified in this research: (Mis)Understanding 'Race' and Racism; White (Un)Awareness; Barriers to Racial Discourse and Socio-Political (Dis)Connection (Chapter 5). How it was demonstrated in the interviews is discussed in this chapter.

I propose that White Ignorance Disruption is the active process of racial epistemic ignorance, i.e., white ignorance (Mills, 2007) being 'disrupted' through white trainee counsellors being asked about 'race', racism and whiteness. Importantly, the disruption is caused by another white person speaking openly (in this case asking research questions; Appendix v) about 'race', racism and whiteness, thus 'breaking ranks' of white collective ignorance. Using reflexivity, I explore what it was like to be perceived as the 'disruptor' (Theme 2, Section 6.4). I have conceived of White Ignorance Disruption as a way to describe the moments when the participants white ignorance was, however briefly, shaken before they expressed identifiable forms of white peoples' reactions to racial discourse, such as white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018), various emotional responses (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015) or cognitive forms such as distancing from racism (Case and Hemmings, 2005; Lentin, 2015). Although it is not possible to quantify how much white ignorance was disrupted, and whether it had any lasting effect, it is proposed that during the interviews a disruption took place, when as a white researcher, I asked white participants to talk about 'race', racism and whiteness. The themes outlined in Chapter 5, and discussed here, captured the ways in which white ignorance (Mills, 2007) was upheld, the moments it was disrupted, and

the attempts used by the participants to retreat back into white ignorance. It is

recognised emotional and behavioural responses to White Ignorance Disruption are

akin to 'white fragility' (DiAngelo, 2018). However, where this differs is the connection

to white ignorance (Mills, 2007) and is specific to the research participants through

the identification of the methods of ignorance they used and moments which

disrupted those methods. In this way, White Ignorance Disruption can be seen as the

process that led the responses similar to white fragility. Further, although 'white

fragility' (DiAngelo, 2018, pp. 29-30) mentions the 'racial contract' (Mills, 1997,

Section 2.1.5), the later theory of white ignorance (Mills, 2007, Section 2.1.5) is

overlooked, and tends to avoid 'race' by focusing on racism. The introduction of White

Ignorance Disruption can provide a bridge between 'race', white ignorance and the

emotional and behavioural responses experienced by white people in relation to racial

discourse and the subsequent retreat back into white ignorance or the development

of racial awareness. Thus, White Ignorance Disruption addresses the amorphous space

that exists between ignorance and awareness.

In addition to 'white fragility' (DiAngelo, 2018), the work of Spanierman and Cabrera

(2015) is also considered as they outline the complexity of emotional responses white

people may experience when engaging with racism and anti-racism. Although my

concept of White Ignorance Disruption is applied specifically to counselling trainees, I

feel that it has the potential to be applicable to other groups of white people. It is

argued that White Ignorance Disruption is particularly complicated for counselling

trainees as they were entering a professional role that they perceived as 'good', and

who understood talking about 'race', racism and whiteness as 'bad' (Theme 3, Section 6.5). Thus, the disruption was not only cognitive and emotional, but also put them in a moral dilemma because 'good' people do not 'see' or talk about 'race', but they were being asked to do so by someone they perceived to be a 'good' person.

Writing from a theological perspective, Calme (2020) has linked DiAngelo's (2018) concept of white fragility to what he calls 'white epistemic disorientation'. This refers to 'the discomfort of not being a knower' (Calme, 2020, p. 142). He argues that the white person's discomfort of not knowing, and what they see as their 'legitimate' questioning, is perceived by DiAngelo (2018) as white fragility. This 'conflict of interpretations of white fragility is an added level of dissonance and disequilibrium' (Calme, 2020, p. 142). Using his theological positioning, he suggests the learner needs to adopt humility, akin to Christ's, in their learning. Setting aside Calme's (2020) theological stance, it may be possible to argue that his concept of the discomfort of not knowing may be an additional factor that underpins advanced ignorance (Medina, 2016, p. 183), or 'substantive' ignorance (Alcoff, 2007, p. 39). Analogous of Calme's (2020) notion of discomfort being a contributing factor to white people's epistemic disorientation, Medina (2016, p. 197) has put forward 'epistemic discomfort' which also encompasses feelings of disorientation and 'losing one's epistemic bearings'.

I refer to Calme's (2020) work here as superficially his concept of 'white epistemic disorientation' and its connection to white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018) may seem similar to my concept of White Ignorance Disruption. Likewise, Medina's (2016) idea of

epistemic discomfort could also be viewed as similar to White Ignorance Disruption, as the participants lost their 'epistemic bearings' (Medina, 2016, p. 197). However, White Ignorance Disruption is not theological or purely theoretical. Instead, I understand it as relating to the initial stirring of unformed emotional and cognitive responses when a white researcher asked white participants about 'race', racism and whiteness. In this way, White Ignorance Disruption is positioned as a theoretical bridge, which can connect Mills (2007) white ignorance to other theories such as the emotions of white racism and anti-racism (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015), epistemic discomfort (Medina, 2016), white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018) and white epistemic disorientation (Calme, 2020). Thus, White Ignorance Disruption is not simply an indefinite disorientation or discomfort, it is the moment between ignorance and response. In this chapter I have outlined how this process took place in relation to this research.

Although I have previously stated that the findings of this research are comfortable in their ambiguity and cannot be wrestled into theoretical boxes, I have presented White Ignorance Disruption (Table 21), below. White Ignorance Disruption is conceptualised as being a flexible theory which could potentially manifest in multiple ways. This concept was formulated through the prism of the themes that were identified in this research and data set. Therefore, a summation of the White Ignorance Disruption in regard to this research is possible:

Table 21 Summary of the process of White Ignorance Disruption

Theme	Subthemes	How White Ignorance Disruption occurred
(Mis)Understanding 'Race' and Racism	Semantic understanding	Intellectual disruption: as the person became aware of lack of semantic understanding.
	Self-consciousness	Emotional disruption as the person's lack of semantic understanding, colour-blind beliefs, and perception of a 'good' person/counsellor clashed with being asked directly about 'race' and racism.
	Distancing self (and others) from racism	A place of intellectual and emotional safety, by assuring oneself that they are not racist. At this point, the person may retreat back into white ignorance.
White (Un)Awareness	Whiteness as meaningless	White ignorance reinforced through not understanding whiteness as racialised. White ignorance disruption occurs through asking about whiteness.
	Reverse racism	Attack used as a form of defence against White Ignorance Disruption.
	Complicated recognition of whiteness	Indication that White Ignorance Disruption has allowed learning to begin
Barriers to Racial Discourse	Lack of contact with people of colour	White ignorance reinforced through 'not needing' to engage with racial discourse. Used as intellectual/emotional resistance to White Ignorance Disruption.
	Contact with people of colour.	Friendships/colleagues with people of colour, seen as sufficient evidence of racial awareness. Also used as intellectual/emotional resistance to White Ignorance Disruption.
	Colour-blind attitudes	Racial discourse seen as racist and used as a rationale to not engage with 'race'. Also used as intellectual/emotional resistance to White Ignorance Disruption.
	'Good White Counsellor'	Racial discourse seen as 'bad', and counsellor seen as 'good'. Allows white ignorance to be sustained for moralistic reasoning. Also used as intellectual/emotional resistance to White Ignorance Disruption.
Socio-Political (Dis)Connection	Student and curriculum disconnection	White ignorance co-constructed and reciprocal. White Ignorance Disruption needs to be systemic, e.g., de-colonialising the curriculum.
	Student and curriculum connection	Places where white ignorance was disrupted and allows for opportunities for racial discourse.
	'Race' Education: Is it racist?	Perception of 'race' education mixed, encompasses wanting to sustain white ignorance *and* a curiosity in disrupting that ignorance.

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Further, the process of White Ignorance Disruption occurred in three of the themes that were identified in this research: the first, (Mis)Understanding 'Race' and Racism (Section 6.3); the second, White (Un)Awareness (Section 6.4); and the third, Barriers to Racial Discourse (Section 6.5), encapsulate the process of White Ignorance Disruption as it happened. The fourth and final theme, Socio-Political (Dis)Connection (Section 6.6), shows how white ignorance (Mills, 2007) and epistemic ignorance (Sullivan and Tuana, 2007) was maintained and co-constructed between the participants and the curriculum.

To present White Ignorance Disruption, the research themes will be discussed and contextualised through using literature from Chapter 2, additional literature and is situated within the concept of white ignorance (Mills, 2007).

The second original contribution to knowledge, what I have termed the 'Good White Counsellor' narrative will be discussed in Section 6.5.

6.3 Theme 1: (Mis)Understanding 'race' and racism

The first theme describes the difficulties the participants faced when talking about 'race' and racism. The first was semantic understanding, whereby 'race' was understood in terms of skin colour and physiological difference, and racism as an individual act of violence. The second subtheme highlighted feelings of self-consciousness in not wanting to offend or appear offensive, when talking about 'race' and racism. The third subtheme, attempting to distance self (and others) from racism, refers to the participants' insistence that they (and others) are not racist.

Semantic understanding

This research found that perhaps a cornerstone of white ignorance maintenance is through not having accurate semantic understanding of 'race' and racism. The research interview questions (Appendix v) meant that their lack of awareness, or ignorance, was brought to the participants' attention. Thus, the process of White Ignorance Disruption began within the interview. When asked how they understood 'race', colour was used as a consistent descriptor across the participants. This is supported by Anne, Mary and Phil's consistent use of the word *'coloured'* to described black people. Using Fernando's (2010, p. 8) definition that 'race', that it is often characterised by physical appearance and presumed to be genetic, it may be possible that the emphasis on physical appearance, specifically skin colour and Vix's focus on black hair, indicates that the participants believed 'race' to be biologically or genetically determined. Although it is not possible to state that my interpretation is correct, there are echoes of Linnaeus' 18th century taxonomy of humans based upon physical appearance (Fara, 2017), specifically skin colour. Further, when asked how she understood 'race', Vix was reminded of a university seminar when students were asked to chronologically categorise human skulls. In Vix's recollection, students did this based on the skulls' aesthetic appearance. This anecdote calls to mind another 18th century scientist, Blumenbach, who was also an early contributor to 'race' as a scientific concept through the categorisation of human skulls (Painter, 2003; Bhopal, 2007). Although the participants did not seem aware of this, as they did not offer an historical analysis in their answers (with the exception being Vix's mention of slavery as an '*historical pain'*) it appears that the concept of 'race' as a biological idea persists

but is divorced from its origins. This supports the argument that one reason white

people avoid discussing 'race' is due to a lack of understanding of its historical context

(Mazzocco, 2017). Another interpretation is that the participants, like many white

people, are not aware of the historical origins of 'race' because of white ignorance.

This claim of white ignorance is strengthened by the absence of any socio-political

analysis when asked how they understood 'race'. The words 'social construct', or

similar phrases or interpretations, did not feature in their answers, again suggesting

that 'race' was understood by the participants as something separated from social or

political influences. In addition, the participants' understanding of 'race' also

encompassed nationality, culture and ethnicity. It has been put forward that white

people may avoid using the word 'race' due to their own discomfort and replace it

with words such as 'culture' (Matias, Montoya and Nibish, 2016); the implication being

that alternative words are perceived by white people as less powerful. The metaphor

of a discursive minefield used in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2), whereby talking about 'race'

and racism seemed to be dangerous for the participants lest they cause harm to

themselves and others, may explain why their understanding of 'race' included other

related terms. This could be due to their own discomfort (Matias, Montoya and Nibish,

2016) or due to semantic misunderstanding by believing the words are

interchangeable. However, the Equality Act 2010 (section 9) defines 'race' as 'colour,

nationality, ethnic or national origins' and does not acknowledge 'race' as a social

construct. Thus, the participants' semantic misunderstanding, confusion with other

terms, focus on colour and ignorance of the construction of racial categorisation,

reflects official legislation. Another perspective is that the silence around racial

discourse has given a false impression to white people that 'race' based inequality has

been dealt with (Bhopal, 2018). Perhaps the participants also felt that 'race' was something of the past, not relevant, and therefore not requiring semantic understanding. However, given the absence of historical and contemporary socio-political analysis about 'race' from the participants, it seems more likely that inaccurate semantic understanding was due to white ignorance on the topic. This point of view is supported by the fact the participants knew the working title of the research, *'How do white trainee counsellors in South Wales define 'race' and racism?'*, 12 weeks prior to the interviews taking place. This would have given them opportunity to look up the meaning of the words in preparation for the interviews, that they did not do this indicates that white ignorance was maintained for as long as possible. Consequently, the process of White Ignorance Disruption took place within the interviews and began with the question *'can you tell me how you understand race?'* and the realisation that they did not know the answer. Anne, Betty, Elizabeth, Emily, Mary and Phil's answers began haltingly, sometimes with an intake of breath. Betty immediately admitted that she was confused about what words she could use, and Phil replied that he did not understand 'race'. Although Vix was more confident in her answer and referred to the role of culture, her anecdotes of the skulls and black hair echoed the emphasis on physical appearance the other participants also gave. Therefore, in answer to the research question *'How do white trainee counsellors understand 'race'?',* the answer is that their understanding was based primarily on physical appearance and devoid of historical and contemporary socio-political understanding. In addition, white ignorance was maintained as long as possible. In this way, Medina's (2016, p. 183) notion of active ignorance, specifically 'conceptual lacunas' was present in the participants understanding of 'race'. However, White

Ignorance Disruption did occur through them admitting, or realising, that they did not know what 'race' meant.

Similarly, their semantic understanding of racism was not in line with current understandings and was viewed as overt, individual acts of violence. This is supported by the recognition that white people are socialised to think of racism 'as discrete acts committed by individual people, rather than as a complex, interconnected system' (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 3). In this way, the participants' understanding supports the prevalent understanding of racism. Therefore, an awareness of the 'new' racisms, or the more covert, invisible forms of racism (Barker, 1981; Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich, 2012) was absent. It could be argued that the participants possessed both a basic and an active form of ignorance (Medina, 2016) in that they had a false belief about what racism is, yet that false belief needed to be sustained through cognitive and affective resistance to learning what constitutes as racism. Moreover, they possessed colour-blind attitudes which has been cited as a form of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018); this will be explored in Theme 3 (Section 6.5). Also present were indications of racialisation (Garner, 2017), evidenced in the broad stereotyping of Muslim people when the participants considered how cultural differences may impact the counselling relationship. Emily and Phil both referred to possible challenges their respective genders may have on working with Muslim people of the opposite sex. Additionally, Mary considered how religious practices may impact the grieving process and subsequent bereavement counselling because *'they do things differently, don't they?'*. Phil also described Muslim people as a *'closed race'*. This perception could be due to what critical race theory understands as 'differential racialisation' or the way in which

'dominant society racializes (*sic*) different minority groups at different times' (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017, pp. 9-10). Whilst it is not possible to state that this occurred, it was interesting that Muslim people were cited as the racial 'Other' when thinking about cross-racial counselling practice and is a potential area for further research. This will be discussed further in Section 6.6.

The participants' understanding of racism as individual acts of violence and hatred contradicts a core tenet of critical race theory: that racism is an everyday occurrence and not an anomaly (Crenshaw *et al*, 1995; Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). Bell (1992) has termed this the 'permanence of racism'. This suggests that white ignorance of racism was upheld through not seeing the everyday, subtle forms racism can take, with only the overt and violent manifestations of racism able to penetrate white ignorance. However, like their understanding of 'race', their understanding of racism was also devoid of historical or contemporary socio-political understanding. This strengthens the argument that the participants were disconnected from the bigger socio-political picture (Theme 4, Section 6.6). It seemed that unless racism is overt, the participants could not 'see' it. This supports the fourth frame of colour-blind racism, minimisation which 'involves regarding discrimination as all-out racist behaviour' (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, p. 57). The minimising of racism leads to a 'narrowing' of its definition to only 'explicit' acts committed by 'aberrant' individuals (Garner, 2017, p. 184).

Despite the reduction of racism to a simple definition, some participants were confused by what constituted as racism. In the same way that culture, nationality, and

ethnicity were confused with 'race', other forms of discrimination were confused with racism. The hesitancy with which the participants understood 'race', was also present in their understanding of racism. This suggests that their white ignorance around racism was disturbed in the interview, as evidenced by Betty and Mary asking, *'is that right?'*. Betty and Elizabeth understood the Welsh/English rivalry as racism, rather than xenophobia. The difference between the two being that 'racism is ideological, and xenophobia is psychological', with the former rooted in a 'belief in systemic differences' and the latter using 'whatever justification' it can (Widfeldt, 2015, p. 15). Elizabeth and Mary's understanding also encompassed homophobia and ableism as forms of racism and Phil's definition included describing different breeds of dog and nationalities as 'races', inferring that enmity between 'races', or between dog breeds and nationalities, was racism. Therefore, despite the participants understanding of racism being minimised and narrowed in accordance with colour-blind racism (Garner, 2017; Bonilla-Silva, 2018) to meaning individual, overt acts of violence and hostility, there was confusion as to what it constitutes, with different types of discriminatory behaviour also understood as racism.

The lack of semantic understanding over what constitutes as racism makes sense when there is also a lack of semantic understanding of what 'race' is. Thus, gaining accurate semantic understanding of what 'race' and racism is would be the first intellectual step of White Ignorance Disruption. By asking the question *'how do you understand 'race'/racism?'* it drew the participants attention to their lack of understanding of these terms. As suggested in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2), effective racial discourse and education may not be able to take place until the basic semantic

understanding of 'race' and racism is clarified. This would need to be done alongside explaining their historical origins and contemporary consequences. Therefore, accurate semantic understanding could be the foundational step in White Ignorance Disruption when teaching white people about 'race' and racism. This could also be applicable to other health and social science disciplines too.

Self-consciousness

Although it is argued that semantic understanding is the foundational step in White Ignorance Disruption, it is recognised that this may not be an uncomplicated process. It was found that the participants experienced feelings of self-consciousness during the interview through not wanting to offend people of colour, or to be seen as offensive. Whilst the participants may not have understood their self-consciousness in relation to ignorance, it may be possible to infer that the two are related. White people who have sustained white ignorance throughout their lives, which this research found included not needing to understand the semantics of 'race' and racism, will perhaps feel self-conscious when asked to talk about it. Therefore, self-consciousness may be the first emotional step of White Ignorance Disruption. This self-consciousness may stem from the emotional impact of talking about 'race' and racism, whereby 'a seemingly invisible state of emotionality intoxicates us all when we talk about race' (Matias, 2016, p. 2). Another possible cause for the self-consciousness was an internal conflict the participants may have experienced with their colour-blind beliefs (Theme 3, Section 6.5), the notion that to see (or talk) about 'race' is to be racist (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Burke, 2019) were challenged when asked to engage in racial discourse. In the same way, white people tend to perceive racism as something

'bad' people do (Sullivan, 2014a; Trepagnier, 2016; DiAngelo, 2018) and given the understanding of a counsellor being a 'good' person (Theme 3, Section 6.5), there may have been self-consciousness around (a) not wanting to be a 'bad' person (b) not wanting to be a 'bad' counsellor and (c) not wanting to discriminate but not knowing how due to lack of education. In regard to the latter point, Fricker's (2007) concept of hermeneutical epistemic injustice is relevant, as the participants did not have the conceptual or semantic tools available to them to understand or discuss 'race', racism and whiteness. Therefore, their perception of the interview questions may have conflicted with their core beliefs about 'race' and racism and with being a 'good' counsellor. This was underscored by a lack of knowledge of the topic. Therefore, having colour-blind attitudes which purport that 'race' does not matter, understanding racism is only perpetrated by 'bad' people, and as trainee counsellors wanting to embody the positive attributes of the role, may have clashed with the interview's focus on 'race' and racism. Factoring in a lack of conceptual knowledge but also not wanting to offend, may have cumulated in feelings of self-consciousness. Also relevant, is the concept of 'white fear' (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015) which describes the fear white people experience when encountering 'race', be it fear of appearing racist, fearing people of colour and fearing one's own racism. Subsequently, lack of semantic understanding when situated alongside not wanting to be a 'bad' person and not having the conceptual tools to talk about 'race', racism and whiteness could have led to 'white fear' (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015). Hence, feeling self-conscious could be understood as a 'normal' response when one does not have semantic tools or knowledge to talk about 'race', racism and whiteness.

In this way, white ignorance was disrupted both intellectually and emotionally, which resulted in feelings of self-consciousness.

It has been argued that deflection is used as a tool when the emotionality of talking about 'race' becomes overwhelming for white people (Matias, Montoya and Nishi, 2016), in this situation, feelings of self-consciousness. This may explain why some of the participants moved away from answering the question '*how do you understand racism?*' to making statements that they, and others they knew, were not racist.

Distancing self (and others) from racism

It seemed that when their ignorance was initially disrupted, and uncomfortable emotions emerged, participants sought refuge in the belief that they, and those connected to them, were not racist. This made the third subtheme 'Distancing self (and others) from racism'. This can be understood as a place of intellectual and emotional safety for the participants when their white ignorance was disrupted. It seemed to be a way to reassure themselves and perhaps retreat back into white ignorance, i.e., *'I am not a racist, therefore I do not need to think/talk about 'race'/racism anymore'*. This could be seen as a strategic manoeuvre to end White Ignorance Disruption, perhaps through trying to re-orientate and comfort oneself due to feelings of epistemic discomfort (Medina, 2016) or to distance oneself from the challenging emotions white people can feel when talking about 'race' (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015). As outlined above, the participants understood racism as individual acts of violence and hostility. It has been put forward that 'the simplistic idea that racism is limited to individual intentional acts committed by unkind people is

at the root of virtually all white defensiveness on this topic' (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 73).

Perhaps the combination of lack of semantic understanding, as well as self-consciousness and a self-image of being a 'good' person is what led to the participants distancing themselves from racism. Alternatively, the distancing may have emerged from a place of what Calme (2020) refers to as the discomfort of not being the knower, in that the participants were aware of their lack of awareness about racism and sought to avoid the question lest that lack of knowledge became apparent. However, it has been argued that the defensiveness white people can experience when talking about racism can result in avoidance strategies. This supports what Lentin (2015) calls the 'three D's of racial management: deflection, distancing and denial. In addition, Titley (2019) has added the fourth 'D' of 'debatability'. It is argued that the use of deflection, distancing and denial 'are key to the separation of racism as event from racism as structural and routine' (Lentin, 2015, p. 7). Doing so keeps the recognition of racism 'frozen' in historical reference points, i.e., slavery or the Holocaust and ignores the 'motility' of contemporary racism (Lentin, 2015, p. 3). However, this has been furthered to include the idea of 'not racism' (Lentin 2018; 2020) whereby white people try to control the discursive meaning of what constitutes as racism, this idea along with 'debatability' (Titley, 2019) will be explored in Theme 2 (Section 6.4). Although the participants did not include an historical understanding of racism, their understanding of racism as individual acts of violence and hostility may suggest that their understanding is 'frozen' and not in line with contemporary understandings of racism as multifaceted and mutable (Garner, 2017). In this way, white ignorance is sustained through non-engagement with racism and not 'seeing' the forms it can take. This sustaining of white ignorance is supported at systemic

levels (Sullivan and Tuana, 2007) within the counselling curriculum (Theme 4, Section 6.6) meaning that this is not a simple process of the trainee counsellor not wanting to know, but perhaps not having access to ways of knowing. Additionally, active ignorance is engaged via the use of a defence mechanism (Medina, 2016) which in this research was distancing the self (and others) from racism.

Consequently, because racism was understood as individual and historical reference points were absent, the three d's strategy (Lentin, 2015) may not have been needed. Thus, distancing alone was sufficient for the participants to manage their lack of awareness and self-consciousness. The tactic of distancing was expressed in different ways. Betty, Phil and Mary distanced themselves with an insistence of *'I'm not racist'*. Anne, Elizabeth and Mary reframed the racist behaviour of others as not racist through the use of justification, e.g., the person was not violent/too young/too old. Whereas Vix attempted to understand why someone might be racist toward an acquaintance. In a class seminar, Marie stated that counselling a racist client could be a *'fascinating experience'* that could be educative. Likewise, because racism was minimised and simplified to its more overt forms (Bonilla-Silva, 2018), distancing through statements of 'I/others are not racist', was a straightforward solution. According to Whitt (2016, p. 427), student distancing from injustices, such as racism and sexism, is rooted in Medina's 'active ignorance' (2016) and is 'pedagogically problematic' as it stops students understanding and engaging with 'social facts'. It has also been argued that silence is one distancing method white students can use when learning about anti-racism to avoid social disapproval from fellow whites and used alongside statements such as 'I am not racist' (Case and Hemmings, 2005). During the

class observation, it was noted that there was a silence around racism when two opportunities arose to speak about it (working with a racist client and the YouTube video of a black client and white counsellor). Perhaps this was a subtler form of distancing used by the class through a collective silence and shared white ignorance.

Therefore, distancing could be a pivotal moment in the process of White Ignorance Disruption and in the education of white people about 'race' and racism, as it may be used as a way to 'shut down' the conversation about 'race' and racism and provide safe passage back to white ignorance.

6.4 Theme 2: White (Un)Awareness

Whiteness only comprised one question in the interview: '*what does being white mean to you?*', yet it was the question that elicited the strongest response. This indicates that talking about whiteness has the potential to bring about powerful emotions during White Ignorance Disruption. The concept of 'white fragility' is relevant to understanding these strong responses as it refers to defensive emotions and behaviours that are triggered in white people when confronted with 'racial stress', in the form of racial discourse (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 2).

It is important to preface this section with the acknowledgement that some of the participants' expression of a belief in reverse racism was the portion of the interviews that I struggled with the most during, and after, the interviews took place. Further, in the process of White Ignorance Disruption, it was this part of the interviews that I became hyper-aware of being a 'disruptor'. Admittedly, the notion of reverse racism

was an anathema to me. Whilst I could empathise with feelings of self-consciousness, lack of semantic understanding and colour-blindness I found it harder to do so with reverse racism. Perhaps this is because even when my own understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness was limited, I understood that reverse racism was not possible due to power imbalances between whites and people of colour. In addition, this was the part of the interview that moved into what felt at times a personal accusation that I was racist for researching this topic and asking these questions. Anne and Phil were forthright in this belief. In the interview with those participants, I felt shocked that they felt that way but due to my counselling training and experience, I was able to 'bracket' this response. 'Bracketing' refers to putting aside one's own emotions and attitudes to stay present in the moment with the intention of returning to those responses after the counselling session (Joyce and Sills, 2010, pp. 18-20). In the interview itself, I was able to stay with Anne and Phil's feelings and did not feel a need to mount a defence. However, on the drive home and for days afterwards, Anne and Phil's accusations of the research (and by extension me) being racist lingered. Although I understood 'I'm racist and always working on my racisms' (Lester, Anders and Mariner, 2018, p. 68), I became aware that on another level, perhaps I began to perceive myself as 'a good white person' (Sullivan, 2014a, discussed in Section 6.5) and this research was an expression of that goodness. It also led me to question whether my research was worthwhile. Indeed, I suggest that a reciprocal process of White Ignorance Disruption took place between myself and the participants. Asking *'what does being white mean to you?'* led to White Ignorance Disruption in the participants, some of whom pushed back or deflected with accusations of reverse racism, anger and withdrawal, which led to a personal hyper-awareness of being the

'disruptor'. In turn, this awareness allowed me to experience my own White Ignorance Disruption, specifically around falling into the trap of being the 'good' white person (Sullivan, 2014a). This may show how susceptible one can be to this way of thinking even with an awareness of 'race', racism and whiteness. It is with this recognition, that the topic of reverse racism elicited the most personal and complicated response in the interviews, that it is discussed.

Whiteness as meaningless

When asked what being white meant to them, most of the participants perceived it as devoid of any meaning. Elizabeth's response to the question typified the participants understanding of whiteness:

> Elizabeth: I don't think it has any kind of sentiment to me. It doesn't give me any identity. I think it, it's very much just my appearance and that's what skin I have… It just is. Yes. Just my skin.

Further, it also reflects the wider understanding white people have around being white. As Chapter 2 showed, there is a tendency for white people to be disconnected from whiteness, with it being a de-racialised identity (Ryde, 2009) and the invisible standard to which other racialised groups are measured (Halley, Eshleman, and Mahadevan-Vijaya, 2011). In short, to white people, white simply equates being human (Dyer, 2017) and is therefore not racialised. Similarly, the participants did not express any awareness of the history of whiteness (Painter, 2010) or of its fluidity as category (as shown by Ignatiev, 2009). This is not to condemn them, as their understanding of whiteness is representative of the general understanding that white people possess:

> whiteness for the majority of white people is so unmarked that in their eyes, it does not actually function as a racial or ethnic identity (Garner, 2007, pp. 34-35)

This is supported by Betty's acknowledgement that *'we didn't have to go there'* [at school]*,* with 'going there' referring to thinking about 'race', specifically whiteness. Another perspective for whiteness being seen as meaningless could be that that the participants did not have the emotional tools to *'go there'*, as it has been argued white people tend to numb themselves to the reality of whiteness (Kendell, 2013, p. 61) and that processing the consequences of whiteness can lead to an 'intolerable level of pain' (Altman, 2003, p. 97). Therefore, not thinking about whiteness in terms of its historical or contemporary actions or the personal implications of having a white racialised identity, could be seen as a psychological reason for white ignorance. In other words, to understand whiteness as meaningless is to see it as inconsequential, and therefore the racial realities of the past and present do not need to be addressed. Hence white ignorance is sustained.

While Betty, Elizabeth, Emily and Phil had relatively straightforward responses to the question of their whiteness in that they admitted that it meant little to them, (although Phil went on to talk about reverse racism, see below), Anne and Mary had stronger reactions. For Mary, this became an emotional and communicative withdrawal which stood in stark contrast to her previous engagement and expansive answers. This led me to ask Mary directly about this change in mood after the question of whiteness, which she had not realised had occurred. While Mary's energy seemed to deplete, Anne's increased, and she became energised with anger at the

question of whiteness. Anne's response will be explored in relation to reverse racism (below). Nonetheless, the participants varied responses to the question of whiteness, from Mary's withdrawal to Anne's anger, supports the behavioural responses of 'white fragility' (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 119). This indicates that the question of whiteness was a troubling one for the participants. Underlying the 'white fragility' (DiAngelo, 2018), Mary's withdrawal could be seen as an expression of 'white fear' (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015), perhaps fearing, in the words of Betty, *'going there'* and considering the meaning of whiteness.

Indeed, during the interviews, it was at the point of asking about whiteness that I felt something shift in the room, be it a burgeoning recognition or a resistance to the concept of whiteness. Of course, this could be my personal feelings being projected onto the participants, that perhaps *my* curiosity peaked at how they would answer the question. However, if I had experienced the same response across all the participants, it could be argued that I was supplanting my own expectations onto their answers. Yet the question elicited different responses, from inquisitive to angry, suggesting that the question of whiteness *did* provoke an atmospheric change in the interviews. This could be because a question about whiteness juxtaposed to questions about 'race' and racism may have seen an anomaly to the participants as whiteness was de-racialised to them.

In terms of white identity, it could be argued that the participants were in phase one, status one of Helms' white identity development model, the 'contact' stage (Helms, 1990, pp. 55-58). This is entered with 'either naïve curiosity or timidity and trepidation

about blacks and a superficial and inconsistent awareness of being white' (Helms, 1990, p. 55). This is supported by the later subthemes of contact/lack of contact with people of colour in the third theme of Barriers to Racial Discourse (Section 6.5) as those in the contact stage have 'limited inter-racial social or occupational interaction with blacks' (Helms, 1990, p. 57). However, Helms' (1990) model suggests that in the contact phase there is some, albeit inconsistent, awareness of whiteness. Although Betty and Emily were able to contemplate what their whiteness may mean, prior to the interview they had not thought about it. Other than Vix who was aware of her whiteness as a teenager, the other participants understood their whiteness as meaningless. Therefore, white ignorance (Mills, 2007) seems a more appropriate description than Helms' (1990) contact phase as it suggests that the meaninglessness attached to whiteness came from a place of not knowing. This could be seen as basic ignorance due to an absence of belief or knowledge (Medina, 2016, p. 183) of whiteness as a racialised identity. Asking *'what does being white mean to you?'* led to White Ignorance Disruption for Betty and Emily in their burgeoning complicated recognition of whiteness (see below). However, for others posing the question and the ensuing White Ignorance Disruption, resulted in advanced ignorance strategies (Medina, 2016, p. 183) of affective resistance in Mary's withdrawal and defence mechanisms in Anne, Phil and Vix's assertions of reverse racism. This could be seen as methods of 'push back' to White Ignorance Disruption.

That whiteness was seen as meaningless to the participants is not to judge them but to recognise that their understanding of whiteness is situated in a wider context where whiteness is de-racialised by white people. This is supported by the first two

principles of Hartmann, Gerteis and Crolls's (2009, pp. 407-409) three 'theoretical

cores' of critical whiteness studies in that white people are not aware of their 'race'

and its social construction and are unaware of the advantages whiteness affords. Their

third principle of colour-blind ideology is relevant to the next theme of Barriers to

Racial Discourse (Section 6.5). It also concurs with Clarke and Garner's (2010)

categorisation of British sociological research into whiteness whereby whiteness is de-

racialised and invisible. One of the aims of critical whiteness studies is to consider how

'whiteness as a form of power is defined, displayed, performed, policed and

reinvented' (Twine and Gallagher, 2007, p. 5). In this way, this research's finding that

counselling trainees understood their whiteness as meaningless speaks to the

collective perception of whiteness, held by white people.

Reverse racism

It has been demonstrated thus far, that talking about 'race', racism and whiteness was

intellectually and emotionally difficult for the participants and may explain why 'race'

was avoided during the participant-observations in the limited opportunities for

discussion within the classroom setting. Thus, the interview itself perhaps allowed the

participants white ignorance to be disrupted for the first time. For some of the

participants, this White Ignorance Disruption led to attack being used as a form of

defence as demonstrated through a belief in reverse racism. Sue (2015, p. 140)

suggests that defensiveness and anger are emotions some white people experience

when talking about 'race'.

Reverse racism is a belief that racism can be experienced by white people at the hands of other racialised groups, without considering the historical and contemporary racial power dynamics between whites and people of colour. Kobler (2017, p. 1) argues that reverse racism is a combination of 'colour-blindness, the denial of white privilege, and white victimhood', when combined, these 'work in concert to perpetuate racial inequalities' (Kobler, 2017, p. 1). In this research, it was found that the participants had colour-blind attitudes (Theme 3, Section 6.5) and that whiteness was a de-racialised identity; arguably a denial in itself of the historical and contemporary benefits of being white. Reverse racism is predicated on a belief that racial minorities progress comes at the cost of anti-white bias (Norton and Sommers, 2011; Wilkens and Kaiser, 2014). However, as demonstrated throughout the findings of this research, there was a disconnection between the participants' understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness and the broader socio-political context. This was seen in Phil's comment that on social media, there is:

Phil: …plenty of black power but you start shouting 'white power' it would be a whole different ball game, you'd be arrested for it.

This illustrates a lack of awareness regarding the political histories of white power and black power and what they mean. Although Anne did not use the term reverse racism, her self-confessed angry response to my question *'what does being white mean to you?'* was focused on feelings of discrimination at whiteness being mentioned, contending that:

Anne: it's a question that doesn't need to be asked.

Moreover, Anne felt *'uncomfortable'* and *'insulted'* by the question. Her demeanour changed to the extent that I said to her:

> RS: I can see the colour in your cheeks have raised a bit, slightly, as well, so I can see that me asking that question has perhaps annoyed you.

In this instance my training and experience as a trauma counsellor was useful, as part of the role requires listening to not only what is being said and how it is being said, but also being aware of physiological changes in a person which may indicate unspoken feelings. By verbalising that the colour of her cheeks had changed, I was recognising that *something* had happened physiologically to Anne in relation to the question of whiteness. Sullivan (2014b) argues that white ignorance functions not only cognitively but physically and that educators should pay as much attention to the physiological reactions of white students as they do to their cognitive ones. Therefore, the 'disruptor' should be aware that White Ignorance Disruption may be expressed physically as well as intellectually and emotionally.

In her answer, Anne recognised that being white meant she might not be stopped by the police as much as black person but did not critically engage with this comment. Therefore, it seems unlikely that the expressions of reverse racism by Anne and Phil came from a perception of racial minority advantage due to anti-white bias (Norton and Sommers, 2011; Wilkens and Kaiser, 2014) as they did not express any resentment toward racial minorities progression. Rather, it seemed to stem from the questioning of whiteness, specifically my research questions.

Better suited to understand Anne and Phil's responses is Titley's (2019) concept of the 'debatability' of racism. This refers to:

> the constant contest as to what constitutes as racism, as to whose 'definition' and voice counts, and as to the consequences that should stem from these fractious forms of public recognition and denial (Titley, 2019, p. 3)

Titley (2019) uses debatability to understand media discourse around racism in the so-called 'post-racial' era. However, it has resonance here as Anne and Phil engaged in a literal and figurative debate about my questioning of whiteness. It was literal in Anne's feeling that it had *'no purpose'* or relevance and in Phil's feeling (and assertion that other research participants felt the same) that the working title of this research was racist. It also felt like a figurative debate as they seemed to be debating the purpose of talking about whiteness *at all.* As explained earlier, this led me to question why I was doing this research and whether I was helping or hindering the field of 'race' scholarship.

Further, it shook me out of the trap of being the 'good white person' (Sullivan, 2014a). Nonetheless, questioning whiteness was understood by Anne and Phil as unnecessary at best and racist at worst. Anne's anger could also be interpreted as 'white rage' or the anger felt when white people feel resentful about racial progress and 'push back' against it (Spanierman and Cabrera 2015; Andersen, 2017). However, it did not feel like rage in the room, and it was not linked to verbalised resentment about racial progress. Rather, the anger may have stemmed from being disrupted from her colour-blind attitude through being asked about whiteness and the perception that doing so was racist. Colour-blindness will be discussed in Theme 3 (Section 6.5).

It may seem ironic that Anne and Phil's understanding of racism was uncertain (along with other participants), yet they seemed sure that the questioning of whiteness was discriminatory, even racist. In this context, Lentin's (2020) theory of 'not racism' is useful. Furthering Titley's (2019) concept, Lentin (2020, p. 56) uses 'not racism' to describe 'the constant redefinition of racism to suit white agendas'. In this way, white people controlling the definition of racism serves the specific purpose of upholding white supremacy. Lentin (2020) argues that suggestions of white-bias and reverse racism by white people, fall into 'not racism'. This results in what she calls 'discursive racist violence' (Lentin, 2020, p. 62) as the use of 'not racism' allows white people to tell people of colour what they are experiencing is not racism and deny their lived reality.

Perhaps this could be seen in Vix's feeling that she has experienced reverse racism through online criticism from black women about her enjoyment of styling black hair. Vix was unable to view this criticism in a socio-political context, feeling personally attacked for expressing her opinion:

> Vix: …And then you've got these you know, you've got these, these black women who are coming back going, 'you shouldn't be doing this. This is our domain'. Is that racist? Certainly prejudiced. And if racism is prejudice, then yeah, you know?

Vix's apparent inability to understand or empathise with the black women's criticism and feelings about a white woman styling black hair could be seen as 'not racism' (Lentin, 2020) in action as Vix re-orientated feelings of prejudice onto herself. This allows insight into how someone may redefine black women's feelings of racism in order to position oneself as the recipient of reverse racism. The socio-political

disconnection is also evident as Vix seems unaware of what has been called the 'politics of black hair' (Barrett, 2016) whereby Eurocentric beauty standards are placed onto black women (Gentles-Peart, 2018). The tension between white and black women about hair is not a recent phenomenon. During the slave trade, white women would punish black female slaves by shaving their hair for 'minor transgressions' (Dabiri, 2020, p. 116). Consequently, the criticism Vix interpreted as reverse racism, is loaded with historical and contemporary meaning and is representative of power imbalances between black and white women. Additionally, it is relevant that the criticism Vix received took place online, as black women have found online spaces valuable in embracing and accepting their natural hair and rejecting white European beauty ideals (Mbunyuza-Memani, 2019).

However, it is recognised that Anne and Phil's assertions of reverse racism may be located in white ignorance (Mills, 2007) in that whiteness was de-racialised and not situated in any meaningful historical or contemporary context. This ignorance meant that this research's explicit questioning of whiteness led to White Ignorance Disruption. This resulted in attack being used as a form of defence and expressed through claims of reverse racism. The use of the word 'attack' is deliberate because during the interviews it did feel like a personal attack on myself and research, as well as an attack on the questioning of whiteness per se. However, it is possible that any person viewed as the 'disruptor' may experience similar strategies of resisting White Ignorance Disruption in an effort to sustain white ignorance (Mills, 2007).

Vix's inability to accept black women's feelings around white women styling black hair (and the connotations this holds), fits with Lentin's (2020) 'not racism' as she seemed to redefine racism to situate herself as the recipient. Possibly, the criticism from black women meant her white ignorance (Mills, 2007) was disrupted to an extent as she was aware of their opinions but was unable to locate their reasoning in historical racism or Eurocentric beauty standards. It seemed that Vix resisted further engagement or self-reflection through her assertions of reverse racism, consequently white ignorance was sustained.

Therefore, claims of reverse racism through the debatability of racism (Titley, 2019) and the redefinition of racism from a white perspective, known as 'not racism' (Lentin, 2020) is understood as the ways in which White Ignorance Disruption was resisted by Anne, Phil and Vix. However, it is also recognised that Anne and Phil's claims of reverse racism were aimed at me and this research as the question *'what does being white mean to you'?* and the working title of this research *'how do* white *trainee counsellors in South Wales define 'race' and racism?'* were seen as racist. Therefore, any interpretation of their meanings will inevitably be filtered through this accusation. It is acknowledged that this analysis of reverse racism and the personal accusations cannot be compartmentalised. Nonetheless, the questioning of whiteness did result in accusations of reverse racism and this is understood as a 'push back' against White Ignorance Disruption taking place.

Complicated recognition of whiteness

Despite whiteness being meaningless and/or its discussion contentious, for three participants, the process of White Ignorance Disruption did lead to tentative steps towards awareness of what their own whiteness, and whiteness more generally, may mean. Reflecting on what made this complicated recognition of whiteness possible, it is clear the three participants shared the fact they had considered their whiteness in the past. For Vix this was due to her childhood friend's Chinese mum calling her 'fat ghost girl'. Whereas Betty and Emily remembered feelings of fear they experienced as young white women walking through groups of black men when living in London (explored in Theme 3, Section 6.5 and Theme 4, Section 6.6). Hence, this awareness is complicated as its origins are tied to negative experiences which had not been engaged with prior to the interview taking place. In this way, Betty and Emily's first meaningful engagement with their whiteness was captured in the interview. This previous awareness of being white perhaps allowed a more contemplative approach when asked *'what does being white mean to you?'*

Despite this, Betty's first reaction was similar to Anne, Elizabeth, Mary and Phil's in that despite expressing a preference for being white, she was unable to articulate why. Betty's response, through returning to the question of whiteness once the recording device had been turned off and again when it had been turned off a second time, would indicate a reticence in verbalising honest thoughts about whiteness. Acknowledging that her preference for being white could be due to a '*slight'* bit of racism, she stated:

> Betty: I don't think I wanted to admit it when I was thinking it, because it's not right

My own interpretation of this, not only from the words Betty used but the whispered and hesitant way in which she said them, was that Betty was experiencing the beginnings of 'white guilt'. This refers to the emotional response of guilt when realising the realities of one's white racial positioning and attendant privileges, 'alerting' the white person to their complicity in racial inequality (Ryde, 2009, pp 51-52). In her 'cycle of white awareness' model, Ryde (2009, pp. 50-55) places guilt and shame as the step which comes after denial and struggling to understand the other but before understanding the self and the integration of learning. Therefore, it could be argued that connecting with guilt is a necessary step in White Ignorance Disruption as it may instigate learning about 'race', racism and whiteness. The fact that Betty asked for a list of books to continue her learning at the end of her interview would support this perspective. However, the concept of white guilt has been criticised as a 'special temptation' (Dyer, 2017, p. 11) because white people:

> may lacerate ourselves with admission of our guilt, but that bears witness to the fineness of a moral spirit that can feel such guilt – the display of our guilt is our calvary (Dyer, 2017, p. 11)

In this way, white guilt can be a method of self-flagellation and expression of good moral character without having to meaningfully engage with 'race', racism and whiteness. Although Ryde (2009, p. 52) understands guilt and shame as necessary emotions on the path to white awareness, she also recognises that one can become 'stuck' in them and lead to white people looking toward black people to 'absolve' them of their guilt. It is interesting to consider the words Dyer (2017) and Ryde (2009) use to describe 'white guilt': 'temptation', 'bear witness', 'moral spirit' and 'absolve'.

These words have biblical connotations, inferring that 'white guilt' occurs when one connects to the sins of 'race', racism and whiteness. Alternatively, white guilt has been called the 'crucial emotion' (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015, p. 16) for white people to develop racial awareness and take accountability for racism. As a result, white guilt can become a motivating factor in learning about 'race', racism and whiteness, as long as one does not become 'stuck' in it.

However, it is accepted that Betty may not have experienced white guilt as she mentioned that due to her dyslexia, she does not always feel confident in expressing herself and her admittance earlier in the interview to not knowing the correct language to use regarding 'race' could also be factors in her reticence in expressing her thoughts. Nonetheless, the concept of white guilt can be viewed as a step toward meaningful engagement with 'race', racism and white privilege. However, the 'disruptor' needs to be cognisant that it is a step that one can become trapped in. It also emphasises that those in the role of 'disruptor' have an ethical obligation to be aware that White Ignorance Disruption may be emotive and when coupled with learning differences, care should be taken. Further, it is not clear as to the role that learning differences, such as dyslexia, may play in learning about 'race', racism, and whiteness. This would be an interesting area for further study.

While Betty's admittance to a *'slight'* bit of racism and awareness of the difficult feelings that emerged could been seen as the beginnings of white guilt, Emily and Vix seemed to become aware of 'white privilege' or the unearned advantages of being white (Chapter 2, Section 2.1.4). Additionally, white empathy also seemed to be

present. This refers to the development of 'understanding the dehumanization *(sic)* and pain that people of colour experience as a result of racial oppression' (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015, p. 18). Emily began to engage with what being white may mean in cross-racial counselling practice through her consideration that clients of colour may question what a white counsellor could know about their lives. Emily felt this could lead to a *'block'* in the counselling relationship. Additionally, Emily also recognised that white people saw themselves as the '*superior race':*

> Emily: …that we're something better somehow. Yeah. I don't know.
> Strange actually. Yeah. It's not something I think about.

In this statement, it seemed that Emily began to verbalise and cogitate thoughts on 'race', racism and whiteness for the first time. As she admitted, it was something she had not thought about before, indicating that her white ignorance (Mills, 2007) had been disrupted and allowed her to engage with her thoughts and feelings around 'race', racism and whiteness. Emily also showed white empathy as she began to engage with oppression of people of colour (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015, pp. 18-19) through her comment that white people tended to have a sense of racial superiority.

Similarly, despite Vix's earlier claim to the existence of reverse racism she was also able to recognise the privileges being white could afford by contemplating the racialised stereotypes placed upon her Chinese friend:

> Vix: And I guess, you know, yeah, does white have privilege? Yes, it does
> because of obvious reasons. Does it necessarily give you an
> economic advantage? Not necessarily.

Vix's understanding of white privilege falls in line with Sullivan's (2017) 'white priority' which seeks to remove the economic connotations of 'privilege'. Vix expressed white empathy (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015) for her Chinese friend who had certain stereotypical expectations placed upon her, appreciating that white people *'don't have that preconceived position'.* Perhaps Vix had the most complicated recognition of whiteness in that she simultaneously expressed a belief in reverse racism while acknowledging white privilege. This demonstrates the complexities of discussing 'race', racism and whiteness and supports the argument made earlier in this chapter that the findings cannot be neatly packaged into theoretical boxes (Section 6.1). Further research into reverse racism is recommended to understand the complexities such a belief may contain.

It would appear that Betty, Emily and Vix experienced White Ignorance Disruption in that their advanced ignorance, namely their cognitive and affective ignorance (Medina, p. 183) appeared to be disrupted. This resulted in feelings of guilt and empathy, as well as the recognition of white privilege (McIntosh, 1988; Bhopal, 2018; Ryde 2019).

6.5 Theme 3: Barriers to Racial Discourse

Having white ignorance disrupted meant that the participants put up certain barriers to the racial discourse of the interviews. These barriers can also be understood as methods to halt the disruption of white ignorance, and perhaps were places of safety and self-reassurance during the intellectual and emotional disruption. The barriers

found in this research were: contact and lack of contact with people of colour, colour-blind ideology and believing the counsellor is a 'good' person.

Contact and lack of contact with People of Colour.

In this research, 'contact' was understood as having interpersonal relationships with people of colour which could range from acquaintances to lifelong friendships. Both contact with people of colour and lack of contact with people of colour were cited by the participants as reasons for not engaging with racial discourse. Betty, Elizabeth, Emily, and Mary referred to having *'sheltered'* upbringings. This rationale was used to explain why racial awareness had not been needed in their lives before. Anne, Phil and Vix's past and present friendships with people of colour were used as evidence of their racial awareness. These were understood as barriers because it seemed that they were used as justifications for non-engagement with racial discourse. This is because contact and lack of contact with people of colour could be used to sustain white ignorance, i.e., there is no need to engage with 'race', racism and whiteness because the individual does not expect to encounter people of colour, or past and present friendships with people of colour are understood as sufficient evidence of engagement. When situated alongside semantic misunderstanding of 'race' and racism, feelings of self-consciousness and with whiteness perceived as meaningless, these justifications may derive from a lack of knowledge about 'race', racism and whiteness. Therefore, while superficially they may seem two distinct barriers it would appear that they could serve the same purpose: to sustain white ignorance (Mills, 2007) and resist White Ignorance Disruption. Frankenberg (1993, p. 69) found that whether the childhood experiences of her white female participants

were entirely white or had cross-racial interactions, 'even the presence or absence of people of colour seemed to be as much social-mental construct as a social-physical one'. Thus, physical proximity to people of colour does not necessarily result in greater cognitive or emotional awareness of 'race'. In this way, white ignorance (Mills, 2007) can be sustained despite having contact with people of colour.

Further, these two barriers can both be understood together through the concept of the 'intergroup contact hypothesis' (Allport, 1954) and the role it can play in forming racial attitudes. The intergroup contact hypothesis posits that positive interpersonal contact between minority and majority groups could be an effective tool in reducing prejudice (Allport, 1954). Even though it is a theory from the mid-twentieth century, it remains influential in the fields of psychology and social science as a way to understand prejudice (Dovidio, Glick and Rudman, 2005; O'Connor, 2017). Allport (1954) suggested that for intergroup contact to reduce prejudice, there needed to be four 'optimal' conditions: shared goals, cooperation in reaching those goals, equal status amongst group members and support through authorities and laws. Although intergroup contact can change attitudes, it does not inevitably lead to social change (Tropp, Mazziotta and Wright, 2018, p. 213). Indeed, it has been stated that:

> any reduction in prejudice associated with positive contact may be counteracted by increases in prejudice that co-concurs with (even limited amounts of) negative contact (Barlow *et al*, 2012, p. 1630)

This may explain Betty and Emily's contact with 'gangs' of black boys left them both feeling frightened and not engaging with 'race', racism or whiteness for decades until the research interview took place. Similarly, Vix's positive contact through her

friendships with people of colour was also situated alongside negative contact, such as the criticism from black woman about styling black hair. This may account for her simultaneously believing in reverse racism and recognising white privilege, although it is acknowledged that this may be a simplistic interpretation.

However, intergroup contact through cross-racial friendships alone is not a sufficient predictor of whether racial attitudes will be positively impacted as it has been found that time spent together and self-disclosure were important factors in positive cross-racial friendships (Davies *et al.*, 2011). This is supported by the argument that affective process plays a significant factor in positive intergroup contact (Tropp, Mazziotta and Wright, 2018). It is not possible to state whether these factors were or were not present in Anne, Phil and Vix's contact with people of colour as that was not the remit of this research and the nuances of their contact was not elicited in the interviews. Similarly, whether Allport's (1954) 'optimal' factors were present in their contact was not obtained from the interviews. Therefore, it may not be possible to fully explain why those three participants had the most intergroup contact yet were the three to express a belief in reverse racism. What may be possible to understand is the confidence, if not accuracy, with which they expressed their opinions about 'race', racism and whiteness when compared to the self-described *'sheltered'* participants. This confidence may be because intergroup contact has been found to reduce anxiety in the majority group members, in this situation the white group members (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2008; Pettigrew *et al*, 2011). Therefore, Anne, Phil and Vix's confidence may be understood due to reduced anxiety in racial discourse, based on their past contact. Yet Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) found that alongside a reduction in anxiety,

majority group members also experienced an increase in knowledge and empathy from intergroup contact. This research found that Anne, Phil and Vix's knowledge of 'race', racism and whiteness was similar to the other participants who had little-to-no contact with people of colour. Additionally, they expressed assertions of reverse racism which does not seem conducive to an empathic response to racism. Therefore, it may be possible to infer that their contact with people of colour gave them a sense of authority in racial discourse and a confidence in debating what constitutes as racism (Titley, 2019; Lentin, 2020).

Arguably underlying contact and lack of contact with people of colour could be 'white apathy' (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015). This pertains to the belief 'if one does not have *feelings* about racism, then racism must not be important' (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015, p. 11). Therefore, if the participants emotionally believed that 'race', racism and whiteness does not matter (as evidenced by colour-blind attitudes, below) then perhaps there was no need to engage with it either cognitively or emotionally. This then makes their contact with people of colour redundant to their understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness.

Therefore, this research would indicate that contact and lack of contact did not have a significant difference on white trainee counsellors' understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness. Whether the participants lived a self-described *'sheltered'* life or had existing friendships with people of colour, they shared the same challenges in engaging with racial discourse. However, it would appear that both experiences were

utilised as rationale for not needing to engage in racial discourse, in sustaining white

ignorance (Mills, 2007) and resisting White Ignorance Disruption.

Colour-blind attitudes

In the same way that contact and lack of contact with people of colour was used to

end White Ignorance Disruption, so it seemed that colour-blindness was used for the

same purpose and potentially as a way to retreat back into white ignorance. Simply, if

colour does not matter, then talking about 'race' is not necessary (Bonilla-Silva, 2018;

Burke, 2019). Uniting the participants was a lack of knowledge about 'race', racism

and whiteness but also a belief in colour-blind racial ideology as the ideal racial

attitude. As has been argued, ignorance can pertain to not only a lack of knowledge

but the presence of false beliefs (Medina, 2016). In addition, white apathy has been

called the 'emotional equivalent of its cognitive counterpart, colour-blind ideology'

(Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015, p. 11). Therefore, colour-blind racial attitudes could

be seen as the presence of a false intellectual belief situated alongside an emotional

justification. This may create a double-layered barrier to racial discourse.

Each of the participants made colour-blind statements, feeling that 'race' should not

matter, particularly in a counselling relationship. When considering the 'four frames'

of colour-blindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, pp. 54-74), it would seem that the two overtly

expressed were abstract liberalism and minimisation. Minimisation was discussed

previously in this chapter in regard to the semantic understanding of racism (Section

6.3). Abstract liberalism has been called the foundation to colour-blind attitudes and

allows white people to take a moralistic stance 'while opposing almost all practical

approaches to deal with de facto racial inequality' (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, p. 56). This was

expressed through statements made by the participants that skin colour is irrelevant,

that people are equal and in the unspoken belief that talking about 'race' was 'bad'.

Lack of support for racial equality could be seen in the resistance to 'race' education

(Theme 4, Section 6.6).

 In the classroom observations, 'race' occurred twice: when discussing whether they

could work with a racist client and when watching a video clip of a white male

counsellor and a black female client. In a group discussion of the video clip, the 'races'

of the counsellor and client were not mentioned, nor how this could affect the

therapeutic relationship. As Marie commented in class (when discussing a case

vignette about a Transgender counsellor):

> Marie: In this politically correct world we're obligated to pretend we don't
> notice people are Trans[gender] or their race.

Therefore, it seemed that the class did not 'notice' 'race' either and colour-blindness

was evident by racial difference in the video being met with silence. I had a similar

experience as a trainee counsellor, whereby my class watched a video with a black

male client. When asked as a group to talk about the video, the client's 'race' was not

mentioned for most of the discussion, until one member of the group mentioned that

the client was black. I can recall the strength of my feelings that this peer was being

racist for mentioning the client's 'race', and I verbalised the sentiment that 'race' is

irrelevant. The tutor (not the tutor discussed in this research) stayed silent but shot

me a conspiratorial eye-roll which I interpreted as support for my comment and

affirmation that colour-blindness was the correct racial attitude. This shows how

colour-blindness can be perceived as the 'right' attitude, was reinforced through my classroom's silence, the 'disruptor' (in this case my peer) being criticised and a tutor's tacit support. The pervasive silence around pedagogical racial discourse has been termed 'white silence' (DiAngelo, 2012; Applebaum, 2016b) and will be explored in Theme 4 (Section 6.6).

Mills (1997, p. 93) argues that one aspect of the racial contract is that it 'creates a racialized moral psychology' whereby white people will 'act in racist ways while thinking of themselves as acting morally'. This concurs with the argument that colour-blindness allows whites to resist racial equality while believing they are moral for not 'seeing' 'race' (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). For the participants, it seemed that colour-blindness was understood as the morally correct attitude to 'race' and the process of asking about 'race' in the interview contradicted that perception. As the 'disruptor', it felt at times that I was perceived as behaving 'badly' as the research questions directly and unambiguously brought 'race', racism and whiteness into conversation. This is something potential 'disruptors' should be aware of: that the intellectual and emotional rationale that colour-blindness is the correct way to understand 'race', racism and whiteness can mean that those 'disrupting' are repositioned as the 'bad' person. In addition, it has been put forward that colour-blindness can be used as a way to retreat back into wilful ignorance when confronted with racial injustice (Mueller, 2017).

An example of this is how Anne reacted to the research questions. She had the strongest colour-blind beliefs of the participants, repeating throughout the interview

that she sees people as individuals and does not see skin colour. Anne also had a

strong reaction when asked how she felt about being white, feeling that it was an

'insulting' question which *'doesn't need to be asked'.* Anne said in the interview that

my research questions left her feeling that:

> Anne: I just, I find myself feeling quite defensive for the coloured people…
> because why, why should they be? Why should they be targeted?

Indeed, when I was leaving the classroom on my last day, which was a couple of hours

after I interviewed her, Anne said in passing:

> Anne: it will be interesting, *very* interesting, to see your results.

These words seemed to be an addendum to her comments in the interview that my

research questions left her feeling *'insulted'* and were *'targeting'* people of colour. Her

words have stayed with me, more in their delivery than their content. It seemed to me

as if Anne were challenging me, saying: 'I disagree with what you have said and done,

and I want to know what the point was'. This is supported by her comment about

whiteness that:

> Anne: … There is no purpose to it [asking about whiteness]. I don't think
> there is. It's not a question that needs to be asked.

Indeed, it felt as if Anne could have been saying this about the whole interview. Of

course, my interpretation of those words is highly subjective and is filtered through

Anne's emotional response to the interview. They are strengthened by Phil's belief

that my use of the word 'white' in the working title of the research was racist. Both of

these comments seemed to insinuate that in my role of 'disruptor' I had broken the

code of racial colour-blindness and consequently, I was targeting people of colour

because I was not subscribing to colour-blind ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Mills' (1997) argument that that the racial contract can be rationalised as a moral stance seemed to be upheld; therefore, when the 'disruptor' breaks the racial contract, they are perceived as immoral. However, given my own reaction as a trainee counsellor to a situation when 'race' was verbalised and 'seen', I understand that Anne's reaction was in all likelihood coming from a place of genuine conviction. In this way, she was simply reproducing a pervasive white understanding of 'race'. Supporting this interpretation is that the dominance of colour-blind ideology amongst white people has been termed one of the theoretical cores of critical whiteness studies (Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll, 2009). Additionally, being colour-blind has been found to be perceived as a positive identity trait (Hartmann *et al*, 2017).

It could be argued that colour-blindness is a convenient position to uphold white ignorance by 'good' white people in that it allows the white person to sustain a positive self-perception about their attitudes to 'race', without having to meaningfully engage in racial awareness or racial equality. It seemed that the participants understood colour-blind racial attitudes as the correct and moral way to understand 'race', racism and whiteness, thus creating a barrier to racial discourse.

'Good White Counsellor'

Closely related to colour-blindness, a profession specific barrier was found in the perception of the participants' perception of the counsellor as a 'good' person. The notion that a 'good' person does not 'see' 'race' is therefore strengthened by the view that the participants had of the personality of the counsellor as a person imbued with

positive attributes. As with the previous barriers to racial discourse, this could be used

as an intellectual rationale and a place of emotional safety, i.e., *'good people do not*

see/speak about 'race', a counsellor is a 'good' person, therefore counsellors' do not

talk about race'. Again, this may be a simplistic understanding of a complicated topic,

but it does seem that colour-blindness and the characteristics of a counsellor can be

linked through a sense of moralistic goodness.

As previously stated (Section 6.3), the semantic understanding of racism was reduced

to the notion of being intentionally cruel and overtly hostile to another person.

Therefore, being racist was perceived as antithetical to being a 'good' counsellor. In

the same way, talking about 'race' was a semantic, intellectual, and emotional

minefield and contradictory to the participants' colour-blind attitudes, rendering it a

'bad' and verboten topic for a 'good' counsellor to engage in. This has been termed

the good/bad binary of racism, whereby racism is understood as 'extreme acts of

prejudice' perpetrated by 'bad' people, therefore if a person does not commit such

acts, they are 'good' and not racist (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 71). It has been argued:

> this worldview guarantees that I will not build my skills in thinking critically
> about racism or use my position to challenge racial inequality (DiAngelo,
> 2018, p. 73).

Similarly, Sullivan (2014a) refers to the problem of 'good white people', or white

people who think of themselves as educated liberals in comparison to the 'bad' white

people, i.e., uneducated and lower class, who they hold responsible for racism.

Supporting the findings of this research, Sullivan (2014a, p. 87) argues that colour-

blindness is a primary method that 'good white people' use to show their 'kindness' to

people of colour. Linking the concepts of white ignorance, colour-blindness and 'good white people', Sullivan (2014a, p. 86) argues that there is a 'hubristic pride taken in white ignorance, camouflaged as moral innocence and goodness'. However, Sullivan (2014a) focuses on class as a defining characteristic in relation to the self-perception of 'goodness' and the positioning of other white people as 'bad'. This was not found in this research but arguably the understanding that a colour-blind attitude was correct combined with a perception of the inherent 'goodness' of a counsellor, entrenches what I have termed a 'Good White Counsellor' professional narrative. This may explain why white counsellors would be shocked to think of themselves as racist (Lago and Thompson, 2002). This perception is perhaps supported through whiteness being the normalised standard in counselling training (Rotham, Malott and Paone, 2012) and the words 'race', racism and whiteness being avoided in guidelines for counselling course accreditation (BACP, 2012, pp. 1-20). This systemic colour-blind approach will be explored in Theme 4 (Section 6.6) and Chapter 7 (Section 7.7).

Understanding racism as existing on a good/bad binary (DiAngelo, 2018) means that white people are unable to see the subtler forms of racism, this has been referred to as 'silent racism' (Trepagnier, 2016). This form of racism is often perpetuated by 'well-meaning whites' who may not be aware of it (Trepagnier, 2016, p. 6). This lack of awareness is 'because they presume that they are not racist' (Trepagnier, 2016, p. 42). To remedy this, it is argued that it is better to understand racism as existing on a continuum, whereby one is more or less racist, rather than simply 'not racist' (Trepagnier, 2016). By inference, it allows one to not be wholly 'good' or 'bad' in regard to 'race', racism and whiteness. In doing so, it moves away from the good/bad

binary of racism (DiAngelo, 2018) or the presumption of being a 'good white person' (Sullivan, 2014a) based on class and education (or being a counsellor). This may be a useful step in White Ignorance Disruption, as it will allow one to reposition themselves as a lifelong learner educating themselves about 'race', racism and whiteness and not simply as a 'good' or 'bad' person.

This is also relevant to my own experience as a white researcher as it felt as times that being the 'disruptor' meant my 'goodness' was questioned by some participants. They knew that I was a qualified counsellor, appreciated my professional experience and knowledge (as evidenced by them asking me to evaluate their skills practise) and over several weeks prior to the interviews had built a positive relationship with me. Therefore, it could be argued that my research questions which focused on 'race', racism and whiteness, contradicted their understanding of a 'good' counsellor (and of a 'good' person through breaking colour-blind ideology). In this way, learners' perception of the 'disruptor' during White Ignorance Disruption can potentially contradict their understanding of the 'disruptor' prior to racial discourse taking place. Personally, this was an interesting process and at times, it felt as though some of the participants were re-evaluating me alongside engaging in the interview process, all while talking about 'race', racism and whiteness for the first time. As discussed above (Section 6.1), I had perhaps fallen into the trap that I was a 'good white person' (Sullivan, 2014a) and experienced my own White Ignorance Disruption. This indicates that the 'disruptor' is not infallible to such thinking. Accepting that racism exists on a continuum (Trepagnier, 2016) could be a useful way for the 'disruptor' to relinquish any conceit of being 'a good white person' (Sullivan, 2014a). Indeed, Foste (2020)

terms this the 'enlightenment narrative' whereby white student leaders are more

preoccupied with presenting themselves as being 'good' rather than actively challenge

racism, white privilege, and white supremacy. Likewise, the 'disruptor' also needs to

be aware of their own self-perception in their role as white researcher/educator and

ensure research/education does not become a performative gesture (Foste, 2020).

Therefore, researcher/educator reflexivity may be a key component to White

Ignorance Disruption. In this way, the post-critical ethnographic methodology used in

this research (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders, 2019), with its emphasis on

researcher reflexivity and positionality, allowed my own White Ignorance Disruption

to take place. Therefore, understanding racism as existing on a good/bad binary

(DiAngelo, 2018) and having the self-perception of being a 'good white person'

(Sullivan, 2014a) could be seen as a place of comfort and self-assurance for white

people. When coupled with the understanding that a counsellor is a 'good' person and

reinforced with colour-blind ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2018), it potentially creates a

profession specific barrier which I have termed the 'Good White Counsellor'.

6.6 Theme 4: Socio-Political (Dis)Connection

The three previous themes captured the initial process of White Ignorance Disruption

as it happened. The final theme shows how it is co-constructed and maintained. This

research found that there was a general disconnection to the historical and

contemporary socio-political context in both participants and curriculum. This did not

only refer to 'race' but to other issues such as gender, gender-based violence,

disabilities, and culture. Therefore, it appeared that 'race', racism and whiteness were

one of various socio-political issues that were avoided by the curriculum and the

participants. The reasons for this have been explored in the previous three themes but could perhaps be summarised as: not knowing how to talk about 'race', racism and whiteness, feeling it unnecessary and uncomfortable to talk about 'race', racism and whiteness (as it would contradict colour-blind ideology), and that counsellors are 'good' people and 'good' people are not racist. Therefore, the three theoretical cores of critical whiteness studies are upheld: white people are not racially self-aware, white privilege is not understood, and colour-blind ideology is the dominant narrative (Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll, 2009, pp. 407-409).

Student and curriculum disconnection

It was found that both the students and the curriculum were disconnected from the bigger socio-political context. This is not a unique discovery, as outlined in the literature review (Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2), counselling has been criticised for neglecting historical and contemporary socio-political factors (Tuckwell, 2002; Ryde, 2011; McLeod, 2013). Therefore, it could be argued that the findings in this theme reflect a long-term problem within the counselling profession. Thus, the curriculum and participants observed in this research are not anomalies in being disconnected from the socio-political context but rather they are representative of a wider issue within counselling.

It is relevant to note that the socio-political disconnection within the profession is one reason why I decided to stop counselling practice in 2018 (Smith, 2020). As I had already made that decision, almost two years before conducting the fieldwork for this research, it could be argued that I was biased in 'seeing' this disconnection during

participant-observations. In addition, the tutor privately observed to me that diversity was taught at a *'superficial level'* as the amount of content which needed to be included in the course meant that he felt he could not dedicate the time needed to diversity issues. The tutor also mentioned that there had been a challenging group discussion earlier in course, prior to my participant-observations, that meant the trainees may be *'scared'* to engage with potentially contentious topics. By inference, it would seem that 'race', racism and whiteness could be categorised as contentious topics that may lead to the participants feeling *'scared'.* The reasons for this may be found in the first three themes in this chapter (Sections 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5) and evidenced by the avoidance of talking about 'race' and racism when two separate opportunities arose in class seminars. Therefore, the socio-political disconnection observed in both the participants and the curriculum could be due to not solely a lack of interest but as by-products of a full curriculum and not knowing how to engage with socio-political issues in a constructive, non-confrontational way. Supporting this, Elizabeth, Emily and Vix expressed feelings of discomfort and concern regarding potential consequences of the group discussing diversity. This may account for the socio-political disconnection found within the classroom. This interpretation could explain what happened during week five of observation when the class were given a case vignette (Appendix iii) to discuss. Phil felt that the male fictional client's self-harming through punching walls, was *'turning their anger from punching her* [fictional ex-girlfriend in the vignette] *to punching walls'* [domestic violence was not mentioned in the vignette]. At the time, and when writing this, this comment felt assumptive and powerful coming from a man, especially when delivered to a class full of women (expect for the male tutor). Yet it went unchallenged and opportunities for discussion

about gender-based violence and domestic abuse were missed. It may also explain the groans when 'Brexit Day' was mentioned, Mary and Lee stating their disengagement with politics and Ceri's feelings that bringing politics into counselling was a *'definite no-no'.* Ceri's comment reflects the long held misconception that counselling should be a 'politically neutral activity' (Kearney, 1996, p. 6).

However, it is important to remember that the course studied in this research is a BACP accredited course. Therefore, the BACP can seem like an invisible omnipresence throughout the course, as the curriculum is shaped by their course accreditation criteria (BACP, 2012; BACP 2019), with the compulsory requirement that trainees become members of the organisation, are required to meet their training expectations (Student Handbook 2019/2020) and abide by their ethical framework (BACP, 2018a). This allows for another interpretation of the socio-political disconnection: that it was reinforced by a lack of clear direction in the official training guidelines in regard to 'race', racism and whiteness (BACP, 2012, pp. 1-20). Hence, it appeared that there was a hierarchical socio-political disconnection as the BACP did not mention 'race', racism and whiteness in their course accreditation criteria (BACP, 2012; BACP 2019) and the curriculum did not integrate 'race', racism and whiteness or take opportunities to discuss it when it arose. Consequently, the trainees were also silent. This appears to have resulted in white ignorance (Mills, 2007) being sustained at multiple levels of counselling training. Additionally, the socio-political disconnection may explain the dominance of Eurocentric theories in regard to mental health (Watters, 2011; Mills, 2014; Fernando and Moodley, 2018) which are perpetuated unwittingly by white counsellors who are disconnected from racial discourse. Indeed, it has been argued

that there is a reluctance to discuss racism and to evaluate Eurocentric theories in counselling and psychotherapy (McKenzie-Mavinga, 2016). Again, some of the reasons for this reluctance may be found in the previous three themes. The systemic colour-blind attitude in relation to 'race' is discussed in Section 6.7 and Chapter 7, Section 7.7.

Taking the perspective that the curriculum and participants' socio-political disconnection was grounded in limited time and a hesitation about the impact on the group dynamic, it could be argued that the disconnection was hermeneutical injustice (Fricker, 2007). In other words, the curriculum and the participants did not have the conceptual (or temporal) resources available to effectively engage with socio-political issues. However, this understanding stands in contrast to the participants assertion that the group felt *'comfortable'* talking about diversity (which I defined to them as including culture, gender, gender identity, disabilities and sexual orientation). This could suggest that the participants felt they did have the resources needed to engage with socio-political issues. It could also be argued that the socio-political disconnection from the BACP, to the curriculum and to the trainee counsellors (individually and as a group) could be examples of advanced ignorance (Medina, 2016, p. 183), in the forms of cognitive resistance through conceptual lacunas, and affective resistance through apathy toward socio-politics. In this way, the socio-political disconnection could be an example of epistemic ignorance as a 'substantive practice' (Alcoff, 2007, p. 39). This perspective can be furthered by considering the participants' silence on the two occasions 'race' was mentioned in class. It has been argued that 'white silence' in pedagogical racial discourse is used to actively resist engagement with 'race' and this

allows the maintenance of white privilege (DiAngelo, 2012). Reflecting on teaching

critical whiteness studies, Applebaum (2016b) recognises that while white silence can

be used to actively resist racial discourse and learning, it can also facilitate 'listening

silence' whereby white students are engaged with learning, albeit silently. However,

'such listening must also be interrogated for its role in sustaining power and privilege'

through considering the context within which the discourse and silence is taking place

(Applebaum, 2016b, p. 392). Therefore, white silence can be either a form of

resistance or a method of learning, meaning that what may appear as disconnection

may be a silent method of connection. However, as Applebaum (2016b) argues, the

contextual circumstances that the silence takes place in is significant. In this research,

the participants' silence occurred within a curriculum that did not include 'race',

racism and whiteness (Student Handbook 2019/2020), this omission is reflected in the

course accreditation guidelines (BACP, 2012; 2019) and ethical framework (BACP,

2018a). This may indicate that the context in which the participants' white silence

occurred was emblematic of a systemic white silence. Perhaps this socio-political

disconnection and white silence is because counselling pedagogy, theory and practice

has not yet found what critical race theory calls an 'interest convergence' (Bell, 1980;

Delgado and Stefancic, 2017, p. 9). In other words, counselling has not found an

incentive to challenge the white, Eurocentric status quo of the profession.

Therefore, White Ignorance Disruption for counsellors will not only require disruption

on a personal level, though challenging one's assumptions, emotions, and knowledge,

but also disrupting the curriculum through actively incorporating the socio-political

context into counselling training and accreditation guidelines. Social justice

counselling is one theoretical model that actively includes socio-politics (Chung and

Bemak, 2012; Ratts, Rafferty McCullough and Rubel, 2016; Rogers-Sirin, 2017) and

could be effectively utilised in counselling training to connect counselling theory and

practice to socio-politics. However, to specifically address 'race', racism and

whiteness, in Chapter 7 (Section 7.8) I will recommend 'Critical Whiteness Counselling

Studies' as one way to achieve a connection between counselling and critical

whiteness studies. Taking this approach will ensure racial discourse (including the

historical and contemporary context of 'race', racism and whiteness) becomes integral

to counselling training and practice.

Student and curriculum connection

The second subtheme found that there were points of connection to socio-politics for

the students and the curriculum. For the participants this included an interest in

learning about gender identity, an awareness of the role media can play in

understanding 'race', and a curiosity in cultural differences. Within the curriculum, the

student handbook stated that students would be deemed 'incapable' of counselling

practice if they held discriminatory beliefs which they did not modify (Student

Handbook, 2019/2020). Although how 'incapable' is monitored and defined, and what

constitutes as a sufficient 'modification' of beliefs is not outlined in the Student

Handbook (2019/2020). Thus, despite this criteria's presence in the Student Handbook

(2019/2020) seeming like evidence of the curriculum's socio-political connection, the

ambiguity in its practical application means it could facilitate the 'production and

reproduction' (Bain, 2018, p. 18) of white ignorance given its implementation relying

on the racial awareness of the tutor.

Likewise, whether the participants understood their awareness as socio-political was not ascertained. Therefore, the social-political connections found in this research, could be interpreted as a burgeoning awareness and the start of tentative explorations of these topics. Certainly, in the interviews it seemed that the open discussion of 'race', racism and whiteness permitted the intellectual and temporal space for these connections to be initiated. For example, White Ignorance Disruption permitted the realisation that cultural differences may have an influence on the counselling relationship in cross-cultural dyads; something which had not been considered before by the participants (and had not been discussed in the seminars I observed). This suggests that White Ignorance Disruption can have a profession specific consequence. As they are most relevant to this research, the burgeoning awareness that the participants showed in relation to culture and the media will be explored.

The understanding of 'culture' is taken from Fernando's (2010, p. 8) description of it as being characterised as a set behaviours and attitudes which are inherited by parental figures yet in actuality are a 'changeable blue-print for living':

> Culture is now seen as something that cannot be clearly defined, as something living, dynamic and changing - a flexible system of values and worldviews that people live by, and through which they define identities and negotiate their lives (Fernando, 2010, p. 10)

Therefore, the discussion of 'culture' in this section recognises that it is not a static concept but one that is changeable. Moreover, talk of 'cultural differences' is located in a Westernised understanding of what is 'normal' and what is 'different'. As whiteness is held as the normalised standard (Halley, Eshleman, and Mahadevan-

Vijaya, 2011; Hayes *et al*, 2013; Dyer, 2017) it could be argued that 'cultural

differences' is a palatable way of indicating non-white, non-Western ways of being.

Some of the participants showed an awareness that cultural differences between a

white counsellor and a client of colour may impact the therapeutic relationship. This

appeared to be a realisation that was made in the actual interview. The tutor had

previously mentioned in seminars that he had worked with a client from Indonesia

and with another client for whom English was a second language; he did not further

this to explore cross-cultural counselling and the students did not ask any questions

about it. However, in the interviews, Emily, Phil, Mary and Vix made statements which

connected cultural difference to counselling practice. Emily, Phil and Mary, focused on

the potential impact of having a Muslim client, feeling that a Muslim client may not

want to work with a client of a different gender and that religious practices may alter

the grieving process (and by inference changing the Eurocentric understanding of

grief). Using the example of Chinese culture, Vix wondered:

> Vix: …am I going to understand where they're coming from? I'm not going,
> going to be able to prod them in the right way or am I going to be
> offensive? [in counselling practice]

Emily, Mary and Phil's assessment of the Muslim community could be perceived as

one-dimensional and stereotypical. Taras (2014, p. 35) notes 'both deep structures

and shallow stereotypes are implicated in the construction of Islam as the racial

'Other''. In the context of this research, the 'deep structures' (Taras, 2014. P. 35) could

be applicable to the systemic colour-blind attitudes regarding 'race', racism and

whiteness (Chapter 7, Section 7.7) identified in this research. This is also evident in

that the participants' awareness of the potential role cultural differences could have in the counselling practice was not situated in a broader understanding of the dominance of Eurocentrism and whiteness. Indeed, the positioning of Muslim's as the racial 'Other' could be seen as an example of 'differential racialisation' (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017, pp. 9-10). It has been argued that through the process of racialisation, Muslim people have turned into a homogenous group that discards physical, geographical, and economic differences (Garner and Selod, 2015). The similar perspectives of Emily and Phil, who both felt that the gender of the Muslim client would impact the counselling dyad, reflects the argument that Muslims are gendered in racialised ways (Garner and Selod, 2015). In this instance, the subtext of Emily and Phil's statements seem to racialise Muslim women as being forbidden to speak to men and Muslim men being representative of a *'closed race'*:

> Emily: So, for example, if it was men of, not to be using Muslims, but if it was a Muslim man, because they have very different views on women, that might create, and they might not feel comfortable at all, talking to a woman.

> Phil: …So, if I was *[sic]* to work in a Muslim country, I couldn't treat a Muslim woman because of their beliefs. So, at the same thought I would have thought a Muslim woman wouldn't want to come in and open up to me as a counsellor, whereas a Muslim male might not see me as an equal because they're a very closed race.

Therefore, it could be argued that the racialisation and 'essentialising' or reducing groups of people to simplistic homogenous characteristics (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017, p. 173), is a negative socio-political connection. Similarly, it seemed that the participants were positioning the Muslim culture as responsible for potential difficulties encountered in cross-cultural counselling. This could be an example of cultural racism, one of the four frames of colour-blind ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

This is because the responsibility of the success/failure of the counselling seemed to be placed on the Muslim clients' attitudes rather than considering the ways in which Eurocentric counselling theory and practice may impact the cross-cultural counselling relationship.

However, it did seem that they were beginning to connect to what could become a deeper understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness in counselling if given an opportunity for further learning. This would indicate that some White Ignorance Disruption had taken place, in particular through disrupting advanced ignorance represented by affective, apathic resistance (Medina, 2016, p. 183) toward 'race', racism and whiteness. This awareness could be utilised as a 'springboard' for further awareness. Perhaps traditionally, one way of utilising the tentative interest of cross-cultural counselling practice would be through the teaching of cultural competency frameworks (such as: Constantine and Landany, 2001; Sue and Sue, 2008; Collins and Arthur, 2010). However, as discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.2), cultural competency has been criticised for being formulated 'within colonial confines' (Tate, Torres Rivera and Edwards, 2015, p. 44). However, given that cultural competency is not a requirement of the BACP's ethical framework (BACP, 2018a), there is no guarantee that even this critiqued method of connection would be made during counselling training. Therefore, it would appear that the socio-political connection to culture could potentially entrench racialised notions through either neglecting to capitalise on the connection or through cultural competence which may reinforce notions of 'Otherness'. My recommendation of 'Critical Whiteness Counselling Studies' (see Chapter 7, Section 7.8) could be one way of effectively utilising the socio-political

connection to culture by reorienting the focus to the white counsellor and Eurocentric

counselling theory. Doing so would provide an historical and contemporary socio-

political context of 'race', racism and whiteness.

Another point of socio-political connection was Anne, Betty and Emily linking the role

of the media in forming understandings about 'race'. Anne felt that in rural Wales

attitudes toward black people are formulated through the media representation:

> Anne: I think the media has tainted it and I think their perception is that all
> black people are drug takers or carry knives and, that's, this is a
> very naive impression of them.

It has been argued that in the United States, black men 'occupy a huge place in the

media landscape' (Kumah-Abiwu, 2020, p. 65), one which is dominated by negative

representation. Supporting this, local media representations of black men as criminals

can negatively influence people's perception of black men (Dixon, 2008), a

consequence of which could be the violent way the police respond to black men in the

United States (Johnson, 2018). Kumah-Abiwu (2020) states that the negative portrayal

of black men is due to generations of white dominated 'media gatekeepers',

themselves influenced by the white racial frame (Feagin, 2013), who shape the 'social

imagery' and 'cognitive mapping' of black men in people's minds (Kumah-Abiwu,

2020, p. 74). In the UK, a government commission report (Cushion, Moore and Jewell,

2011) into how the British media represented black men and boys found that:

> Overall, the dominant discourse surrounding black young (*sic*) men and
> boys in the news media links them with violent crime, and particularly
> murders involving knives and/or gangs… Violent crime, murders, and gun
> and knife crime accounted for the majority of crime coverage featuring
> black young (*sic*) men and boys in the mainstream news, with little context

or explanation for the reasons why crime was committed (Cushion, Moore and Jewell, 2011, p. 2)

This lack of context was reinforced by an absence of black commentators in the mainstream media, all of which could influence the public perception and self-perception of young black men and boys (Cushion, Moore and Jewell, 2011). Supporting Kumah-Abiwu's (2020) argument that 'media gatekeepers' are responsible for this negative representation, Cushion, Moore and Jewell (2011, p. 6) also acknowledge that journalists are both contributors and 'subjects' to 'dominant ideological discourses'. Indeed, Dyer (2017) has argued that the white, Eurocentric point-of-view has long shaped racial imagery, rendering whiteness as raceless; arguably this is reflected in the media. A report commission by The Runnymede Trust also found that 'structural factors – such as discrimination, disadvantage and inequality – are generally ignored as contributors to crime trends and patterns' in the British media (Sveinsson, 2008, p. 3) and that 'race' is an influential factor in the way crime is reported. Therefore, Anne's comment that the media has *'tainted'* the perception of black people is an accurate one. It could also be argued that lack of socio-political context in the media is reflected in the socio-political disconnection in the counselling curriculum and the participants identified in this research. Again, this suggests that the participants' lack of socio-political awareness around 'race', racism and whiteness is not an anomaly, but is representative of a wider disconnection.

Anne's comment is similar to that of Betty and Emily's, who reflected on their personal feelings of fear when encountering *'gangs'* of young black men whilst living in London, almost a decade apart. They both cited the news as sources of information

that black boys are violent, with Emily commenting: *'it's like amplified because that's what we're shown a lot'.* This supports the argument that media representations of young black men and boys as violent can be influential on racial attitudes (Dixon, 2008; Cushion, Moore and Jewell, 2011; Kumah-Abiwu, 2020).

Another interpretation of Betty and Emily's feelings of fear around black men is that white women have been historically positioned as being vulnerable to sexual attentions of black men and in need of protection. Brooms and Perry (2016) have suggested that the media portrayal of black men has been distorted to an image of being hypersexualised and dangerous. The origins of this stereotype can be traced back to what is seen as the first, and controversial, cinematic blockbuster, 'The Birth of a Nation' (Stokes, 2007). This film was released in 1915 and focused on the American Civil War, valorising the Ku Klux Klan (which led to their resurgence). It has been called 'whole-heartedly white supremacist' (Dyer, 2017, p. 36). In this film, white women were positioned as being 'weak' and needing protection from the sexualised threat of black men, with white men being the saviours of white women's morality (Stokes, 2007, p. 221). Phipps (2020) argues that this notion of white women needing 'protection' from the perceived sexualised threat of black men against white women has continued:

> This 'risk' posed to white women from the oversexualised Other has justified racist community and state violence, both historically and now (Phipps, 2020, p. 73)

It could be argued that the historical reading of black men as sexual threats to white women, positions them as the archetypal 'bad men', a narrative which is manifest through contemporary media representations of black men and boys as criminals.

It is evident from the interviews that Betty and Emily were not aware of this historical socio-political context to their fears as young white women. However, the tentative connection between their internalised fears and media representations of young black men, could suggest that White Ignorance Disruption had taken place and through their own reflexivity. From this, they were beginning to understand the role the media played in shaping their racial attitudes. Once again, this could provide an opportunity for creating a deeper connection to the historical and contemporary context of 'race', racism and whiteness.

As Anne, Betty and Emily found some connection to the socio-political context, there were indications that the curriculum was connected to the socio-politics of racism and anti-discriminatory behaviour. This connection was found in the BACP informed Student Handbook (2019/2020), which contained the criteria expected of trainee counsellors such as: an awareness of prejudice, (Student Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 20), sensitivity to a variety of people and issues (Student Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 53), a lack of 'social prejudice, ethnocentrism and authoritarianism' (Student Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 53) and a need to be sensitive to 'the social worlds of clients who may be from different gender, ethnic, sexual orientation, different abilities, first language and age group' (Student Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 54). It also stated that a trainee would be assessed as incapable of counselling practice if they showed 'signs of

prejudice and discrimination but is unable to change their attitudes or behaviour and this leaves the clients at risk' (Student Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 66). Although these statements are supportive of social justice and equality, they do not present concrete guidelines on how these criteria should be measured and assessed. Consequently, the interpretation and application of these criteria are reliant upon the course tutor's own awareness and knowledge of these issues.

Supporting this, Ahmed (2012) has argued that the existence of equality policy within an institution is often seen as evidence of institutional equality. Consequently, 'saying you are *for* equality, becomes as good as *doing* equality' (Mirza, 2018, p. 17). Extending Foste's (2020) 'enlightenment narrative', it could be argued that the curriculum falls into a performative gesture rather than seeking to practically tackle 'race', racism and whiteness (and other forms of anti-discriminatory behaviour). This focus on the '*appearance* of serious engagement', rather than action, means that there is little progress in racial justice within UK Higher Education (Rollock, 2018, p. 314). As well as the application of equality policy, who writes and controls it is also pertinent to its efficacy (Ahmed, 2012). The Student Handbook (2019/2020) is written with accordance to the BACP's criteria for counselling trainees, therefore it is relevant to remember that 'race', racism and whiteness is omitted from their course accreditation criteria (BACP, 2012; BACP 2019) and ethical framework (2018a). Therefore, despite the Student Handbook (2019/2020) showing indications of socio-political connection, its ambiguity somewhat indicates systemic colour-blind attitudes around 'race', racism and whiteness (Chapter 7, Section 7.7). This is because while it may seem that the curriculum, as guided by the BACP, states that discriminatory

beliefs will not be tolerated, the lack of clarity around how such behaviour is measured and enforced means that its interpretation is dependent upon the understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness of the course leaders. Potentially, the lack of guidance on the evaluation of discriminatory behaviours and attitudes may mean that the existence of the guidelines within the Student Handbook (2019/2020) are interpreted by those who use it as sufficient evidence of equality practice. The recommendation of 'Critical Whiteness Counselling Studies' in Chapter 7 (Section 7.8) may be one way to bring clarity and a method to actively tackling 'race', racism and whiteness in counselling pedagogy.

'Race' education: Is it racist?

The ambiguity found in the curriculum around how to address discrimination and prejudice (BACP, 2012; BACP 2019; Student Handbook 2019/2020) was also reflected in the ambivalent feelings the participants had towards 'race' education. In this this research, 'race' education is understood as the teaching of 'race', racism and whiteness grounded in anti-racism education, which critically explores systemic racism and racial injustice (DiAngelo, 2012). It seemed that the semantic misunderstanding of 'race' (Section 6.3), the understanding of racism as overt acts of hostility perpetrated by 'bad' people (Section 6.3), whiteness as being meaningless (Section 6.4) and colour-blind ideology as the 'good' way to understand 'race' (Section 6.5), were contributing factors in this ambivalence toward 'race' education. It stands to reason that if the understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness is not in line with current definitions and is disconnected from an historical and contemporary socio-political context, then learning about 'race' could seem unnecessary to white trainee counsellors.

Additionally, the barriers to racial discourse found in this research could also be used as rationale for the irrelevancy of 'race' education, particularly those of colour-blindness and perceptions of the counsellor as a 'good' person. For example, when asked whether 'race' should be taught on a counselling course, Anne felt that doing so would equate to racial discrimination, with her resistance to 'race' education being that it would *'target'* people of colour, thus contradicting her colour-blind understanding of 'race'. As Anne states: *'the only difference is the colour of the skin'*. Underlying Anne's statement is the notion that to learn about 'race' is to learn about people of colour, not whiteness. This assumption was shared by all of the participants, whatever their perspective on the matter, and supports the argument that whiteness is a de-racialised identity for white people (Garner, 2007; Ryde, 2009). Whereas Anne understood 'race' education as *'targeting'* people of colour, Vix understood it as *'special treatment'* for people of colour which could result in white trainees feeling *'resentful'* for being '*singled out'.* Therefore, it would seem that disrupting white ignorance through 'race' education needs to begin with the tutor/lecturer connecting students to the historical and socio-political context of 'race', racism and whiteness (as outlined in Chapter 2, Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2). This could take an interdisciplinary approach extending beyond counselling theory. I will further this in Chapter 7 (Section 7.8), with the recommendation of 'Critical Whiteness Counselling Studies'.

However, teaching about 'race' also faces challenges within the academy. In higher education, there have been calls to decolonialise the curriculum through challenging the white dominant educational institutions and the colonial, colour-blind narrative that they purport (Arday and Mirza, 2018; Bhambra, Nisancioglu and Gebrial, 2018). It

has been argued that Mills' (2007) theory of white ignorance may explain why racial injustice exists at all levels of the British education system through its 'production and reproduction' (Bain, 2018, p. 18). This would suggest that although counselling has been criticised for being disconnected from socio-politics (Tuckwell, 2002; Ryde, 2011; McLeod, 2013) and counselling training overlooking whiteness (Ryde, 2011; Rotham, Malott and Paone, 2012; d'Ardenne, 2013; Bartoli *et al*, 2015), higher education more generally has been criticised for similar behaviour. It has been put forward that:

> race or racism is seldom named or foregrounded thus serving to maintain a racially sanitised norm which benefits whites and marginalises faculty, staff and students of colour (Rollock, 2018, p. 322).

As discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.1.6), the British education system tends not to 'see' 'race' at multiple levels. Within secondary schools, approaches to racial inequality have become de-racialised and colour-blind (Warrington *et al,* 2018) despite the attainment gap between black and white children widening (Gillborn *et al*, 2017). In universities, low numbers of racial harassment reporting are seen as proof of the non-existence of racial harassment, not a testament to a lack of faith in the complaints system (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019). It is also seen in the paucity of black academics in leadership roles (Arday, 2018; Bhopal, 2018; Rollock, 2019). Despite this, British universities tend to perceive themselves as liberal, with policies that 'ensure fairness' but do not prioritise racial inequality (Pilkington, 2015, p. 9).

Thus, the participants' attitudes toward 'race' education can be situated in the status quo of whiteness in education and an example of the colonialisation of the curriculum.

Curricula can reproduce whiteness through the invisibility of whiteness in educational institutions, the 'Othering' of people of colour and the fallacy that 'if it isn't white it isn't right' (Peters, 2018, p. 265). The 'production and reproduction' that Bain (2018, p. 18) refers to could be located in participants' colour-blind attitudes, misunderstanding what 'race' and racism is, and understanding whiteness as meaningless. This is supported and reinforced by the absence of 'race', racism and whiteness in the counselling curriculum (BACP, 2012; BACP 2019).

The normalisation of whiteness within education echoes the normalisation of whiteness, through Eurocentrism, in mental health (Watters, 2011; Mills, 2014; Fernando and Moodley, 2018) and its absence from BACP course accreditation guidelines (BACP, 2012; 2019). This aligns with the wider contexts of the invisibility of whiteness in education, mental health and counselling. It was discussed above that the student and curriculum socio-political disconnection seemed to be symbiotic; similarly, it could be argued that the absence of 'race' education in the counselling curriculum, and the participants' attitudes toward it, are also symbiotic. If the course accreditation guidelines (BACP, 2012; 2019) do not require 'race' education, then white students do not expect it, are unaware of it as a possibility, meaning they do not ask for it and so it is not provided.

Kendi (2019) has argued that policy change is a key component in racial justice, because 'education suasion' or seeking to educate white people by 'appealing to their moral conscious through horror and their logical mind', is not sufficient to achieve systemic change (Kendi, 2019, p. 205). Rather than education effecting policy change,

policy change will lead to attitude change (Kendi, 2019). Several counsellors of colour

have advocated for policy change within organisational and institutional levels to

challenge the racial inequalities within counselling (Jackson, 2020b). However, as

outlined above, the existence of equality policy can sometimes be perceived by

institutions as proof of equality practice (Ahmed, 2012; Rollock, 2018). Further, it is

possible for there to be 'racist and exclusionary policies that operate beneath a veneer

of professed tolerance and diversity' (Gillborn, 2006, p. 26). In this way, avoidance of

'race', racism and whiteness in preference for 'diversity' in the course accreditation

guidelines (BACP, 2012; 2019), Student Handbook (2019/2020) and ethical framework

(BACP, 2018a) could be understood as exclusionary while appearing to be inclusive.

Nonetheless, education can be an important method through which behaviours of

white people can be 'formed and transformed' (Sullivan, 2006, p. 27) meaning that

'race' education could be a significant factor in racial justice.

In terms of counselling education, Bartoli *et al* (2015) argue that white

psychotherapist self-awareness is not enough and needs to be accompanied by socio-

political awareness of systemic racism as well as policies, practice and curriculum that

are focused on social justice. This supports the suggestion that education alone is not

sufficient and must be accompanied by policy change (Kendi, 2018). Similarly, Bartoli

et al (2015) have outlined the ways in which white psychotherapists can learn about

'race'. These include learning that to talk about 'race' is not racist, the development of

a positive white racial identity as well as engaging in social justice and recognition that

racism is systemic (Bartoli *et al*, 2015, pp. 253-258). Although Bartoli *et al* (2015) have

presented a useful guide to how to teach white psychotherapists about 'race' and

discuss the importance of challenging systemic racism through curriculum and policy, they do not mention critical race theory (Crenshaw *et al*, 1995; Delgado and Stefancic, 2017) or critical whiteness studies (Delgado and Stefancic, 1997; Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll, 2009; Applebaum, 2016a). Also absent is white ignorance (Mills, 2007; 2015) and epistemic ignorance (Sullivan and Tuana, 2007). Therefore, it could be argued that this approach (Bartoli *et al*, 2015) is divorced from a wider theoretical perspective. Learning about 'race' and racism without anchoring it to theory could result in harmful white moral outrage, entrenching the perception of 'good' and 'bad' whites (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015, pp. 19-20). I recommend 'Critical Whiteness Counselling Studies' in Chapter 7 (Section 7.8), which would seek to anchor counselling theory and practice to the theoretical foundation of critical whiteness studies.

Jackson (2008, p. 303) argues that it is important not to take a moralistic stance over students who are learning about 'race' for the first time, which brings to mind Trepagnier's (2016) continuum of racism, suggesting that one could achieve students' potential to become 'less racist' through education. Similarly, it has been advised that white educators need to put into perspective what can be realistically achieved within the classroom to end active ignorance, with educators needing to take a gradual approach and anticipate students use of distancing strategies (Whitt, 2016). Although it could be a frustrating process for white educators, there are positive aspects for white people when learning about 'race', as it may elicit positive emotions such as joy and hope (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015). Further, it is important for white educators to take the onus on teaching about racism, become role models to white students and

be prepared for the emotional reactions white students will experience (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015). Reflecting on her own experience of developing a white racial identity with other white people, Ryde (2009, p. 75) believes that a collaborative approach is key to reducing feelings of isolation when learning about whiteness. The importance of collaboration and prepared educators is reflected in Beech's (2020) dialogic classroom based approach for teaching critical whiteness studies which requires critical engagement, discussion and reflection. Therefore, it would seem that the process of White Ignorance Disruption, under which sits emotional and cognitive responses, could be harnessed to become a dialogical and collaborative pedagogical process. Trainee counsellors may be in an advantageous position to do this, given the dialogical style of the seminars observed and the expectation that they are reflective and 'in touch' with their emotions. Through connecting to the historical and contemporary socio-political context, a more rounded understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness may be achievable.

However, although 'race' education is one step toward disrupting white ignorance, it also needs to be accompanied by policy change to be effective (Kendi, 2018). The course accreditation guidelines set out by the BACP (BACP, 2012; 2019) and those found in the Student Handbook (2019/2020) have been found to be ambiguous. Therefore, policy change in the form of clear guidelines which name 'race', racism and whiteness could provide a positive first step in 'race' education in counselling pedagogy.

6.7 Summary

A full summary of the research, and how it answered the research questions, will be presented in Chapter 7. While this chapter has not attempted to make conclusive interpretations of the four themes identified in this research, in accordance with its subjective epistemology, it has situated the four research themes into a wider context of 'race', racism and whiteness scholarship. In doing so, this chapter indicates that the participants' understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness is comparable to that of white peoples' racial attitudes more generally. Additionally, the findings support the 'core theoretical principles' of critical whiteness studies that for white people, whiteness is invisible, its advantages are not recognised, and colour-blind ideology is dominant (Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll, 2009, pp. 407-409). I have also introduced the term White Ignorance Disruption which was used to describe the process of the white participants' white ignorance (Mills, 2007) being disrupted through asking the research questions. This elicited different cognitive and emotional responses, from anger, to engagement and withdrawal. This supports the argument that for white people talking about 'race', racism and whiteness can be fraught with emotion (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015; DiAngelo, 2018). Therefore, White Ignorance Disruption was used as a theoretical bridge to connect white ignorance (Mills, 2007) to other theories of whiteness, such as 'white fragility' (DiAngelo, 2018). Additionally, the role of 'disruptor' was also considered by using researcher reflexivity, as well as outlining how I had my own white ignorance (Mills, 2007) disrupted during the research (Section 6.1). However, it is recognised that White Ignorance Disruption is a concept in its infancy and will need further work to strengthen it as a theoretical concept. Nonetheless, its use in this discussion of the findings has been a valuable

description of the cognitive and affective processes experienced by the participants when discussing 'race', racism and whiteness.

Additionally, this research would suggest that counselling as a profession may be guilty of systemic colour-blind racism. In Chapter 2, Feagin's (2006, p. 2) definition of systemic racism was used, where he claims it is 'far more than a matter of racial prejudice and individual bigotry. It is a material, social, and ideological reality'. This research has found that the 'ideological reality' (Feagin, 2006, p. 2) in this context could refer to the pervasiveness of the colour-blind ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2018) this research identified. Consequently, the material and social reality is that counselling theory, training and practice may perpetuate this colour-blind ideology. Phillips (2011) 'Multi-Level Framework' of how institutional racialisation functions at micro, meso and macro levels was also discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.1.7). Adapting Phillips (2011) framework, it is possible to apply the findings of this research to this multileveled definition. At the micro, i.e., individual level, the participants demonstrated a lack of semantic understanding about 'race' and racism, whiteness was de-racialised, and some participants expressing a belief in reverse racism. Also evident were colour-blind attitudes and a lack of socio-political awareness. At the meso level, the BACP course accreditation criteria (BACP, 2012; BACP 2019) training expectations (Student Handbook 2019/2020) and ethical framework (BACP, 2018a) also omit explicit mention of 'race', racism and whiteness in their guidelines, preferring instead 'diversity' and 'discrimination'. This is an echoing of not 'seeing' 'race' akin to the participants' attitudes. In this way, counselling training reflects education more generally through overlooking 'race' and perpetuating colonial,

colour-blind narratives (Arday and Mirza, 2018; Bhambra, Nisancioglu and Gebrial, 2018; Rollock, 2018). At the macro level, mental health is viewed through a white Eurocentric lens (Fernando, 2010; Watters, 2011; Fernando, 2014; Mills, 2014; Fernando and Moodley, 2018) and whiteness is de-racialised, invisible and normalised (Garner, 2007; Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll, 2009; Ryde, 2009; Clarke and Garner, 2010; Halley, Eshleman, and Mahadevan-Vijaya, 2011; Hayes *et al*, 2013; Applebaum, 2016a). This will be discussed further in Chapter 7 (Section 7.7).

In line with the post-critical ethnography's concept of research as a 'moral activity' (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004, p. 24) and to show researcher reflexivity and awareness of the potential impact of researcher positionality, the next chapter will demonstrate limitations of this research (Section 7.8). Alongside this, the implications and recommendations of this research will be outlined (Section 7.8).

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This chapter will begin by presenting the research questions and give a brief overview of the conceptual framework, methodology and methods used to answer the research questions (Section 7.1). It will then outline the original contribution to knowledge (Section 7.2) and summarise the themes identified in this research (Section 7.3). After which, the findings will be synthesised by considering how the research participants understood 'race', racism and whiteness through situating the themes identified in this research in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the additional literature used in Chapter 6. This will allow the research questions to be answered (Sections 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6). An overview of the findings will be presented (Section 7.7). The implications, limitations and recommendations of this research will be outlined (Section 7.8) and some final thoughts on the research will be discussed (Section 7.9).

When synthesising the findings in Sections 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6, it should be noted that 'white ignorance' (Mills, 2007) underpins each section. The notion that that the participants and the curriculum possessed a wilful 'not knowing', about 'race', racism and whiteness (akin to most white people) and was presented in Chapter 6. Therefore, asking the research questions was the rocking of that foundation and led to what I have termed White Ignorance Disruption, the unformed cognitive and emotional responses to racial discourse before they become solidified into other theories of whiteness (such as white fragility, DiAngelo, 2018).

7.1 Research Questions, Methodology and Methods

The aim of this research was to address an existing gap in knowledge. Through conducting a literature review (Chapter 2) it was found that there was no existing research regarding white trainee counsellors understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness. In addition, such research conducted in Wales was not found. This allowed the overall research question to be formulated:

- *How do white trainee counsellors in South Wales understand 'race', racism and whiteness?*

To answer this question, five further questions were used:

- How do white counselling trainees understand 'race'?
- Do they understand 'race' to be a social construct?
- How do they understand racism?
- Do they perceive whiteness as a racialised identity?
- How do they feel discussing 'race' and racism?

Figure 4 (below) outlines the research elements used to answer the research questions. The ontological position taken was 'historical realism' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 98) as this recognises that political and cultural factors, and by inference 'race', will influences one's experience of reality. The epistemological stance was 'theorised subjectivity' which recognises the political influences in the lives of both researcher and participant(s), as well as the emotional impact of research (Letherby, 2013). 'Theorised subjectivity' has been demonstrated through the reflexive nature of this thesis.

Critical theory provided the theoretical perspective and was chosen for its focus on emancipation (Strydom, 2011; Scotland, 2012) and social justice (Tracy, 2019).

Supporting this, the primary theoretical lens of critical whiteness studies was used as it seeks to challenge and deconstruct white supremacy (Delgado and Stefancic, 1997; Twine and Gallagher, 2007; Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll, 2009; Applebaum, 2016a). Critical race theory has also been incorporated as a complimentary theoretical lens (Crenshaw *et al*, 1995; Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). Congruent with critical theory and critical whiteness studies, the methodological approach taken was post-critical ethnography, (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders, 2019). This reflexive methodology allowed critical engagement with my own positionality as a white researcher. Research ethics were differentiated using the 'procedural and practice' understanding of research ethics (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). The research is also understood through the concept of 'crystallization' (Richards, 2003; Ellingson, 2009) in the acceptance that multiple truths can co-exist within these findings depending on the perspective of the reader. Data was gathered over four weeks of participant-observations with 16 first year counselling trainees at a FE college in South Wales. After which, 7 participants were interviewed over two weeks using semi-structured interviews and relevant course documents were analysed. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was used to analyse the findings in order to identify the research themes. My research elements can be summarised as:

Figure 4 Chapter 7: My Research Elements
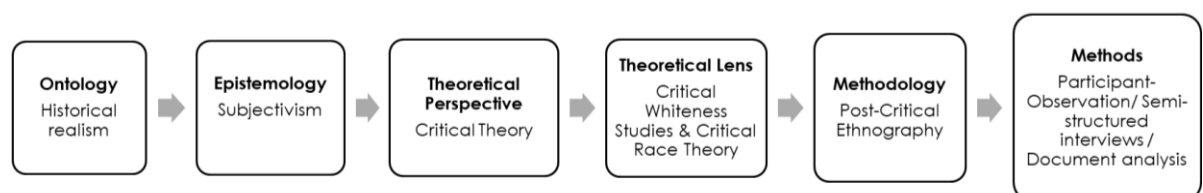
(*adapted from* Crotty, 1998, p. 4)

7.2 Original Contribution to Knowledge

This research has explored how white trainee counsellors in Wales understand 'race', racism and whiteness. It has offered an original contribution to knowledge through asking this question in Wales, by using critical whiteness studies as the primary theoretical lens and through my concepts of White Ignorance Disruption and the Good White Counsellor. These concepts were identified through the empirical research presented in this thesis.

I have conceived of White Ignorance Disruption as a way to describe the emotional and cognitive processes that the research participants experienced when asked to talk about 'race', racism and whiteness. The emotional responses included self-consciousness (Matias, 2016) white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018), white guilt (Ryde, 2009, p. 52; Dyer, 2017, p. 11), white empathy and white fear (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015). The cognitive responses included distancing themselves (and others) from racism (Case and Hemmings, 2005; Lentin, 2015), the redefining of racism (Titley, 2019; Lentin, 2020) through the insistence of reverse racism, citing contact and lack of contact with people of colour as rationale for not learning about 'race' and racism, and an understanding of 'race' that was de-racialised to the extent that most participants had not considered whiteness prior to the interview. Therefore, I have presented White Ignorance Disruption as a theoretical bridge which connects white ignorance (Mills, 2007) to different theories of whiteness and can encompass a myriad of emotional and cognitive responses by white people when they are asked to talk about 'race', racism and whiteness. I have presented it as a way to describe the initial stirring of unformed emotional and cognitive responses when talking about 'race',

racism and whiteness. I have conceptualised it as the moment(s) between white ignorance (Mills, 2007) and theories of white people's responses to racial discourse such as white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018). It is a concept that needs further work but provides an original contribution to knowledge.

I have conceptualised the theory of the 'Good White Counsellor' to unite Sullivan's (2014a) concept of the 'good white people', DiAngelo's (2018) good/bad binary of racism, and Bonilla-Silva's (2018) theory of colour-blind ideology to describe a white counsellor who would be shocked to think of their colour-blind beliefs as racist. Rather, their use of colour-blind ideology is misunderstood as a way to express their 'goodness' (in comparison to the 'bad' racists) and signify support for racial equality.

The research was located in South Wales and adds to the knowledge base of 'race', racism in whiteness in Wales. Recent research into racial inequalities in the UK (Byrne *et al*, 2020) discussed 'race' in Wales in conjunction with England. Therefore, the sole focus on Wales is an important contribution and comes at a time when the Welsh Government has recognised racial inequality in Wales (Welsh Government, 2020a).

7.3 Summary of the Themes Identified

The four themes identified in this research allowed the research questions to be answered. The research findings identified four themes. Theme 1, '(Mis)Understanding 'Race' and Racism' found that that white trainee counsellors understanding of 'race' and racism was not in line with contemporary understandings, with semantic confusion over what constituted as 'race' and racism. This confusion

was complicated by feelings of self-consciousness and efforts to distance themselves and loved ones from racism.

Theme 2, 'White (Un)Awareness' found their understanding of whiteness was de-racialised to the extent that most had not thought about being white until asked in the interview. Further, some participants expressed a belief in reverse racism. This research was used as an example of reverse racism given its inclusion of the word 'white' in the title. However, some participants did begin the process of contemplating what their whiteness may mean.

Theme 3, 'Barriers to Racial Discourse' identified the obstacles encountered when trying to talk about 'race'. For some participants, having a lack of contact with people of colour was cited as a reason for not needing to engage with 'race'. Conversely, other participants cited past or present friendships with people of colour which seemed to be a rationale for not needing to engage with 'race'. Additionally, colour-blind attitudes (Bonilla-Silva, 2018) were also prevalent amongst the participants with the underlying connotation that to 'see' (or speak about) 'race' is to be racist. Closely related was the perception of the counsellor as a 'good' person. When combined with the notion of the 'good white people' (Sullivan, 2014a), who would be horrified to think of themselves as racist, a profession specific barrier to racial discourse was identified. I have termed this the 'Good White Counsellor'.

The final theme, 'Socio-Political Disconnection' found that the students and curriculum were disconnected from the socio-political context, with politics being

seen as a *'no-no'* for counsellors. This meant that opportunities to discuss 'race' and racism (as well as gender identity, disability and domestic violence) were missed. This was reflected in the course accreditation guidelines (BACP 2012; BACP 2019), ethical framework (BACP 2018a) and Student Handbook (2019/2020). However, the participants did show curiosity in learning more about culture, although this was focused on racialised understandings of Muslims. They also showed an awareness of the role media can play in shaping racial attitudes. Finally, when asked about whether they thought counselling training should include 'race' education, there were mixed feelings, seeing it as either *'targeting'* people or colour or that white people would be *'singled out'.* For those who could see its value, there still seemed to be trepidation around the idea, such as whether the person teaching it should be black or white. All participants assumed 'race' education meant learning about people of colour, not whiteness.

7.4 White Trainee Counsellors Understanding of 'Race'

The literature review (Chapter 2, Section 2.1.1) traced the construction of 'race' from its origins in the Enlightenment period in the first taxonomy of human beings (Bhopal, 2007; Rattansi, 2007; Fara, 2017), with this categorisation providing the origins for the notion of inferior (i.e., black) and superior (i.e., white) 'races'; this is now known as scientific (or biological) racism. This concept of a racialised inferiority and superiority was used as justification for the slave trade (Walvin, 2007) and as a rationale for the British Empire (Tharoor, 2018). The idea then became incorporated into Social Darwinism (Gasman, 2017), which evolved into Eugenics (Ifekwunigwe, 1999; Levine, 2017; Saini, 2019), which itself became synonymous with the Nazi regime (Bergman,

2014). In response to the atrocities of the Holocaust, UNESCO stated that there is no

scientific basis for the concept of superior or inferior 'races' (UNESCO, 1949, p. 36).

However, despite scientific racism being discredited (Marks, 2017) these ideas still

persist (Saini, 2019) and have remerged (Herrnstein and Murray, 1994; BBC, 2019;

Charlton, 2019). Subsequently, 'race' endures as the 'floating signifier' (Hall, 2017).

The research participants were not aware of this historical context of 'race', nor of it

as a socially constructed concept. Although not explicitly stated, there seemed to be

an implicit understanding of 'race' as biological as the participants appeared to

understand 'race' being signified by skin colour, black hair and even skulls. This was

evidenced by some of the participants consistently referring to black people as

'coloured' in the interviews. There seemed to be distant, if unarticulated, echoes of

biological difference underpinning their understanding of 'race'. However, there was

no expression of a perception of racial inferiority or superiority. The exception was

Emily's statement that she thinks some whites tend to think *'that we're something*

better somehow' but went on to say that it is not something she thinks about. Rather,

the participants seemed to want to express feelings of racial equality through colour-

blind statements of *'I don't see race/skin-colour'.* This is discussed in Section 7.5.

In addition, there was semantic confusion over what constituted as 'race', with terms

such as culture, ethnicity and national identity used to describe 'race'. It has been

suggested that white people avoid the word 'race' due to feelings of discomfort

(Matias, Montoya and Nibish, 2016) and due to having a lack of historical context to

discuss it (Mazzocco, 2017). Further, the findings of this research support the

contention that 'race' persists as a form of classification across time and context despite scientific advancements proving that it is not a biological characteristic (Hall, 2017).

Having a lack of historical and socio-political context was discussed above in regard to the social construction of 'race'. The discomfort the participants felt led to feelings of self-consciousness, which supports the argument that white people experience a range of emotions when talking about 'race' as they are not used to engaging in racial discourse (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015; Matias, Montoya and Nishi, 2016).

The literature review also considered how racial inequality is present in the contemporary context of the British education system (Section 2.1.6). It was found that in secondary schools, racism is neglected in the education system (Gillborn, 2008), which has led to an attainment gap between black and white students (Gillborn *et al,* 2017). It has been argued the one of the reasons for this is that education policy has become more colour-blind and de-racialised over the decades (Warmington *et al,* 2018). In Wales, children of colour have said they have experienced racism from pupils and staff, and they feel the curriculum does not address racism (EYST, 2018). Likewise, teachers in Wales have said they feel unprepared to teach about racism and did not prioritise it (Show Racism the Red Card, 2016).

This is echoed in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), whereby women of colour in British academia have also faced discrimination (Ahmed, 2012; Bhopal, 2016; Gabriel and Tate, 2017). However, students and staff of colour did not feel confident in

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reporting instances of racial harassment (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019). Despite this, HEIs do not recognise the institutional challenges staff and students of colour face (Ahmed, 2012; Pilkington, 2015).

Similarly, this research found that the course accreditation guidelines (BACP 2012; BACP 2019) and ethical framework (BACP 2018a) exclude the words 'race', 'racism' and 'whiteness'. As a consequence, counselling pedagogy is analogous to an education system which is generally colour-blind and Eurocentric (Arday and Mirza, 2018; Bhambra, Nisancioglu and Gebrial, 2018; Rollock, 2018). The research findings in Theme 4 (Socio-Political (Dis)Connection) strengthen this finding as the participants and curriculum were disconnected to a wider socio-political context. For example, it was observed that opportunities to talk critically about politics, gender based violence, domestic abuse, culture and disabilities were missed by both the tutor and the participants. Relevant to this research, two classroom based opportunities to discuss 'race' were also avoided (the YouTube video of a cross-racial counselling session and the brief discussion about working with a racist client).

However, the difficulties white people have in counselling with addressing 'race' can been seen in one of the earliest attempts to so, with Carl Roger's 1977 recorded session with a black African-American man (YouTube, 2017). This recording proved to be problematic, with Roger's privilege on display (McLeod, 2004; Turner, 2020) and his temperament being in contrast with his usual empathic nature (Brodley, 2004; Lietaer, 2004; Mier and Witty, 2004).

Further, attempts to reach the 'Other' in counselling has traditionally been through multicultural counselling and multicultural counselling competency frameworks (such as: Constantine and Landany, 2001; Sue and Sue, 2008; Collins and Arthur, 2010). However, multicultural competency frameworks have been criticised for looking outward, thus 'Othering' the client of colour and for failing to critique whiteness (Bartoli *et al*, 2015; Sue and Sue, 2016). This was evidenced by some participants wondering what it would be like to counsel a Muslim client by problematising (perceived) Muslim cultural attitudes, rather than considering how the Eurocentric counselling training/theories can be adapted to meet the client's needs or question whether their understanding was misinformed. This is considered below (Section 7.5). Social justice counselling has been offered as a way to overcome this problem (Chung and Bemak, 2012; Ratts, Rafferty McCullough and Rubel, 2016; Rogers-Sirin, 2017), however it is not a mandatory part of counselling training. Therefore, the understanding and recognition of 'race' in counselling has long been a difficult one and these research findings support that argument.

Also relevant to the understanding of 'race', was whether the participants had contact or lack of contact with people of colour, as this was understood as one of the 'Barriers to Racial Discourse' (Theme 3). This is because, not learning about 'race', and by implication accurately understanding 'race', seemed to be justified by these dichotomous positions. The participants who had *'sheltered'* upbringings, i.e., a lack of contact with people of colour, used this as a justification for not learning about 'race'. Conversely, those who had past or present friendships with people of colour, relied on those relationships as rationale for not needing to learn about 'race'. Either way, these

justifications may serve to block an accurate understanding of 'race'. Meaningful

engagement between majority and minority groups have been cited as a pathway to

equality (Allport, 1954; Davies *et al*., 2011; Tropp, Mazziotta and Wright, 2018). This

contact may lead to a decrease in anxiety for majority group members (Pettigrew and

Tropp, 2008; Pettigrew *et al*, 2011). How meaningful the participants contact with

people of colour was in not ascertained. However, the reduction in anxiety may

explain the confidence, but not accuracy, those participants had when talking about

how they understood 'race'.

Consequently, although the participants' and curriculum's understanding of 'race' is

not in line with contemporary understandings (be it at an individual or institutional

level), it is comparable to both the education system's understanding, i.e., colour-blind

and Eurocentric (Arday and Mirza, 2018; Bhambra, Nisancioglu and Gebrial, 2018;

Rollock, 2018) and counselling's approach to 'race', i.e. socio-politically disconnected

(Kearney, 1996; Tuckwell, 2002; Ryde, 2011; McLeod, 2013) and avoided (Ryde, 2011;

d'Ardenne, 2013; Turner, 2018b; Jackson, 2018; Jackson 2020a; Jackson, 2020b).

7.5 White Trainee Counsellors Understanding of Racism

As with their understanding of 'race', the participants were also semantically confused

about what constitutes as racism, with other forms of discrimination, such as

xenophobia and homophobia, included in their understanding. Moreover, the

consistent understanding was that racism is overt and committed as individual acts of

hostility. This contradicts critical race theory's understanding of racism as an everyday

occurrence (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw *et al*, 1995; Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). The

semantic confusion identified in this research supports the 'minimisation' frame of colour-blind racism which posits that white people cannot 'see' racism unless it is overt (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). They also seemed to lack awareness that racism is not 'frozen' in historical moments of the past (Lentin, 2015, p. 3) but is mutable (Cole, 2016; Garner, 2017).

It would seem that the participants understanding of racism as overt, individual acts of hostility led them to distancing themselves (and others) from racism (Theme 1). This was evidenced through statements such as *'I'm not racist'* (Mary). Distancing from racism is one way white people manage racial discourse (Lentin, 2015) and is a common strategy amongst white students when learning about racism (Case and Hemmings, 2005; Whitt, 2016). In this way, the participants were reproducing a frequently used approach by white people when talking about racism. It also seemed to be a way to minimise the racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018) of loved ones by justifying racist behaviour (the person was not violent/too young/too old). In Vix's case, it was a way to minimise racism experienced by a black acquaintance. One explanation for this distancing strategy may be that racism is seen as something done by 'bad' white people (Sullivan, 2014a; Trepagnier, 2016; DiAngelo, 2018). Theme 4 found that the participants described the characteristics of a counsellor in positive terms with the inference being that they positioned themselves as 'good' people. The perception of colour-blind attitudes as the correct and moral attitude to have about 'race' (see below), and the argument that 'good white people' are not responsible for racism (Sullivan, 2014a) could make a profession specific barrier to racial discourse. Supporting this, it has been put forward that white counsellors would be astonished to

think of themselves as racist (Lago and Thompson, 2002). Therefore, it is possible to have what I call the 'Good White Counsellor' who perceives racism as something 'bad' people do and expresses their 'goodness' through colour-blind attitudes (discussed below).

In Chapter 2 (Section 2.1.7), racism was explored by discussing institutional/systemic racism, racialisation and colour-blind ideology. Institutional racism refers to the policies, practices and procedures which benefit white people to the disadvantage of people of colour (Better, 2008). Systemic racism also has a similar understanding but recognises that an ideological component (i.e., white supremacy) underpins those discriminatory policies, practices and procedures (Feagin, 2006). Recently, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Welsh Government has acknowledged that systemic racial inequality in Wales may be a cause of the higher mortality rates amongst people of colour in Wales (Welsh Government, 2020a). This highlights the implications of systemic racism. By adapting Phillips (2011) micro/meso/macro multi-level framework, this research found that there was a reasonable argument to suggest that counselling was culpable of systemic colour-blind racism; this was discussed in Chapter 6 (Section 6.7) and is presented below (Section 7.7).

Racialisation refers to the dominant racial group (i.e., whites) categorising and re-categorising people of colour with certain characteristics, behaviours and cultural stereotyping (Garner, 2017). Whilst racialisation was not as obvious as colour-blindness in the research findings (see below), there were points where participants connected with the socio-political context (Theme 4) through wondering what it

would be like to work therapeutically with a Muslim client. However, in doing so, the

racialisation of Muslims became apparent with the participants feeling there would be

problems due to gender/cultural differences, with Phil referring to them as a '*closed*

race.' Taras (2014, p. 35) has argued that Muslims have become the racialised 'Other'

through 'deep structures and shallow stereotypes'. However, as this research was not

focusing on counselling trainees' attitudes toward Muslim clients, it is not possible to

state the depth and origins of this apparent stereotyping, in this case a belief that a

Muslim client would not work with a client of the opposite gender. Despite this, these

brief comments do seem to support the argument that Muslims have become a

homogenised entity (Garner and Selod, 2015). It is also an example of what critical

race theory terms 'differential racialisation' (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017, pp. 9-10)

and of 'cultural racism' as the participants seemed to place responsibility for the

success/failure of counselling on Muslim clients cultural attitudes (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

Nevertheless, it offers a partial insight into how racialisation may be present amongst

white counselling trainees, although this would need further exploration.

However, the most evident form of racism was that of the participants' colour-blind

attitudes. This was outlined in Theme 3 and understood as a barrier to racial discourse

because if the participants claimed to not 'see' race, they then had a rationale for not

talking about 'race'. Chapter 2 (Section 2.1.7) considered Bonilla-Silva's (2018) theory

of colour-blind ideology, what he termed the 'racism without racists' (Bonilla-Silva,

2018, p. 57). This was expressed by all of the participants through statements such as

'*I don't notice people's skin colour*' (Anne); '*I don't treat a black patient; I treat a*

patient' (Phil); '*that person is not the culture or not the race*' (Vix). It was also present

in a group discussion after watching a YouTube video of a cross-racial counselling

dyad, where the implications of a white male counsellor working with a black female

client was avoided. Although these statements, and the classroom silence, seemed to

be expressed as a way to confer to me that they were not racist, it reflected the first

frame of colour-blind ideology, abstract liberalism. This argues that white people tend

to perceive colour-blind racial attitudes as the correct and moral racial stance to take

(Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Likewise, the racial contract allows whites to behave in racist

ways whilst simultaneously believing themselves to be behaving morally (Mills, 1997,

p. 93). Therefore, this research concurs with research which found that colour-

blindness has become an aspect of self-identity and perceived as a positive attribute

to possess (Hartmann *et al*, 2017). However, Wise (2010) suggests that post-racial

liberalism has reduced the emphasis on 'race' as a factor in inequalities, preferring to

focus on economic factors. This is supported by the suggestion that the UK

government have been colour-blind in their policies through prioritising socio-

economic inequality rather than 'race' inequality (The Runnymede Trust, 2016a).

Recently, a government commissioned report stated that factors such as socio-

economics, religion and geography were more significant to inequalities in the UK

than racism (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021a, p. 8); thus, seemingly

taking a colour-blind stance. In this way, the participants' colour-blind attitudes were

representative of a contemporary socio-political attitude which de-emphasises 'race'.

This is also reflected in the BACP course accreditation guidelines (BACP, 2012; 2019)

and their ethical framework (BACP, 2018a) which both exclude the words 'race',

'racism' and 'whiteness'. Arguably, the preference for 'diversity' (BACP, 2012; 2018a;

2019) is a colour-blind policy. Thus, the third theoretical core of critical whiteness

studies, the dominance of colour-blind ideology, was present (Hartmann, Gerteis and

Croll, 2009) (the first two principles are discussed in section 7.6).

Theme 2 (White (Un)Awareness) identified one form of racism that three of the

participants seemed to feel confident in discussing, that of reverse racism. Reverse

racism has been described as white people feeling racial minorities progress comes at

the expense of anti-white bias (Norton and Sommers, 2011; Wilkens and Kaiser, 2014).

However, resentment toward people of colour's progress was not articulated by the

participants. Rather, it seemed to be rooted in the responses to the interview question

'what does being white mean to you?' and the working title of this research *'How do*

white trainee counsellors in South Wales define 'race' and racism?'. These questions

were perhaps perceived as antithetical to colour-blind attitudes (discussed above) as

well as seeking meaning in whiteness (which was deemed meaningless, Section 7.6).

This led to feelings of anger and hostility aimed toward me. The impact of this hostility

was discussed in Chapter 6 (Section 6.4).

Mazzocco (2017) has argued that white people can feel self-consciousness in racial

discourse due to a lack of historical context. It would seem that this understanding is

also applicable to Vix's concept of reverse racism as she felt discriminated against due

to criticism of her enjoyment of styling black hair, which was de-contextualised from

Eurocentric beauty standards placed on women of colour (Gentles-Peart, 2018;

Mbunyuza-Memani, 2019), and de-historicised from white women's relationship with

black women's hair (Barrett, 2016; Dabiri, 2020). Similarly, Phil's comparison of 'white

power' to 'black power' as his example of anti-white prejudice, was de-historised and disconnected from its socio-political context.

Another explanation is that the participants expressions of reverse racism was an example of what Lentin (2020) termed 'not racism', or white people's redefining of racism to uphold white supremacy. Similarly, Titley's (2019) debatability of racism was also evidenced by the questioning of the purpose of asking about whiteness. It could be suggested that while racism was not semantically understood, it was nonetheless perceived as something to be distanced from as only 'bad' people are racist. Despite this, three of the participants did feel comfortable in debating whether discourse around whiteness was racist. Thus, there was an attempt to re-define racism, despite having an inaccurate understanding of what it is. Developing further understanding of how white people understand reverse racism is an area of research I would like to pursue.

Therefore, although the white trainee counsellors understanding of racism was confused with other forms of discrimination, it appeared to be understood through the lens of colour-blindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). This was shown through the presence of three of the four 'frames' of colour-blindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). The first was abstract liberalism, i.e., *'I don't see skin colour'*, and a belief that everyone is equal thus discounting the reality of racial inequality, the second was minimisation through only 'seeing' overt forms of racism and justifying the racism of others, and the third through cultural racism in seeming to place responsibility for the success/failure of counselling Muslim clients on their cultural attitudes. The fourth frame of

naturalisation, or the argument it is natural for racialised groups of people to stay together, was not found in the research. Cultural racism could also be understood as a form of racialisation (Garner, 2017) and differential racialisation (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017).

However, this colour-blindness was not unique to the participants, as colour-blindness has been the primary way Governments have addressed policies in the post-racial era (Wise, 2010; The Runnymede Trust, 2016a) and is reflected in the colour-blind approach taken in the BACP's course accreditation guidelines (BACP 2012; 2019) and ethical framework (BACP, 2018a). Hence, the participants are reproducing systemic colour-blind attitudes as the normalised racial attitude.

The expressions of reverse racism were understood not as resistance to minorities racial progress (Norton and Sommers, 2011; Wilkens and Kaiser, 2014), but rather as a 'push-back' against what was possibly perceived as my 'incorrect' approach to racial discourse, i.e., not colour-blind, through asking about whiteness. It also seemed that the historical and contemporary socio-political disconnection found in the understanding of 'race' (Section 7.4) was redolent of a disconnection when talking about reverse racism. However, further research is recommended to understand the cognitive and emotive factors present in claims of reverse racism.

7.6 White Trainee Counsellors Understanding of Whiteness
Theme 2 (White (Un)Awareness), highlighted that for the participants their whiteness was meaningless to them. This was evidenced not only by their articulated responses

to this question (Chapter 5, Section 5.3), but also the fact that that their

contemplation of *'what does being white mean to you?'* was so new that it was

captured in the interview. This supports the argument that whiteness is a de-racialised

identity for white people (Garner, 2007; Ryde, 2011) and normalised to beyond the

point of recognition (Halley, Eshleman, and Mahadevan-Vijaya, 2011). When

considering the racial identity awareness of the participants, the first 'contact' stage in

Helms' White Racial Identity Model (Helms, 1990, pp. 55-58), in which white people

have an 'inconsistent awareness of being white' (Helms, 1990, p. 55) did not seem to

be a sufficient descriptor. This is because for most of the participants, their awareness

of being white was not 'inconsistent', but non-existent. Therefore, white ignorance

(Mills, 2007) seems a more appropriate description than Helms (1990) contact phase

to encapsulate the participants lack of racial awareness, as it seemed to come from a

place of not knowing. However, the participants were not unique in this lack of racial

awareness. One of Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll's (2009) core theoretical principles of

critical whiteness studies, is white people are not aware or conscious of having a white

identity, nor aware of its social construction (Chapter 2, Section 2.1.2). It seems that

the participants understanding of their whiteness was not an anomaly but in line with

a general lack of racial awareness amongst white people.

Similarly, one of Applebaum's (2016a) key concepts of critical whiteness studies is that

of the invisibility of whiteness. Critical whiteness studies seeks to make whiteness

visible (Applebaum, 2016a). It seemed that my asking about whiteness in the

interviews made whiteness visible and consequently there was 'push-back' to this,

such as talk of reverse racism (discussed above). There also seemed to be examples of

white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018) in the anger and emotional withdrawal expressed by some participants. This illustrates how my concept of White Ignorance Disruption works: the participants awareness of being white seemed to be rooted in white ignorance (Mills, 2007), as shown by their lack of previous contemplation about the meaning of being white. I then asked, *'what does being white mean to you?'* which stimulated an emotional and cognitive process which I call White Ignorance Disruption. This process then led to emotional responses (anger/withdrawal) akin to white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018) and cognitive responses (talk of reverse racism) akin to the theory of 'not racism' (Lentin, 2020).

However, not all of the participants were hostile to questions about whiteness. Being white was something that Vix, Betty and Emily re-connected with in the interview. What unified these three experiences was that their past awareness of being white was rooted in negative experiences. In the interview, their awareness of being white was rekindled and tentatively explored. This led to admittance to thoughts of possessing a *'slight'* bit of racism and recognition of white privilege (McIntosh, 1988; Jensen, 2005; Kendell, 2013; Bhopal, 2018; Ryde, 2019). Consequently, emotions such as white guilt (Ryde, 2009, p. 52; Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015, p. 16) and white empathy (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015, p. 18) emerged. Again, this shows White Ignorance Disruption in action. The three participants' white ignorance about what it means to be white, was disrupted through asking '*what does being white mean to you?*', this started White Ignorance Disruption through the unformed cognitive and emotional process of ruminating on this question, which facilitated reconnection to

past memories, this then elicited the emotional responses of white guilt and white empathy.

Therefore, the white trainee counsellors understanding of whiteness as de-racialised and meaningless can be located in the invisibility of whiteness (Applebaum, 2016a), of it being a de-racialised identity for white people (Garner, 2007; Ryde, 2009; Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll, 2009) and its normalisation as the standard to which other 'race's' are measured (Halley, Eshleman, and Mahadevan-Vijaya, 2011). Similarly, counselling pedagogy does not address whiteness (Ryde, 2011; Rotham, Malott and Paone, 2012; d'Ardenne, 2013; Bartoli *et al*, 2015). This is evidenced in the BACP's course accreditation criteria (BACP, 2012; 2019) and ethical framework (2018a). Further, counselling pedagogy is situated in an education system which also privileges Eurocentric (i.e., white) approaches which fail to openly address 'race' (Arday and Mirza, 2018; Bhambra, Nisancioglu and Gebrial, 2018; Rollock, 2018). It could be argued that white privilege, the second core theoretical principle of critical whiteness studies (Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll, 2009) was present. White privilege (McIntosh, 1988; Jensen, 2005; Kendell, 2013; Bhopal, 2018; Ryde, 2019) was discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.1.4). Although a critiqued term (Blum, 2008; Fuller, 2016; Chen, 2017) the notion of unearned by-products of whiteness can perhaps be seen in the invisibility of whiteness at various levels of counselling from individual trainee counsellors to policy (BACP, 2018a) and curriculum (BACP 2012; Student Handbook 2019/2020). This perhaps is reinforced by counselling being a white dominated profession (Lago, 2011, p. 179; Boyle, 2020). Consequently, the white trainee

counsellors understanding of whiteness found in this research seems to be
representative of the systemic understanding of whiteness.

7.7 Overview of the Findings

The findings of this doctoral research support the three core principles of critical

whiteness studies: that white people are unaware of their 'race', unaware of the

privileges and colour-blind ideology is dominant (Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll, 2009,

pp. 407-409). The first of these principles was evidenced by whiteness being

meaningless and therefore de-racialised, further the participants were semantically

confused as to what constitutes as 'race' and racism. The privileges of being white in

counselling training can perhaps be found in whiteness being the normalised standard

for counselling training (Rotham, Malott and Paone, 2012), the development of a

white racial identity not being required (Ryde, 2011) and an overall absence of

discourse on 'race', racism and whiteness (d'Ardenne, 2013; Turner, 2018b; Jackson,

2020a; 2020b). This argument is supported by the course accreditation criteria (BACP,

2012; 2019) and the ethical framework (BACP, 2018a), which does not require, in

Betty's words, white trainee counsellors to '*go there*', i.e., critically engage with 'race',

racism and whiteness. Further, colour-blind ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2018) was

dominant through the not 'seeing' of 'race' being understood as the correct way to

understand 'race', and in three of the four frames of Bonilla-Silva's (2018) colour-blind

ideology being identified (Section 7.5).

The findings also support the argument that for white people talking about 'race',

racism and whiteness can be fraught with emotion (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015;

Matias, Montoya and Nishi, 2016; DiAngelo, 2018). The socio-political disconnection found in counselling (Kearney, 1996; Tuckwell, 2002; Ryde, 2011; McLeod, 2013) was also reflected in the course accreditation criteria (BACP, 2012; 2019) and seemed to be reproduced in the classroom where opportunities to discuss socio-political issues were missed and/or avoided (such as: 'race', gender, gender identity, domestic abuse, disabilities and cultural differences).

This research suggests that white trainee counsellors in South Wales understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness seems to show a relationship with white peoples understanding more generally (discussed in Chapters 2, 6 and 7). An added complication is the intersecting ideas of the counsellor as a 'good' person and colour-blind ideology as the 'good' attitude toward 'race'; this may create a profession specific barrier to learning about 'race'. This supports the argument that racism is seen by whites dichotomously in terms of 'good' and 'bad' people (Sullivan, 2014a; Trepagnier, 2016; DiAngelo, 2018). Therefore, counselling as a profession may fall into a trap of being colour-blind and a perception of being professional examples of 'good white people' (Sullivan, 2014a). I have termed this the 'Good White Counsellor'. A professional narrative of being a 'Good White Counsellor' will have consequences for counsellors and clients of colour whose lived realities will continue to be overlooked in training, theory and practice.

Furthering this argument, in Chapter 6 (Section 6.7), Phillips' (2011) multilevel framework was adapted to understand this research. It was argued that counselling may be culpable of systemic colour-blind racism. At the micro level, individual white

trainee counsellors had colour-blind attitudes through not 'seeing' 'race', they were semantically confused as to what constitutes 'race' and racism, some expressed belief in reverse racism, their whiteness was de-racialised, and they seemed to have a self-perception of being a 'Good White Counsellor'. At the meso level it was exhibited institutionally through course accreditation guidelines (BACP 2012; 2019) and ethical framework (BACP 2018a) omitting the words 'race', 'racism' and whiteness'. This was reproduced in ambiguous training criteria which did not explicitly present how 'diversity' should be taught or trainee understanding should be assessed (Student Handbook 2019/2020). Additionally, counselling pedagogy is located in an education system which is generally colour-blind and Eurocentric (Arday and Mirza, 2018; Bhambra, Nisancioglu and Gebrial, 2018; Rollock, 2018). The micro and meso levels are themselves situated in the macro level ideas of mental health and wellness being seen through a Westernised and Eurocentric lens (Fernando, 2010; Watters, 2011; Fernando, 2014; Mills, 2014; Fernando and Moodley, 2018) and where whiteness is rendered invisible and de-racialised (Garner, 2007; Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll, 2009; Ryde, 2009; Clarke and Garner, 2010; Halley, Eshleman, and Mahadevan-Vijaya, 2011; Hayes *et al*, 2013; Applebaum, 2016a).

Therefore, it could be argued that counselling training and its relevant policies and practices can act as a bridge between the micro and macro understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness within counselling specifically and mental health and whiteness more generally. To overcome this, Kendi's (2019) argument for policy change prior to educational efforts is recommended. This would entail course accreditation guidelines, curriculum and ethical frameworks to explicitly include the learning of

'race', racism and whiteness. I will argue that 'Critical Whiteness Counselling Studies',

i.e., an interdisciplinary socio-political training on 'race', racism and whiteness which

critically interrogates counselling theory and practice, would be a pedagogical step

toward challenging colour-blind attitudes at all levels of counselling (Section 7.8).

However, educational institutions having anti-discriminatory policies does not

necessarily equate to effective implementation of those policies (Ahmed, 2012).

Further research is needed to ascertain whether 'Critical Whiteness Counselling

Studies' and relevant policy changes would be effective in instigating institutional (i.e.,

the BACP and counselling training providers) change.

However, the themes identified in this research may provide a pathway to overcome

the potential obstacles to effective anti-racist education, such as 'Critical Whiteness

Counselling Studies'. These obstacles were:

- Confusion over what constitutes as 'race' (Theme 1)
- Confusion over constitutes as racism (Theme 1)
- Self-consciousness in talking about 'race' (Theme 1)
- Distancing the self and others from racism (Theme 1)
- De-racialised white identity (Theme 2)
- Colour-blind attitudes (Theme 3)
- The 'Good White Counsellor' narrative (Theme 3)
- Student and curriculum socio-political disconnection (Theme 4)

These factors all seemed to underpin the participants attitudes toward anti-racist

education (Theme 4, Chapter 5, Section 5.5). This attitude seemed to be marked by

ambivalence and confusion toward the purpose of learning about 'race' on a

counselling course. This was reinforced by a perception that 'race' education may

'target' people of colour or *'vilify'* white people. Therefore, anti-racist counselling

education, e.g., 'Critical Whiteness Counselling Studies' (Section 7.8) would need to address these factors.

However, it is hoped that such an approach may affect a more lasting White Ignorance Disruption at micro (individual) and meso (pedagogy and policy) levels of counselling. This could have potentially positive consequences for clients and counsellors of colour as their racial realities would be seen and talked about with white counsellors who felt equipped and comfortable in racial discourse.

However, this is not necessarily a straightforward endeavour. Underpinning this misunderstanding of 'race', racism and whiteness (at all levels) was white ignorance (Mills, 2007) or the wilful refusal to 'see' the realities and consequences of 'race' lest it upset the racial hierarchy. Strengthening this, was the perception the participants had of the counsellor being a 'good' person; a notion which intersects with the concept of the 'good white person' (Sullivan, 2014a) who would be appalled to think of themselves as racist. In this respect the 'Good White Counsellor' seems to have white ignorance (Mills, 2007) about what constitutes as 'race' and racism, and de-racialises whiteness whilst simultaneously understanding colour-blind attitudes as the moralistic way to view 'race' (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Thus, emotional and cognitive resistance to white trainee counsellors learning about 'race', racism and whiteness is a probable outcome of white ignorance (Mills, 2007) when combined with colour-blind attitudes (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Therefore, what I have termed White Ignorance Disruption will be challenging and confronting to white counselling trainees as it will contradict their white ignorance and sincerely held colour-blind convictions. Consequently, the

'disruptor' may be positioned as the 'bad' person for addressing 'race', racism and whiteness. Applying one of critical race theory's core concepts to the research findings, it is reasonable to suggest that counselling pedagogy has not yet found its 'interest convergence' (Bell, 1980; Delgado and Stefancic, 2017, p. 9) or an incentive to unambiguously address 'race', racism and whiteness in counselling. However, as Chapter 2 (Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2) demonstrated, 'race' is a socially constructed concept. Therefore, it can be de-constructed and this doctoral research into how white trainee counsellors in South Wales understand 'race', racism and whiteness may be a tentative step toward that deconstruction within the counselling context. From the themes identified, I have proposed that counselling pedagogy can de-construct 'race' within counselling training, theory and practice through 'Critical Whiteness Counselling Studies' (Section 7.8) and by changing its policies such as course accreditation guidelines (BACP 2012; 2019) and ethical framework (BACP, 2018a) to include 'race', racism and whiteness.

7.8 Implications, Limitations and Recommendations

Implications

I have presented two theoretical concepts in this thesis through White Ignorance Disruption and the Good White Counsellor; both theories present an original contribution to knowledge. White Ignorance Disruption is a descriptive term for the process for when white people's ignorance about 'race', racism and whiteness alters but remains unformed. White Ignorance Disruption can be used as a theoretical bridge to connect white ignorance (Mills, 2007) to the myriad of cognitive and affective responses white people experience when confronting 'race' (such as: Spanierman and

Cabrera, 2015; DiAngelo, 2018) as it is a descriptive term to describe the initial stirring of unformed emotional and cognitive responses to racial discourse. I have conceived of it as a flexible concept that may encompass various affective and cognitive responses and as a way to describe the place in-between white ignorance and white awareness or a precursor to retreating back into white ignorance. The concept of the Good White Counsellor was identified through a combination of the research participants belief that to see or to speak about 'race' was racist (meaning colour-blindness was the moralistic way to view 'race'), their understanding of racism being expressed by 'bad' people and their description of a counsellor as being imbued with positive characteristics. In this way, a profession specific theory was identified.

Additional work is needed to further both theories, but they may prove to be theoretical contributions to the fields of critical whiteness studies and counselling. White ignorance Disruption can contribute through its ability to provide a bridge from Mills' (2007) white ignorance and other theories of whiteness, and its flexibility which means it could be applied to various settings and disciplines. Similarly, identifying the existence of the Good White Counsellor can provide an explicit way to challenge colour-blind attitudes and be a means to facilitate racial discourse in counselling.

Limitations

As with all research, this doctoral research has its limitations. Perhaps the most significant of these is the resurgence of vicarious traumatisation I experienced during the period of participant-observations. In Chapter 1 (Section 1.1) of this thesis, I explained that I experienced vicarious traumatisation as an effect of counselling

practice. In the months prior to starting the data collection, the symptoms had improved significantly. However, after my first day of the fieldwork, I experienced an unexpected return of the symptoms: nightmares, increased anxiety, tearfulness, exhaustion and a general despondency. I had not anticipated that undertaking fieldwork would have such a profound effect; this was an oversight and one that I have learned from. While the well-being of the participants was an ethical consideration at the forefront of my mind, I had neglected to consider the personal toll the research may take. I have reflexively considered the emotional impact of the research process elsewhere (Smith, 2021, see Appendix vi), which I hope will be useful to PhD students and researchers alike.

Also mentioned in the introduction, this research has focused on the black/white binary of 'race' (Section 1.5). This means that literature relating to biracial and other people of colour has not been included in this research, meaning that the findings are limited. Also, given its use of critical whiteness studies, being conducted by a white researcher and having white participants, it may be open to the criticism of centring whiteness. The decision to focus on white trainee counsellors understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness was a deliberate as I did not want to risk participants of colour experiencing 'racial trauma' (Carter, 2007) through a white researcher asking about their experiences. However, this decision means that the 'unique voice of colour' (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017, p. 11) is absent in relation to counsellors of colour. Further research which includes the experiences of trainee counsellors of colour on white-dominated counselling courses in Wales will provide an important counterpart to this research.

Limitations regarding the methods used in this research have been explored in Chapter 4 (Section 4.5). The primary limitation of the method is that the combination of methodology and method was a personal decision made by a novice researcher, not one rooted in academic precedent. Further, more time could have been spent on the participant-observation, as arguably six weeks does not give enough time to fully become a part of the culture being observed. However, given the re-emergence of vicarious traumatisation (Smith, 2021, see Appendix vi) and the Covid-19 pandemic, it would not have been possible to continue participant-observation anyway. It is also recognised that due to Covid-19, a face-to-face member check was unable to take place, thus this thesis lacks insight into the participants' response to the research findings. In addition, the use of reflexivity throughout the research process was done in accordance with the methodology (Noblit, Flores and Murillo 2004; Anders, 2019) but it is accepted that reflexivity risks becoming a vehicle for egocentrism.

Similarly, another potential limitation is my own positionality as a white woman. In accordance with the post-critical ethnographic methodology used in this research (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders, 2019), which emphasises the importance of researcher positionality, I have been reflexive throughout this thesis about my role in this research. As discussed in Chapter 6 (Section 6.1), I experienced my own White Ignorance Disruption from the trap of the 'good white person' (Sullivan, 2014a). Therefore, the white researcher can also unwittingly subscribe to this way of thinking, with their 'race' research potentially becoming 'evidence' of being a 'good' white person.

It is recognised that I have spent my life benefitting from white supremacy and the 'racial contract' (Mills, 1997). Even as a white woman who positions herself as anti-racist, it does not mean that I am free of white ignorance (Mills, 2007) or that this thesis is evidence of racial awareness. Indeed, I see this doctoral research as the beginning of racial awareness, not the completion of it. Therefore, critical feedback is welcomed on what I have 'seen' and what I have not 'seen'.

Recommendations

The recommendation of this research is the introduction of 'Critical Whiteness Counselling Studies'. It is envisaged that this would incorporate the theoretical aspect of critical whiteness studies with the theoretical and practice aspect of counselling. It could be applicable to students, lecturers and the counselling curriculum. This would require:

- Learning about the historical and contemporary understandings of 'race', racism and whiteness (including its social construction).
- Personal reflection on one's prejudices and racisms.
- Awareness of systemic racism.
- Awareness of overt and covert racism.
- Awareness of the advantages of whiteness.
- Challenging colour-blind ideology.
- Challenging the concept of the Good White Counsellor.
- Critical engagement with Eurocentric counselling theory.
- Decolonialising the counselling curriculum.
- Critical engagement with counselling policies.
- Development of counselling skills that incorporate socio-political awareness.

Taking an interdisciplinary approach, 'Critical Whiteness Counselling Studies' would draw on not only counselling but also sociological theories. It is thought that as

counselling training requires personal development and reflexive learning alongside the development of counselling skills, counselling trainees would be well placed to undertake the personal reflection required in learning about 'race', racism and whiteness. This would mean that White Ignorance Disruption, and the myriad emotional responses that it entails, could be harnessed pedagogically through 'Critical Whiteness Counselling Studies'.

However, as Kendi (2019) argues, education is not sufficient without policy change. Therefore, to make 'Critical Whiteness Counselling Studies' effective, changing the BACP ethical framework (BACP, 2018a), course accreditation guidelines (BACP, 2012; 2019) and consequently the curriculum, would ensure systemic change takes place in relation to 'race', racism and whiteness. The recommended changes are the inclusion of the words 'race', racism and whiteness in BACP policies, in replacement of 'diversity'. By extension, this would necessitate the inclusion of other forms of discrimination such as gender, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, ageism etc., to also be named. Thus, bringing unambiguous awareness to those forms of discrimination too.

Areas for further research have also been identified. As mentioned above, the small scale of this research means it would be interesting to apply the same research questions to other white trainee counsellors to see whether these findings are specific to its geographical region or whether they are representative of white trainee counsellors' general understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness. Research which

includes the experiences of trainee counsellors of colour in Wales is strongly

recommended.

Further research around 'Critical Whiteness Counselling Studies' is also recommended

to explore its potential and efficacy. Another recommendation is for further research

into white people in Wales/the UK who feel they have been the victims of reverse

racism in order to explore its component beliefs. Also identified, was a need to

explore the role that learning differences, such as dyslexia, may or may not play in

white people's understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness. A general

recommendation is that the field of critical whiteness studies is expanded in Welsh

academia through further Wales based research into 'race', racism and whiteness.

7.9 Personal Reflections and Final Thoughts

Undertaking this research was at times personally challenging. It led to a resurgence in

the symptoms of vicarious traumatisation (Smith 2021, Appendix vi) which initiated

my leaving counselling practice in 2018. Despite this, it served as a useful lesson for

any future research I may undertake; that researcher self-care is an ethical

consideration as important as the ethical care for research participants. Similarly, this

research was conducted at a time when 'race', racism and whiteness is visible and in

the white public consciousness through the political climate, Black Lives Matter

(Reuters, 2020) and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic (Jarved *et al*, 2020; Public

Health England, 2020; Welsh Government, 2020a). Hence the research findings

contained within these pages seems relevant to the need for counselling theory,

training and practice to (accurately) understand 'race', racism and whiteness.

However, this is not to simplify the road to racial justice as it is also recognised that racial justice in all contexts, not just counselling, will be an ongoing one. Nonetheless, it is hoped that the two new concepts I have presented in this research of 'White Ignorance Disruption' and the 'Good White Counsellor' will contribute to progressing the work within the fields of social justice and racial equality.

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APPENDICES

Appendix i: Consent Forms and Information Sheets

PhD research Social Justice:
How do white trainee counsellors in South Wales define 'race' and racism?
Researcher: Ruth Smith

General information

What is the research is about?
This research is about how white trainee counsellors in South Wales define 'race' and racism.

Why it is being conducted?
It is being conducted to (a) find out more about this subject, (b) to provide and original contribution to knowledge and (c) to fulfil the requirements of a PhD programme at the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David.

Who it is being conducted for?
It is being conducted for the purposes of the PhD in Social Justice at the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David.

Who is funding it?
It is not funded by an external body and is entirely self-funded by the researcher.

What will happen to the results?
The data collected will be analysed and re-produced in the completed PhD thesis. The results will be anonymous and confidential.

Where the results will appear and who is likely to have access to them?
The results will appear in the completed PhD thesis and possibly published in academic journal articles and/or a book. Confidentiality and anonymity will still be upheld in any format that uses the research findings through the use of pseudonyms for participants and the college.

What will be expected if you agree to participate and how long will participation take?
If you agree to participate, I would like to join your year group for one academic term. I will become a part of the group as a 'participant-observer' which means I will be present and take part in group activities such as lectures, skills practice, join students during lunch breaks etc. I will make notes on things such as what is discussed in lectures, the group dynamic and any informal conversations we may have; this is

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called 'informal interviewing' and I will ask your permission to use what is said in my thesis. I would like to conduct semi-structured interviews and/or a focus group toward the end of my time with the group. I would also like to have copies of any handouts that are used in lectures.

What will anonymity and confidentiality mean in practice?

The college will remain anonymous to protect your identity and be referred to as 'Welsh College A'. I will keep the field notes, interview recordings and transcriptions in a locked box that only I have access to. You will choose a pseudonym that I will use in the thesis and not be referred to by your real name. Any identifying information will not be included.

Please note:

You do not have to participate. If you choose not to participate, I will not record any observations of you or conversations that we have. Not choosing to participate will have no impact on your course assessment.

Even if you have agreed to participate, you can withdraw any time without detriment. Any observations I have made or conversations we have had will not be included in the thesis. Withdrawing will have no impact on your course assessment, it will not change our interactions and your decision to withdraw will be kept confidential.

If you agree to participate and I ask to join your group activity, you can refuse to let me do so, and there will be no detriment.

Please read the information sheets for further information.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact me: Ruth Smith rsmith.139666@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

Supervisors: Dr Caroline Lohmann-Hancock C.Lohmann-hancock@uwtsd.ac.uk and Dr Nichola Welton n.welton@uwtsd.ac.uk

PhD research Social Justice:
How do white trainee counsellors in Wales define 'race' and racism?

__Purpose of study:__

The main aim of this PhD research is to gain understanding of how white trainee counsellors define race and racism. I am looking for participants who are in level 4 of counselling training and identify as white.

The research seeks to explore whether similar or diverse definitions are understood by white trainee counsellors and whether it is felt the history or race is relevant to the participants' contemporary lives.

__What participating in this study will involve:__

I am seeking white trainee counsellors and to participate in a sixty-minute audio-recorded interview. In the interview, you will be asked questions related to race.

I am also seeking to become a 'participant-observer' with a training group for one academic term. This would involve me becoming a part of the group through attending lectures, skills practice and group activities (excluding personal development groups)

All data collected will be __confidential__ and all contributions made during the interview and seminars/lectures will be __anonymised.__ Interviews will be conducted face-to-face in a location of your convenience.

Information sheet - interview

PhD Research: How do white trainee counsellors in South Wales define 'race' and racism?

Researcher: Ruth Smith

You are being invited to participate in a research study interview. Please take time to read this information sheet carefully as it will outline why the research is being conducted and what participation will entail. Please ask if you require clarification or additional information.

This research is being carried out as part of a PhD in Social Justice by Ruth Smith and is being supervised by Dr Caroline Lohman-Hancock and Dr Nichola Welton from the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David.

- The purpose of this study is to understand of how white trainee counsellors define race and racism.

- You are being invited to take part in this research because you identify as white and you are a trainee counsellor (at level 4).

- An interview will be carried out face-to-face, audio recorded and will take approximately sixty minutes.

- The audio-recording will be transcribed, anonymised and deleted upon completion of the research.

- Digital anonymised transcriptions will be kept on a USB which will be locked in a cabinet that only I have access to. Once the research is completed it will be deleted.

- All personal details such as your name and contact details will be kept securely and separately and disposed safely upon completion of the research.

- In the thesis, you will be referred to by a pseudonym of your choosing.

- If you would like to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

- You have the right to withdraw at any time and all information used will be deleted/destroyed.
- Themes that occur in the analysis of the interview will also be discussed in the thesis.
- Anticipated risks to taking part in this research are thought to be minimal. However, should you experience any emotional distress then please talk to your tutor or contact your clinical supervisor and/or personal therapist.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact me: Ruth Smith rsmith.139666@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

Supervisors: Dr Caroline Lohmann-Hancock C.Lohmann-hancock@uwtsd.ac.uk and Dr Nichola Welton n.welton@uwtsd.ac.uk

Information sheet – observation

PhD Research: How do white trainee counsellors in South Wales define 'race' and racism?

Researcher: Ruth Smith

You are being invited to participate in a research study observation. Please take time to read this information sheet carefully as it will outline why the research is being conducted and what participation will entail. Please ask if you require clarification or additional information.

This research is being carried out as part of a PhD in Social Justice by Ruth Smith and is being supervised by Dr Caroline Lohman-Hancock and Dr Nichola Welton from the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David.

- The purpose of this study is to understand of how white trainee counsellors define race and racism.

- You are being invited to take part in this research because you identify as white and you are a trainee counsellor (at level 4).

- I will observe any lectures/seminars, activities such as skills practice and become a part of the group for one academic term. I will take copies of lectures handouts.

- I will make field notes on things such as:
  - The content of the lecture
  - Student contributions
  - Group dynamic
  - Issues/themes/questions that emerge.
  - Informal conversations we may have (called 'informal interviewing')
- All notes will be anonymised and confidential.

- They will be kept locked in a cabinet that only I have access to.

- Once the research is completed it will be destroyed.

- All personal details such as your name and contact details will be kept securely and separately and disposed safely upon completion of the research.

- In the thesis, you will be referred to by a pseudonym of your choosing.

- If you would like to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

- You have the right to withdraw at any time and all information used will be deleted/destroyed.

- Themes that occur in the analysis of the observation will also be discussed in the thesis.

- Anticipated risks to taking part in this research are thought to be minimal. However, should you experience any emotional distress then please talk to your tutor or contact your clinical supervisor and/or personal therapist.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact me: Ruth Smith rsmith.139666@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

Supervisors: Dr Caroline Lohmann-Hancock C.Lohmann-hancock@uwtsd.ac.uk and Dr Nichola Welton n.welton@uwtsd.ac.uk

Participant Consent Form

PhD Research: How do white trainee counsellors in South Wales define 'race' and racism?

Researcher: Ruth Smith (rsmith.139666@student.uwtsd.ac.uk)

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheets provided.

2. I can confirm that I have been given the researcher's and research supervisor's contact details.

3. I understand that participation is voluntary, does not have any impact on my course assessment, and <u>I can withdraw at any time</u>. Should I withdraw all data will be destroyed.

4. I understand that any themes that occur in the analysis of the interview and class observations will be discussed in the thesis.

5. I understand that data collected for the interview and observations will be anonymised with a pseudonym of my choosing.

6. I understand that personal information will be kept secure and confidential.

7. I understand the researcher (Ruth Smith) is not here to formally advise in an academic or personal capacity. Any safeguarding issues that are disclosed to the researcher will be shared with the course tutor.

8. I consent to participate in this research project in an audio-recorded face-to-face interview / observation / both (please circle)

Name: _____ Signature:

_____

Date: _____   Email: _____   I wish to be

emailed a report of the research findings one the research project is completed: Yes /

No

Interview Schedule

PhD Research: How do white trainee counsellors in South Wales define 'race' and racism?

Researcher: Ruth Smith (rsmith.139666@student.uwtsd.ac.uk)

Date: _____ Time of Interview: Start: _____ End: _____

Venue: _____

Participant chosen pseudonym: _____

Introduction:

The researcher will introduce herself to the participant, provide a description of the research project and explain the format of the interview. The researcher will provide an information and ensure that the participant has signed the consent form. The participant will be reminded of their right to withdraw from the research project at any time. Once the participant feels ready the interview will begin and last approximately sixty minutes. All data gathered will be **anonymised** and **confidential.**

Interview topic:

The participant will be asked to define 'race' and racism, and to answer questions on this topic. The interview will be semi-structured to allow the participant to share their experiences. When required reflection, paraphrasing and nonverbal communication will be used, such as nodding. At the end, the participant will be asked if they have any final thoughts or questions. They will be reminded of the procedure should they have any concerns post-interview. They will be thanked for their contribution and given a debriefing sheet. Participants will be reminded of the procedure should they have any concerns post-interview. They will be thanked for their contribution and given a debriefing sheet.

Participants can choose to withdraw their consent to being interviewed at any time. If the participant chooses to withdraw their consent post-interview, this will be respected, and the data will not be included in the thesis.

This decision will be kept confidential and will have no impact on your course assessment.

Observation Schedule

PhD Research: How do white trainee counsellors in South Wales define 'race' and racism?

Researcher: Ruth Smith (rsmith.139666@student.uwtsd.ac.uk)

Spring Term 2020

Introduction:

The researcher will participate and observe group activities such as lectures, skills practice and during break times. The participants have the right to withdraw from the research project at any time. All data gathered will be **anonymised** and **confidential**.

Observation process:

The researcher will participate, observe and make notes during such as:

- o The content of the lecture
- o Student contributions
- o Group dynamic
- o Issues/themes/questions that emerge.
- o Informal conversations we may have (called 'informal interviewing')

Participants can choose to withdraw their consent to be observed at any time. If the participant chooses to withdraw their consent post-observation, this will be respected, and the data will not be included in the thesis.

This decision will be kept confidential and will have no impact on your course assessment.

Debriefing sheet - Interview

PhD Research: How do white trainee counsellors in South Wales define 'race' and racism?

Researcher: Ruth Smith (rsmith.139666@student.uwtsd.ac.uk)

Thank you for participating in this research study interview. Please take time to read this information sheet carefully as it will provide post-interview information. Please ask if you require clarification or additional information.

- The audio-recording will be transcribed, anonymised and deleted upon completion of the PhD.

- Digital anonymised transcriptions will be kept on a USB which will be locked in a cabinet that only I have access to. Once the research is completed it will be deleted.

- All personal details such as your name and contact details will be kept securely and separately and disposed safely upon completion of the research.

- In thesis, you will be referred to by your chosen pseudonym.

- You have the right to withdraw at any time and all information used will be deleted/destroyed.

- Themes that occur in the analysis of the interview will be discussed in the thesis.

- Anticipated risks to taking part in this research are thought to be minimal. However, should you experience any emotional distress then please talk to your tutor, contact your personal therapist and / or clinical supervisor.

Participants will be reminded of the procedure should they have any concerns post-interview. They will be thanked for their contribution and given a debriefing sheet.

Participants can choose to withdraw their consent to being interviewed at any time. If the participant chooses to withdraw their consent post-interview, this will be respected, and the data will not be included in the thesis.

This decision will be kept confidential and will have no impact on your course assessment.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact me: Ruth Smith rsmith.139666@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

Supervisors: Dr Caroline Lohmann-Hancock C.Lohmann-hancock@uwtsd.ac.uk and Dr Nichola Welton n.welton@uwtsd.ac.uk

<u>Debriefing sheet – observation</u>

PhD Research: How do white trainee counsellors in South Wales define 'race' and
racism?
Researcher: Ruth Smith (rsmith.139666@student.uwtsd.ac.uk)

Thank you for participating in this research. Please take time to read this information
sheet carefully as it will provide post class observation information. Please ask if you
require clarification or additional information.

- The notes taken will be transcribed, anonymised and destroyed upon
  completion of the PhD.

- All personal details such as your name and contact details will be kept securely
  and separately and disposed safely upon completion of the research.

- In thesis, you will be referred to by your chosen pseudonym.

- You have the right to withdraw at any time and all information used will be
  deleted/destroyed.

- Themes that occur in the analysis of the field notes will be discussed in the
  thesis.

- Anticipated risks to taking part in this research are thought to be minimal.
  However, should you experience any emotional distress then please tell you
  tutor, or contact your personal therapist and / or clinical supervisor.

Participants can choose to withdraw their consent to be observed at any time. If the
participant chooses to withdraw their consent post-observation, this will be respected,
and the data will not be included in the thesis.
This decision will be kept confidential and will have no impact on your course
assessment.

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If you have any questions or would like more information please contact me: Ruth Smith, rsmith.139666@student.uwtsd.ac.uk. Supervisors: Dr Caroline Lohmann-Hancock C.Lohmann-hancock@uwtsd.ac.uk and Dr Nichola Welton n.welton@uwtsd.ac.uk

Contacts

PhD Research: How do white trainee counsellors in South Wales define 'race' and racism and understand its history?

Researcher: Ruth Smith (rsmith.139666@student.uwtsd.ac.uk)

It is thought that the risks to participants are minimal. However, should you feel the need to talk to anyone at any point, these contacts may be useful to you:

Mental Health:
Samaritans:
Phone: 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline)
Website: www.samaritans.org.uk
Mind:
Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm)
Website: www.mind.org.uk
SANE
SANEline: 0300 304 7000 (daily, 4.30pm to 10.30pm)
Website: www.sane.org.uk/support
Race and Racism
Tell Mama:
Message +44 7341 846086 on WhatsApp
Website: https://tellmamauk.org/about-us/
Stop Hate UK:
Phone: 0800 138 1625 / Website: https://www.stophateuk.org/

Appendix ii: Report of Findings

This was sent to all research participants and the tutor in lieu of a face-to-face

presentation of findings and member check due to COVID-19. It was sent in

September 2020 and participants had four weeks to respond.

How do white trainee counsellors in south Wales understand 'race', racism and whiteness?

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The content of this document comes directly from the thesis – please do not quote or reference this document as the thesis has not yet been submitted. Thank-you.

Hello!

I hope that you are all keeping well, particularly during these challenging times. I would like to thank you all again for welcoming me into the group and for participating in the research. I said that you would all have a 'right of reply' to the research findings where you see the findings before I submitted and be able to give feedback.

Due to the pandemic, it will be more challenging to come into college and do this face-to-face. So, I have put together this document outlining the findings of the research.

I would love to hear your thoughts and you can email me directly – please feel free to be honest! I will continue to use your pseudonyms if I include your feedback into the thesis. You are free to disagree with what I found, and I will include any disagreements in the thesis to ensure your voice is heard.

However, this is completely voluntary, and you are under no obligation to give your feedback.

If you have any questions or comments, don't hesitate to email me.

Thank-you again for participating and please stay safe.

I wish you all the very best for the rest of your training.

Warm wishes

Ruth Smith rsmith.139666@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

Introduction

Before I present the findings, I wanted to begin by answering a question that perhaps some of you may had about the title of the research and the inclusion of the word 'white'.

I understand that some people felt that the research and the title was racist in itself. The reason I have chosen to undertake this research is because people of colour state that they are tired of trying to teach white people about 'race' and racism (such as: Eddo-Lodge, 2017). As Gay (2014, p. 259) argues, 'it's dangerous to suggest that the targets of oppression are wholly responsible for ending that oppression'. It is in this spirit that this research was undertaken.

Additionally, recounting racism can have negative impact on the mental health of black people, leading to 'racial trauma' which is similar to PTSD (Carter, 2007; Carter *et al*, 2017). Further, for white people, there can be a misconception that to 'see' 'race' is to be racist – however, this is known as colour-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018 - discussed below). Therefore, I chose to research only white participants. I am using critical whiteness studies (Delgado and Stefancic, 1997; Applebaum, 2016) as my theoretical lens. This school of scholarship critiques whiteness and its dominance in society with the aim of challenging racial injustice and racism. Therefore, this research has always been intended as contributing to anti-racism and is situated in scholarship which seeks to create racial justice and equality.

A brief note – the reason why I place the word race in inverted commas ('race') is because it is a 'social construct', i.e., a made up category with no genetic or biological foundation.

Findings

The analysis of findings chapter and the discussion of findings chapter amounts to approximately 40,000 words. Therefore, I will give brief summaries of each theme and include notes to show what the literature says about each finding. It is important to note that in the thesis, I do not make claims that my findings are the 'truth', rather they are my *interpretation* of what I heard and observed.

I found four themes in the research, outlined in the table below:

Theme	Subthemes
(Mis)Understanding 'race' and racism	Semantic Understanding Self-consciousness Distancing self (and others) from racism
White (Un)Awareness	Whiteness as meaningless 'Reverse racism' Complicated recognition of whiteness
Barriers to Racial Discourse	Lack of contact with POC Contact with POC. Colour-blind Attitudes 'Good White Counsellor'
Socio-Political (Dis)Connection	Student and curriculum disconnection Student and curriculum connection 'Race' education: Is it racist?

The first three themes can from the interviews and the last theme from both the participant-observation and the interviews.

As a group, there were times that you were very honest with me about your thoughts, feelings and life experiences – I have not included those in the themes as I felt that it was private and not relevant to the research question. Similarly, anything I heard in skills practice was not included as this was confidential information.

Theme 1: Mis-Understanding 'race' and racism

This theme refers to the difficulties the interview participants faced when talking about 'race' and racism.

Semantic Understanding

The first difficulty encountered was that the participants were not certain about what 'race' actually meant, but there seemed to be an unspoken understanding of it as a biological concept, signified by colour.

There was an absence of social commentary and lack of awareness that 'race' is a socially constructed concept with no biological foundation. The historical consequences of 'race' and its current socio-political implications was also absent. Therefore, it seemed that that the meaning of 'race' was not understood with

confidence and the default interpretation was of physiological difference, with skin colour being the explicit and regular answer.

Racism was understood only in overt forms, primarily as individual acts of violence. There was also confusion as to what constituted as racism, with other forms of discrimination (such as xenophobia and homophobia) being misunderstood as racism. Colour-blind ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2018) was seen as the ideal attitude toward racial difference.

Note:

'Race' is a social construct – it is a 'made-up' category of human beings based on the work of Carl Linnaeus in 1735 (Fara, 2017). There is no biological foundation for 'race' (Rattansi, 2007; Saini, 2019). Therefore 'race' is often misunderstood as being genetic differences when it is really a man-made category. It has been argued that one reason white people may avoid discussing 'race' is due to a lack understanding of the historical context of race (Mazzocco, 2017).

Racism does not only exist in overt forms such as racial slurs and violence, but it can also be covert and take many forms, including institutional racism (Better, 2008), colour-blind racism (Bonilla-Siva, 2018, discussed below), racialisation (Garner, 2012) and micro-aggressions (Sue, 2010).

Self-Consciousness

The participants felt self-conscious when talking about 'race' and racism. This was due to realising that they did not fully understand what 'race' and racism were and/or concerns about causing offence to people of colour.

Note:

White people often feel uncomfortable when talking about 'race' (DiAngelo, 2018) and can experience complex emotional responses (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015). This has been called an 'invisible state of emotionality' (Matias, 2016, p. 2). Therefore, this self-consciousness could be seen as 'normal' reaction experienced by many white people when trying to talk about 'race'.

Distancing self (and others) from racism

Despite there being a lack of clarity in the semantic understanding and a self-consciousness in not offending anyone, or being seen as offensive, there was a stronger conviction in not being seen as racist. Statements such as *'I'm not racist'*

were repeated or when talking about racism exhibited by friends/family, there were attempts to justify this behaviour (the person in question was young/old/not violent).

Note:

White people often try to distance themselves from racism. They can be more offended at being called racist, than with racism itself (Heuchan and Shukla, 2018). Distancing is one of the 'three D's' used by white people in racial discourse: deflection, denial and distancing (Lentin, 2015). Deflection and denial were not evident in the participants answers.

Theme 2: White (Un)Awareness

The second theme refers to the lack of awareness, and moments of awareness, the interview participants faced when talking about whiteness. For most of the participants, thinking and talking about whiteness what something they had never done prior to the interview.

Whiteness as meaningless

For many of the participants, being a white person was something that they had never considered before the interview took place. The question *'what does being white mean to you?'* was met with shock and then a dismissal that it meant anything at all. It was also met with anger at it being asked or emotional withdrawal. This suggests that for the participants, whiteness was de-racialised, with 'race' belonging to the 'Other'.

Note:

Whiteness is often a de-racialised identity for white people (Garner, 2007; Ryde, 2009) Further, white people tend to numb ourselves to the reality of whiteness (Kendell, 2013). Learning and talking about whiteness can lead to feelings of stress, this is known as 'white fragility' and results in complex emotional and behavioural responses (DiAngelo, 2018)

Reverse racism

'Reverse racism' is the belief that white people can be victims of racism and it is a concept that arose during some of the interviews. Some participants felt certain that it existed, others felt that the research question *'what does being white mean to you?'* was racist and another felt that the title of the research was racist as well (and suggested that others in the group did too).

'Reverse racism' is centred on a belief that racial minorities progress comes at the cost of anti-white prejudice (Norton and Sommers, 2011; Wilkens and Kaiser, 2014). This was not evident in the research as the participants did not express such an opinion. Rather, it seemed rooted in colour-blind attitudes (Bonilla-Silva, 2018 – see below) in that to talk about 'race' is to be racist. The belief of the existence of 'reverse racism' may also be an example of what Titley (2019) calls the 'debatability' of racism and Lentin (2020) calls 'not racism' whereby white people seek to define what racism is or is not.

Complicated recognition of whiteness

Although whiteness was something that most of the interview participants had not considered before the interview, some did begin to question what it might mean during the interview itself. For those who were becoming aware of what their whiteness may mean, it still brought up complex emotions.

Note:

As discussed about, talking about 'race' can lead to complex emotions for white people (Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015).

Theme 3: Barriers to Racial Discourse

The third theme considers the barriers to engaging with racial discourse that the interview participants faced when talking about 'race', racism whiteness.

Lack of contact with POC

Several participants used the word 'sheltered' in reference to their childhoods and therefore a lack of contact with people of colour. This meant that these interview participants had never thought or talked about 'race', racism or whiteness in the way in which they did in the interview.

Contact with POC.

For other participants, past and present friendships with people of colour were seen as sufficient evidence of engagement/knowledge about 'race'. Despite this contact with people of colour, the understandings of 'race' and racism as those who had little-to-no contact. However, these participants had more confidence with which they made their statements. Interestingly, these were the were participants who brought up 'reverse racism'.

Contact of lack of contact with people of colour in childhood can influence racial attitudes in white people (Frankenberg, 1993). The still influential work of Allport (1954), states that contact with minority groups can help reduce prejudice and requires shared goals, cooperation, equality and support via law and policy. However, it was not possible to ascertain whether these were present in the friendships of those who had/have contact with people of colour. The confidence found in talking about 'race', racism and whiteness (if not accuracy) in those who had contact with people of colour, may be because intergroup contact has been found to reduce anxiety in the majority group members (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2008; Pettigrew et al, 2011).

Colour-blind Attitudes

Colour-blindness, or white people not acknowledging 'race' under the misconception that to do so is itself racist (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Burke, 2019), was present in all of the participants interviews. For some, it there was an insistence that they do not see 'race' or that everyone is equal. This also occurred during the class participant-observation, when the class were shown a YouTube video of counselling session with a black female client and white male counsellor, the purpose of this was for to watch how to 'contract' a counselling session. Ina group discussion afterwards, none of the class or tutor mentioned the racial or gender difference of the client and counsellor and what this could mean to the counselling relationship. It seemed the whole class were 'blind' to the racial difference and the implications this could have. Moreover, for some, even seeing or speaking about 'race' was understood as offensive and a way of 'targeting' people of colour.

Colour-blind racism is the belief that 'race' is irrelevant, but this attitude dismisses the lived realities of people of colour and ignores the barriers they face (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). It is called the 'racism without racists' (Bonilla-Silva, 2018) as those who are colour-blind would be shocked to know that their attitudes are a form of racism. It contains beliefs such as everyone is equal and has the same opportunities if they work hard enough (ignoring structural racism) and it minimises covert forms of racism such as micro-aggressions, by only recognising overt forms (like violence). It is usually enacted by 'good white people' (Sullivan, 2014) who would be horrified to think they

are being racist. It is often seen as the correct and moral way to understand 'race'
(Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

'Good White Counsellor'

When asked to describe a typical counsellor, each of the interview participants provided positive characteristics that they felt made a counsellor's personality. This positive perception is understandable given this is their chosen profession. The reason for its inclusion here as a one reason for the difficulties in talking about 'race', racism and whiteness, is that it was felt that the participants self-consciousness stemmed from not only their (lack of) interactions with people of colour, but also from not wanting to offend or be seen as offensive. As such, if a counsellor is perceived to be a 'good' person, and 'good' people do not see/talk about 'race', then 'race', racism and whiteness will be avoided. This may account for the colour-blind attitudes and hostility when asked about whiteness.

Note:

Racism is often understood by white people in simplistic terms, that 'bad' people and racist and 'good' people are not racist; this is called the good/bad binary of racism (DiAngelo, 2018). Sullivan (2014) also refers to the 'good white people' who perceive themselves as liberal, and believe racism comes from the 'bad' white people. Instead, it is argued that racism exists on a continuum, whereby one is more or less racist, rather than simply 'not racist' (Trepagnier, 2016).

Theme 4: Socio-Political (Dis)Connection

This final theme considers the general socio-political dimension of the participants in their learning and within the curriculum itself. This theme found that there was a general disconnection to socio-politics in the participants and the curriculum. However, there were points of connection found in the interviews and curriculum.

Student and curriculum disconnection

It is felt that this subtheme worked symbiotically: students do not engage with socio-political issues and the curriculum reflects that; the curriculum does not engage with socio-political and so the students reflect that. This was manifest when observing the morning seminars, at times the tutor would mention something related to diversity (outlined below) and the students did not question or engage with it, or a student

would mention something, and the rest of the class and tutor did not engage. Over the six weeks, other diversity topics were brought up as a brief comment or aside, often an anecdote which was embedded within a seminar. Instances included the tutor sharing the following: the experiences of a former student who is disabled and their clients reaction to them; having good resources available for working with autism; discussing his experience of working with a client who spoke a different language; and sharing his experience of working with an Indonesian client. In all of these instances, the class did not inquire or pursue these, with no discussion of how disability, language or cultural differences may have affected the counselling relationship or considering the socio-political aspect of these topics. For example, by looking at ableism and Eurocentrism. This is also mirrored in the curriculum, for example in the handbook of assignment briefs, which outlined the assignments expected in the first year, none required the consideration of the socio-political implications of counselling practice or theory.

Note:

This is not a new finding, as counselling has been criticised for neglecting historical and contemporary socio-political factors (Tuckwell, 2002; Ryde, 2011; McLeod, 2013). It has also been misunderstood that counselling is 'politically neutral' (Kearney, 1996, p. 6). The BACP do not mention 'race', racism and whiteness in their course accreditation criteria (BACP, 2012; BACP 2019) or in their ethical framework (BACP, 2018). In this way, the socio-political disconnection (in relation to race) could be seen to start with the BACP, go down to the curriculum and then reaches counselling trainees.

Student and curriculum connection

There was an awareness amongst some participants about the potential impact of cultural differences in the therapeutic relationship – the example given by some participants was working with a Muslim client. Some interview were aware of the influence that the media can have in shaping racial attitudes.

The student handbook explains that the course is accredited with the BACP and lists the admissions criteria in line with the BACP's conditions. These ten criteria include that those chosen should be aware of prejudice, oppression and equality (Student Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 20), be sensitive toward others, (Student Handbook,

2019/2020, p. 53) an 'absence of social prejudice, ethnocentrism and authoritarianism' (Student Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 53) and a 'sensitivity to the social worlds of clients who may be from different gender, ethnic sexual orientation, different abilities, first language of age group' (Student Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 54). Also, a trainee will be considered incapable of counselling practice if they 'shows signs of prejudice and discrimination but is unable to change their attitudes or behaviour and this leaves the clients at risk' (Student Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 66). However, it does not state how signs of discrimination are recognised and how a change in attitude is measured.

Another aspect of the curriculum's connection is that the library is well-stocked with books relating to culture, counselling and mental health, meaning that whilst such a module is not taught on the counselling course, students have access to these resources should they wish to engage with the topic.

Note:

This connection could be used as a 'springboard' to further learning such as cultural competency (such as: Constantine and Landany, 2001; Sue and Sue, 2008; Collins and Arthur, 2010) and social-justice counselling (such as: Chung and Bemak, 2012; *Ratts, Rafferty McCullough and Rubel, 2016; Rogers-Sirin, 2017). UK research has found that media representations of young black men and boys can negatively influence people's perception of them (Cushion, Moore and Jewell, 2011).*

'Race' education: Is it racist?

The final subtheme draws together the previous themes and subthemes. Feelings toward 'race' and whiteness were evident as were the maintenance of colour-blind attitudes in relation to 'race' education. By this it is meant the teaching of 'race' in the counselling curriculum. Underpinning it is a disconnection to understanding the socio-political reasons why teaching about 'race' may be relevant to white people.

There was also an assumption that the teaching of 'race' would mean teaching about people of colour people, and not learning about whiteness. 'Race' education was understood through the filter of the understanding the participant already held about 'race', racism and whiteness. Although some participants saw the benefit in it, 'race' education was understood as learning about the people of colour/other cultures,

viewed as unnecessary due to colour-blind attitudes and even potentially discriminatory toward white people.

Note:

In higher education, there have been calls to decolonialise the curriculum through challenging the white dominant educational institutions and their colonial, colour-blind narrative (Arday and Mirza, 2018; Bhambra, Nisancioglu and Gebrial, 2018). Thus, its absence from BACP course accreditation guidelines (BACP, 2012; BACP 2019) fits into a wider context of the invisibility of whiteness in education, mental health and counselling. In terms of counselling education, Bartoli et al (2015) argue that white psychotherapist self-awareness is not enough and needs to be accompanied by socio-political awareness of systemic racism as well as policies, practice and curriculum that are focused on social justice.

Summary

The findings of this doctoral research support the three core principles of critical whiteness studies: that white people are unaware of their race, unaware of the privileges and colour-blind ideology is dominant (Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll, 2009, pp. 407-409). The findings also support the argument that for white people talking about 'race', racism and whiteness can be fraught with emotionality (such as: Spanierman and Cabrera, 2015; DiAngelo, 2018). Further, white ignorance (Mills, 2007) or the wilful not knowing about 'race', also seemed present. From this I have coined the term 'White Ignorance Disruption' which refers to the cognitive and emotional disruption which took place when the participants were asked about 'race', racism and whiteness.

The socio-political disconnection found in counselling (Kearney, 1996; Tuckwell, 2002; Ryde, 2011; McLeod, 2013) was also reflected in the course accreditation criteria (BACP, 2012; BACP 2019) and seemed to be reproduced in the classroom where opportunities to discuss socio-political issues were missed and/or avoided (such as: 'race', gender, gender identity, domestic abuse, disabilities and cultural differences). This is not to criticise or judge the participants, rather this research suggests that white trainee counsellors in South Wales understanding of 'race', racism and whiteness seems to show a relationship with historical and contemporary societal understanding. Perhaps an added complication is the intersecting ideas of the

counsellor as a 'good' person and colour-blind ideology as the 'good' attitude toward 'race'; this may create a profession specific barrier to learning about 'race'. Therefore, counselling as a profession may fall into a trap of being colour-blind, which will have consequences for counsellors and clients of colour whose lived realities will be overlooked in training, theory and practice.

It is recommended that policy change needs to take place by the BACP to include the learning of 'race', racism and whiteness in its course accreditation guidelines (therefore challenging colour-blind-ideology and becoming more inclusive) and socio-political issues more generally being incorporated into counselling training.

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Sullivan, S. (2014) *Good White People: The Problem with Middle-Class White Anti-Racism.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Titley, G. (2019) *Racism and Media*. London: Sage

Trepagnier, B. (2016) *Silent Racism: How well-meaning white people perpetuate the racial divide*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Tuckwell, G. (2002) *Racial Identity, White Counsellors and Therapists*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Wilkins, C. L., & Kaiser, C. R. (2014). Racial Progress as Threat to the Status Hierarchy Implications for Perceptions of Anti White Bias. *Psychological Science*, 25(2), pp. 439–446.

Appendix iii: Case Vignette

This was discussed in a seminar about doing risk assessments of counselling clients.

(07.02.2020 week five of participant-observations):

Darren is 23 years old and has come to counselling on the advice of his GP. His relationship has broken down acrimoniously and he now has little contact with his ex-partner. He is socially isolated, with little family locally and very few friends. His GP has diagnosed Darren as having severe to moderate depression and has prescribed antidepressants. In order to cope, Darren and been drinking heavily and, on occasions, taking illegal drugs. His is currently unemployed and has not been in work for several months. Darren struggles to talk about how he feels, and his counsellor is aware that he seems to struggle with an emotional language for expression. At points of frustration Darren will hit a wall and has on occasions, seriously injured his knuckles and hand in doing so. Darren says that there are times when he just 'wants to go to sleep and not wake up', but he has not told his GP about this because his mother has mental health problems and was 'sectioned' on several occasions following her own suicide attempts. Darren will not give you permission to speak to his GP at the point but says that he really wants to make counselling work (Reeves, 2015, pp. 139-140)

Reeves, A. (2015) *Working with Risk in Counselling and Psychotherapy*. London: Sage

Appendix iv: List of Library Resources

These are the relevant books that are available for the participants in the library at

'Welsh College A'. The list was compiled on 24.01.2020 and used the search terms:

'race racism counselling', 'whiteness counselling' and 'racism'.

Acred, C. (2013) *Racial Discrimination.* London: Independence Educational Publishers

Bhui, K. (2002) *Racism and Mental Health: Prejudice and Suffering*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Bygott, D. (1992) *Black and British*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Cooper, A. (2003) *Racism (Face the Facts).* London: Heinemann Library

d'Ardenne, P. (2013) *Counselling in Transcultural Settings: Priorities for a Restless World.* London: Sage

Dovidio, J.F., Hewstone, M., Glick, P., and Esses, V.M. (2010) *The SAGE Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination.* London: Sage

Eddo-Lodge, R. (2017) *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*. London: Bloomsbury Circus.

Fernando, S. (2003) *Cultural Diversity, Mental Health and Psychiatry: The Struggle Against Racism.* Hove: Brunner-Routledge

Fernando, S. (2010) *Mental Health, Race and Culture.* (3rd ed.) Basingstoke: Palgrave

Ivey, A.E., D'Andrea, M.J., and Bradford Ivey, M. (2012) *Theories of Counselling and Psychotherapy: A Multicultural Perspective* (7th ed.) Thousand Oaks, California: Sage

Kareem, J. and Littlewood, R. (1999*) Intercultural Therapy: themes, interpretations and practice.* Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons

Lago, C. and Smith, B. (2015.) *Anti-Discriminatory Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy* (2nd ed) London: Sage

Lowe, F. (2019) *Thinking Space: Promoting Thinking about Race, Culture and Diversity in Psychotherapy and Beyond*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge

Palmer, S. and Laungani, P. (1999) *Counselling in a Multicultural Society*. London: Sage

Palmer, S. (2002) *Multicultural Counselling: A Reader*. London: Sage

Pedersen, P.B., Lonner, W.J., Draguns, J.G., Trimble, J.E., Scharron-del Rio, M.R. (2016) *Counselling Across Cultures* (7th ed.) Thousand Oaks, California: Sage

Proctor, G., Cooper, M., Sanders, P., and Malcolm, B. (2006) *Politicizing the Person-centred Approach: An Agenda for Social Change.* Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books

Ridley, C. (2005) *Overcoming Unintentional Racism in Counseling and Therapy: A Practitioners Guide to Intentional Intervention* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rowe, M. (2004) *Policing, Race and Racism*. Cullompton, Devon: Willan Publishing

Ryde, J. (2009) *Being White in the Helping Professions*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Ryde, J. (2019) *White Privilege: How to Be Part of the Solution*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Sanders, V. (2008) *Civil Rights in the USA 1945-1968*. London: Hodder Education

Sarpong, J. (2017) *Diversify*. London: Harper Collins

Sue, D.W and Sue, D. (2008) *Counseling the Culturally Diverse: Theory and Practice* (5th ed). Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

Warwick-Booth, L. (2013) *Social Inequality*. London: Sage

Appendix v: Interview Questions

[Reminder of consent and right to withdraw at any time]

- What are you hoping to gain from the course?

- What is working for you on the course?

- Is there anything that's not really working for you?

- Can you describe to me who you think a typical counsellor is?

- Can you tell me how you understand 'race'?

- What is your experience of 'race'?

- Can you tell me how do you understand racism?

- What does being white mean to you?

- Do you think 'race' should be taught in counselling training?

- What has it felt like talking about 'race' in this way?

- How comfortable do you feel the group are about talking about diversity?

- How comfortable do you feel talking about diversity?

- Is there anything you would like to add to a question I have already asked or mention something you might think is important?

[Thank-you and give information packs]

The emotional impact of research:
A reflexive account of a counsellor turned-PhD researcher's experience of vicarious trauma.

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Abstract: This article presents a personal and reflexive account of my experience as a counsellor turned-researcher who experienced vicarious trauma as a counsellor and the impact this had while conducting counselling-related PhD research. I explore what is meant by "vicarious trauma" and the "emotional impact of research", as well as presenting my own account to illustrate the impact of vicarious trauma on the qualitative research process. It is hoped that by sharing this account, other researchers, who may be negatively impacted by their research, will feel less isolated. Further, the use of post-critical ethnography as my PhD research methodology demands researcher reflexivity and critique of their positionality. This article is a way of achieving this. The article also contributes to the call for researcher self-care to be an institutionally recognised requirement of research approval as researcher wellbeing is often not prioritised in the way it is for research participants.

Keywords: Qualitative research, vicarious trauma, counselling, psychotherapy, self-care, post-critical ethnography

This article offers a personal, autobiographical, and reflexive account of my experience as a PhD researcher living with vicarious traumatisation and the emotional impact this had on me, specifically during my research. While there is existent literature on vicarious trauma and research (see below), these are told from the perspective of experiencing vicarious trauma as a result of conducting research. My personal reflections of already having vicarious trauma prior to starting research offers a different perspective on the emotional impact of research.

Through combining the experience of vicarious trauma acquired through counselling practice with its re-emergence when gathering research data, an original insight into the emotional impact of research may be garnered. I argue that the positionality of counsellor-turned-researcher, affords a unique position to discuss the emotional toll of research. While this a highly subjective account of the emotional impact of research, I hope that it resonates with readers who may have experienced – or be experiencing - something similar. It has been argued that honesty about the emotional impact of research can support other researchers who may otherwise blame themselves for any "unwanted emotions" experienced while doing qualitative research (McQueeney & Lavelle, 2017, p. 88). Similarly, silence around emotion in research can leave the researcher feeling vulnerable (Hubbard, Backett-Milburn & Kemmer, 2001, p. 119). It is with this sense of solidarity that I offer a reflexive account of the emotional toll of research. Writing this article has allowed the realisation that I was not always consciously aware of the emotional impact of conducting research. To paraphrase a line from my favourite book, vicarious trauma has "gone through and through me, like wine through water, and altered the colour of my mind" (Brontë, 2003 [1847], p. 110) and this article is a reflexive account of how the altered "colour of my mind" has impacted my research consciously and unconsciously.

The rationale for choosing to write reflexively about my personal experiences is twofold. Firstly, to be able to critically consider my own actions and behaviours, and then try to understand how these may have impacted the research process, has felt like the bridge between being a counsellor to becoming a researcher. This is because as a counsellor, being reflexive is an ethical practice, through becoming self-aware and considering one's role in the interpersonal dynamics of the therapeutic relationship (Hedges, 2010). Etherington (2004) has suggested that being a reflexive researcher is a natural progression from be a reflexive counsellor; my own experience supports this argument.

Secondly, reflexivity in qualitative research has become more commonplace, allowing the researcher to consider how their subjective experiences and understandings may have affected the research process and vice versa (Finlay & Gough, 2003). Reflexivity offers a way for researchers' to critically engage with their role in their research, be it their methodologically choices or how they represent their participants. It permits the "complexity and messiness" of research to be acknowledged and presented (Finlay, 2017, p.120). In this way, reflexivity has allowed space to explore the unsanitised reality of the emotional impact of undertaking research while living with vicarious trauma. For qualitative researchers, the question "is not whether we embrace reflexivity but how" as contained within the concept of reflexivity is various typologies that the researcher can select in line with their epistemological and methodological stance (Finlay, 2017, p. 124).

The methodological approach of my PhD research is postcritical ethnography (Noblit, Murillo & Flores, 2004; Anders, 2019) which takes a political stance, emphasises the need for researcher reflexivity and for the researcher to critique their own positionality. Post-critical ethnography permits "a way of doing ethnographic work that include[d] not only a critique of power, but also a critique of self" (Anders, 2012, p. 100). My reflexivity in this context is more than personal confessional. Instead, I have sought to critically probe the impact of my subjectivity and positionality, taking the reflexivity into a posthumanist realm (Gemignani, 2017).

Trying to reflexively understand the subjective experience of the emotional impact of research is something which feels instinctual as a counsellor-turned-researcher and is congruent with the methodological approach of my PhD research.

Reflexivity is not just a perfunctory step but "inquiry in itself" which can make its own contribution to knowledge (Gemignani, 2017, p. 185). Through the researcher's emotional reflexivity, the emotions elicited during the research process can be used as a type of qualitative data in itself (Lumsden, 2019). This reflexive account of the emotional impact of qualitative research is not presented as an obligatory methodological requirement, but as potential valuable data and analysis in and of itself.

Personal Background

I am a trained integrative counsellor who specialised in trauma work. The trauma work started in my training when I worked therapeutically with survivors of domestic and sexual abuse. I later specialised in work with refugees and asylum seekers. The period of time from starting my counselling training, to eventually stopping practice due to vicarious traumatisation was five years and what follows is my story.

My PhD research is looking at how white trainee counsellors understand race, racism and whiteness. To discover this, I used the methodology of post-critical ethnography (Noblit, Murillo & Flores, 2004; Anders, 2019). As stated above, this approach is one that understands the political aspects of research and requires the researcher to be reflexive, consistently critique their positionality and also take care in how research participants are represented in the research (Noblit, Murillo and Flores, 2004). This article is one way of demonstrating that reflexivity and consideration of positionality. The ethnographic aspect of the research reflects more traditional ethnographic approaches, requiring the researcher to immerse themselves in a cultural or group context (Angrosino, 2007). For my research, this meant spending six weeks with a group of white counselling trainees who were in their first year of training. Four of those weeks involved participant-observation and the following two weeks were spent conducting semi-structured interviews. How vicarious trauma affected both my experience as a counsellor and a PhD researcher is discussed below. To begin, it is important to clarify what is meant by "vicarious trauma" and the "emotional impact of research".

Literature Review

Vicarious Trauma

McCann and Pearlman (1990) first coined the term "vicarious trauma" defining it as:

> persons who work with victims may experience profound psychological effects, effects that
> can be disruptive and painful for the helper and persist for months or years after
>
> working with traumatized persons. (1990, p. 134)

It can be differentiated from "burnout" which can be healed with rest and personal/organisational changes, whereas vicarious trauma has a longer, if not a permanent, impact (Branson, 2018). Sanderson (2013) states that working with trauma can impact the practitioner's view of the world, human nature and sense of safety, arguing that continued exposure to traumatic material can take its toll on the counsellor's levels of compassion and result in feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness. Similarly, Pearlman and McCann (1995) found that therapists can be unsettled in five areas: safety, trust, self-esteem, control, and intimacy. They suggest that training/CPD, supervision, and self-care are imperative when working with trauma. In a metasynthesis on vicarious trauma (Cohen & Collens, 2013), it was found that trauma workers can be negatively affected emotionally and somatically (such as feelings of helplessness, sadness, anger, shock, frustration and numbness). Strategies for coping with these challenging emotions can include organisational, supervisory, and familial support and self-care, through hobbies and changing workload (Cohen & Collens, 2013). The impact on cognitive processes included questioning of the self, the world and sense of safety (Cohen & Collens, 2013).

However, Kessler et al (1995) found that being exposed to a traumatic stressor does not necessarily result in a diagnosable pathology. Similarly, Stamm (2002) suggests that it is possible that a person could be at risk of experiencing compassion fatigue and experience compassion satisfaction thus striking balance between the two. Indeed, there have been positive aspects noted by researchers in those who work with trauma. Bell (2003) and Spelvins et al (2010) both found that participants in their respective research studies felt more compassionate when working with others. Benatar (2000) identified an increase in self-worth and sense of empowerment and Shami and Ron (2009) discovered that participants found more meaning and value in their profession. Comparably, Tehrani (2009) demonstrated that being able to reflect upon ones work through professional or peer supervision coupled with a healthy lifestyle was associated with higher levels of personal growth and satisfaction with work performance. Cohen and Collins (2019) also recognised that while working with traumatised people can have long-term and short-term negative impact on trauma workers, there is potential for "vicarious posttraumatic growth" to occur through witnessing the client's growth.

The prevalent strategy for dealing with challenging client work is through self-care, although self-care can often be neglected by counsellors and psychotherapists as they often focus on their clients' wellbeing (Norcross & VadenBos, 2018). Norcross and Guy (2007) put forward various methods of self-care, including the development of self-empathy, to "notice, value

and respond to your own needs as generously as you attend to the needs of your client" (Norcross & Guy, 2007, p. 16). Hughes (2014) highlights the need for professional self-care. This may include personal therapy, participating in further training, increasing supervision, and re-considering whether to work with certain issues, groups or organisations. Saakvitne and Pearlman (1997) recommend the key tools of self-care in relation to vicarious traumatisation are sleep, exercise, rest and taking holidays.

Taking these studies into account, it would seem that working with traumatised clients does not necessarily lead to vicarious traumatisation and self-care is a priority in minimising its likelihood. Nonetheless, vicarious trauma appears to be a risk factor associated with working with traumatised clients and although it can express itself in various ways, vicarious trauma seems to negatively alter the counsellor's perceptions of the self, others and society.

Emotional Impact of Research

In the same way that counselling and psychotherapy has an emotional impact on the practitioner, conducting qualitative research can also take an emotional toll on the researcher. Almost two decades ago, it was argued that the emotional aspect of research is neglected (Hubbard, Backett-Milburn & Kemmer, 2001), something that Fenge et al (2019) also recently contended, showing that the emotional impact of research remains an overlooked and under researched topic. Despite this oversight, emotions can serve as both a distraction and a means of insight into research (Woodthorpe, 2009) and have "epistemological significance" as they will influence the researchers way of knowing and interpreting the research data (Hubbard, Backett-Milburn & Kemmer, 2001, p.135).

Kumar and Cavallaro (2018, p. 648) have defined four ways that can make research emotionally challenging:

> [researching] sensitive issues, personal trauma previously experienced, experience of traumatic life events during research, and unexpected events that arise during research in what was previously not identified as a sensitive issue.

To deal with this argue for the need for researcher self-care at both individual and institutional levels (Kumar & Cavallaro, 2018). Eriksen (2017) has also called for researcher self-care to be institutionally incorporated through researcher training programmes. Likewise, suggestions for institutional support through academic supervision and the inclusion of researcher psychological well-being as a necessary step to the ethical approval of projects have also been made (Fenge et al, 2019; van der Merwe & Hunt, 2019; Moran & Asquith, 2020). Rager (2005) suggests the qualitative researcher uses self-care strategies such as counselling, journalling, and speaking to peers as a way to manage the emotional impact of research. For novice researchers, she also recommends institutional support through self-care education (Rager, 2005). Sherry (2013) has written of their use of self-care to navigate feelings of vulnerability when conducting sensitive research. Comparably, it has been put forward that researcher reflexivity is needed throughout the research process, as emotional responses may be unpredictable, and the need to share the emotional challenges with fellow researchers, alongside formal and informal institutional support (Hubbard Backett-Milburn & Kemmer,

2001). This call for researcher self-care echoes the use of practitioner self-care in counselling and psychotherapy.

In reference to the methodological approach of critical ethnography, McQueeney and Lavelle (2017) recommend incorporating emotional labour into the research process through the use of "emotional reflexivity". They suggest contextualising emotions into the wider socio-political circumstances that the research is taking place in, using emotions to critique power relations in the research and through using the researcher's personal biography, i.e., past experiences, to understand the emotional response to the research and the participants (McQueeney & Lavelle, 2017).

There is limited literature regarding vicarious trauma and research, despite it being a potential risk factor for researchers conducting research with traumatised participants, sensitive topics or in traumatic situations (Campbell, 2002; Dominey-Howes, 2015; Fairchild, 2018; Nikischer, 2018; van der Merwe and Hunt, 2019; Berger, 2020). However, as working therapeutically with trauma can lead to posttraumatic growth and positive feelings (Stamm, 2002; Shami and Ron, 2009; Collens and Cohen, 2019), posttraumatic growth may be achieved by researchers (Berger, 2020) and researching trauma may have compensatory factors such as influencing policy and practice changes (Moran and Asquith, 2020).

Official Guidelines

Despite the potential emotional impact of research on the researcher, official research ethics guidelines do not necessarily reflect this. The British Sociological Association's ethical guidelines (2017) rightly emphasises the need for ethical conduct in relation to participants, ensuring that "the physical, social and psychological well-being of research participants is not adversely affected by the research" (British Sociological Association, 2017, p. 5). Similarly, they recognise the importance of the "safety" of researchers (British Sociological Association, 2017, p. 4). However, they do not elucidate on what constitutes "safety" for researchers in the same way they do for research participants. This means that the psychological well-being or the researcher may be overlooked in preference of physical safety in the field. Likewise, it has been suggested that institutional ethical approval process can overlook the wellbeing of the researcher (Fenge et al, 2019) and that researcher wellbeing is often not prioritised in the way it is for research participants (Kumar and Cavallaro, 2018).

In contrast, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy's own research guidelines (BACP, 2019, p. 43) do state that researchers mental health may be impacted during counselling and psychotherapy research, including:

> developing psychological responses to stressors such as the 'burn out' caused by the vicarious traumatic stress of repeatedly hearing harrowing accounts of events.

However, at the time of conducting my research I was no longer a member of the BACP and did not follow their guidelines. My research is sociologically focused as it situates the findings into wider critical discourses about race, racism and whiteness, and counselling provided the contextual environment of the research, not the research focus per se. Thus, following the

BACP's research guidelines was not appropriate, and I was not aware of their reference to the mental health of the researcher.

My Experience of Vicarious Traumatisation in Counselling and Research

In my final year as a trainee counsellor, I undertook a placement working with refugees and asylum seekers. This meant working with highly traumatised clients, (whose issues included experiences of FGM, war, torture and modern-day slavery and sex-trafficking), all while still learning how to be a counsellor. On reflection, putting a trainee in this situation is contestable and potentially unethical; something the organisation later recognised by stopping student placements. To mitigate this, I immersed myself in learning about trauma, was honest in supervision and committed to learning about the socio-political situations my clients had come from. Nonetheless, after six months I decided to leave and pursue other placements. Looking back, and unbeknownst to me, perhaps the seeds of vicarious trauma had been sown and my decision to leave was an unconscious act of self-care. However, I had enjoyed working with the clients and felt privileged to witness their stories, so when the organisation contacted me post-qualifying and offered part-time work, I felt capable and motivated. Moreover, I felt a passion for the work, strongly believing this particular group of clients were ones who were ignored and whose stories deserved to be heard. This feeling was evidenced at a micro level by other counsellors not wanting to hear the sort of work I was doing and at the macro level by the socio-politics of the day, namely Brexit. To understand this work more, and specifically what it meant to me a white woman working with clients from various ethnic backgrounds, I tailored my master's degree to my counselling practice by focusing on working with refugees and asylum seekers and the role of race in cross-racial counselling practice. However, the combination of the stories I was hearing, undertaking trauma-training, writing my masters assignments and dissertation, as well as doing some temporary lecturing work, meant that I came increasingly fatigued. Despite teaching others about working with trauma, ironically, I was missing the signs that I was becoming vicariously traumatised myself.

The conscious transition from "coping" to "traumatised" took place in the short space of a fortnight in June 2018. Despite not recognising the initial signs in myself, things became frighteningly obvious when I found myself feeling physically sick in the carpark before starting work (one time almost vomiting). I came to feel tearful and anxious all the time. I began automatically switching off the news as I could not "hold" any more stories of inhumanity. I started seeing the world as a dark, negative place in contrast to my previous perspective the world being mainly populated by well-intentioned people. I disconnected from my faith and my spiritual side. Then the nightmares started, terrifying amalgamations of the stories clients had told me, in which I was helpless and terrorised (thus becoming situated in the same position as my clients). Additionally, I have had ME for many years and suffered a relapse in my physical health, showing the somatic expression of the vicarious trauma. Of course, with the exception of the nightmares, these symptoms had built up overtime (I now realise that there had long been "butterflies" in my stomach before sessions), but it seemed to me they were so gradual they were unrecognised until each one violently demanded my attention.

I knew I had to act and spoke to my supervisor and manager immediately, asking for a break. Initially, it was for a month and then six months. I saw my last client in July 2018. Over two years later I have still not gone back to counselling practice and I am not sure I ever will, partly because of the reasons described here but also because the break allowed me to critique the socio-politics of counselling in a way I had not done before (Smith, 2020). What is interesting, is that I now realise how I would use "burnout" to describe what I was feeling when in reality it was/is vicarious traumatisation. Branson (2019) differentiates the two by noting that while they share the characteristic of being acquired cumulatively, they diverge in their temporal effect. Burnout can be improved with changes to the work environment and rest, whereas vicarious trauma can be permanent (Branson, 2019). Perhaps using the word "burnout" provided emotional distance from the reality of what I was experiencing, but in my heart, I knew it was vicarious trauma. There was/is a sense of shame and failure that the label carries, as it leads me to question "was I not a good enough trauma counsellor if I became traumatised myself?". This has carried into the PhD, with the thought "what if the vicarious trauma limits my abilities as a researcher"? Writing this article is a way to challenge that thought.

It is relevant to note that I tried to return to personal therapy to help with the vicarious trauma but found that being in a counselling room, even as the client, was triggering for me. Even as I type this, a wave nausea ripples through me at the thought of being in a counselling room. Therefore, healing from trauma can be complicated for the counsellor-turned-researcher when that trauma originated in the place one would logically seek help.

Three months after leaving counselling practice, I started a PhD in Social Justice. Inspired by my masters and counselling practice, my doctoral research has looked at white trainee counsellors understanding of race, racism and whiteness. In this way, I remained connected with the counselling world, but also had an opportunity to step outside of it by engaging with sociological concepts. Although physically and emotionally fatigued from the vicarious trauma, I was enthusiastic about the PhD and the opportunity it gave me to reach beyond counselling and consider it from a different perspective. However, although the nightmares had stopped, I still experienced anxiety and an avoidance of any media or literature that contained violence and human rights abuse. Nonetheless, I felt greatly improved from how I had been months before. This changed dramatically when I started the fieldwork in January 2020. Writing this article has provided the space and time to consider how it may have be inconspicuously present throughout the whole research process. Given this, I will outline different stages of my PhD research to reflexively show how vicarious trauma manifest itself.

A Personal Account of the Emotional Impact of the Research Process

It has been put forward that the researcher's emotional experiences "are as much a product of the research as are other data" (Hubbard, Backett-Milburn and Kemmer, 2001, p. 134). This account also shows emotional reflexivity in action, particularly of the effect of my personal biography on the research, (McQueeney and Lavelle, 2017), demonstrating how my own emotional experiences were interwoven through the research process.

Starting the PhD

I started the PhD already at an emotional and physical deficit. Still, I was excited, if apprehensive, to begin the PhD as this was something I had wanted to do for a few years. The fact the PhD is in Social Justice also provided a psychological benefit as it enabled me to somewhat separate from counselling and engage with new concepts and theories. My academic supervisors do not have a counselling background, which has also greatly helped as they offer a different, sociological, perspective. Despite this, I still decided to focus my research on a counselling context by researching white trainee counsellors understanding of race, racism, and whiteness. In part, this was a natural progression from my master's research, but it also provided a psychic safety net through a sense of familiarity. Nevertheless, I was creating an ongoing tension: focusing on counselling was both helpful (familiar) and harmful (vicarious trauma), with each state ebbing and flowing through the process. Starting the PhD, however, I was not aware of this tension, let alone how it would impact the research.

Conducting the Literature Review

My first task as a new PhD student was to start the literature review, through immersing myself in research papers and books related to my topic. I began by reading about the history and social construction of race and whiteness and the different types of racism. While it was challenging to do this at times, I valued the opportunity to learn new things, and reading/writing this part of the literature felt like a severing of my connection to counselling, albeit a temporary one. For the first time in five years, I was studying and writing about something other than counselling and this felt like an enormous relief. However, on reflection I can see that the anxiety did not cease, and it sustained through my fears about my family's safety (Pearlman and McCann, 1995; Sanderson, 2013) and imposter syndrome (Bothello & Roulet, 2019). The nightmares were becoming less frequent and vivid, but the avoidance of violence in the media was still present (and remains to this day).

After completing the first draft of 'race, whiteness and racism' section of the literature review, I moved onto the 'counselling and race' section. In contrast to my earlier enthusiasm, I found myself apathetic about writing the counselling section of my literature review. While it was easier to do in some ways as I knew the books and authors to include, my disinterest meant it was harder to become motivated. Re-reading this section now, I note there are parts I do not remember writing. This may indicate some dissociation between myself and the work, suggesting my need to psychically detach from counselling. However, I was not consciously aware of this at the time.

Further, halfway through completing this section, I became unwell and was hospitalised with a suspected mini-stroke. Luckily, brain scans showed this was not the case, but I was still physically unwell, experiencing 'cog fog' or mental fatigue, and felt emotionally drained.

After the hospitalisation and a few weeks rest, I continued with the literature review (a neurologist later confirmed that my symptoms were an "evolution" of the ME). It is only in writing this, 18 months later, that I have made the connection between writing this specific

section of the literature review with such a decline in physical health and well-being that it necessitated hospitalisation. This illustrates that the effect the vicarious trauma can have emotionally, cognitively and somatically (Cohen & Collens, 2013). It also highlights its insidious impact on the researcher, in that reading and writing about counselling and thus becoming re-connected to it, triggered a severe response.

While my PhD supervisors are able to objectively evaluate my literature review and assess it to be at the required academic level, I have found that it becomes intertwined with my counselling practice and conjures memories of those two weeks in June 2018. In this way, vicarious trauma's effect on my literature review was found in my physical decline while writing it, and the ongoing avoidance to re-visit this section. It is significant that I have not been consciously aware of this until now.

Fieldwork

The fieldwork was undertaken at a college offering a Foundation Degree in Counselling and I focused on first year trainees. The methods used in my research was participant observation of seminars which was done over four weeks, semi-structured interviews, which were conducted over two weeks, and document analysis of course materials. Over a month before I began the fieldwork, I went to the college and gave a presentation to the potential participants, to introduce myself and the research. Participation was voluntary and they could withdraw consent at any time. I gave a brief background of my counselling research and practice, including vicarious traumatisation, as a way to be transparent and honest with the group, meaning that consent provided was fully informed. After the presentation, I invited the group to ask any questions. There was only one about the research, the rest focused on my work as a counsellor and vicarious traumatisation. I was happy to answer and left the group feeling excited about the fieldwork.

A few weeks later, I began the fieldwork by observing seminars. I also gave feedback in skills practice as a way of participating and to express my gratitude in the group allowing me to join them. At first, I found it exciting to be back in the environment and was able to re-connect with my own first year enthusiasm for counselling. However, this was but a brief interlude as within a week of returning, the vicarious trauma symptoms returned. Sleep became restless, punctuated with the client-story nightmares, the anxiety returned as did a general despondency. I found that I was able to "bracket" (Joyce & Sills, 2010, pp. 18-20) this while with the participants, build positive connections with them and remain focused on the research. But for days afterwards I would experience "after-shocks". Of course, whether I was truly able to "bracket" the vicarious trauma during my time with the participants is moot and unquantifiable. I cannot fully evaluate its impact on the data collection. However, I am aware that on one occasion, during a class seminar, talk turned to a topic that closely related to a traumatic experience with a client. I caught myself staring into space, taken back to the counselling room with the client, my pen suspended above my notebook, failing to record or observe what was happening in the classroom. How many other times did this happen without my realising? It is not possible to tell. Here, the question of *"what if the vicarious trauma limits my abilities as a researcher?"* feels at its most pertinent, if not haunting.

To the research interviews, I was able to bring my counselling experience through empathy, advanced listening skills, use of silence and reflection. This was an instinctive way of being, rather than an artificial affectation. Indeed, it has been suggested that qualitative researchers need to develop emotional intelligence to connect with participants at a deeper level (Collins & Cooper, 2014). Arguably, this is a skill the counsellor can bring with them to the field of research. However, this was complicated by the vicarious trauma I was carrying with me. It is only in writing this, that I have been able to consider how triggering this must have been to me: sitting face-to-face with another person, talking for approximately an hour, in which I listened empathically, was conscious of the ethical well-being of the other person and reflected the underlying meanings to their words. The only difference being that I had a set of questions to ask and the interviews were being audio-recorded. That I did not "see" this until now is interesting.

Reaching out and Speaking Up

With encouragement from my husband, I decided I needed to reach out and tell my academic supervisors what was happening. This became a pivotal moment and they expressed concern, support, and signposting to student services. I also spoke to the counselling course tutor about what was happening, and they also showed support. This collective care and prioritisation of my well-being was like seeing a lighthouse beacon while adrift on stormy seas. I had not experienced this care or support by my counselling organisation when I first experienced the vicarious trauma in 2018, which perhaps impacted the severity of the symptoms. This illustrates how institutional support is a necessary requirement to cope with the emotional aspect of research (Hubbard, Backett-Milburn & Kemmer, 2001; Fenge et al, 2019). Perhaps it was this sense of care that has helped me to be honest about vicarious trauma and research, inspiring the sharing of this story in solidarity with others who may experience the same. Speaking up also includes this article and demonstrating the reflexivity and questioning of my positionality as expected by post-critical ethnography (Noblit, Flores & Murillo, 2004).

Data Analysis and Write-Up

After collecting the data and stopping the fieldwork, the acute reaction to the fieldwork dissipated, although the emotional and physical fatigue remained. I analysed the data using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Decisions were made as to what include and exclude from the data set. I decided to use data that was directly related to my research question and excluded information the participants shared that was sensitive or highly personal. This was done in line post-critical ethnography's concept of "representation" (Nobilt, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders, 2019). Representation is concerned with the dissemination of the research findings and care taken with how participants are portrayed in the analysis. Some information was shared that was irrelevant to the research topic and its inclusion would be unethical as it could be emotionally harmful to the participants. Using McQueeney and Lavelle's (2017) suggestion to contextualise the emotions of research into a wider socio-political context is relevant to this step of the research process.

The data analysis took place during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent discussion of findings was written during the Black Lives Matter protests (Reuters, 2020). This meant that while the obvious signs of vicarious trauma had reduced, there was a globalised anxiety and restlessness that I (as many others were and continue to be) affected by. The emotional impact of this was a sense of urgency and taking refuge in the data analysis and write-up. The urgency was due to feeling as though the world was on fire, that the future was precarious and therefore I felt propelled by a need to "get it done". On the other hand, analysing the data and writing the discussion of findings felt like a place of safety due to the familiarity of continuing with the PhD. Thus, this stage of the research seemed to be impacted less by the vicarious trauma but more by global events.

Writing this Article

Writing this article has afforded an opportunity to consider the impact of vicarious trauma on my PhD research more fully. However, this is not a "happily ever after" ending. Researching and writing this article proved more challenging than I had anticipated. I experienced another bout of anxiety, a frightening nightmare based on the stories of former clients and an increase in somatic pain. One ex-client seemed particularly "close" to me too, her traumatic story resonating in my mind.

Each re-write and edit of the article invoked a re-experiencing of some the physical and emotional symptoms such as nausea and despondency. This was not caused by the writing process per se as writing is something that I enjoy and would like to pursue. Instead, the editing of this article kept reminding me of the seemingly permanent effects of vicarious trauma and a feeling that I "failed" as a counsellor and "wasted" my training, skills and knowledge. I know that these are not rational thoughts, but they continue to haunt me each time I re-visit this article. The support I received from the journal editor and reviewers has helped to mitigate some of these feelings and they have encouraged me to see the potential power and value in sharing my experiences with others who may be experiencing something similar. It is this hope that has enabled me to persevere with this article.

This supports the suggestion that vicarious trauma is not always a temporary state of being (Branson, 2019). Despite this, researching and writing this article is something I was not ready to do for a long-time, so its completion it is a victory in itself. Further, it has also removed the ever-present question of *"when will this end?"*. I can see now that the symptoms may lessen over time, but they will always be there, one way or another. This has allowed a sense of relief, acknowledging that my life is not in a suspended state of animation waiting to get back to the "old" me. Consequently, vicarious trauma will have an impact on my day-to-day life, my epistemological understanding of the world, including my PhD research and research data. This is pertinent to research which involves fieldwork with traumatised participants, as outlined in the literature review. Perhaps underdiscussed, is the counsellor-turned-researcher who has experienced vicarious trauma and then changes to a research focused career.

From personal experience, the call to post-critical ethnographic research (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004) in which I built ethical relationships and genuine connections with my participants as well as reflexively questioning myself, seemed like a natural progression from counselling practice. Arguably, the relational and subjective aspect of qualitative research can

stimulate the natural empathic qualities in the counsellor. Therefore, while I may no longer be a practicing counsellor, those skills and the knowledge of my training have been transferred to the role of researcher. For example, for the counsellor-turned researcher, the research interview can somewhat replicate the counselling session.

Synthesizing the Experience

This personal account has shown that working with traumatised clients can lead to vicarious trauma (McCann & Pearlman, 1990; Pearlman & McCann, 1995), which can potentially have long-term consequences (Branson, 2019) and be exhibited in various ways (Cohen & Collens, 2013). It also shows the emotional aspect of undertaking qualitative research (Hubbard, Backett-Milburn & Kemmer, 2001; Kumar & Cavallaro, 2018), including the potential for researcher vicarious traumatisation (Campbell, 2002; Dominey-Howes, 2015; Fairchild, 2018; Nikischer, 2018; van der Merwe & Hunt, 2019; Berger, 2020).

I have demonstrated how vicarious trauma arose throughout various stages of my PhD research, although some of these were only recognisable in retrospect through reflexivity. Where this article has offered a new perspective is that the vicarious trauma was not experienced because of the research but existed prior to it due to previous counselling practice.

It also joins the recommendations of others that researcher self-care becomes institutionally incorporated into research through education and as a requirement of ethical approval (Eriksen, 2017; Kumar & Cavallaro, 2018; Fenge et al, 2019; van der Mew and Hunt, 2019; Moran and Asquith, 2020). The support and care from my academic supervisors were fundamental in dealing with the impact of vicarious trauma on my research. Counsellors-turned-researchers are primarily positioned to make that self-care connection, this perhaps explains why the BACP (2019) explicitly recognise the psychological risks to the researcher in comparison to the ambiguity of researcher "safety" outlined by the British Sociological Association (2017). Further, personal therapy is also recommended during the research process (and potentially beyond) for traumatised researchers and/or those researching trauma. This could either be an aspect of self-care, or as a distinct requirement of institutional ethical approval. At the same time, it is recognised that this can be complicated for counsellors-turned-researchers who have experienced vicarious trauma because of their therapeutic practice.

From a counselling perspective, it has been argued that:

> self-knowledge, strengthening one's inner life, and selfcare are not considered "a given" or "a luxury" but instead are intentionally embraced as part of an essential ongoing process (Wicks, 2008, pp.167-168).

Arguably, this a notion that can be incorporated into academic research at individual and institutional levels. This would move researcher self-care from a personal responsibility to an institutional requirement. Doing so would allow researcher self-care to be positioned as a

social justice issue, one which would recognise that "caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" (Lorde, 2017 [1988], p.130). The politicisation of self-care as social justice issue would hopefully enable a collective and institutional acknowledgement that researcher self-care is an ethical necessity to navigate research and academia. This is particularly pertinent for marginalised groups working within academia, such as people of colour, disabled, LGBTQIA+, the working class and for those whose identities intersect.

Finally, it is important to recognise that self-care may also include stopping therapeutic practice altogether or deciding not to go ahead with a potentially traumatic research project. Prioritising one's wellbeing over career or academic endeavours may be the ultimate act of self-care. However, it is not always possible to know in advance how traumatic counselling practice or a research project will be. I had not anticipated that I would be re-traumatised by conducting ethnographic research in a counselling environment with counselling trainees. Sharing these experiences honestly may offer a step toward a collective-care in both the fields of therapy and research, whereby sharing one's personal experiences could help reduce isolation and stigma for others who are also struggling.

A recommendation for the fields of therapy and research is that that they both need to recognise the long-term impact of vicarious trauma. One step toward this recognition is to encourage open discourse about the reality of living with vicarious trauma. It is hoped this article is one contribution to that much needed conversation.

Concluding Thoughts

The ways in which the vicarious trauma manifest during the PhD research process echoed its insidious presence in my counselling practice. In short, it was not there, until it was obviously there. Writing this article has allowed me to recognise that perhaps it was affecting the research prior to the data collection but I simply did not "see" it. Its presence only became clear during the data collection (January-March 2020) echoing those two weeks back in 2018 when I became distressingly aware of the symptoms. However, as a counsellor-turned-researcher, I can bring self-care to the future research and extoll the need for researcher self-care the way in which the idea is embedded into counselling practice.

Finally, research suggests that vicarious traumatisation seems to have long-lasting, if not permanent, effects on the individual (Branson, 2019). It makes sense, therefore, to reflexivity recognise that it will have an epistemic impact on research undertaken, especially when that research involves returning to emotional sites reminiscent of the initial cause of the vicarious trauma. As stated at the start of this article, vicarious trauma has "gone through and through me, like wine through water, and altered the colour of my mind" (Brontë, 2003 [1847], p. 110). Its effects may be permanent and at times invisible, meaning its influence on my research may not be quantifiable as it has changed the "colour of my mind" and thus, an objective assessment is not possible. However, honesty and transparency about the reality of living with vicarious trauma and the way it has (at times unknowingly) seeped into my research is an example of post-critical ethnography's exhortation to researcher reflexivity and consideration of their positionality (Noblit, Flores and Murillo, 2004; Anders, 2019). It is also

an act of solidarity with other counsellors and researchers who may experience something similar and a recognition of multiple emotional impacts of research.

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