The Transracial Mother/Child Dyad

And

The Politics of Citizenship in Ireland

By

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Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... v
Declaration ......................................................................................................................................... vi
Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................................... vii
Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 1
Chapter 1: Mapping the Politics of Mixed ‘Race’ Belonging in Ireland ........................................ 9
  Ireland’s Shifting National Imaginary ............................................................................................ 9
  Ireland’s State Nation-Building ...................................................................................................... 9
  The Specificity of 21st Century Irish Racism (and the Racialisation of Migration) ................. 12
  The Citizenship Referendum 2004 ............................................................................................... 15
  Women’s Bodies and the Nation (Historical and Contemporary Context) ............................. 19
  The Racialised Legacy of the Citizenship Referendum .............................................................. 22
  The Racialisation of Irishness ....................................................................................................... 22
  A Racially Diverse Future for Ireland? ....................................................................................... 25
  Mixed ‘Race’ Irish as a Political Category .................................................................................... 28
  Concluding Remarks .................................................................................................................... 33
Chapter 2: Theorising the Landscape of Citizenship, Gender and ‘Race’ .................................. 35
  Introduction ....................................................................................................................................... 35
  An Alternative Framework for Conceptualising the Citizen-Subject ...................................... 35
  Theorising ‘Race’ and Racialisation .............................................................................................. 40
  Foucault and Biopower .................................................................................................................. 40
  The Dynamics of Racialisation ....................................................................................................... 43
  The Relationality of Whiteness (and the White Mother) ............................................................ 47
  The Intersection(s) of Whiteness and the Nation ....................................................................... 51
  Genealogy of Mixed ‘Race’ (Racial Construction and Identification) ....................................... 53
  Black versus Mixed ‘Race’ (Contested Terminologies) .............................................................. 55
  The National Abject (and Irregular Belonging) .......................................................................... 58
  Acts of Citizenship and the Notion of Rightful Presence .......................................................... 62
  Concluding Remarks ..................................................................................................................... 64
Chapter 3: Researching the Lived Experiences of the Transracial Dyad ................................ 65
  Introduction ....................................................................................................................................... 65
| The Ontological and Epistemological Foundations | 65 |
| Feminist Ontological and Epistemological Debates | 65 |
| De Certeau and His Analyses of Borderland Phenomena | 71 |
| Feminist Poststructuralism and the Experiencing Subject | 72 |
| Research Design | 74 |
| Research Strands | 75 |
| Accessing Participants | 76 |
| In-depth Interviewing | 79 |
| Data Analysis and Knowledge Construction | 82 |
| Critical Reflexivity | 86 |
| Vignette 1: The Unsettling of White Subjectivities | 88 |
| Vignette 2: Mixed ‘Race’ Motherhood and the Vicissitudes of Shadeism | 90 |
| Vignette 3: The ‘Outsider Within’ (Nation) | 91 |
| Concluding Remarks | 92 |
| Chapter 4: The (Il) Legitimate Mixed ‘Race’ Citizen Subject | 93 |
| Introduction | 93 |
| Enacting Citizenship through Mothering Work | 94 |
| The Transracial Mother/Child Dyad: Interrupting Dominant Modes of Belonging | 94 |
| Everyday Narratives of Claims-Making | 98 |
| A Citizenship Denied: Implications for the Future | 103 |
| The Mixed ‘Race’ Irish Citizen as a Legitimate Presence | 106 |
| Claiming Political Subjecthood | 106 |
| Ambivalent Positioning of the Mixed ‘Race’ Irish Citizen | 109 |
| Historical Continuity of Racial Injustice | 114 |
| Concluding Remarks | 115 |
| Chapter 5: The Workings of ‘Race’ through Cultural Belonging | 118 |
| Introduction | 118 |
| Familialised National Belonging | 119 |
| Cultural (In) Authenticity | 119 |
| Transnational Belongings | 124 |
| The Transnational Family Network | 124 |
Appendix F: Information Sheet for Activists ................................................................. 237
Appendix G: Consent Form .......................................................................................... 239
Abstract
The Transracial Mother/Child Dyad and the Politics of Citizenship in Ireland

By Patti O’Malley

During the last two decades, Ireland has witnessed extensive migratory change which has dramatically impacted the overall profile of the Irish population. In particular, the arrival of immigrants of a non-white phenotype has unsettled narrow racialised constructions of Irish identity (King-O’Riain 2007). In recent years, the multiracial family formation and the social phenomenon of mixed ‘race’ children have also emerged as features of the Irish familial landscape.

Moreover, the Citizenship Referendum 2004 re-configured Ireland’s citizenship regime by re-affirming Irishness as firmly located within the realm of ‘blood-ties’ and kinship: a purity of ‘race’ that has evolved across generations (Crowley et al. 2006). By thus privileging the principles of *jus sanguinis*, it is fair to say that racialised discourses of inclusion and exclusion are deeply interwoven into the very fabric of Irish society and its institutions (Ni Laoire et al. 2011). In fact, the mixed ‘race’ Irish citizen, who simultaneously embodies the potential for assimilation into, and de-stabilisation of the Irish nation, raises important questions related to notions of citizenship and political membership (Enright 2011). In the context of everyday encounters, such citizens can be positioned as ‘other’ and as manifesting incompatibility with an authentic Irish identity (Morrison 2004).

Through the unique lens of the family milieu, this thesis aims to provide insight into how citizenship is lived by the mixed ‘race’ citizen and more specifically, how the racialised dynamics of citizenship are negotiated by the white mother and her mixed ‘race’ child(ren) who are positioned differently vis-à-vis legitimate Irish citizenship. In fact, the growth of the multiracial family constellation challenges the public-private dichotomy which has been a defining feature of social and political theories of citizenship to date (Turner 2008). Framed by theoretical concepts related to citizenship, gender and ‘race’, this research is guided by the overarching question ‘how are issues of ‘race’ and belonging mediated within the transracial mother/child dyad?’ I draw on interviews with key mixed ‘race’ activists and the experiential narratives of twelve white Irish mothers and fifteen mixed ‘race’ (black African/white Irish) children.

Although the racialised insider/outsider dichotomy is at work in the interviews and continues to frame terms of belonging in Ireland, the narratives of both mother and child move us beyond the binary in term of both subjectivity and lived experience. Indeed, their everyday narratives point towards a re-calibration of citizenship at the margins and offer new framings of national identity. However, being positioned in the paradoxical, in-between space of the nation, it becomes apparent that the (non) belonging experiences of the transracial mother/child dyad are rendered invisible within existing parameters of a politics of citizenship which fails to incorporate alternative types of political subjectivity. However, the lived experiences of the transracial mother/child dyad can be captured by a re-theorisation of political subjectivity through Kristeva’s (1991) work, which acknowledges the incomplete and fragmented nature of the subject. This thesis, therefore, contributes to wider theoretical debates related to how political subjectivity may be experienced beyond the statist insider/outsider framework.
Declaration

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

Signed: _________________________
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Introduction

The demographic composition of the Irish state has been transformed by unprecedented levels of immigration since the mid-1990s. In fact, non-Irish nationals represent 12.2 per cent of the total resident population (Central Statistics Office 2018). However, from its inception, Irish state nation-building has been shaped by exclusionary ideologies which have attempted to construct a version of Irishness that highlights both religious and ethnic homogeneity underpinned by a taken-for-granted whiteness (Fanning 2012). In particular, the arrival of immigrants of a non-white phenotype has unsettled narrow racialised constructions of Irish identity (King-O’Riain 2007).

In western societies, interracial unions are on the increase (Song 2009). Indeed, this demographic trend is also evident in Ireland as the multiracial family formation and the social phenomenon of mixed ‘race’ children have emerged as features of the Irish familial landscape (Central Statistics Office, Census Data 2016). A rise in interracial partnering invariably leads to the presence of white women who are parenting children who are ascribed to another ‘race’ (O’Donoghue 2004). This multiracial family encounters unique challenges in terms of negotiating the black/white divide and its traditional impermeability (Dalmage 2001). Existing on the borderland of the racial divide, this family represents an aberrant position of apparently being of two ‘races’ that has been termed ‘the outsider within’ (Hill Collins 1990; Dalmage 2001). This ambiguous racial designation can lead to hostility, discrimination and institutional impingements regarding white women’s efforts to parent mixed ‘race’ children in a world which is unable or unwilling to categorise their family in racial terms (O’Donoghue 2004).

White Irish mothers and their mixed ‘race’ (i.e. white Irish/black African) children, as the majority of transracial parent dyads in the state (Central Statistics Office 2018), provide the
focus for this research. The mixed ‘race’ citizen, who simultaneously embodies the potential for assimilation into, and de-stabilisation of the Irish nation, raises important questions related to notions of citizenship and political membership (Enright 2011). In the context of everyday encounters, such citizens can be positioned as ‘other’ and as manifesting incompatibility with an authentic Irish identity (Morrison 2004). Indeed, as the white mother of mixed ‘race’ Irish children, I, too, have negotiated at familial level the impact of the exclusionary consequences of the category of Irishness and its regulatory effects.

The celebration of mixed ‘race’ figures such as Phil Lynott¹, Paul McGrath² and Ruth Negga³ as Irish heroes has been marked by an exoticism that simultaneously renders them ‘other’ and symbols of a cosmopolitan inclusive Irish identity. In recent months, Irish society has also witnessed its first African-Irish mixed ‘race’ winner of the Rose of Tralee contest⁴ which, interestingly, cites the celebration of Irish heritage as one of its founding principles. In national media interviews, Kirsten Maté Maher, has called upon Irish society to embrace its ‘diversity’ whilst emphasising that ‘there is no typical Irish woman’ (O’Fátharta 2018). It is fair to say, therefore, that Kirsten, as the African-Irish Rose of Tralee, who will serve as an Ambassador for Ireland for a year, represents a momentary disturbance in the tacit association that exists between whiteness and Irishness. There is also Leo Varadkar, Ireland’s mixed ‘race’ (i.e. of Irish and Indian parentage) Taoiseach⁵, who, although interrupting the white public face of power, has publicly stated that he does not wish to be defined by his mixed ‘race’ status. Adopting a position to the right of the political mainstream, he has, perhaps, achieved most notoriety for his initiation of a high-profile campaign designed to

¹ Phil Lynott (1949-1986) was a mixed ‘race’ Irish musician and songwriter.
² Paul McGrath is a mixed ‘race’ Irish international footballer (Aston Villa/Manchester United)
³ Ruth Negga is an Ethiopian-Irish actress.
⁴ The Rose of Tralee Festival is held annually in the town of Tralee (County Kerry) and any woman of Irish birth/ancestry is entitled to take part. It is not strictly a Beauty Pageant as the ‘Roses’ are not judged by appearance but on both their personality and suitability to serve as an Ambassador for Ireland for a year.
⁵ The Taoiseach is the Prime Minister of Ireland.
eradicate welfare fraud (Wilson 2017). Indeed, it can be argued that both Kirsten Maté Maher and Leo Varadkar are hailed as exemplary figures of a tolerant and multicultural Irish society (Fortier 2005) and may potentially contribute towards an unsettling of dominant modes of belonging. But, Ireland has yet to experience a minority public figure who articulates a politicised view of ‘race’ and racism.

However, it is the lived experiences of the expanding population of mixed ‘race’ Irish young people which provide the focus for this study. Through the unique lens of the family milieu, this project aims to provide insight into how citizenship is ‘lived’ by the mixed ‘race’ citizen and more specifically, how the racialised dynamics of citizenship are negotiated by the white mother and her mixed ‘race’ Irish child who are positioned differently vis-à-vis legitimate Irish citizenship. In terms of terminology, I use the term ‘child (ren)’ when directly referencing the mother and child unit and ‘young people’ or ‘youth citizen’ during general discussion.

Whilst the relationship between ‘race’ and citizenship has been examined at the public policy level, this study brings the focus to the dynamics of citizenship as lived in the intimate space of the cross-racial mother/child dyad. In fact, the growth of multiracial families challenges the public/private dichotomy which has been a defining feature of social and political theories of citizenship to date (Turner 2008). This research project, therefore, aims to potentially expand the citizenship debate across public and private domains and across racial identities and identifications.

Following Roseneil et al. (2013), I firstly draw attention to a body of scholarship which examines the politics of reproduction vis-à-vis citizenship. Although Pateman (1988, 1989, 1992), Lister (1997) and Yuval-Davis (1997) have challenged liberal and civic republican notions of citizenship which have failed to interrogate the public/private dichotomy, it is only
in the last two decades that there has been a proliferation of research that pays homage to the second wave feminist principle that gendered reproductive work is linked to the reproduction of inequalities at a social and political level (Chodorow 1978; Firestone 1970; Roseneil et al. 2013). This increased awareness of the politics of reproduction has focused attention upon the myriad mechanisms that states deploy in order to regulate and monitor the reproduction of its citizenry and has foregrounded the relationship between reproductive rights and women’s citizenship (Mazur 2002). Attention has also been drawn to the mundane, gendered and at times, racialised dimensions of caring tasks/practices that can be conceptualised as women’s citizenship practices (Kershaw 2010; Tronto 2005; Williams 2004). Mothering practices are regarded as crucial to ‘the reproduction of the nation’ (Luibhéid 2004; Tyler 2013; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Yuval-Davis 1996) in terms of both the transmission of culture and ethnic and racial boundary maintenance. Also, the reliance of the nation-state on political membership based on ancestry and lineage (jus sanguinis) is examined in addition to nation states’ ‘primary demographic objective of securing and enforcing the historic connection between reproduction and citizenship’ (Turner 2008, p.53).

This study is also located in the aftermath of the Citizenship Referendum 2004 in which 80 per cent of the Irish populace voted against allowing Irish-born children of non-Irish nationals to acquire a constitutional right to citizenship. In effect, the Referendum represented a vote against a racially diverse future for Ireland and created ‘a racialized two-tier system’ (King-O’Riain 2007, p.535) of belonging. Moreover, the Referendum re-invigorated the link in the national imaginary between ‘childbearing, race and nation-state’ (Luibhéid 2004, p.342) as the articulation of immigration regulation with questions of gender, sexuality and reproduction assumed centrality in political discourse.

By focusing on the transracial mother/child dyad, this research, therefore, offers a fresh perspective in relation to both the complex entanglement of the power-laden practices of
citizenship and reproduction and on the processes by which (non) citizens are reproduced. Indeed, a body of international literature has identified similar, albeit nationally nuanced, intersections between citizenship, national identity and ‘race’. In Britain, state authority has been re-asserted regarding the protection of national identity and citizenship rights, particularly in the wake of 9/11 and the subsequent re-surgence of a ‘neo-assimilationist’ agenda (Kofman 2005). The current model of citizenship in Britain is, therefore, constructed around a ‘contractual’ relationship whereby minority entitlements are contingent upon a primary affiliation with the national identity (Kofman 2005). But, how can this be achieved in the context of the host/stranger dualism which continues to frame terms of belonging in Britain (Fortier 2005)? In fact, visible minorities are required to undergo a process of de-racialisation (or what Fortier (2005) calls ‘a peeling of the skin’) as part of an attempt to acquire the ‘unmarked’ status of full belonging. This process is facilitated via proclamations of pride in their Britishness but ultimately, of course, is doomed to failure as the non-white skin cannot be entirely peeled off. Moreover, this dilemma places a heavy burden on the capacity of citizenship to absorb minority subjects into the national framework (Lewis 2006).

In the French context, the politics of citizenship is grounded in the racialised legacy of France’s colonial past and associated constructions of ‘otherness’ alongside its Republican political tradition (Jugé and Perez 2006). The institution of citizenship is equated with whiteness and the French policy of assimilation, by adopting a false conception of ‘colour-blindness’ (Bonilla Silva 2003), fails to accommodate issues of difference. In fact, in order to be ‘truly’ French, one must be white (e.g. Le Pen and ‘France for the French’) which, of course, creates a double bind for non-white minorities and serves to exacerbate their marginalised positioning within national space.

In the USA, phenotype has emerged as a direct determinant of civic and social status (Fredrickson 2003) and indeed, the US context provides a salutary lesson in how formal
citizenship rights translate to neither legitimacy nor belonging (Turner 2016). Whilst other minority groups were enabled to accrue racial privilege based on their putative whiteness, African-Americans have endured draconian levels of legalised discrimination (Fredrickson 2003). The Civil Rights Acts (1964 and 1965) stipulated measures related to the political and legal domain of citizenship, but neglected to enforce ‘substantive citizenship’ (Glenn 2002). Substantive citizenship can be defined as the ‘actual ability to exercise rights of citizenship’ in a manner which renders people ‘full and equal citizens in substance as well as in law’ (2002, p.53). Moreover, the emergence of a neo-conservative agenda in the 80s/90s resulted in a dismantling of the social citizenship rights implemented by the New Deal programme, with detrimental effects on racialised minorities (Fredrickson 2003). In fact, contemporary statistics indicate that race-based structural inequalities continue to deny African-Americans access to equal citizenship rights as they have a substantially greater likelihood of being imprisoned, unemployed and socio-economically disadvantaged (ibid.).

Echoing some of these examples of racialised citizenship elsewhere, the focus of this study relates to the workings of racialised belonging in contemporary Ireland. The central question guiding this research is ‘how are issues of ‘race’ and belonging mediated within the transracial mother/child dyad’? Whilst this question provides the overarching framework for this study, two further questions facilitate inquiry into the racialised inflections of citizenship. Firstly, ‘what can these experiences within the transracial mother/child dyad tell us about (a) negotiations of ‘race’ and racism within the private and public sphere and (b) the specific relationship between ‘race’ and national belonging’? And finally, ‘what are the particular positionings and experiences of the white Irish mother and the mixed ‘race’ youth citizen in Ireland’?

This thesis is organised into seven chapters:
Chapter one sets out the specificity of the Irish socio-political landscape in relation to racialised belonging. In particular, I trace the origins of how ‘race’ is produced, performed, negotiated and lived in contemporary Ireland. In chapter two, I outline the key theoretical concepts that help to unravel the overlapping domains of citizenship, gender and ‘race’ that are foundational to this study. This, then, provides a framework for analysing the accounts of the activists, mothers and young people in chapters four, five, six and seven. Chapter three outlines the methodological approach. In this chapter, I draw on the principles of feminist research which provide the rationale for the choice of research design in this study. I situate my study within the relevant feminist epistemological and methodological debates before discussing the research methods adopted and my approach to data analysis. Finally, I reflect on my own positioning as the researcher and reflexively review the research process.

Chapter four which focuses on ‘The Il(legitimate) Mixed ‘Race’ Citizen-Subject’ examines both the everyday efforts by the mothers to establish their mixed ‘race’ children as equal claimants of rights in the Irish public sphere and the political activism of key actors in the burgeoning mixed ‘race’ movement for recognition as legitimate citizens. This chapter, therefore, provides multi-layered insights into the workings of mixed ‘race’ politics in Ireland.

In chapter five, which is entitled ‘The Workings of ‘Race’ through Cultural Belonging’, I discuss how national belonging is lived at the level of the everyday in the mother/child dyad. In particular, I focus on the relative positioning of the mixed ‘race’ Irish children and their mothers, both as racialised subjects negotiating national identity in the context of multiple and differentiated forms of belonging.

Chapter six addresses ‘Mothering Outsider Children’ and shifts the focus to a consideration of how the host/stranger dualism shapes the positioning and experiences of the white Irish
mothers. I locate the dynamics of racialisation within the intimate space of the mother/child dyad as I consider how the mother negotiates discourses of belonging and exclusion on behalf of her child(ren). In the second section, I explore how the self-constructions, experiences and ways of being of the white mother are shaped through ongoing negotiations of the racialised insider/outsider dichotomy.

Chapter seven, entitled ‘The Racialised Body of the Mixed ‘Race’ Irish Subject’, draws attention to the various ways that the racialised insider/outsider binary shapes the positioning and experiences of the mixed ‘race’ young people. This chapter is driven by two questions: ‘how do the young people narrate the racialisation of their lives and/or make sense of their positioning as racialised outsiders’? And, ‘how do the mixed ‘race’ Irish young people negotiate belonging when subject to racialised exclusion’?

This research is important because, although studies of ‘race’ and racism have been conducted at the state/policy level in Ireland, it re-locates the study of racialised belonging to the privatised world of the multiracial family constellation. This level of analysis remains under-theorised in the sociology of ‘race’ and racism (Twine 2010). Indeed, this study of Irish racialised belonging through a familial lens addresses specific gaps in the literature related to: the emerging generation of mixed ‘race’ Irish young people; the white mother of the interracial family formation; whiteness as a racial category (in Ireland); and the re-framing of the racial politics of citizenship from a poststructuralist perspective.
Chapter One: Mapping the Politics of Mixed ‘Race’ Belonging in Ireland

Introduction

In this chapter, I trace the significant moments and features that have shaped racialised belonging in the Irish context. Firstly, I examine how the early definitions of Irish citizenship were framed by nationalist discourses before embarking on a discussion of the unique manifestations of ‘race’ and racism in twenty-first century Ireland. Most significantly, I unravel the complexity and meaning of events surrounding the Citizenship Referendum 2004 and examine its legacy in terms of the generation of new modes of racialisation. Finally, I trace the embryonic development of mixed ‘race’ Irish as a political category.

Ireland’s Shifting National Imaginary

Ireland’s State Nation-Building

From its inception, Irish nation-building has been shaped by exclusionary ideologies which have attempted to construct a version of Irishness that highlights both religious and ethnic homogeneity, underpinned by a taken-for-granted whiteness (Fanning 2012). Indeed, over the course of the 19th century, several shifts occurred within the context of Irish nationalism which shaped ideological aspirations for a Gaelic-Catholic Ireland (ibid.).

As the mass movement for Catholic emancipation gained political momentum across Irish society, notions of religious exclusivity were being sown and developed (ibid.). In addition, during this period, the concept of cultural nationalism was being bolstered by several prominent sporting and cultural associations – for example, the Gaelic League6 (which led the

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6 The Gaelic League was founded in 1893 with Douglas Hyde as its first President.
reclamation of the Gaelic Language) and the Gaelic Athletic Association\(^7\) (as the site where a Catholic Gaelic Republicanism was espoused) (ibid.).

At this time, also, the rhetoric of Irish liberation could be described as racial-nationalist as the idea of the Irish ‘race’ was deployed in order to militate against notions of the inferiority of the Irish as promulgated by colonial ideology (Fanning 2012; Garner 2004). Within the context of cultural nationalism, claims of Irish inferiority were countered by the invocation of a mythology which depicted the Irish Celt (or Gael) as embodying racial purity (Garner 2004). The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) as ‘a privileged depository of Irishness’ (Garner 2004, p.153) was constituted as a key site of nationalist ideology. In fact, Maurice Davin (Founder of the GAA) referred to Gaelic games as ‘the characteristic sports and past-times of the gaelic “race”’ (Cronin 1999, p.103).

Indeed, this ‘Irish-Ireland’ (Fanning 2012, p.30) nation-building project bolstered by cultural nationalism in the years before Independence evolved into the public face of institutional monoculturalism in the years after Independence (ibid.). It is also worth noting that, during the 19\(^{th}\) and 20\(^{th}\) centuries, the Irish (like other western societies), absorbed a popular culture which presented tales of colonial glory and conquest emanating from white supremacist beliefs vis-à-vis ‘race’ (ibid.). Conceptualisations of racial difference at this time were, therefore, based upon notions of white supremacy articulated by 19\(^{th}\) century scientific racism which deployed ‘race’ thinking as a means of justification for colonialism and imperialism (Garner 2004). This allows us to see how Ireland, as a postcolonial nation, was indeed racialised from the outset (Harrington 2005).

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\(^7\) The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), founded in 1884 by Maurice Davin, is an Irish sporting and cultural organisation which focuses on promoting indigenous Gaelic games such as hurling, camogie and gaelic football. The GAA further promotes the Irish language, music and dance.
Following Independence, the Catholic Church assumed control of the formulation of social policy and the educational system, Gaelic was re-instated as the official language of the state and the tenets of Catholic morality enshrined within the civil code via legislation related to contraception, divorce and abortion (Fanning 2012; Harrington 2005). Thus, notions of a Gaelic-Catholic Ireland prevailed across several institutions (politics, religion, education and sporting life) in postcolonial Ireland (Fanning 2012). We are further enabled to see that an integral feature of Irish nation-building was the production of an homogenous cultural continuity (Garner 2004).

Women, as ‘reproducers of the nation’ were singled out for even harsher regulation (Harrington 2005) as they were firmly established as mothers in the 1937 Constitution (Lentin 1998; Mullalley 2005). Moreover, the Catholic Church further institutionalised a public/private divide as women were designated as mothers of the Irish ‘race’ (Gray and Ryan 1998, p.126). As Harrington (2005, p.431) notes, ‘women were installed, as reproductive and domestic labourers, at the heart of the patriarchal and autarkic formation that was nationalist Ireland’. I will return to feminist analyses of nationalism later in the chapter.

Irish nation-building, therefore, has emerged through processes of social closure (Fanning 2012). By enshrining a ‘Catholic, Irish-Ireland nationalist hegemony’ (ibid. p.30), the 1937 Constitution has excluded minority groups (Lentin 1998). Through these constitutional and state ideologies and practices, racism is produced both institutionally and in everyday interaction in Ireland as minority groups (i.e. Travellers, black/mixed ‘race’, Jewish) are negatively racialised and contiguously, excluded from dominant constructions of the Irish nation (Fanning 2012). This dominant ideology of homogeneity has produced what O’Connell (1995) refers to as the ‘myth of Irishness’.
The Specificity of 21st Century Irish Racism (and the Phenomenon of the Racialisation of Migration)

As discussed above, nationalist discourses have promulgated homogenising notions of Irish identity with exclusionary consequences for minority groups (Fanning 2012). Garner (2004) has also noted the prevalence of nationalism as a mainstream ideology in contemporary Ireland which manifests in notions of racial purity (the ‘excess of purism’ (Balibar 1991)) as underpinning the way(s) that ‘difference’ is constituted in Ireland.

Moreover, in addition to the pre-existing endogenous racism(s) (see above and below), Ireland’s contemporary positioning in terms of world-power systems – particularly, in relation to imperialism and colonialism – have racialised both Irishness and Otherness (Lentin and McVeigh 2002). In fact, understandings of the political salience of the terms ‘whiteness’ and ‘blackness’ have been present in the Irish imaginary since the 17th century when Irish people became slave owners in the Caribbean (Cleary 2003; Garner 2004).

The experience of emigration and involvement in British colonial processes has exposed Irish people to racist doctrine, both as recipients and perpetrators of processes of racialisation (McVeigh 1996; Garner 2004; Rolston and Shannon 2002). Also, in 19th century US and Britain, the Irish were constructed as an inferior ‘race’ (see earlier in chapter) and these constructions have been re-worked in current modes of racialisation (for example, the racialisation of migration (see below)) (Garner 2004; McLaughlin 1999). Conversely, the Irish have been empowered both by British imperial connections (as ‘willing servants of Empire’ (Crowley et al. 2006)) and by virtue of Ireland’s structural positioning as predominantly white and European with strong connections to the Irish diaspora in the US and Britain (Lentin and McVeigh 2002).
The figure of the Irish Catholic missionary, which ‘drew upon colonial ideologies of racial superiority’ (Fanning 2012, p.16), also contributes to contemporary understandings of ‘race’ and racism in the Irish context (Crowley et al. 2006). The proliferation of missionary propaganda (e.g. magazines and Trócaire\(^8\) collection boxes) has meant that successive generations of Irish people have been subject to the ‘black baby’ phenomenon (ibid.). In fact, current paternalistic constructions of African immigrants as helpless and passive have been shaped and influenced by the legacy of the ‘black baby’ in the Irish public consciousness (Fanning 2012).

Garner has suggested that ‘the Irish have “appropriated” racism as a postcolonial instrument of domination’ (2004, p.26) – a racism which is now targeted towards minority groups (or more specifically, visible minorities) who, as ‘racialised outsiders’ (McVeigh 1992), must bear culpability for the phenomenon of racism in Ireland (Lentin and McVeigh 2002).

Moreover, the specific dynamics of Irish racism have implications for considerations of racism in a wider context – as the experiences of the Irish, who have been racialised both at home and in their diaspora settings, confound the notion that racism can be conceptualised exclusively in terms of the black/white paradigm (Garner 2004). In fact, the distinct ethnic identity of the Irish in Britain has been eroded by their white racial designation within the paradigm of colour (black/white) (Hickman and Walter 1995). The increased levels of immigration both during and since the Celtic Tiger boom period, has meant that Irish identity has racialised in more complex ways (Lentin and McVeigh 2006). As the 1990s witnessed the emergence of new black Irish or minority ethnic communities, Irish identity became explicitly linked with whiteness for the first time (ibid.).

This increases our understanding of how the racialisation of the Other is both informed by and interconnects with the racialisation of the Irish (Lentin 1999). For, as Lentin (ibid. p.3)

\(^8\) Trócaire (meaning ‘compassion’) is the overseas development agency of Ireland’s Catholic Church.
argues: ‘we cannot understand Irish racism, or the Irish racialisation of the Other, without understanding the racialisation of the Irish self’. Indeed, the historical racialisation of the Irish (vis-à-vis other white groups) provides a useful starting point in any discussion of the social construction of ‘race’ (Garner 2004). In this regard, Ignatiev (1995) examines how Irish emigrants to America during the 18th/19th centuries, although enduring material conditions comparable to African Americans, actively differentiated themselves by claiming whiteness. Indeed, upon arrival, the Irish encountered a social hierarchy based on phenotype and the prevalence of discourses which equated blackness with slavery and whiteness with freedom. Therefore, the Irish, through an ‘instrumentalisation of whiteness’ (Garner 2004, p.139) set out to acquire the racial privilege which would guarantee unfettered access to the labour market.

During the last two decades, Ireland has also witnessed extensive migratory change which has dramatically impacted the overall profile of the Irish population (Central Statistics Office 2018). As of April 2018, the immigration figure for the year thus far is 90,300 persons (34.2 per cent of which are non-EU immigrants) (ibid.). Net inward migration stands at 34,000 which is the highest level since 2008 (ibid.). These kinds of social transformation are momentous for a country which has historically been regarded as ‘an emigrant nursery’ (MacLaughlin 1994). In particular, the arrival of immigrants of a non-white phenotype has ‘challenged existing frameworks of racial and ethnic understanding’ (King-O’Riain 2007, p.519). Indeed, the Census 2016 reports that the number of ‘Black or Black Irish - African’ residing in Ireland is 56,968 persons (1.2 per cent of the total population) which represents a 0.3 per cent decrease per annum since Census 2011 (Central Statistics Office, Census Data 2016).

Popular and political responses to immigration in Ireland have racialised ‘asylum seekers’ and ‘refugees’ as black (Fanning 2012; Lentin and McVeigh 2006). In fact, ‘there is a
semantic association of black people with asylum seekers and of asylum seekers with immigrants’ (White 2002, p.104) thereby perpetuating an historical tradition of racialised exclusion by state practices in relation to minority groups (McGinnity et al. 2006). As a consequence of this racialisation of migration, discourses of ‘race’ and immigration have become interlinked, thus, bearing out Balibar’s (1991) contention that immigration has become the new name of ‘race’.

The re-configuration of Ireland’s citizenship regime in the 2004 Referendum can be viewed as a governmental response to national hostility towards immigration and the increasingly negative construction of asylum-seekers (Lentin and McVeigh 2006). The Citizenship Referendum was targeted at black asylum seekers who were discursively constructed as ‘illegal immigrants’, ‘bogus refugees’ and ‘failed asylum seekers’ (Lentin 2007, p.617) and was a legacy of state endorsed processes of exclusion (Fanning 2012; Garner 2004). In fact, Lentin (2007) regards the Citizenship Referendum as a ‘turning point in the recent history of racism in Ireland’ (p.611) and as a marker of the political significance of gendered reproductive work. As such, the Referendum is discussed in some detail in the section that follows.

The Citizenship Referendum 2004

In the June 2004 Referendum, the Irish public voted in a 4 to 1 majority against allowing the Irish-born children of non-Irish nationals to acquire a constitutional right to citizenship (Lentin 2007). This Referendum, and the events leading up to it, sparked a government ‘furore’ and media frenzy, as the people of Ireland were urged to prevent abuse by ‘citizenship tourists’ who, in the words of Michael McDowell (Minister for Justice at the time) have no ‘real connection to Ireland’ (Crowley et al. 2006; Dáil Debates 2004). Supreme Court jurisprudence in the years leading up to the Referendum 2004 coincided with an
intensification of political debate related to issues of immigration and citizenship or, more specifically, the rights of non-national parents of Irish-born children vis-à-vis birthright claims and terms of national belonging (Mullalley 2005).

In 1990, the Fajujonu family (who were Nigerian and Moroccan respectively and parents of an Irish-born child) successfully appealed their deportation order at the Supreme Court (Luibhéid 2004; Mullalley 2005) on the grounds that deportation of the parents would infringe the constitutional rights of the child ‘to the company, care and parentage of their parents within a family unit’ (Fajujonu versus Minister for Justice 1990 cited in Mullalley 2005, p.582). Following this ruling, which prioritised the constitutional rights of the child, applications for residence by non-national parents were generally approved (Mullalley 2005). Nonetheless, according to Luibhéid (2013), the Fajujonu case represents the point at which the pregnant body of the African woman became paradigmatic of illegal immigration (see below).

After Fajujonu, rates of in-migration increased considerably throughout the 1990s and political tensions continued to grow as childbearing African women were conceived as threats to both national sovereignty and the prevailing racial/cultural hierarchy (Luibhéid 2013). The issue was rendered more complex when the Belfast Agreement (1998) established ‘the birth right of every person born on the island of Ireland, which includes its islands and seas, to be part of the Irish nation’ (Article 2, Irish Constitution 1998 cited in Harrington 2005, p.439). Indeed, the Belfast Agreement marked the point at which the entitlement to Irish citizenship, which had previously been provided for by statute only, was now enshrined in the Constitution (Harrington 2005).

Issues regarding the preservation of national sovereignty were more explicitly evoked in the Supreme Court decision of Lobe and Osayande 2004 (i.e. two families of Czech Roma and
Nigerian origin with Irish citizen children) (Harrington 2005). In this scenario, both families appealed the grounds of their proposed deportation by claiming a constitutional right to reside with their children on the basis of Fajuyonu (ibid.).

This time, however, the application was refused on the grounds that ‘it is in the interest of the common good of the state that it should have control of the entry of aliens’ (Osheku versus Ireland 1986 cited in Harrington 2005, p.440). Most significantly, perhaps, this Supreme Court decision, which was widely regarded as a legislative victory in the battle against ‘citizenship abuse’ (Tormey 2007) (see below), failed to acknowledge in any way the contravention of the constitutionally protected rights of these families (Mullalley 2005).

The Lobe and Osayande case further foregrounds issues pertaining ‘to the inalienable and imprescriptible’ rights of the family as encoded in Article 41 of the Irish Constitution (Harrington 2005), which effectively means that the constitutionally protected rights of the family are defined as occupying a status ‘antecedent and superior’ to all positive law (which includes asylum and immigration legislation) (Mullalley 2005). In addition, the elevated status of the family unit is widely regarded as a defining feature of Irish national identity (ibid.). In fact, it could be argued that the Lobe and Osayande case required striking a balance between, on the one hand, the status of the heteronormative family formation as bedrock of the Irish nation-state and on the other, the exercise of state power vis-à-vis immigration and the safeguarding of national sovereignty (Luibheid 2013). But, perhaps most strikingly, was the fact that ‘these two rights were no longer in alignment and the figure of the pregnant migrant had supposedly brought them into disjuncture’ (Luibheid 2013, p.153).

Pregnant immigrant women (or, more specifically, African women) were portrayed by both the government and the media as arriving in Ireland during latter stages of pregnancy in order to ensure that their babies could be born on Irish soil (ibid.). They could then take advantage
of the *jus soli* citizenship rights and the apparent legal ‘loophole’ left by the Fajujonu case in 1990 (Tormey 2007). As Lentin (2005) has observed, this act was regarded as a strategic move on the part of African immigrant women to parent future generations of Irish children.

The Fianna Fáil\(^9\) Government campaigned vigorously for a ‘yes’ vote in the Amendment. In fact, their campaign slogan read ‘vote yes for common sense citizenship’ which was explicitly articulated with discourses of morality (Crowley *et al.* 2006; Tormey 2007) (see below). Indeed, the re-configuration of Ireland’s citizenship regime in the 2004 Referendum sought to re-affirm ‘Irishness’ as firmly located within the realm of ‘blood-ties’ and kinship: a purity of ‘race’ that has evolved across generations (Crowley *et al.* 2006). ‘Common sense citizenship’ has therefore been deployed as an ‘essentialising tool’ casting culture and identity in essentialist terms (ibid. p.4).

The Citizenship Referendum, with its denial of the constitutional right to citizenship to Irish-born children of non-Irish nationals, further highlights the vulnerability of the migrant children who have been denied a sense of belonging in the state (Mullalley 2005). Despite the sanctity of family life enshrined in the Constitution, the state removed citizenship rights from future generations of Irish-born children, who were unable to prove a ‘blood’ connection (ibid.). In fact, the value of connection to a territory is evaluated according to ‘the length and depth of past association, rather than the salience or value of future connections’ (Bhabha 2003 cited in Mullalley 2005, p.600). Moreover, the child’s perspective as a rights-bearing citizen is subjugated to state interests regarding strategies of immigration control versus parental residence rights (Mullalley 2005).

Whilst pregnancy in Ireland has conventionally been the site of conflicting views in relation to understandings of the nation (Oaks 1998), the Referendum foregrounded pregnancy, once

\(^9\) Fianna Fáil is a centre-right political party in Ireland.
again, as the site of heated debate in relation to the racial composition of the political community (Ni Mhurchú 2014). This deployment of women’s sexuality also highlights the centrality assumed by female bodies in racial discourse (Luibhéid 2004). It is the sexuality of women as a threat to the state and the nation that I turn to in the next section.

**Women’s Bodies and the Nation (Historical and Contemporary Context)**

Particular attention is drawn to the objectification of black women’s pregnant bodies as, during the Referendum process, the childbearing faculties of African women assumed centrality in the recalibration of citizenship as their bodies became racialised sites of conflict over who has the right to belong (Conlon 2010; Luibhéid 2004).

Both government and the media were complicit in the moral denigration of African pregnant women who were constituted as suspect members of the nation (Tormey 2007) as if, somehow ‘the notion of immorality is laminated upon black bodies’ (ibid. p.69). Indeed, Tormey also raises another interesting perspective related ‘to the signifying power of black, pregnant bodies in Irish space’ (2007, p.72). That is, when a black woman, whose childbearing practices have been so publicly vilified, attempts to access Irish spaces, her hypervisibility evokes a very powerful and specific type of response. As the ‘bearer’ of black children, she ‘exposes the unspoken racial episteme of the national body politic by confronting observers with a future-inflected practice that has repercussions for the diversity of the nation’ (ibid. p.82) (see later in chapter). This, of course, drives home the point that only certain types of bodies are allowed to occupy Irish public spaces. In fact, the pregnant African women of the Referendum era, could be described ‘as abject “not-subjects”’ (Butler 1993) - ‘it was the visible re-iteration of their bodies in visual media and on the streets which created a kind of performative materiality that came to speak louder than words’ (Tormey 2007, p.81).
These processes of racialised abjection rendered the African mothers-to-be legible according to abject categories such as ‘asylum seeker’, ‘suspect patriot’ or ‘citizenship tourist’ as opposed to being simply hailed as a migrant, or even a mother (Luibhéid 2013). In fact, understandings of these migrant women’s pregnancies were being filtered through discourses of criminality and exploitation of the welfare system as opposed to a consideration of the complex constellation of factors that have shaped migration in the Irish context (ibid.). Moreover, these women’s bodies were subject to intense scrutiny as they were reduced to their ‘sex organs and reproductive capacities’ (Luibhéd 2004, p.340) – in short, ‘like modern day Sarah Baartmans, their figures rendered normative heterosexuality problematic’ (Luibhéid 2013, p.52). Luibhéid (2013) also suggests that there is a re-configuration of sexual norms at work via the body of the African pregnant woman - that is, sexual norms which were harnessed to the development of post-colonial Catholic nationalism.

In an argument framed by Irish abortion debates, Garner (2007) further considers how, during the Referendum process, the body of the African woman became the locus of political conflict over the boundaries of Irish national identity. He notes that, in pro-life abortion discourse, the unborn child is unequivocally regarded as a future and rights-bearing citizen of Ireland. However, in Referendum debates, this argument has been entirely reversed – the unborn child lacks citizenship entitlement on the basis of the mother’s non-national status (which resonates with Lentin’s (2005) observation that women’s bodies are racially ‘marked’). So, in this context, the unborn is not vested with individual rights but is instead subject to a racialised hierarchy of citizenship and belonging. Therefore, before a child can be truly regarded as Irish, the unborn child must be considered Irish in the womb. As Mulhall (2011, p.100) notes, ‘the racially marked woman as producer of an undesirable future…[became] the biopolitical complement to the ethnically desirable, presumptively
white woman who is, on the other hand, legislatively coerced into reproducing the nation’s aspirational future’.

As has been well-documented, this articulation of immigration regulation with the state appropriation of women’s bodies (especially sexuality and childbearing) in relation to ethnic and racial boundary maintenance is not unique from an historical (Meaney 1993; Ryan 2002) or indeed, an international perspective (Yuval-Davis 1999). In terms of feminist analyses of nationalism, Ireland (as a postcolonial nation), provides an exemplar par excellence of the intersections between discourses of gender, ‘race’ and nation, perhaps, most significantly, because there is a tendency to frame ‘Irishness’ in national rather than racial terms (Fletcher 2005; Ryan 2002). Nationalism is sustained by ‘signifiers’ which work through racialised and gendered processes – for instance, the nationalist desire to perpetuate the body politic in both cultural and biological terms (Smyth 2005; Yuval-Davis 1989). Women’s bodies are ‘signifiers of the “social body” and for Ireland, the racialised imaginary of the body politic has historically been white’ (Tormey 2007, p.83).

Therefore, ‘race’ functions as a signifier of nationalist ideology – that is, as the ‘fictive ethnicity’ around which nationalism is organised (Balibar 1991). As Yuval-Davis (1997, p.45) argues, ‘the nation is invested in women as carrying the burden of its representation’. Therefore, the woman’s body, as reproducer for the nation, is ‘racially marked’ and just as some women are charged with the reproduction of the national population, other women’s childbearing is figured as a threat to, or violation of, the nation (Lentin 2005). Indeed, in Ireland, black women ‘were not generally the women whose childbearing was envisioned as perpetuating the nation understood in racial terms’ (Luibhéid 2004, p.343).

Historically, white Irish women have also become intimately acquainted with the interconnections between ‘childbearing, race and nation-state’ as they have been defined in
relation ‘to their childbearing role within the making of the nation – a subordination that was reflected in the 1937 Constitution and is still being struggled over’ (Luibhéid 2004, pp. 342-344). As Oaks (1998, p.133) argues, the reproduction of Irish women can be explained as ‘a medium through which competing national origin stories that focus on Irish national identity and cultural self-determination, indeed, versions of “Irishness” itself, are imagined and expressed’.

From an historical perspective, the end of British oppression marked the imposition of a strict moral code – ‘the overwhelming push to define Ireland as “not-England” led to a search for distinguishing marks for identity, of which women’s reproductive sexuality became “key”’ (Mullalley 2005, p.82). The 1937 Constitution also enshrines a strong interconnection between gender and ‘race’ (Lentin 1998). Indeed, Lentin (1998, p.9) describes this Constitution as ‘both gendered and ethnically exclusionary: the Constitution was religiously non-inclusive, it was based on sedentary values, it erased ethnic minorities and constructed a monolithic “woman” as mother and carer whose place is firmly within “the family”’. The 1937 Constitution cast women, therefore, as reproducers of the nation. This section has, therefore, demonstrated how the bodies of African pregnant women have continued the historical trajectory of linking women’s reproductive capacity with Irish national identity as enshrined in the Constitution (Luibhéid 2013). In the next section, I examine the racialised discourses in circulation, both during, and in the aftermath, of the Citizenship Referendum.

The Racialised Legacy of the Citizenship Referendum

The Racialisation of Irishness

Although there was an implicit, rather than explicit, engagement with the issue of ‘race’ during the Referendum (Luibhéid 2004; Garner 2007; Tormey 2007), the term ‘Irish’ as ‘a populist expression of cultural nationalism’ functioned effectively as ‘an index of exclusion’
The term ‘Irish’ worked to summon up notions of an authentic belonging conceived in biological/blood terms (ibid.). In fact, it could be argued that the *jus sanguinis* provision gave a legal legitimacy to ‘Irish’ as a populist expression of exclusion thereby generating new modes of racialisation in Ireland. This is consistent with Tormey’s (2007) view that the real crisis in twenty-first century Ireland relates to the meaning of Irishness itself.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, debates of Irish national identity and belonging during the Referendum era were framed by discourses of morality (e.g. ‘suspect patriot’ and/or ‘citizenship tourist’) (Tormey 2007). If the state had raised objections to the pregnant African women on the grounds of racial, as opposed to moral incommensurability, then, the liberal democratic principles espoused by the Irish government would have been contravened (Tormey 2007). Instead, by its very effective and cynical portrayal of African mothers-to-be as harbingers of moral degradation, the Irish populace, in a sense, completed the task of the Irish government by opting, in the Referendum vote, for an Ireland for the ‘truly Irish’ (ibid.). Indeed, the Referendum Campaign is a salutary lesson in how ‘the protean qualities of racialised imaginaries are easily adapted to both populist and elite ends’ (ibid. p.87) as populist appeals to cultural nationalism (‘Ireland for the Irish’) bolstered a governmental strategy which dictates that only the ‘truly’ moral are allowed to flourish in Ireland (ibid.).

The government rhetoric of ‘commonsense citizenship’ drew a line around authentic Irishness and ‘cast culture and identity as essentialist – as having inherent characteristics – rather than seeing Irishness as something constructed or performed’ (Crowley *et al.* 2006, p.6). But, this invocation of ‘commonsense citizenship’ also managed to circumvent any accusation of racism framed as it was in terms of a commitment to the protection of Ireland’s sovereign borders (ibid.).
Luibhéid (2004) argues that discourses which are not explicitly racial were deployed in the re-configuration of the racial hierarchical system in 1990s Ireland. Contiguously, the proliferation of negative representations of the reproductive faculties of the African women, is, in fact, a highly effective racial discourse – this discourse has enabled negative racialised imagery ‘to be crafted, consolidated and circulated’ by linking women’s bodies to notions of biology, kinship and nation (2004, p.341).

Indeed, exclusionary racial politics are in operation here but are euphemised in de-racialised discourses of culture and moral duty illustrating ‘the new ways in which the old story of race continues to be told’ (Tormey 2007, p.86). This, of course, bears a marked similarity to the prevailing European political rhetoric of the culturalisation of ‘race’ and immigration (Luibhéid 2013), invoking exclusionary logic along ‘neo-racist’ (Balibar 1991) lines based ‘not on biology, but on the insurmountability of cultural differences’ (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, p.21).

Yet, some citizenship discourses in circulation at this time carried more racialised connotations, as we can note in the speech by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Michael McDowell):

> citizenship is a complex of rights and obligations shared by people of a common nationality….that is the reason the government is putting forward this proposal – to eliminate an aspect of our law that exposes Irish citizenship to abuse. The nature of the abuse is that it is possible for somebody with no real connection with Ireland, North or South, to arrange affairs so as to give birth to a child in Ireland.

(Dáil¹⁰ Debates 2004)

The Minister seems to suggest that the African mothers-to-be are unwilling and/or incapable of committing to reciprocal rights and duties vis-à-vis Irish citizenship (Tormey 2007). But, more significantly, he utilises the term ‘no real connection’ to Ireland to position the African

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¹⁰ Dáil Éireann (or ‘Assembly of Ireland’) is the lower house of the Oireachtas (Irish legislature). Dáil Éireann has 158 members who are known as Teachta Dála (TD or Deputy).
pregnant women as ‘abusing’ Irish citizenship (ibid.). In fact, by an incorporation of the principles of *jus sanguinis* citizenship, the government has informed us of what a ‘real connection’ may actually mean – ‘it was a connection of blood; ultimately a racial tracing’ (Tormey 2007, p.81). For, it seemed that only blood belonging would guarantee ‘a patriotic attachment’ by potential citizens (ibid.). Although there is a strong argument to suggest that successive generations of the Irish diaspora (who may never have visited Ireland) may ultimately possess less of ‘a real connection’ than future generations of African-Irish children born and raised in the country (Luibhéid 2013). We are, thus, acquiring a sense of how the vilification of African pregnant women during the Referendum era actually reflected deeper public anxieties targeted at the future generations of Irish children who may embody racial difference. This projection of fears towards Ireland’s national future is discussed in the next section.

**A Racially Diverse Future for Ireland?**

Effectively, the Referendum enshrined a populist distinction between Irish and non-Irish thereby creating a ‘racialized two-tier system’ of belonging (King-O’Riain 2007, p.535). In particular, children in Ireland are racially divided along the lines of Irish or Irish-born (as the children born to the asylum-seeking African mothers are classified solely as ‘Irish-born children’). So, although couched in discourses of culture and morality, the *jus sanguinis* provision constituted an effort by the state to keep the Irish bloodlines running pure (Garner 2007).

Drawing on Goldberg’s (2002) notion of the racial state, Lentin and McVeigh (2006) regard the Referendum as a pivotal moment which marked Ireland’s transformation from a racial to a racist state. This assertion is developed in relation to the ‘Irish-born children’ of migrant parents. Whilst a racial state defines itself in essentialist nationalist terms, a racist state
distinguishes citizens from non-citizens in racial terms. According to Lentin and McVeigh (2006, p.55), the Referendum “‘denationalized’ people, it stripped people of rights and citizenship’ (original italics) by producing a new category of child who remains ‘part of the nation’, but, is simultaneously regarded as possessing an ‘insufficient connection’ to acquire the rights of citizenship.

More specifically, although the reproductive work of the African women was stigmatised, it is actually the status of the ‘Irish-born child’ that, during the Referendum debates, became the locus of national anxieties around the cultural dilution of Irish identity (Shandy 2008). In fact, these African-Irish children came to represent ‘a sort of malignancy in the body politic’ (2008, p.806) who had the capacity, due to maintaining transnational linkages, to serve as ‘anchor babies’ for a new African diaspora community that extends beyond Irish borders. By subverting Irish conceptualisations of ‘the nation’ and ‘the citizenry’ (Lentin 2003, p.302), these children, therefore, challenge the conflation of national and racial identity. Their presence further signals a transition to an irrevocably altered Irish society which may deploy ‘Irishness towards a new and de-stabilising identity project’ (Arat-Koc 2005 cited in Enright 2011, p.470).

Moreover, the Referendum focused solely on a narrow slice of time – the pregnant mother and her unborn child (Enright 2011). Scant attention was paid to the following years as the children moved towards adulthood and would ‘begin to fully inhabit their citizenship’ (2011, p.469) thereby symbolising ‘a rebuke to the state’s attempts to preserve membership in the nation-state for a putatively homogenous group’ (2011, p.469).

On a similar note, Luibhéid (2013), writing out of a reproductive futurism frame, asserts that, even though the targets of the proposed Amendment were migrants, it was their children who were most directly affected. This highlights the temporal dimension of migration control as
the Referendum rendered ‘migrants’ children and their children’s children vulnerable to becoming designated as illegal and deportable’ (2013, p.149). For, it seems that the regulation of immigration does not pertain solely to border security issues (spatial dimension) but also, relates to the creation of a future for the ‘real’ Irish. The ‘heteronormative temporality of generational reproduction’ (2013, p.149) and succession through which states strive to create particular kinds of national futures are invoked through an ‘imaginary child on whose behalf a better future is to be struggled for’ (2013, p.149). This, then, gives rise to a scenario of competing futures whereby the African women’s efforts to stake a claim for a desirable future on behalf of their children militates against Irish governmental strivings towards an ethnically exclusive future for those who are considered to be ‘legitimate’ Irish people (ibid.). In Luibhéid’s (2013, p.149) terms, this is known as a model of ‘competing reproductive futurism’ whereby states manage reproduction in a manner which instils a marked differentiation between citizen and non-citizen.

This further enables an understanding of how states naturalise the link between birth and political inscription as citizens in terms of ‘family, kinship and nation’ (2013, p.169) or what Luibhéid terms, ‘heteronormative kinship genealogy’ (2013, p.172). It is, therefore, the state which ultimately makes the decision as to what forms of family kinship are deemed ‘legitimate’ (Stevens 1999). In effect, the Referendum set out to undo the link between birth and absorption into the Irish political community as citizens (Luibhéid 2013). Yet, the implications of this act of severing the link, brings into play a situation whereby there occurs an expansion of the category of migrant or more pertinently, an expansion of the category of ‘illegal migrant’ (ibid.). That is, by a portrayal of African women as facilitating the entry of illegal immigrants, boundaries were subsequently re-drawn and these children were exposed to being ‘illegalised’ – a status which can also be transmitted across the generations (2013, p.193).
The Referendum, therefore, enshrined a racist conception of Irish identity by making ‘blood and heredity the cornerstone of Irish citizenship’ (Mullalley 2005, p.101). Moreover, this racist notion has become institutionalised across the globe by allowing the children of the Irish diaspora to claim Irishness through qualifying for *jus sanguinis* citizenship (Luibheid 2013). In fact, the stark contrast between the Irish state’s process of ‘illegalisation’ of African childbearing women and their children and the children of the Irish diaspora ‘re-articulates Irishness and blood and genealogy in the most literally racist way’ (2013, p.199).

Finally, the Citizenship Referendum outcome demonstrated that the Irish populace are greatly pre-occupied with issues of belonging: about who does and whodoesn’t have the right to belong (Tormey 2007)? Rather than contemplation of who is (dis) allowed Irish identity, perhaps, a more appropriate line of questioning may be to ask ‘what does being Irish in the new Ireland mean’ (ibid.)? As Mullalley (2005) observes, the manner in which these questions of belonging are resolved will have vast implications for the future of the national body politic. In the following section, I trace the evolution of mixed ‘race’ politics in Ireland.

**Mixed ‘Race’ Irish as a Political Category**

Prior to tracing the development of mixed ‘race’ Irish as a political category, this section firstly examines the positionings and experiences of the mixed ‘race’ Irish citizen. The multiracial family formation and the social phenomenon of mixed ‘race’ children have emerged as features of the Irish familial landscape in recent years (Central Statistics Office, Census Data 2016). In fact, Hannon *et al.* (2014) report that, by 2011, Irish-born females were most likely to marry non-Irish born men from the USA (65%), UK (6.3%), Central Europe (4.2%) and Africa (3.8%). Census Data (2016) also indicates that the fastest growing ethnic group since 2011 has been ‘other, including mixed background’, which displayed an
annualised growth of 14.7 per cent and, in fact, this cohort now comprises 1.5 per cent of the population.

Due to homogenising notions of Irish identity and the incorporation of principles of *jus sanguinis* principles in constitutional law, it is fair to say that racialised discourses of inclusion and exclusion are deeply interwoven into the very fabric of Irish society and its institutions (Ní Laoire *et al.* 2011) and, as such, have constructed a version of Irishness that ‘others’ and excludes the mixed ‘race’ person (Morrison 2004). In fact, mixed ‘race’ people are forced to stake a claim for Irishness which, had they a white phenotype, would be unquestionably assumed (ibid.). In a nation which conflates Irishness with whiteness, the existence of a mixed ‘race’ subject is an ‘unsettling’ presence; they are the personification of the other (Enright 2011). The mixed ‘race’ citizen, therefore, unsettles the stabilised relationship between ‘race’ and nation in Ireland (Morrison 2004). Such citizens provide a glimpse of a future that Ireland is not yet ready to embrace as exemplified by the Referendum voting outcome (Tormey 2007).

Therefore, the mixed ‘race’ Irish subject represents a ‘related fear come to life, that kinship and race are not reliable gate-keepers of the nation-state’ (Enright 2011, p.469). They are the ‘second-generation subjects’ whose very existence confounds the state’s efforts to preserve racial homogeneity (ibid.). Such subjects therefore occupy a liminal position ‘not entirely classifiable as foreign; living in-between cultures and liable to inhabit...citizenship in unsettling ways’ (2011, p.469).

In fact, in the aftermath of the Referendum, the ‘second generation subject’ became inextricably intertwined with the concept of ‘dangerous citizenship’ (Enright 2011, p.473). The Pro-Amendment campaign managed to instil a kind of ‘original sin of disloyalty’ (2011, p.474) right at the heart of Irish citizenship, as the children of immigrant women were
castigated as ‘importers of otherness’ (ibid.). This resonates with Tormey’s (2007) assertion that the Referendum served to create and reinforce a racialised divide between the ‘second generation subject’ and the ‘white, Irish’ person: ‘black bodies are not yet politic bodies, and so black children born in Ireland are not perceived as rightful (or rights-bearing) citizens. They may be in, but they are not of, their Irish communities’ (Tormey 2007, p.83).

In fact, a distinct pattern has emerged in Irish political life – that is, the children of immigrants (‘second generation subjects’) being refused legitimate participation in the public sphere (Enright 2011). An example of the complex relationship between the state and the mixed ‘race’ youth citizen is the case of Shekinah Egan, the Muslim-Irish girl, who attempted to stake a claim to citizenship by requesting permission to wear the hijab at school (ibid.).

The Irish government, by their subsequent refusal to legislate for the headscarf in the classroom, effectively diffused Shekinah’s attempted ‘act of citizenship’ in claiming the right to wear it (Isin 2002). Although her citizenship cannot be ‘illegalised’ (Luibhéid 2013, p.193) as it could be for the black children affected by the 2004 Referendum, as a mixed ‘race’ Irish citizen with a white Irish father, her political autonomy was questioned and she was prohibited from making claims on the state (McNevin 2006). This de-politicisation of Shekinah’s claim raises crucial questions around the Irish way of ‘living with difference’ (Ahmed 2000, p.95).

There has been a relative absence of mixed ‘race’ political movements in Ireland. The establishment of Harmony in 1986, although borne out of a need for mutual support by multiracial families in Ireland, actually preceded the formulation of a coherent political response to racism by the Irish state (Tannam 2002). As a consequence, Harmony’s progress was enfeebled by a combination of a lack of state acknowledgement, public funding and/or organisational focus and development (ibid.). Harmony’s existence did, however, pave the way for other anti-racist organisations such as the Platform against Racism in 1996 and
concomitantly, is regarded as a key player in putting racism/anti-racism on the Irish political agenda (ibid.). Unfortunately, Harmony’s demise in 1999 signalled the end of formal organisational support for multiracial families, despite the increasing prevalence of mixed ‘race’ children in Ireland (ibid.).

It is also interesting to note that the Association of Mixed Race Irish (AMRI) (originally established in 2013 as the Mixed Race Irish campaign), which strives to gain recognition of mixed ‘race’ Irish people and to campaign on relevant issues (such as institutional abuse) (MRI 2013) is based in London rather than Ireland. AMRI has documented the experiences of mixed ‘race’ Irish children who, between the 1940s and the 1980s, were incarcerated in state institutions. These children were denied fundamental human rights being forced to endure skin-based racism, forced child labour and exposed to potential physical, emotional and sexual abuse (Michael 2015). Indeed, this sustained exposure to abuse during their childhood years has had a profound psychological impact on many former residents of the Irish industrial school system who report continued experiences of racism, poverty, feelings of alienation and displacement, low self-esteem, and poor physical and mental health (Gartland 2015).

In 2014, AMRI made a submission to the Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality concerning the maltreatment of mixed ‘race’ Irish citizens raised in state institutions (MRI 2014). Primarily, they asked for recognition of ‘mixed ‘race’ Irish’ as an identity and a proposal that the Irish Census is amended to reflect this racial category. AMRI further requested that the Committee acknowledge both the inhumane treatment of the mixed ‘race’ Irish children in Irish state institutions (during 1940 to 1980) and the state’s failure to protect and honour the most fundamental human rights of this cohort. The Association also noted the
neglect of the Ryan report (2009)\textsuperscript{11} on industrial abuse to include ‘race’ as a specific category of investigation.

Indeed, AMRI has successfully lobbied for the issue of ‘race’ to be included in the statutory terms of reference in the Government appointed Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation which will document evidence of ‘race’ discrimination perpetrated against mixed ‘race’ Irish children in fourteen mother and baby homes across Ireland (between 1950 and the 1970s) (Bryan 2015). This is a hugely significant achievement for AMRI as this is the first time that considerations of ‘race’ have been included as a specific criteria in any Irish governmental investigation of enquiry into institutional abuse (ibid.).

Based on her lived experiences as a mixed ‘race’ Irish woman, Lorraine Maher launched the #IamIrish Campaign in 2016 (in London). Lorraine has collaborated with photographer, Tracey Anderson, to create a photographic exhibition (at the London Irish Centre, London City Hall and Axis Ballymun, Dublin) of mixed ‘race’ Irish people. By rendering visible mixed ‘race’ Irish lives and experiences, the #IamIrish project aims to challenge existing perceptions of the racialised meaning and category of Irishness (#IamIrish 2018).

In fact, the construction of the Census 2016 (and Census 2011) severely limited the choices of racial category for mixed ‘race’ (i.e. white Irish/black African) individuals who are forced to select either ‘white’, or ‘black or black Irish’. There also exists the option to tick ‘other including mixed background’ and to further provide a written description of one’s mixed origins. However, this may have the effect of being designated as ‘other’ – that is, ‘other’ to the category of Irishness (Bryan 2016; Michael 2015). In addition, by positioning ‘white

\textsuperscript{11} The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA) was established with the remit to investigate all forms of child abuse in Irish Catholic Church-run industrial schools and orphanages (from 1936 onwards). The Ryan Report (2009), by which the Commission is more commonly known, elicited testimony from former inhabitants of more than 250 Church-run institutions and found that these institutions had both criminally neglected and failed in their duty of care towards these vulnerable children (Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs 2019).
Irish’ (A1) as the first option (ethnic/cultural background), the Census actually reproduces the racialised hierarchy implicit in the language of skin colour (Bryan 2016). The Census 2016, therefore, by its re-inscription of the dominant black-white binary, and its paradigmatic effect on the reproduction of ‘race’, both reproduces the invisibility of the mixed ‘race’ population and/or inhibits the development of a politicised mixed ‘race’ Irish identity.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has located the transracial mother/child dyad of this study in the wider social, cultural and political context of public debates and discourses and constitutional and legislative initiatives that shape the belonging in and through ‘race’ in twenty-first century Ireland. The specific manifestations of ‘race’ and racism in Ireland have all intertwined in complex ways to shape the national landscape of racialised belonging. These include the promulgation of homogenising discourses of Irishness, the phenomenon of the racialisation of migration and in particular, the experiences of the Irish themselves which are integral to our understandings of the construction and negotiation of racialised identities. Most specifically, this chapter has highlighted how the Citizenship Referendum 2004, by enshrining *jus sanguinis* principles of Irish belonging, continues to frame emergent conversations about who is allowed to be Irish? Whilst women’s bodies have assumed centrality in relation to competing stories about Irish identity and belonging, it is the children of the Referendum who became the focus of national anxieties around issues of cultural purity. Yet, it is indeed mixed ‘race’ young people who must bear the burden of ‘dangerous citizenship’ as they attempt to inhabit their citizenship in the future. It is clear, therefore, that an exploration of negotiations of racialised belonging by the transracial mother/child dyad will provide unique insights into the workings of mixed ‘race’ politics in contemporary Ireland. In the next chapter, I examine the key theoretical concepts which will help to grapple with the interlinked domains of
citizenship, gender and ‘race’ which are central to my analysis of the workings of racialised belonging.
**Chapter Two: Theorising the Landscape of Citizenship, Gender and ‘Race’**

**Introduction**

Chapter one mapped the socio-political landscape in which this study is located by reviewing the significant discourses and events shaping racialised belonging in the Irish context. In this chapter, I examine the key theoretical concepts that help unravel the overlapping domains of citizenship, gender and ‘race’ that are foundational to this study. This will, then, provide a framework for an analysis of the accounts of the activists, mothers and young people in subsequent chapters.

This chapter begins by exploring key ideas related to the re-theorisation of citizenship. Framed by critical citizenship scholarship (Ní Mhurchú (2011, 2014, 2015); Walker (1993, 1999, 2003) and Kristeva’s (1991) notion of subjectivity, alternative framing(s) of the politics of citizenship are discussed. In the second section, the Foucauldian (1978, 2003) notion of biopower and the work of Fanon (2008) are deployed to theorise the workings of ‘race’ and racialisation. In the final section, I introduce the figure of the national abject, as developed by Tyler (2013), using the Kristevan (1982) theory of abjection as a conceptual lens for a discussion of the mobilisation of the national abject to legitimate neoliberal systems of governance.

**An Alternative Framework for Conceptualising the Citizen-Subject**

So, how can we re-conceptualise citizenship for the transracial mother/child dyad of this study which, by its very existence, disrupts the notion of the state as the central site of legitimate sovereign authority? In order to encompass the lived experiences of the mother and child (in relationship to one another), there is a need to work with a conceptual language
around citizenship and belonging which can facilitate an understanding of the differential marginalised positioning of both mother and child.

Dominant citizenship scholarship has thus far been framed as a conflict between particularist and universalist models of citizenship (Ní Mhurchú 2014). Following Ní Mhurchú (2014), I draw on recent critical citizenship scholarship and in particular, the work of Walker (1993, 1999, 2003) whose work challenges, from a poststructuralist perspective, the basis of the prevailing politics of citizenship as based on the insider/outsider dichotomy. For the above theorists, citizenship is viewed in terms of a process (i.e. rupture) rather than presence (i.e. sovereign essence, status).

Walker (1993, 1999) calls for a re-formulation of citizenship by asking us to give due attention to the manner in which we conceptualise the sovereign autonomous ‘we’. More specifically, he sets out to interrogate notions of sovereign individuality as existing separately from state boundaries. In this regard, Walker suggests that we view citizenship as linked to a particular notion of subjectivity instead of a presumption that subjectivity is both sovereign and autonomous.

Walker’s (1999) notion of ‘a constitutive subject of politics’ (which he terms ‘the modern subject’), therefore, problematizes modern statist conceptions of political subjectivity. Instead of working with coherent categories such as ‘Irish’, ‘African’ and ‘woman’, the underlying coherency of these categories is questioned. The term ‘coherency’ relates to taken-for-granted assumptions regarding ‘the lines of analysis that we rely on “to make sense” of our established political categories’ (1999, p.198). In fact, state sovereignty posits a specifically modern way of ‘Being’ as regards citizen-subjectivity which, in turn, re-affirms a distinct notion of political life (citizen-subjectivity), an associated notion of time (as progressive and linear) and absolute space (Ní Mhurchú 2014).
Kristeva’s work provides an alternative framework for the conceptualisation of subjectivity beyond statist dualisms and is utilised in this thesis in order to extend the lines of analysis opened up by Walker’s notion of ‘the constitutive subject of modern politics’ (1999). Therefore, I further draw on Ní Mhurchú’s (2011, 2014, 2015) use of Kristeva’s (1991) notion of ‘foreignness’ which incorporates Freud’s notion of the ‘splitting off’ of the self—that is, an individual’s deep sense of ‘Being’. In Strangers to Ourselves (1991), Kristeva examines the political experiences of the stranger who is defined as ‘immigrant’, ‘exile’ or ‘foreigner’. Indeed, her analysis of national identity through the lens of psychoanalysis enables us to think through both subject formation and its public signification at the same time.

Unlike existing citizenship analysis, Kristeva (1991) does not set out to consider how a fragmented subject may be re-conceptualised in terms of a located presence (e.g. as a hyphenated national). Instead, she considers ‘foreignness’ to be a ‘symptom’ (1991, p.103) which undermines notions of a stable, unified self (i.e. self and other as indistinguishable). She, therefore, ‘rethinks the human condition as one of rupture within the notion of a coherent self’ (Ní Mhurchú 2014, p.151). Kristeva’s work thus allows us to shift from an understanding of ‘Being’ as a metaphysics of presence defined vis-à-vis the state to a metaphysics of process – in short, modern subjectivity as a subject-in-process.

Crucial to Kristeva’s (1991) work, then, is the idea that subjectivity must incorporate the Freudian notion of alterity which cannot be foreclosed. Her notion of the subject calls upon us to engage with unresolved otherness ‘without attempting to totalise it, annihilate it, or reconcile it’ (Oliver 1993, p.13) as any attempt to expel alterity from the constitution of subjectivity has the capacity to lead to abject forms of identification (Kristeva 1991) (see below). Kristeva (1991, p.182) further advances the idea that the elaboration of ‘the stranger in ourselves’ (i.e. the unconscious) may act as an ethics of alterity thereby prompting
reconciliation with the irreconcilable: ‘psychoanalysis is then experienced as a journey into the strangerness of the other and of oneself’ (1991, p.182).

The Kristevan understanding of human ‘Being’, therefore, provides an alternative framework for a conceptualisation of citizen-subjectivity (which exceeds notions of modern subjectivity) (Ní Mhurchú 2014). Kristeva achieves this by re-figuring the manner in which we have conventionally conceptualised the ‘self’ in terms of spatial and linear temporal boundaries between binaries of inclusion and exclusion (ibid.) (see Walker (1999) above).

Indeed, the categories of inside/outside do not feature in Kristeva’s theory of foreignness which posits that no political community can effectively foreclose on alterity (Ní Mhurchú 2014). Kristeva, therefore, problematizes the association of politics and public life. In fact, much of Kristeva’s work addresses the incorporation of embodiment into the public sphere (McAfee 2004). Instead of subscribing to western dualistic thought processes, Kristeva demonstrates how both poles of the dualism (e.g. body/mind) are articulated by each other. However, the difference with Kristeva’s deployment of ‘these kinds of polarities is that the former pole (semiotic/nature/body/unconscious) always makes itself felt – is discharged into the latter (symbolic/culture/mind/consciousness)’ (McAfee 2004, p.17).

By regarding the public sphere as that which emerges ‘in the field of “the intimate”’ (Jabri 2009, p.223), Kristeva effectively collapses the distinction between public and private. As such, Kristeva’s emphasis on ‘the intimate’ provides a potentially useful frame for this study which focuses on the ‘private’ domain of the mother/child dyad as relates to the ‘public’ politics of citizenship as lived. In her exegesis of ‘Herethics’, which is founded upon the newly conceived relation between mother and child, Kristeva (1995) suggests a crucial role for the mother as she proffers the mother/child dyad as the prototype for all social relations (i.e. relations to the ‘other’ based upon relations to the ‘other within’). We are, thus, enabled
to see how the dyad challenges any notions of a unified subject but is, instead, emblematic of the Kristevan subject-in-process (Oliver 1993). Kristeva further suggests that the maternal body acts as a connection between the semiotic (drives) and symbolic modes of signification by collapsing the dualisms of body and mind (and nature/culture) which can be ‘folded into one another - via the maternal body’ (McAfee 2004, p.85).

The act of birth, therefore, heralds the onset of a new form of subjectivity for both mother and child which helps us understand more transitive ways of being in the world that extend beyond the conventional dualism of modern political subjectivity (Ní Mhurchú 2016). Indeed, we cannot make sense of the positioning of the transracial mother/child dyad of this study in accordance with existing political categorisations. This is because the ambiguous subjectivity of the transracial mother/child dyad exemplifies the type of complex subjectivity which exceeds capture by conventional notions of citizenship.

Ní Mhurchú (2015) further considers ambiguous experiences of subjectivity which involve a problematic claiming of belonging to any particular place (that is, being suspended between ‘here’ and ‘there’). There is a proliferation of literature (Isin 2002; Jabri 2012; McNevin 2011) which relates to how political subjectivity is re-conceptualised by some theorists away from statist understandings focusing, instead, on how the constitution of the subject is bound up with the constitution of the social order.

The subject pursues an imaginary (and elusive) sense of wholeness which ‘will confirm its existence as a subject’ (Edkins and Pin Fat 1999, p.4). This perspective is linked to the de-centring of the Cartesian subject that, through an incorporation of Freud’s notion of the unconscious, has challenged the very basis of Cartesian philosophy (ibid.). The self, by assuming that it already exists, is always retrospectively defined through its social or symbolic order. Indeed, it is precisely at this point that one is constituted as a subject or, in
Edkins and Pin-Fat’s (1999, p.5) terms, subjectivity itself ‘only ever will have been’ (original italics).

Increasingly, there is an emphasis on examining how ‘Being’ is constituted at the same time as the social order in complex and indeterminate ways (Ní Mhurchú 2014; Sajed 2013; Stephens 2013); that is, the instances of subjectivity which are experienced ‘as never having been or never being because they remain retrospectively undefined – falling in between’ (Ní Mhurchú 2015, p.6 – original italics). I am interested, therefore, in how the concept of ambiguous subjectivity may be applied to the mixed ‘race’ young people of this study, who are not constituted in a progressively linear fashion but are, rather, interpellated by a variety of discourses (which may relate to either citizenship (‘from here’) or migration (‘from there’)) (Ní Mhurchú 2015).

Therefore, Walker’s (1999) notion of ‘a constitutive subject of politics’ and the work of Ní Mhurchú (2011, 2014, 2015, 2016) and Kristeva (1991) provide a framework for understanding the constitution of citizenship in this study. In addition, issues of ‘race’ and racism, as intersects with citizenship, are also a contributory factor in the complex positionality of the transracial mother/child dyad.

**Theorising Race and Racialisation**

**Foucault and Biopower**

The Foucauldian theory of biopower provides a useful analytical lens for this study as it brings together issues of biological processes (reproduction), sexuality, the nation and racism as these concepts relate to the workings of citizenship.
In *The History of Sexuality Volume One* 1978, Foucault develops the concept of biopower as another mechanism of governmentality. This new regulatory type of power employs multifarious mechanisms and bio-political technologies in order to administer the life force of the people by taking as its focus ‘man as living being – man as species’ across ‘the entire domain of human life’ (Foucault 2003, p.242) (i.e. natality, fertility and mortality). Foucault (1978) further posits a clear link between ‘race’ as an explicit category and the rise of biopower throughout the 19th century:

Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, the thematics of blood was sometimes called on to lend its entire historical weight towards revitalising the type of political power that was exercised through the device of sexuality. Racism took shape at this point (racism in its modern ‘biologizing’ statist form); it was then that a whole politics of settlement…family, marriage, education, social hierarchization, the body, conduct, health and everyday life, received their color and their justification from the mythical concern with protecting the purity of the blood and ensuring the triumph of the race.

(1978, p.149).

Foucault asserts that we can only truly understand the origins and workings of racism if we analyse it within the historical context of biopolitics (and normalisation) and in conjunction with *the dispositif de sexualité* (McWhorter 2005, p.540): ‘sex is the means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species’ (Foucault 1978, p.146). In fact, as part of his analysis of sexuality, Foucault elucidates the association between nation and racism as ‘the mythical concern with protecting the purity of the blood’ (p.149 – see quote above). The phenomenon of modern racism emanates from biopower’s ‘appropriation and adaptation of an older discourse of blood’ (McWhorter 2005, p.539). Therefore, in order to qualify as a member of a particular ‘race’, one has to satisfy the criteria of biological relatedness and/or to have the blood of that ‘race’ flowing through one’s veins (e.g. the one drop rule of hypodescent (Shein 2004) (see later in chapter).

In *Society Must be Defended*, Foucault turns to a critical analysis of the workings of ‘race’. Racism exercises power in two distinct ways – the construction of a racial hierarchy and the
linking together of notions of the ‘right to kill’ with the continuity of ‘man as species’ (2003, p.242). The notion that the species body ‘was made up of various races compelled biopolitical practices to divide it into constituent groups’ thereby facilitating the application of biopower to ‘treat the population as a mixture of races, or, to be more accurate, to treat the species, to subdivide the species it controls into the subspecies known precisely as races’ (2003, p.255). These subspecies (races) then evolve into distinct nations. Indeed, it was the application of biopower which marked the point when ‘race’ and nation, although previously existing as discrete entities, became interconnected (ibid.).

So, racism works on ‘the biological continuum of the human race of races, the distinction among races, the hierarchy of races, [establishing] the fact that certain races are described as good and that others, in contrast, are described as inferior’ (2003, p.255). But, the ensuing fragmentation of society into ‘races’ means that there is a marked tendency for political issues to become translated into biological concerns (e.g. children of interracial relationships deemed racially impure on the basis of undoing ‘ruptures in the biological continuum’ (Shein 2004, p.14)). In fact, if the division of ‘races’ does not occur, there ceases to be a basis for ‘the death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or of the degenerate or of the abnormal) in order to make life “more healthy, more pure”’ (Foucault 2003, p.255).

We are, therefore, enabled to see how racism is ‘bound up with the workings of the state that is obliged to use race, the elimination of races and the purification of race to exercise its sovereign power’ (2003, p.258).

‘Race’ manifested as a specific type of abnormality within discourses and practices of biopower (Shein 2004). For example, whilst whiteness symbolises health, wellbeing and optimal functioning, blackness is equated with nature and savagery – an abnormality that must be eliminated so that whiteness may both flourish and more significantly, that the racial continuity of the species through biological reproduction can be ensured (McWhorter 2005).
In Foucault’s (2003) final analysis, it is the concept of state racism which enables sovereignty’s power ‘to take life or let live’ to persist within modern, normalising society. By creating ‘ruptures in the biological continuum’ racism provides the ultimate justification for death. In fact, state racism creates a link between ‘my life and the death of the other’ and is targeted at internal ‘others’ as opposed to external enemies – that is, certain subspecies who must be eliminated so that the species overall may flourish (ibid.).

But, most significantly, the relationship between the self and others is conceptualised in biological as opposed to political terms for ‘in the biopower system...killing or the imperative to kill is acceptable only if it results not in a victory over political adversaries, but in the elimination of the biological threat to and the improvement of the species or race’ (Foucault 2003, p.256). In short, the old ‘sovereign’ right to kill is succeeded by the biological necessity to kill (ibid.).

The Foucauldian analysis of biopower remains applicable insofar as the notion of biopower highlights the interlinked trajectories of state and nation (i.e. citizenship as nationality) and posits an intimate relationship between racism and nation (Isin 2012). Moreover, biopower’s orientation towards the life force of the population helps us understand how ancestry (blood) is linked with nationalism as the intermixing of blood is a necessary requirement for reproduction of the nation’s people (Wade 2007).

The Dynamics of Racialisation

The concept of racialisation further facilitates an analysis of the complex positioning of citizen-subjectivity and the mixed ‘race’ mother/child dyad. This concept makes reference to the historical emergence of the idea of ‘race’ and to its constant reproduction and application (Miles and Brown 2003). Racialisation is, therefore, utilised ‘to denote a dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to particular biological features of human beings as a result of
which individuals may be assigned to a general category of persons that reproduces itself biologically’ (Miles and Brown 2003, p.102).

However, despite the emphasis on racialisation as ‘a dialectical process’ (Miles and Brown 2003, p.102) (i.e. racially defining the self occurs simultaneously whilst defining the other), Lewis (2007) decries the persistent tendency for those rendered visible within normative discourses of ‘race’ (i.e. non-whites) to be solely regarded as objects of racialisation. With this in mind, I proceed, in this study, on the assumption that the lives, practices and identities of those positioned as white, as well as black, are racialised as I set out to examine whiteness within a framework of racialisation. In alignment with Riggs (2008), my analysis of racialisation further seeks to incorporate two seemingly disparate understandings by acknowledging both the banal operation of racial categories and the prevailing notion of ‘race’ as a social construction.

Following Garner (2007), I theorise whiteness as a marked and racialised category of identity as opposed to an unmarked, universal norm. As Dyer (1997, p.45) suggests, ‘whites must be seen to be white, yet whiteness as race resides in invisible properties and whiteness as power is maintained by being unseen’. Of course, the notion of whiteness as unmarked is solely the preserve of those who are racially positioned as white (ibid.). Or, rather, it can be said that whiteness serves as ‘a “blind spot” for white people in “a racially saturated field of visibility”’ (Butler 1993, p.15). Whiteness further works through scripts that reproduce white privilege and all the cultural values attributed to whiteness (Gray 2002).

Fanon’s theory of colonial psychopathology is also foundational to this study by providing a frame to help us understand the lived experiences of racialised abjection (abjection will be discussed in detail later in chapter). In the context of the ‘black-white relation’ (Fanon 2008, p.3), Fanon describes how the abject internalises the racialised discourses by which he/she is
fixed and classified. That is, how the black body comes to embody racial difference in a process which Fanon terms ‘epidermalisation’ or, as Hall (2000, p.5) defines it ‘the writing of difference on the skin of the other’. We can note the prevalence of the body in Fanon’s account as he draws on a ‘recurring motif of traumatised corporeality’ (Hook 2006, p.2) as the black body is persistently contrasted with a whiteness that is disembodied.

By drawing our attention to the ‘violence’ of racial interpellation (‘look, a negro’ (2008, p.85)), Fanon helps us understand that it is in the context of everyday encounters that bodies become racialised through processes of othering. The relation between knowing and looking is crucial here – it is through the white gaze (the ‘hate stare’) that the ‘other’ becomes fixed and known (‘I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am fixed’ (2008, p.87)). Moreover, as Ahmed states, ‘it is by “seeing” bodily others that they are “known” and this knowledge serves to constitute the subject (the white subject) as the one who knows’ (2002, p.56). Racial categories then get lived out on the body (ibid.).

In Fanon’s seminal episode of the white child’s cry ‘mama, see the negro! I am frightened’ (2008, p.85), we can see how the white body has a visceral response to the physicality of the black body. The black body fragments, immobilised by the white child’s cry – ‘I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object’ (ibid. p.85) and, whilst the black body is also afraid, this becomes misrecognised as rage.

Indeed, the irony remains that ‘the failure to see the black subject in the seeing of the black body is important…there is always a failed translation…always a gap, to be filled, as it were, between how we construct the racial body and how it is lived’ (Ahmed 2002, p.55). For, when viewing and attempting to read the bodies of others, we are not able to authentically grasp the person but it is, rather, a perception based on fantasy – a fantasy of the black ‘other’ which helps to re-constitute whiteness (ibid.).
As Fanon further explains, ‘not only must the black man be black: he must be black in relation to the white man’ (2008, pp.82-83). If we look at the wider implications of this assertion, Fanon is providing an account of one of the psychological consequences of colonialism (and hence, otherness) which is that the black man is excluded from ‘the self-other dynamic of subjectivity itself’ (Fuss 1994, p.21). In this sense, subjectivity not only remains the privilege of the white man solely but the black man, denied access to his own subjectivity, must submit to the process of being dehumanised, rendered abject (‘sealed into a crushing objecthood’ (2008, p.82)).

But, one of the overriding effects of this colonisation of black subjectivity is that the black man is ‘forever in combat with his own image’ (2008, p.150). For, whilst ‘the black man must be black in relation to the white man’ (ibid. p.83) the converse does not apply – that is, the concept of whiteness does not need the referent ‘black’ for its symbolic constitution (ibid.). As Fanon states, ‘the negro is comparison’ (ibid. p.163).

Ahmed (2002) further emphasises the importance of the visual and the omnipresence of the body in discourses of racialisation. Ahmed suggests that we cannot understand ‘race’ without a consideration of embodiment and the myriad ways that bodies come to be regarded as possessing a racial identity – as the body is marked as the site of racialisation itself. In fact, processes of racialisation invest skin colour with racial meaning to the extent that the terms ‘black’ and ‘white’ do not refer to phenotype but rather to racial identity. That is, ‘race’ as an effect of racialisation, rather than the cause. Although conceptualising the racialised body as a discursive construction, Ahmed suggests that, in a somewhat contradictory manner, ‘essence’ remains on the body. More specifically, she asks, ‘how is it that bodies come to be lived as possessing essential characteristics (p.47, original italics)?
Ahmed further examines the close association between the bodily and psychic registers of racialisation. That is, how the black body is viewed as threatening and primitive and how this perception then affects the (re)constitution of bodily and social space in the course of quotidian encounters. Indeed, it is as if the black body must be ascribed as the racialised ‘other’ so that the white body can continue to exist ‘apart’ from the black body. A re-definition of space occurs through the (re)consolidation of boundaries as the white body aligns itself with the nation and the black body becomes the ‘body out of place’.

Haritaworn (2009) focuses on processes of racialisation as specifically related to the mixed ‘race’ experience. As has been well-documented, mixed ‘race’ people are generally exposed to what Fanon (2008) regards as violent reading practices (the ‘what are you’? encounters (Williams 1996)). However, there is also a prevailing tendency within mixed ‘race’ scholarship to pinpoint the racial ambiguity of the mixed ‘race’ person as the sole impetus behind such encounters. But, by so doing, and as Haritaworn (2009) cautions, we reify the racialised power relations which are at the core of these multiracialising reading practices.

Haritaworn (2009) asserts that, rather than a presumption of the phenotypic ambiguity of the mixed ‘race’ person, we need to find an alternative starting point. She suggests, therefore, an acknowledgement at a theoretical level that, rather than existing as a pre-social property of bodies, the ambiguous phenotype, by means of the external racial gaze (Fanon 2008) actually gets (re) produced in the ‘what are you’? encounter.

**The Relationality of Whiteness (and the White Mother)**

Dominant conceptualisations of whiteness further emphasise an equally experienced location of structural advantage and power (Garner 2007). But, as Garner states:

> The relationality of whiteness involves two simultaneous border maintenance processes: one between white and people of colour and the other between white and not-quite white. All
white subjects are located somewhere on this spectrum, which is an outcome of the ongoing classificatory process conceptualised as racialisation.

(2007, p.175)

There exists, therefore, a variety of positionings within whiteness and hence, the privileges which invariably flow from such a status are not evenly distributed (ibid.). As an example, the Irish have occupied a paradoxical position in relation to mainstream white identity in both the US and Britain (Hickman 1998; Ignatiev 1995; Walter 2011) (see chapter one). As Frankenberg (1993, p.236) further notes, ‘the range of possible ways of living whiteness, for an individual woman in a particular time and place, is delimited by the relations of racism at that moment and in that place’.

Yet, it remains important to note that, in relation to non-whites, those positioned as white do occupy a location of relational privilege (Moran 2004). Moreover, it is the white person’s lack of cognizance of this fact which operates as ‘a central mechanism in the reproduction of racialised systems of knowledge, power and privilege’ – with it being regarded as ‘just the way things are’ (Moran 2004, para.18).

In this study, I examine the racialised positioning of the white mother of the mixed ‘race’ Irish child which poses a challenge to the notion of whiteness as stable, unchanging and as a lived position of privilege and power. Whilst the white mother in interracial family formations has appeared in ‘race’ literature, there has been a marked tendency to regard her solely as ‘a heritage marker’ for her children, rather than a person who can bring to bear her own racialised dynamics (Luke 1994).

Frankenberg’s seminal study of white women in the US represented a sustained attempt to map out and examine ‘the terrain of whiteness’ (1993, p.2) by analysing the significance of ‘race’ in the women’s lives. This was the first study of ‘race’ by a white feminist which shifted the research focus from ethnic minorities to white women. Her findings indicated that
the women’s perspectives on ‘race’ and racism in America could be broadly categorised according to three discursive repertoires – ‘essentialist racism, color and power evasion and race cognizance’ (1993, p.188) with ‘evasion’ being the most dominant (i.e. ‘the production of the white self innocent of racism’ (1993, p.188)).

During the 1990s, a new genre of ‘race’ related literature began to appear – the autobiographical memoir written by white mothers of black/mixed ‘race’ children (Lazarre 1996; Reddy 1994; Segrest 1994). In these publications, the white women elucidate their growing racial awareness and subsequent re-negotiation of whiteness as their routine mothering practices become circumscribed by discourses of ‘race’ and racism. In fact, Lazarre explains how everyday mothering forced her to come to terms with ‘the blindness of whiteness’ (1996, p.49).

Twine (2010) conducted an ethnographic analysis of the white mothers in multiracial families (in Leicester, England) as they encounter aspects of racism in their daily lives. These women can be regarded as ‘insider-outsiders’ (2010, p.93) who, through their intimate association with blackness, have come to understand the pernicious effects of racism. Twine established the concept of ‘racial literacy’, which she defines as a response to racism that ‘generates a repertoire of discursive and material practices’ (2010, p.92). Through the acquisition of ‘racial literacy’, the white mothers develop a critical racial frame for an analysis of how both their public and private lives are structured by a racialised hierarchical system. The mothers also demonstrated an increased recognition of ‘everyday racism’ (Essed 1991) and a growing ability to assess the influence of class and gender on racial hierarchies. Finally, these mothers also learned to see beyond their own whiteness as they re-evaluated its social, political and cultural implications.
Twine further highlights the invisible nature of caretaking mothering practices – that is, the interracial family formation as the site of ‘micro-level political projects’ where racialised identities are produced, negotiated and contested (2010, p.4). In addition, Harman’s (2010) study of the racialised experiences of white mothers in such families found that, by means of their mothering practices, the women experience transformational shifts in their perspectives vis-à-vis issues of racial injustice.

But, it is also worth noting that, unlike mothers in monoracial family units, the white mother of the multiracial family is, oftentimes, subject to ‘a critical racialised gaze’ in relation to her maternal competence (Caballero, Edwards and Puthussery 2008; Harman 2010; Twine 2010). The above studies, therefore, provide evidence that whiteness as an advantageous social location is not equally experienced by these mothers (Britton 2013). In fact, Britton asks us to extend our analysis of the racialised positioning of the white mother to a consideration of how her whiteness may impact racialised power relations within the context of the family unit. That is, to what degree are everyday mothering practices structured by, and structuring of, whiteness (both as a discourse and as a practice)? Such a nuanced analysis of the implications of whiteness may provide unique insight as to how ‘race’ impacts all members of multiracial family formations (ibid.). This may further enable us to understand how the theoretical domains of both whiteness and mixed ‘race’ may be interconnected and articulate each other thereby challenging essentialist ideas of racial categories and difference (ibid.).

Any theorisation of whiteness, therefore, needs to attempt to resolve the ever-present tension between the hegemony of whiteness and the diverse ways that whiteness is lived (Moran 2004). In this regard, Frankenberg defines ‘the terrain of whiteness’ as comprised of three linked dimensions – a location of structural advantage, a white standpoint and a set of unmarked cultural practices (1993, p.1) - which may be categorised as society (institutions and structures), subjectivity and culture. In a society in which white hegemony prevails, all
three dimensions play a contributory role in relation to the structuring of racialised inequalities (Moran 2004).

It is fair to say, therefore, that the ways in which the mothers of this study, as individual white subjects, negotiate their lived whiteness at the level of the family also has repercussions for racialised power relations at the structural level (Moran 2004). In other words, white subjectivities are both entangled with and contribute, to a greater or lesser degree, to the reproduction of the racialised structures of Irish society as the white subjects attempt ‘to protect or maintain their foundational subjective cathexis in their own racial categorisation and its connection to their understanding of the nation’ (Moran 2004, para.37).

**The Intersection (s) of Whiteness and the Nation**

As discussed in chapter one, exclusionary discourses of Irishness have constructed the nation as racially and ethnically homogenous (Fanning 2012). Drawing on the work of Hage (1998) and Moran (2004), therefore, my approach to whiteness in this thesis also involves a thinking through of its intersections with discourses of Irish national identity and nation-building processes in order to acquire a sense of how whiteness gets (re) produced as both a dominant and cherished identity. In the Australian context, Hage and Moran discuss how the forces of immigration and globalisation have heralded unprecedented levels of ethnic/racial heterogeneity. However, as part of the resistance to globalising processes (and the onslaught of neoliberalism), ethnic/racial diversity may be construed as national fragmentation (Moran 2004). Such resistance may further ‘manifest as a strong attachment to an imagined white homogeneous nation’ (Moran 2004, para. 9) – a fantasy which serves to privilege an idealised whiteness. Hage asserts that this white national fantasy incorporates notions of an imagined white nation space but in addition, ‘an ideal image of the self as a “meaningful subject”’ (1998, p.70). Nationalist practices of exclusion construct this imagined racialised nation so
that a white national fantasy conflates ‘real’ Australianness with whiteness which assumes hegemonic status in rationalities and practices of government (ibid.).

Hage further speaks of the two-tiered sense of belonging which manifests in the national space. Firstly, passive belonging relies on an expectation of being a part of the nation in the sense of being able to avail of the nation’s resources. Secondly, governmental belonging encompasses the belief that one possesses legitimate rights and entitlements in terms of management of the nation – in the sense of ‘the nation belongs to me’ (1998, p.45). Of course, in order to claim governmental belonging, one must firstly be able to claim belonging to whiteness. This dominant positioning thus endows one with the capacity to inhabit the national will which, in a sense, becomes almost indistinguishable from one’s own will (Hage 1998). The central positioning of white subjects also means that there is a corresponding (implicit) positioning of those racially ascribed as non-white – as national abjects (ibid.) (see below).

Of course, the very real material consequences of such exclusivist mythologies becomes apparent when one considers the effectiveness with which they may be wielded for political gains (Moran 2004). Indeed, as part of a phenomenon which Wacquant (2010) refers to as ‘neoliberal statecrafting’, neoliberal governance functions through the generation of high levels of national anxiety in the body politic. This constant state of anxiety is exacerbated by the locally felt effects of globalisation, economic rationalism and de-regulation which have resulted in greater instability and fracture. Of course, in the ensuing climate of insecurity, public hostility becomes targeted at minority groups who are perceived to be a strain on dwindling national resources and therefore, subject to ‘heightened stigmatisation’ (Wacquant 2010, p.24). Tyler (2013) refers to these groups as ‘figurative scapegoats’ who are deemed to be national abjects (see below). In the next section, I develop a conceptual framework within
which to locate interpretations of mixed ‘race’ identity (by both mother and child) and also, the politics of racialised positioning.

**Genealogy of Mixed ‘Race’ (Racial Construction and Identification)**

According to Ifekwunigwe (2004), there are three stages of multiracial discourse: the discourse of racial homogeneity (‘the age of pathology’) which occurred mostly during the 19th century; the ‘age of celebration’ in the late 20th century and the ‘age of critique’ which is characteristic of more recent multiracial theory and its concern with issues of categorisation, structure and agency (e.g. Census terminology (Aspinall 2009; Morning 2003)).

The origins of mixed ‘race’ theory are located in 19th century ‘race’ science fiction (Ifekwunigwe 1999). This era (‘the age of pathology’) was marked by the prevalence of biological discourses and associated metaphors of ‘contagion and pollution’ (Ifekwunigwe 1997). ‘Hybrid degeneracy theory’ was also very popular at this time which advanced science claims based on the notion that interbreeding would threaten both the supremacy and ‘purity’ of the white race (Ifekwunigwe 2004; Tizard and Phoenix 2002). Thus, hostility directed towards interracial partnering was an integral aspect of scientific racism (Tizard and Phoenix 2002). In fact, ‘hybrid forms (…miscegenated children) were seen to embody threatening forms of perversion and degeneration’ (Young 1995, p.5 cited in Ifekwunigwe 2004, p.8).

The latter part of the 19th century also witnessed the emergence of debates linked to whether human ‘races’ consisted of one ‘race’ (monogenesis) or a separate species (polygenesis) (Ifekwunigwe 2004).

By the early part of the 20th century in Western countries, biological discourses of ‘race’ had given way to sociological and anthropological discourses but interestingly, the pathological framework persisted, particularly as regards the distaste for racial mixing (Ifekwunigwe 2004; Tizard and Phoenix 2002). For example, the Marginal Man thesis of the 1930s
(originally devised by Park (1928) and later elaborated by Stonequist (1937)), examined how a person suspended between two racial groups and/or ‘antagonistic cultures’ was ‘condemned to live in two societies’ (Ifekwunigwe 2004). Park, however, did emphasise the benefits of such a marginal condition which may serve as a precursor to contemporary notions of ‘border crossing’ (Tizard and Phoenix 2002).

During the 1930s, also, the eugenics movement emerged which mobilised science to support its mission to elevate the genetic superiority of the white ‘race’ and the eradication of inferior ‘races’ (ibid.). Eugenics was founded upon a belief in ‘racial’ degeneracy which activated fears in relation to the evisceration of the superior white ‘race’ by means of sexual transgression (Kohn 1996; Tizard and Phoenix 2002). And, finally, there was the inter-war period and the phenomenon of selective breeding which invoked ideas of ‘purity’ and ‘racial hygiene’ leading inexorably towards the Nazi Experiment and Hitler’s Final Solution (Ifekwunigwe 1999).

The ‘age of celebration’ (from the 1990s onwards) witnessed the emergence of celebratory accounts (Root 1992, 1996; Zack 1995) of mixed ‘race’ status and/or insider accounts which present more complex analyses and attempt to refute notions of fixed, immutable identities (Ifekwunigwe 1997, 1999) (see below). In the more recent ‘age of critique’, the canon of multiraciality is emerging as the dominant paradigm (Nakashima 1996). The attendant capacity for identification with more than one racial background is regarded as the defining feature of multiracial identity and experience and most significantly, provides the basis for a collective political solidarity (McKibbin 2014). In fact, the US Government formally recognises multiraciality as the practice whereby one has the capacity to choose more than one ‘race’ in the Census (ibid.). Whilst post-civil rights black affirmation was based upon traditional models of racial classification, the multiracial political movement contests the criteria for racial categorisation itself (ibid.).
Historically, blackness was legally prescribed (by the enforcement of hypodescent norms (see below)) and encompassed those of mixed ‘race’ descent. Thus, whilst the post-civil rights movement was able to advance political claims for all those socially (and legally) ascribed as black, the multiracial movement, being based on a racial identity of individual personal choice, does not possess a solid foundation for political membership (ibid.). McKibbin (2014) suggests, however, that it is crucial for the multiracial movement to engage with the power dynamics of white supremacy and the continued defining power of racial categories. For, if the movement does not demonstrate a strong commitment to black political solidarity, then it risks reinforcing the very racial ideology it seeks to disrupt. In mixed ‘race’ scholarship, the issue of terminology has also emerged as a site of considerable debate and will be discussed in the next section.

**Black versus Mixed ‘Race’ (Contested Terminologies)**

Mixed ‘race’ people have thus been positioned in a contradictory manner – that is, of neither black nor white racial designation but suspended somewhere in-between (Ifekwunigwe 1999). As such, a variety of racial terms have emerged – those which emphasise a monoracial identity (‘black’, ‘white’) or racial mixing (‘mixed race’, ‘mixed heritage’, ‘mixed’) or indeed, those which opt for a transcendent type of identification (such as ‘there is only one race, the human race’) (Caballero 2014). Indeed, the racial term chosen feeds into a particular assemblage of political ideologies and debates related to racial construction and/or identification (ibid.).

Since the 1990s, it has been widely acknowledged that mixed ‘race’ people are not afflicted by identity issues and that the majority prefer to racially identify as ‘mixed’ as opposed to black (Tizard and Phoenix 2002). Indeed, this shift has ultimately led to both the US and UK governments incorporating a mixed ‘race’ category in their respective Censuses (during the...
2000s) (ibid.). During the 1990s, also, Tizard and Phoenix (1993) published the first British research which set out to examine the racialised identities of black and white mixed parentage youth. Research findings indicated that many of the mixed ‘race’ youth chose to identify in a manner which incorporated both parents’ differentially racialised identities. In addition, theorisations of mixed ‘race’ have also been shaped and informed both by postmodern conceptualisations of identities and current racialisation discourse (Rattansi and Phoenix 1998; Tizard and Phoenix 2002). We can, therefore, see how ‘race’ and racism are not understood as static concepts but as socially constructed, fluid and dynamic processes (Brah 1996).

Indeed, the majority of insider accounts suggest that the bi-racial person strives to extend his/her identity and belonging beyond essentialist notions of skin colour (Ifekwunigwe 1999). These accounts emphasise the need for a racial term which captures the distinctiveness of their racial location without the reification of ‘race’ (ibid.). Yet, at some level, the pathological tendency persists because the term mixed ‘race’ is often refused because it perpetuates essentialist notions of skin colour and re-inscribes a dominant black-white paradigm (Caballero 2014; Ifekwunigwe 1999; Phoenix and Owen 1996). The terms generally employed to define those who are mixed (that is, mixed ‘race’, mulatto, bi-racial) ‘tend to pathologise those who cannot easily be fitted into the taken-for-granted racialised binary opposition’ (Tizard and Phoenix 2002, p.9). In addition, terms such as ‘dual’ or ‘mixed’ heritage are based on an assumption that culture is equally inherited from each parent which renders it as much of a dichotomous construction as mixed ‘race’, bi-racial etc (ibid.). The term ‘heritage’ further perpetuates the idea that culture is biologically inherited and provides the natural basis for rightful belonging in cultures/nations (Tizard and Phoenix 2002).
Those who refute the term ‘black’ argue that this term could be said to perpetuate rather than contest racial discourses (Ifekwunigwe 1999; Tizard and Phoenix 2002). This term reproduces the one drop rule ‘of social hypodescent [which] dictates that one known African ancestor made a person black’ (Spickard 1989 cited in Ifekwunigwe 1999, p.5). In the context of a hierarchical racialised system, hypodescent is the assignment of the offspring of interracial liaisons to the subordinate group (Hollinger 2005). Historically, the concept of hypodescent was enacted in order to safeguard the property interests of slaveholders in Caribbean plantation societies and later on, to uphold the principles of Jim Crow racism (Hollinger 2005). Miscegenation laws were implemented, driven by notions of racial purity and sexual distaste for racial mixing (ibid). Mulatto children, signifiers of sexual transgression, posed challenges to racial classification and/or the preservation of the skin colour divide (Khanna 2010). In fact, notions of the one drop rule still permeate the politics of ‘race’ and impact upon contemporary racial identity construction (Caballero 2014; Ifekwunigwe 1999; Song 2003).

Proponents of the term ‘black’ suggest that in a society which equally discriminates against all those of a non-white phenotype the term Black serves as a unifying concept or a form of ‘protective colouration’ (Ifekwunigwe 1997). In fact, in the context of American racial politics, an identification as ‘mixed’ rather than black, may be regarded as fragmenting the black community and/or seeking a social location closer to that of whites in the racial order (Spencer 1997). In 1970/80s Britain, the term Black was adopted by the anti-racist movement as the symbolic racial designation of people of Caribbean, African and South Asian origins (Archer 2001). As Brah has noted, the Black individual becomes ‘a signifier of the entangled racialised colonial histories of black settlers of African, Asian and Caribbean descent affirming a politics of solidarity against a racism centred around colour’ (1996, p.3).
The racial phenomenon of shadeism relies on the hierarchical system that privileges those with European-like phenotypical traits (pale skin, European hair/facial features) (Ifekwunigwe 1999; Mama 1995; Tate 2007). The emphasis on skin shade, defined by Mama (1995, p.103) as the ‘colonial integrationist discourse’ is also the historical legacy of colonialism and slavery. The term ‘pigmentocracy’ has been adopted by social scientists to define the phenomenon whereby health and social status are ultimately determined by skin colour (Lynn 2008). For example, in the ‘pigmentocracy’ of the Caribbean plantation culture, a partial white heritage ultimately determined life, death and even freedom (Tate 2007). It is, therefore, understandable that these issues still retain symbolic potency in notions of black beauty and desirability (Tate 2007). In the next section, I discuss Tyler’s (2013) concept of the national abject which further helps us think through the workings of racialised (non) belonging for the mother/child dyad.

The National Abject (and Irregular Belonging)

According to Foucault (2010, p.226), neoliberal governmentality involves the shaping of our notion of the deserving citizen ‘via a regime of normalising whereby *homo oeconomicus* is the standard against which all other citizens are measured and ranked’ (Ong 1999 cited in Gray 2011, p.95). Consequently, those whose value system is regarded as antithetical to neoliberal individualism may be forced to live out a de-legitimised presence within the state (Tyler 2013).

Tyler draws upon Bataille’s ([1934]1993) notion of abjection as ‘a force of sovereignty, a founding exclusion which constitutes a part of the population as moral outcasts; represented from the outside with disgust as the dregs of the people, populace and gutter’ (Bataille 1993 cited in Tyler 2013, p.19). Yet, as Bataille argued, these dehumanised groups, although relegated to the periphery of the sovereign territory, conversely assume a central role in
public life as objects of stigma. That is, the disciplinary forces of sovereignty (and its associated dualistic framework (i.e. inside/outside)) produce abjects so that, by the very fact of their presence, they may preserve and/or consolidate the borders of the state and provide legitimacy for the state’s power. Therefore, as Tyler (2013) notes, national abjects exist in a paradoxical condition as, they are, in a sense, included through their exclusion [original italics]. In fact, it is this suspended state of being both included and excluded which provides the very essence of what it means to be rendered abject.

For the national abject, political agency is exerted in the staking of claims to justice as the abject strives to attain the everyday conditions that constitute ‘a liveable life’ (Tyler 2013, p.12). In Berlant’s (2011) terms, these national abjects exercise a form of ‘cruel optimism’ as they direct their aspirations towards a more meaningful future – that is, they aspire to a sense of home and attachment, a sense of belonging and safety. In short, they are pushing beyond notions of mere day-to-day survival in pursuit of a sense of ‘anchorage’ (Tyler 2013, p.12). This sense of ‘anchorage’ manifests as access to secure employment and housing, adequate medical care, educational prospects and perhaps, most significantly, the full protection and entitlements of citizenship (even as these basic rights are being relentlessly eroded by neoliberal capitalism (ibid.)). However, due to the liminal positioning of the national abject, this sense of ‘anchorage’ remains elusive – hence, the ‘cruel optimism’ (Berlant 2011).

The Kristevan theory of abjection, as elucidated in her book the Powers of Horror (Kristeva 1982), enhances our understanding of abjection as a mode of governmentality. That is, abjection as the psychic origin and mechanism of repulsion and/or the psychoanalytics of disgust – as ‘an extremely strong feeling which is, at once, somatic and symbolic’ (Meagher 2003, p.33 cited in Tyler 2013). Abjection is an integral feature of Kristeva’s (1982) subject-in-process and how subjectivity is constituted in the first place – i.e. how the subject negotiates its own borders and the excess of the self (i.e. abjecting what is other to oneself).
By way of graphic examples (e.g. sour milk, excrement), Kristeva (1982) demonstrates the violence by which the process of abjection expels phenomena which threaten to engulf the borders of the self – ‘I expel myself, I spit myself out, abject myself with the same motion through which “I” claim to establish myself’ (1982, p.3). However, that which is expelled is not ultimately eliminated but rather, hovers at the borderline of subjectivity providing a challenge to the tenuous ‘I’ of selfhood – that is, abjection ‘is the border of my condition as a living being’ (1982, p.3). Thus, we can see how, in Kristeva’s theory of abjection, subjectivity is constantly in revolt against itself.

Kristeva’s theory of abjection is a continuation of both her earlier work which focuses upon the individual subjectivity of the infant and her notion of the maternal. For Kristeva, the prototype of abjection is the mother’s body (the ‘maternal home’) as the baby attempts to self-individuate – that is, ‘the not-yet subject with its not-yet, or no-longer, object maintains ‘itself’ as the abject. Abjection is a way of denying the primal narcissistic identification with the mother, almost’ (Oliver 1993, p.60).

So, although suffused with desire and longing for the undifferentiated union with the mother (the ‘semiotic chora’), the infant must endeavour to repel the mother in order to develop the borders of the self (McAfee 2004). This process of maternal abjection manifests as a type of lingering presence on the edge of consciousness as our sense of self remains persistently haunted by pre-subjective experiences (ibid.).

Thus, we are enabled to see how the conceptual frame of abjection highlights the manner in which the state may constitute itself through acts of exclusion (i.e. by the denial of formal citizenship rights to marginalised groups) (Tyler 2013). In this sense, abjection, as a theory of bordering (in which borders are dynamic processes), provides an understanding of how both subject and state formation can be thought through together (‘the borders of the subject and
the state are continually being made and undone’ (Butler and Spivak 2007 cited in Tyler 2013, p.46)).

Tyler (2013) further advances the claim that abjection, as a concept, is incorporated into the regime of British citizenship, as ‘a design principle’ working towards the exclusion of disenfranchised populations who, once relegated to the periphery, are constituted as abject. Tyler argues that the 1981 British Nationality Act, although never explicitly framed in racial terms, was, in fact, a crucial moment for the racialisation of Britishness. Moreover, by means of the withdrawal of *jus soli* provision and the subsequent implementation of strict immigration legislation, British citizenship was constituted as ‘an abjectifying technology: a mode of neoliberal governmentality’ (2013, p.53).

These national abjects, although positioned outside dominant modes of judicial belonging are simultaneously marked as ‘failed’ or ‘not quite’ citizens. In short, these ‘failed’ citizens are effectively rendered stateless ‘within the polis as it interiorized other’ (Butler and Spivak 2007, p.16). Hence, there is a total lack of reciprocity in their relationship with the state as such citizens are excluded from formal membership but yet, remain captive within territorial borders – in a sense, both ‘expelled and contained […] saturated with power at the moment in which deprived of citizenship’ (ibid. p.40). As Butler notes:

> The abject designates […] those unliveable and uninhabitable zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of subjects but whose living under the sign of the ‘unliveable’ is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject. (1993, p.3)

Thus, Tyler’s assertion is that these precariously positioned subjects are living testament to the abjectifying consequences of neoliberal governance as they serve as a mechanism for constituting the actual boundary of the neoliberal British state (Tyler 2013). Since the period of economic crisis in 2008, Ireland has also witnessed a deepening of neoliberalism and can, in fact, be defined as a ‘prototypical neoliberal state’ (Mercille and Murphy 2015, p.2). I am
interested, therefore, in how Tyler’s (2013) account of neoliberal governmentality and the national abject(s) it produces is helpful in my analysis of the liminal positioning of the transracial mother/child dyad in the Irish context.

In alignment with the Kristevan framework and closely related to the transracial mother/child dyad, Fortier’s (2016) notion of affective citizenship emphasises affective embodiment and the public domain of citizenship. The ‘affective turn’ in citizenship studies (which emerges from feminist critiques of the Cartesian dualism (mind/body split)) renders untenable any notion that citizenship is just a legal status, by emphasising how emotions and feelings are incorporated into the public domain. Fortier (2016, p.1039) utilises the concept of affect ‘to designate a generic category of emotions and feelings, including embodied and sensory feelings, through which we experience the world’. Her analysis invites us to consider to what extent emotions become attached to, or evoked by, notions of citizenship (e.g. belonging and feelings of safety).

**Acts of Citizenship and the Notion of Rightful Presence**

The ‘acts of citizenship’ literature also foregrounds notions of irregular belonging and, as such, provides a useful frame for an analysis of citizenship in relation to the transracial mother/child dyad. In fact, how do the mother/child unit of this study undermine the cultural and racial homogeneity of the family as it relates to dominant modes of belonging?

Citizenship, as a legal status, does not automatically translate to formal rights and legitimate belonging but also involves practices (political, social, cultural) of becoming claims-making subjects (Isin 2008). The conceptualisation of citizenship as an ‘act’ (‘a moment of insurrection’) both accentuates citizenship as a practice and emphasises its incipient nature (ibid.). The analytical focus of acts of citizenship is, therefore, to encompass how acts may rupture hegemonic citizenship narratives (Erel 2013) by drawing our attention to those
moments of disruption when ‘regardless of status or substance, subjects constitute themselves as citizens, or better still, as those to whom the right to have rights is due’ (Isin 2008, p.18). We are, therefore, enabled to view the complex, multiple and contested nature of political subjectivity (Neveu 2014) and to rethink who can be a citizen beyond the existing ‘rights-bearing liberal subject’ (Ní Mhurchú 2016, p.157).

But, in Turner’s (2016) view, the transformative capacity of acts of citizenship is oftentimes minimised in subsequent analysis. For, these ‘moments of insurrection’, by challenging the notion that ‘inclusion back into normalised modes of belonging and equitable rights is the objective of all struggles’ (2016, p.144), refuse ‘the affirmation of existing rights regimes’ (2016, p.147). This, therefore, moves us beyond a focus on the insider/outsider dualistic framework and also, paves the way for possible alternative claims to political legitimacy.

The concept of rightful presence, as developed by Squire and Darling (2013), is also oriented towards disruptive rights claims enacted by those who may be regarded as ‘illegitimate’ subjects (in statist terms). An analytics of rightful presence sets out to expose the power differential at the core of the host/guest relationship which provides the basis of a hospitality framing of belonging. A hospitality perspective, which remains linked to abstract notions of ‘justice to come’, may fail to recognise those claims which occur at the limits of citizenship. This, in turn, may actually re-affirm, rather than disrupt, host/guest categories of belonging.

The assertion of rightful presence may be construed as political claims-making which is embedded in concrete historical struggles for justice. In fact, a highly significant feature of the notion of rightful presence is the insertion of accounts of historical oppression (e.g. colonial politics, slavery) into the political discourse of twenty-first century Britain. A note of caution is needed, however, as we must remain cognisant of the limitations of the notion of
rightful presence which, despite efforts to exceed existing political categorisations, may ultimately be constrained by conventional statist framings of politics, rights and belonging.

**Concluding Remarks**

In this chapter, I have highlighted key theoretical concepts related to citizenship, gender and ‘race’ as these intersect with concepts of the abject and the national abject, as modes of governmentality. These conceptual tools, therefore, provide a framework for an analysis of the activists’, mothers’ and young people’s empirical narratives as related to negotiations of racialised belonging. In the following chapter, I elucidate the ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings of this study.
Chapter Three: Researching the Lived Experiences of the Transracial Dyad

Introduction

The previous chapter drew on key concepts related to critical citizenship scholarship, ‘race’, gender and abjection in order to provide a theoretical framework for discussion of this study’s empirical findings. In order to document the lived experiences of both mother and child, it is necessary to examine the ways in which their subjectivities have been effectively rendered silent. I endeavour to bring their voices into the public domain with a view to investigating the complex ways in which racialised belonging is lived in contemporary Ireland. The principles of feminist research, therefore, underpin the choice of research design in this study. As a feminist researcher, I utilise the everyday reality of the transracial mother/child dyad as a lens for analysis of broader social processes.

In this chapter, I firstly discuss the philosophical starting points by outlining the ontological and epistemological debates which have shaped this research. Secondly, I provide an overview of the research design which includes an outline of the various phases of the research and the methods employed for the accessing of participants and data collection. I conclude by detailing the analysis phase whilst reflecting on the process of conducting the study.

The Ontological and Epistemological Foundation(s)

Feminist Ontological and Epistemological Debates

A qualitative design is utilised in this research which will allow access to ‘the lived experiences, interpretations, subjectivities and emotions’ (Doucet and Mauthner 2006, p.40) of these women and young people. Qualitative research is governed by principles of the
interpretive paradigm, which is underpinned by the ontological supposition that reality is subjective and comprised of multiple perspectives (Guba 1990; Hennink et al. 2011). This study, therefore, employs an idealist ontology insofar as it is predicated upon the assumption that our view of the external world is mainly comprised of representations and, as such, ‘do not exist outside of the persons who create and hold them; they are not part of some “objective” world that exists apart from their constructions’ (Guba and Lincoln 1989, p.143).

Human beings, unlike the world of nature, exist in a social reality of shared interpretations (Blaikie 2007). Social constructionism, associated with an idealist ontology, acknowledges that, although a person may be individually engaged in acts of sense-making, one’s lived reality is grounded within social, cultural and historical contexts (Hennink et al. 2011; Snape and Spencer 2003). In fact, this approach postulates a notion of social reality as produced by means of inter-subjectivity between a person and his/her social world (Prasad 2005). Social constructionism also references the intrinsically subjective nature of both the researcher and the participants by eschewing the belief that the research process can truly aspire to be ‘value-free’ (Guba 1990).

I set out, in this study, to examine the interstitial positioning of the transracial mother/child dyad in relation to racialised belonging which, in effect, locates both marginality and otherness at the heart of my study. My multi-layered methodological frame is informed by feminist standpoint theory (FST) (which works with a social constructionist theory of the subject), the use of de Certeau’s (1984) heterology project and Scott’s (1992) poststructuralist critique of the foundational status of the concept of experience.

The epistemology of this project is grounded in the key principles of FST (Haraway 1988; Harding 1986; Hartsock 1983) - in particular, the revised conceptualisations of FST (Bracke and de la Bellacasa 2004; Haraway 2003; Harding 1993; Hill Collins 2004; Hirschmann 2004; Pels 2004). FST emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as part of the feminist endeavour to
re-conceptualise knowledge production vis-à-vis power, thereby challenging the origin and validity of knowledge claims (Doucet and Mauthner 2006). FST can simultaneously be regarded as a philosophy of science, an epistemology, a methodology and a political strategy (Harding 2004). By reworking Marx’s concept of historical materialism and Hegel’s master/slave dialectic, FST set out to examine and unravel gendered power relations (Naples and Gurr 2014).

FST postulates that the starting point for knowledge production must be in the material experiences of groups occupying marginal locations (Harding 2004) thereby acknowledging the crucial role played by structures and context in shaping people’s lives and experiences (Hennink et al. 2011). FST has, as its central premise, the notion that knowledge production is not an isolated process but is socially, politically and historically grounded as part of a phenomenon which Haraway (1988) refers to as ‘situated knowledges’; in fact, FST argues that this knowledge represents epistemic privilege (Doucet and Mauthner 2006). Therefore, feminist knowledge production is specifically situated and produces partial insight from distinct and embodied locations (Haraway 1988). It is critical, therefore, that I, as the feminist researcher, ‘situate’ myself by reflecting on my positionality (or social location) as related to knowledge production (Harding 1993; Madge 1993) (see later in chapter).

FST theorists further advance the thesis that the concept of ‘situated knowledges’ actually maximises a ‘strong objectivity’ (Haraway 2004):

> The problem with the conventional conception of objectivity is not that it is too rigorous or too ‘objectifying’ but that it is not rigorous or objectifying enough.

(Harding 2004, p.128)

Scientific enquiry has traditionally split, or created a distance between the subject and object of knowledge whilst the concept of ‘strong objectivity’ requires that both subject and object be situated on the same causal plane (ibid.):
Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn and see.

(Haraway 1988, p.583)

An awareness of social location and context of knowledge produced will ultimately contribute to a more transparent research process and to the development of an accountable ‘strong objectivity’ (Doucet and Mauthner 2006) thereby eschewing what Haraway regards as the ‘god trick of omniscience’ (1988, p.581) implied by conventional conceptions of objectivity. FST, therefore, not only acknowledges the ‘social situatedness’ and partial nature of all knowledge but actually deploys this situatedness as a resource (ibid.).

By examining the marginalised positioning of black women vis-à-vis a majority white culture, Hill Collins (2004) sheds light on the social significance of ‘outsider within’ status as providing a unique standpoint in relation to dominant frameworks of knowledge. Epistemic privilege is shaped by the ‘outsider within’ status of the group which generates ‘a bifurcated consciousness’ or enhanced awareness of the oppressive structures which circumscribe their everyday lives and experiences. A defining feature of black women’s ‘outsider within’ status is the intersectional framework of ‘race’, class and gender (‘a paradigm of intersectionality’) which allows critical insights based on lived reality to be incorporated into any analysis of oppression.

Hill Collins (2004) further asserts the claim that a standpoint is a shared rather than an individual position. Whilst some measure of epistemic insight ensues as a result of a person’s insider/outsider positioning, it is only when this unique standpoint evolves into a shared political consciousness that such insights can effectively propel radical change. Bracke and de la Bellacasa (2004) introduce the concept of an achieved character of a standpoint – that is, a standpoint as being achieved in the context of a collective analytic process and as the outcome of political struggle.
FST, however, has been subject to considerable critique (particularly from postmodernism) mainly on the grounds of essentialism and universalism. In fact, Hartsock (as the pioneer of standpoint) has been accused of basing FST on notions of an essentialised female identity (in terms of biology, reproduction or nature) (Fraser and Nicholson 1990; Grant 1993; Naples and Gurr 2014). Such universalising claims negate other identity categories such as ‘race’, class and sexuality (hooks 1984; Spelman 1988) which amount to a re-inscription of the prevailing hierarchy (Flax 1990; Hekman 1990).

However, according to many of the revised accounts of FST (e.g. Harding 2004), experiences which emanate from standpoints of disenfranchised lives are not essentialist claims in relation to a shared experience but, instead, are starting points for the construction of knowledge. Thus, foundational knowledge claims are not advanced on the basis that these experiences are themselves epistemologically privileged. Instead, the knowledge generated from this standpoint is deemed ‘less partial and distorted’ than the ‘scientifically and epistemologically disadvantaged value-neutral conceptual frameworks’ (Harding 1993, p.43) of traditional scientific methods. Therefore, the principles of universality which have traditionally been presumed in academic knowledge production are questioned in favour of contextually based knowledge (ibid.).

In terms of anti-universalist debates, the point of concern relates to the FST notion of concrete reality versus the postmodern emphasis upon ‘the discursivity of difference’ (Hirschmann 2004). In short, the postmodernist stance is that concrete reality has no existence beyond discourse (ibid.). However, FST possesses a material reality that pre-exists discourse but due to the fact that these lived experiences are socially constructed (and due to identity categories of ‘race’ and class), feminism also needs to acknowledge the discursive construction of material experiences (ibid.).
The issue then remains of how to bring the FST emphasis upon a pre-discursive reality into dialogue with postmodern’s discursivity (ibid.). For Hirschmann, discourse does not entirely capture experience as there is ‘something in experience that escapes or is even prior to language’ (2004, p.327). With this in mind, this research is further influenced by Hirschmann’s (2004) concept of ‘the materialist moment’ which provides an epistemological basis for knowledge construction by locating the point of intersection between the FST emphasis on a pre-discursive material reality with the postmodern idea of the shifting discursive nature of this reality. The idea of a ‘moment’ originates in postmodern theory and pinpoints a moment of disjuncture between discourses. At this point, the person possesses a moment of clarity or insight vis-à-vis the lack of ‘truth’ of the prevailing discourse just before it slides away towards representation.

By locating the standpoints of mothers, activists and young people in ‘a materialist moment’, I can retain a notion of pre-discursive experience which means that I stay attuned to the issue of oppression. We can, therefore, regard this study as located between the material reality of the lives of participants and the postmodern notion of discursivity. I regard the material experiences of the lives of the activists, mothers and young people as starting points for knowledge construction. The perspectives of FST enable the acquisition of a nuanced account of marginalisation. I acknowledge that their ‘outsider within’ status has the capacity to provide a unique standpoint and that such standpoints can be regarded as ‘achieved’ within the context of a particular political, cultural or social milieu. Indeed, FST further resonates with the epistemological insights generated by de Certeau’s (1984) analysis of everyday life which also converges upon a discourse of marginality (Terdiman 2001).
De Certeau and His Analyses of Borderland Phenomena

I turn to de Certeau in this section as I see his work as offering tools to provide my study with a more comprehensive and sensitive methodological frame. Indeed, de Certeau’s analyses of borderland phenomena (which he terms ‘heterology’) provide a powerful model of marginality (Terdiman 2001). This study is, therefore, guided by the bi-directional turn of heterology which incorporates a key methodological rule to reverse epistemological privilege so that we may view social reality through the lens of the marginalised (ibid.). This bi-directional engagement with the ‘other within’ provides both a discursive challenge to, and re-invigorates dominant political ideologies – that is, ‘heterology deterritorializes hegemony’ (ibid. p.408). Therefore, like FST and more specifically Haraway, de Certeau views the ‘situated knowledge’ of the oppressed as the site of new knowledge claims (ibid.). That is, the ‘situated knowledge of those who are dominated turns domination inside out to constitute a site of knowledge that we cannot achieve on our own’ (original italics; de Certeau 1984 cited in Terdiman 2001, p.415).

By taking the Foucauldian concept of discipline as his starting point, de Certeau asks, ‘if the “nets of discipline”’ (1984, xiv, xv) are becoming more extensive, then, how does ‘an entire society risk being reduced to it’ (1984, xiv). What he is suggesting, therefore, is that the apparatus of surveillance (‘the panoptic administration’ (ibid. p.96)) may not be as relentless as Foucault posits. De Certeau argues that to focus exclusively on the structures of domination negates the political agency of the marginalised (Napolitano and Pratten 2007).

De Certeau (1984), therefore, puts forward a theoretical framework for analysing how the ‘weak’ make use of the ‘strong’. More specifically, he analyses the manner in which less powerful actors, in a world saturated by networks of power, ‘make do’. In his theorisation, everyday politics from the perspective of a disempowered position are distinguished from
institutional politics with the former politics deemed to be ‘tactical’ and the latter as ‘strategic’. Tactics are defined by the absence of power but yet, offer hope of redemption from the overbearing networks of surveillance of society as a substrate of political autonomy is created via the ‘microbe-like operations proliferating within technocratic structures and deflecting their functioning by means of a multitude of “tactics” articulated in the details of everyday life’ (1984, xiv). Yet, despite his critique of Foucault’s conception of discipline, de Certeau also advances a notion of power as a monolithic force (Frow 1991). That is, whilst the disenfranchised may momentarily evade capture (or ‘escape without leaving’ (1984, xiii)), they remain ultimately subject to the workings of the dominant order (ibid.).

By applying de Certeau’s concepts of tactical and strategic agency, Kallio (2007, 2008) examines how young people may enact themselves as political agents by means of everyday tactics vis-à-vis adult strategies. In Kallio’s terms, therefore, we can regard the mundane lives of young people as potential fields of political action. In particular, Kallio (2007) emphasises the embodied tactics of quotidian lives as the child’s body is examined as a significant site of political agency. That is, as part of their survival in the ‘nets of discipline’, young people need to discover ways to masquerade as ‘docile’ bodies whilst continuing to maintain their ‘unruly’ bodies (De Certeau 1984, xiv). Therefore, by viewing the mundane politics of the young people in this study as ‘an art of the weak’, we can acquire an enhanced understanding of their political agency.

**Feminist Poststructuralism and the Experiencing Subject**

Next, I consider how such epistemological viewpoints have influenced this project’s methodological approach and the status of knowledge produced. As discussed earlier in the chapter, FST pinpoints material experience as providing the basis for knowledge building. However, theoretical insights inspired by feminist poststructuralism have driven feminist
scholars to problematize the concept of experience as authority and epistemology (Scott 1992). In particular, Joan Scott (1992) has critiqued experience as the foundational basis for knowledge creation. If experience is valorised as authoritative then discursively constructed categories such as ‘woman’, ‘black’, ‘white’ or ‘Irish’ become reified.

These accounts of difference take as ‘self-evident the identities of those whose experience is being documented and thus, naturalise their difference’ (Scott 1992, p.25). Scott further asserts that the focus of inquiry needs to shift from accounts of experience to an analysis of the underlying discursive processes that shape that experience:

> it is not individuals that have experiences but subjects who are constituted through experience. Experience in this definition then becomes not the origin of our explanation, not the authoritative (because seen or felt) evidence that grounds what is known, but rather that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced.

(1992, p.25)

When we interview individuals about their experiences what we are revealing are ‘discursive processes that, through discourse, position subjects and produce their experiences’ (ibid. p.25). If my research study was to rely on the foundational status of experience in terms of knowledge production, then, I would unwittingly perpetuate the prevailing hegemonic discourse (ibid.). Instead of a critical examination of the combination of relational processes through which difference is created, these differences would be defined in terms of individual experiences (ibid.).

Stone-Mediatore (1998) critiques Scott’s notion of experience and language as inextricably intertwined because this ‘elides the distinction between the two, collapsing experience into language’ (1998, p.120). Concomitantly, any critical examination of experience cannot extend beyond an interrogation of the discursive framework. Stone-Mediatore invokes the visceral domain of experience which is not influenced to the same extent by underlying discursive processes.
Whilst incorporating Stone-Mediatore’s insights regarding the visceral domain, my aim is not to displace the central role of experience but to ensure that it remains a critical site of engagement and analysis. Thus, in order to interpret the narrated experiences of the activists, mothers and young people of my study, I need to listen and hear their stories and to seek further clarification regarding the social construction of these experiences. In this regard, Hemmings (2000) advances a notion of feminist genealogy or ‘tracing’ of knowledge. That is, an interrogation of the defining social categories in order to enhance understandings of the contested social and political discourses in which these participants’ lives are entrenched – that is, notions of motherhood, the category of ‘woman’ or ‘child’, constructions of blackness, whiteness, Irishness, institutional racism, historical (e.g. slavery/colonialism) and racist discourses.

By acknowledging that experience and broader structural processes are mutually constitutive, then, I can question how identities have been shaped by discourses and experienced in a subjective sense (Domosh 2003). Moreover, I can question both why and how societal power relations have become enmeshed with individual subjectivities. In fact, through the act of narrating their experiences, the activists, mothers and young people collaborate in the deconstruction of their own essentialised identity formations, dismantling the processes that produced that identity and hence, are active in creating ‘new discursive spaces in which new subjectivities can emerge’ (Gibson Graham 1994, p.220). Thus, we can see how categories like ‘experience’ are re-defined in feminist research praxis.

**Research Design**

This section provides an account of the four interweaving research strands which have shaped this research. In this section, also, I discuss the accessing of participants, the data collection process and I conclude with an overview of the methods of data analysis.
Research Strands

In the designing of this study, I decided that it required four different strands of inquiry.

Strand One (Ongoing)

The focus of this strand was directed towards the workings of mixed ‘race’ politics at a national level through an examination of prevailing discourses – regarding mixed ‘race’, ‘race’, immigration, citizenship – which are in circulation amongst mixed ‘race’ activist groups, general media coverage and throughout mainstream politics.

Strand Two

This phase involved interviews with key actors in the emergent mixed ‘race’ movement in Ireland. I saw their perspectives as providing both political context and sensitisation to the salient issues. The data collected during this phase, therefore, informed the subsequent interview process with the transracial mother/child dyad.

Strand Three

During this phase, twelve mothers participated in one-to-one in-depth interviews of approximately 90 minutes duration. The aim of the interviews was to provide insight into the complex racialised positioning of the white mother and her mixed ‘race’ (i.e. black African/white Irish) child(ren) and to examine intersections with public politics of belonging and citizenship as differently lived by each member of the dyad.

Strand Four

This strand involved fifteen joint interviews with both mothers and children. The aim of these interviews was to focus on ‘the everyday world of citizenship’ (Desforges et al. 2005) in order to ascertain how the mixed ‘race’ youth citizens’ social, cultural and political practices
of citizenship are enacted in everyday encounters. During this strand, I also set out to clarify and expand upon earlier analysis and to re-visit issues that had come to the fore during prior interview(s).

**Accessing Participants**

The population under study was that of white Irish mothers and their children (aged 4-18) who are racially designated as mixed ‘race’ (i.e. white Irish/black African). This cohort represents the majority of transracial parent dyads in the State (Central Statistics Office, Census 2016). The families lived in a range of geographical locations throughout Ireland - cities, small towns and rural settings. I received ethical approval from the University of Limerick Research Ethics Committee (Ethics Application 2015_05_01_AHSS). Throughout the research process, I complied with ethical protocol in relation to such provisions as informed consent (see Appendix E and G), voluntary participation and principles of anonymity/confidentiality (see Appendix D, E and F).

My methodological approach raised ethical issues regarding research with young people and broaching a sensitive subject area (‘race’). However, this project has been further informed by a strong and self-reflexive awareness of child protection issues (e.g. mother and child interviewed jointly). Pseudonyms are also used in the analysis and reporting of data (for all participants, including activists). As this research is with a specific minority of mothers and children, the preservation of anonymity has invariably presented challenges. As the researcher, I have been vigilant about disguising particular details and information (e.g. use of the overall term ‘Africa’ instead of referring to the actual country of father’s origin). Finally, data was stored and handled in accordance with researcher obligations under the Data Protection Act(s) 1998 and 2003.
Due to the marginalised nature of the population under study, I used a non-random strategy for participant recruitment (purposive sampling) in order to obtain those who are ‘information-rich’ on the subject topic (see Appendix A for participant details). When accessing participants, I needed to ensure that (a) the perspectives of key public figures and (b) the everyday experiences of the transracial mother/child dyad were incorporated into the data produced (Hennink et al. 2011). During Strand Two of the research, I issued an interview request (by email) to all organisations/individuals with a vested political interest in mixed ‘race’ politics in Ireland. Four activists agreed to take part in the study. During Strand Three, I used a number of recruitment strategies – these included formal and informal networks, public advertisement and utilisation of the snowball approach (Hennink et al. 2011; Grbich 2007).

I did not approach any potential participant directly but instead, the snowball approach helped me to reach the personal networks of my participants. This effectively meant that my snowball partners have acted as gatekeepers for the research (Hennink et al. 2011). I was also mindful that a risk associated with the snowballing approach is that it may attract participants who harbour similar value systems, opinions and attitudes (Hennink et al. 2011). Informal strategies included utilising my own personal contacts built up within the context of the mixed ‘race’ Irish community.

Interestingly, even at this early stage in the process, I experienced my first encounter with the affective nature of researching ‘race’ as I was confronted by several dilemmas (both ethical and political). From the outset, I was aware that I was conducting a ‘race’ related study in the context of silence which prevails around the issue of ‘race’ in contemporary Ireland and the concomitant paucity of public language in which to describe racialised experiences. I was also, at this point, engaging with racial categories – particularly through the act of ‘naming’ whiteness (Dyer 2007) and thus, opening it up as a racial category. I was aware that a failure
to do so, on my part, could lead to an interview encounter in which there were two white women discussing ‘race’, without labelling it and more significantly, designating ‘others’ as racialised, not us. In addition, the white mothers needed to identify their children as mixed ‘race’ and I think it is fair to say that, to a greater or lesser degree, there was prevarication in relation to racial meanings.

The inclusion of the term ‘white’ in a study framed by ‘race’ seemed to raise a taboo issue immediately (Frankenberg 1993). By directing the empirical focus at mothers (at least, initially) it may have also seemed that whiteness was being privileged or that I was, at some level, attempting to re-inscribe the hegemony that this study seeks to challenge (ibid.) – that is, the tacit association between whiteness and Irishness. This, of course, brings up wider questions about how to engage with racial categories without contributing to their reification (Caballero 2014). Even at this point, I realised that I had the formidable task of exposing the silence upon which whiteness almost furtively reproduces its dominance (Frankenberg 1993).

As several authors have noted, the issue of terminology can be highly emotive when attempting to research people with racially mixed origins (Ali 2003; Caballero 2005). Moreover, as a researcher in this field, I have come to realise that the act of defining as mixed ‘race’ is much more multi-layered and complex than simply stating one’s parental lineage (Mahtani 2002) (see chapter two). However, it was also important to establish a terminological preference even at this early stage (and this generally formed part of the pre-interview discussion – see below) especially in order to demonstrate a commitment to the principle that ‘self-naming is an important step to empowerment’ (Root 1992 cited in Caballero 2014, p.85). It is also important to acknowledge that neither mother nor child generally expressed a clear preference for the terminology used and in fact, oftentimes,
voiced confusion in relation to what was regarded as the ‘political correctness’ of racial labelling.

**In-depth Interviewing**

In alignment with feminist principles, I chose to use qualitative in-depth interviews which are conducive to an open and collaborative style between the researcher and the researched (Doucet and Mauthner 2006), as the main strategy for data collection. In order to document the previously silenced experiences of white Irish mothers and their mixed ‘race’ child(ren), it is necessary to hear their accounts of subjective experiences in order to obtain ‘depth, detail, nuance and context’ (Hennink *et al.* 2011, p.10). In fact, these life accounts could be stifled by the imposition of a rigid format such as standardised questions which would inhibit expression (Elliott 2005).

In-depth interviews can be characterised as ‘a special kind of knowledge-producing conversation’ (original italics; Hesse Biber and Leavy 2006 cited in Hennink *et al.* 2011, p.128). The quality and strength of the interviewer-interviewee relationship is a crucial determining factor in the interview situation (Adler and Adler 2002; Kvale 1996) with ‘active conversation’ being a key principle (Hermanowicz 2002; Holstein and Gubrium 1995). Both interviewer and interviewee actively participate in a ‘meaning-making’ exercise in order to elicit a detailed narrative of the interviewee’s thoughts, feelings, and actions as well as context and structure (Charmaz 2008; Hermanowicz 2002).

My interviewing style can be defined in terms of Holstein and Gubrium’s (1995) ‘active conversation’ technique. I regarded myself, like the interviewees, as embedded within the dominant constructions of ‘race’ circulating within Irish society. I positioned myself as explicitly involved in the questions, at certain moments sharing elements of my lived experiences and/or my analysis of ‘race’ and racism as it evolved throughout the research.
process. I, therefore, understood both myself and the interviewee(s) as engaged in ‘interpretive practice’ (Holstein and Gubrium 1995).

The interviews largely began with some general opening questions related to life details of the interviewee and her family (e.g. ages of children, schools attended) (see Appendix B). We also, at this stage, had a broad discussion about racial labelling in order to ensure that I was guided by the participant’s choice and/or level of comfort as regards racial terminology (see above). The purpose of this opening format is twofold: to provide context and to create rapport by attempting to generate some aspect of progression and flow.

According to di Cicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), the stages of rapport could be described as follows: apprehension, exploration, cooperation and participation (with the latter stage being characterised by very strong rapport). In general terms, the interviews reached the ‘participation’ stage and I felt that this was largely due to the relationship building that had been ongoing since initial contact (phone/email). The ‘moments of recognition’ between us were also helpful in terms of maximising empathy and rapport during the interview itself. There was just one interview which did not proceed beyond the co-operation stage (due to unforeseen disturbances).

During the interview itself, I mostly asked open-ended questions (such as ‘what is it like to mother a mixed ‘race’ child’?) but many responses were a result of direct questions and probes. The direct questions usually occurred at a later point in the interview (see Appendix B). During Strand Four (i.e. joint interview with mother and child(ren)), I used a variety of questioning methods such as follow-up, probing, specifying, direct, indirect, structuring and interpreting (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). For example, the expansive probe is used to request more information, by usually re-phrasing in an affirming manner (Hermanowicz 2002). This is consistent with findings by Pezalla et al. (2012) that an affirming tone elicits
richer detail in an interview situation. The expansive probe did work especially well when there were discoveries of shared experience. Also, because the area of mixed ‘race’ (and whiteness) is an area dense with terminological considerations, I found myself re-phrasing sometimes in relation to racial terms. I found myself nervous of silence and there was a tendency to fill the space with another question but I practiced using silence to encourage the participant to expand or reflect further (Hermanowicz 2002).

But, I did attempt to stay attuned to the depth of the type of silence which ensued (e.g. prolonged pauses) throughout the interview itself. I could actually ‘feel’ at particular moments that the interview had entered an area ‘where privilege and particular discourses on ‘race’ construct zones of silence, repression and taboo’ (Frankenberg 1993, p.31). In a sense, these uncomfortable, lingering moments provided rich clues as to where the mothers and young people were positioning themselves within discourses of racialisation (e.g. either silently (re) producing whiteness; avoidance of the term ‘black’ etc).

I utilised various techniques (discussed above) in the interview to enhance clarification and focus, to encourage reflective capacity and to probe, oftentimes, deeply held convictions related to elements of ‘race’ and racism. I tried to be attuned and responsive to moments of emotional intensity within the interview and/or moments when the interviewee shifted perspectives. These techniques allowed greater access to the multi-layered complexity of the participants’ meanings and interpretations. This attendance to rich detail meant that participants’ accounts were characterised at times by a lack of internal coherence, and the presence of some ambiguities and tensions.

Finally, it is important that the interview ‘fades out’ (Hennink et al. 2011). I noticed that interviews sometimes reached a natural conclusion by themselves, as the process slowed down a bit. When this did not happen, I drew the interview to a close by asking questions of a
more general nature which projected into the future (e.g. related to the future status of mixed ‘race’ children) (ibid.). Finally, the interview concluded by the provision of space for the interviewee(s) to add any additional information or raise questions or concern. All interviews were 90 minutes approximately in duration.

Data Analysis and Knowledge Construction
As outlined earlier, the methodological approach to this research is grounded in feminist epistemologies. The analytical design of this study was defined by my efforts to collect and represent complex layers of ‘voice’ but, to do so in a manner which highlighted ambiguities and contradictions. In alignment with this study’s qualitative and cyclical design, I regard data collection, analysis and representation of experiences as ‘intertwined phases of knowledge construction’ (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p.48).

Certain practices in qualitative research endeavour to ‘give voice’ to participants so that they may, in effect, speak for themselves. However, this is, oftentimes, based on the presumption that one can arrive at an easily accessible truth or account of lived experience. Yet, there must be recognition of the fact that researchers are themselves implicated in the representation of participants’ voices (Lather 1993). Below, I briefly discuss scholarship which highlights issues, from a feminist poststructuralist perspective, in relation to the politics of representation (Lather 1993; St Pierre and Pillow 2000).

In 1991, Lather referred to data analysis as ‘the black hole of qualitative research’ (p.149). She has raised questions about the type of data analysis that regards words/phrases as ‘brute’ data which is waiting ‘out there’ to be collected and then, fragmented through coding. This is, in fact, quite a mechanistic approach – it is ‘the language of scientific discovery, the language of Cartesian dualism’ (Pascale 2011, p.105).
Conventionally, data analysis has been elided with coding as efforts were made to stay close to the original voice and phrasing of the participant (Jackson and Mazzei 2012). Yet, it is a naïve claim to suggest that authentic voices can be simply reduced to analytical themes and remain uncontaminated by theoretical interpretation (ibid.). For we, as researchers have already, in a sense, contaminated the participants’ words by starting out the study with some theoretically-informed assumptions and also, by means of the asymmetry of power that is an integral aspect of the research process (ibid.).

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) have advanced the notion of creating ‘multivocal texts’ – that is, a method of reading data (participants’ voices) that, after Deleuze and Guattari (1983), they have termed ‘plugging in’. That is, rather than the primacy of one voice, the researcher, by staying attuned to the data, allows multiple tellings, or indeed, multi-layered voices to flow naturally from the data. Deleuze and Guattari use the metaphor of the rhizome to illuminate this process whereby the researcher embarks on a ‘rhizomatic journey’ by examining the data for points of rupture, discontinuity, intensity following ‘an anarchistic growth not…the smooth unfolding of an orderly structure’ (1983, p.134).

When participants relate stories to us, it is important to remember that they are not transparent and/or easily accessible renditions of feeling (Jackson and Mazzei 2012). As Butler (2005, p.79) wrote, ‘in speaking the “I”, I undergo something of what cannot be captured or assimilated by the “I” since “I” always arrive too late to myself’. Researchers need to attempt to stay focused on what is happening at that moment or even, to capture that moment where participants arrive too late. In the representation of my data, therefore, I attempt to ‘plug in’ to the multi-dimensional voices, the contradictions and inconsistencies as I allow a fluidity of standpoints to naturally emerge from the data.
The data analysis utilised in this study is broadly grounded in principles of thematic narrative analysis, as per Riessman (2008). In thematic analysis, the content (‘the told’) is the primary focus (ibid.). It is crucial, therefore, to preserve the story (of racialised belonging) as ‘intact’, as it unfolds over the course of the interview, by establishing theory which originates within the case rather than from component thematic categories across cases (ibid.).

The interview data was, therefore, subject to inductive analyses as I developed themes and arguments from the data itself (Braun and Clarke 2006). Thematic narrative analysis can be regarded as the discernment and theorisation of underlying patterns, meanings and themes within the interview data (Braun and Clarke 2006). The transcription process served as the initial interpretive tool in my study as broad themes, recurrent ideas and personal reflections were noted.

A systematic process then began whereby the reading and collation of data occurred simultaneously with the development, re-evaluation and entrenchment of themes (ibid.). My analysis at this stage was being guided by the question ‘how are issues of ‘race’ and belonging mediated within the transracial mother/child dyad’?

Data analysis, at this stage, was also sensitised through my engagement with the key theoretical concepts discussed in chapter two, as I began the process of linking themes to associated theoretical models. At this point, also, I embarked upon the writing of a reflective piece in relation to themes which arose from the data. This immersion in the data facilitated an empirically-based conceptual understanding of the data to emerge.

I also completed individual narratives in relation to each participant in a chronological form (which was based around the main summing up of ideas and themes). This helped to consolidate, and differentiate, the details of each mother and child unit in my mind and further facilitated the process of preparing a specifically tailored joint interview with mother
and child(ren). This cyclical and multi-layered approach can be regarded as an attempt to access multiple levels of voices in the research process. It is not regarded as an attempt to arrive at a greater level of truth, or a superior form of data, but rather to grasp at the meaning.

Analysis at this stage was further guided by the sub-research questions of: ‘what are the particular positionings and experiences of the white Irish mother and the mixed ‘race’ Irish children’? and ‘what can the experiences of the mother/child dyad tell us about (a) negotiations of ‘race’ and racism within the private and public sphere and (b) the specific relationship between ‘race’ and Irish national belonging’? Thematic narrative analysis unearthed several themes from the study relating to public sphere (il) legitimacy, exclusivity of Irish national identity, whiteness and racialisation.

In order to attain a more abstract level of conceptualisation, I re-read all the interviews and listened again to audio recordings in order to re-acquaint myself with the unique flavour of each interview – the tone, inflections and pauses. In addition, I created a profile for each mother/child unit which referenced specific excerpts in the data (interspersed with my interpretation) and categorised these in accordance with the four meta-themes. The creation of the profile description aided me in the continuous process of going back and forth between data and theoretical literature in search of suggestive or enabling conceptual tools. I also, at this stage, initiated the process of looking across the data continuously building on themes and ideas. I tried to ensure that I chose specific quotes which encapsulated some of the tensions and ambiguities of the interview whilst also paying attention to the progression of themes within the interview itself.

The four meta-themes developed through building on the quotes. This process, then, naturally directed me towards the theoretical tools which would help me to grapple with the complexities of the ideas and the multiple layers of voice. We are, therefore, enabled to see
how the bringing together of each empirical chapter involved an iterative process of data analysis, interpretation, personal reflection and theoretical formulation.

**Critical Reflexivity**

In this section, I firstly highlight key debates around the issue of critical reflexivity and secondly, by drawing on several extracts from my fieldwork diary, I acknowledge my own positionality in this research study.

Qualitative researchers utilise reflexivity as an attempt ‘to better represent, legitimise or call into question their data’ (Pillow 2003, p.176). Reflexivity may be further defined as:

>A turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference. In the context of social research, reflexivity at its most immediately obvious level refers to the way in which the products of research are affected by the personal and the process of doing research. (Davies 1999, p.4)

But, several critiques have emerged regarding the effectiveness of reflexivity for research purposes. Several theorists have raised concerns that reflexivity may be a form of narcissism and/or that the voices of the participants may become secondary or even muted (Denzin 1997; Patai 1991). Whilst acknowledging its limitations, Pillow (2003) has pinpointed reflexivity’s continued usefulness as a methodological aid and its capacity for rendering visible the practice of representation. Reflexivity can be utilised to measure validity and/or as an interrogation of researcher authority as interpretations and knowledge constructions are challenged (e.g. the use of multivocal texts) (ibid.). Indeed, Williams (1990, p.254) states that she uses reflexivity as a means of analysing her own experiences and reactions as ‘understanding emerges….out of the questions that emerge from my response to the situation’.

Pillow (2003) draws on several theorists in her discussion of the four ‘validated strategies’ (Trinh 1991, p.57) of reflexivity in the research process. Firstly, there is ‘reflexivity as
recognition of the self” (or ‘researcher know thyself’ (Pillow 2003, p.181)) which relates to the researcher’s capacity for self-reflexivity. This strategy is often used as a method of locating the researcher vis-à-vis the participants or more specifically, to demonstrate commonalities between researcher and researched in order ‘to affirm oneness’ (Patai 1991, p.144). However, as Pillow (2003) suggests, this is ultimately a fruitless endeavour as it rests on the notion of a knowable subject and/or does not simply equate to egalitarian practice.

Secondly, there is ‘reflexivity as recognition of the other’ which is crucial to claims of legitimacy and validity (Pillow 2003). However, Lather (1986), problematizes such claims to validity as she highlights the difficulties of representation. Indeed, representation is particularly pertinent for the ‘insider’ researcher who engenders quite unique constraints and responsibilities as regards the translation of the private into public knowledge in order to ‘represent the Other for the master’ (Trinh 1991, p.68). This strategy also falsely claims that, at some level, we can come to know, understand and ‘capture the essence’ (Trinh 1991, p.57 cited in Pillow 2003) of the Other.

Thirdly, there is ‘reflexivity as truth’ which is predicated on the assumption that, by disclosing the self and knowing the Other, one can ‘get it right’ – that is, the researcher’s quest for truth as the primary research objective. But, in this regard, Pillow (2003) suggests, it is essential to examine how reflexivity may be complicit with ‘discourses of truth’ which ‘operate in relation to dominant power structures of a given society’ (McNay 1992, p.25).

Finally, there is ‘reflexivity as transcendence’ which is based on the notion that the researcher is enabled, at some level, to transcend her own subjectivity and, by association, the weight of misrepresentation (Pillow 2003).

However, Lather (1986) advises us to persevere in the use of reflexivity in a rigorous manner, but to do so in a manner which moves us towards unfamiliar territory – that is, towards
‘reflexivities of discomfort’. Finally, Pillow (2003) emphasises that it is not always about superior methodology, or better representation, but, as Viswaswaran (1994, p.32) states, ‘whether we can be accountable to people’s struggles for self-representation and self-determination’.

In my study, therefore, I seek to incorporate Pillow’s critical review into my use of reflexivity. Most importantly, I pay heed to the suggestion to work with an ‘uncomfortable reflexivity – a reflexivity that seeks to know while at the same time, situates this knowing as tenuous’ (2003, p.188). Whilst I understand that my ‘insider’ role can act as a powerfully reflexive position which may facilitate levels of deeper engagement and insight, it is also important that I further acknowledge the possibility of over-complicity and/or the unwitting presumption of sameness.

So, in an effort to give due consideration to Pillow’s (2003) advice to indulge in uncomfortable tellings, I present three reflexive vignettes from my fieldwork diary that are guided, in part, by Williams’ (1990, p.254) assertion (stated above) that ‘understanding emerges…..out of the questions that emerge from my response to the situation’. In particular, I noted that the points of intersection which occurred between my autobiographical journey and the research process invited moments of introspection. Therefore, the following excerpts represent my effort(s) to unravel the entanglement of emotion at the heart of the research and moreover, to ‘reassure the reader that my findings are thoroughly contaminated’ (original italics; Ellingson 1998, p.494 cited in Pillow 2003).

**Vignette One – Unsettling of White Subjectivities (The ‘Dance’ around Whiteness)**

During the research study, I experienced recurring moments of emotional intensity around my relationship to my own sense of whiteness (or, my various positionings within whiteness).
In particular, I noted that my whiteness was ‘raced’ – how did this happen? This, in turn, invited reflection about my own trajectory in and through ‘race’.

I became particularly aware of the various ways in which I used and performed my whiteness (as per phenotype) in the context of interviewing another white woman. And I learned that, in an interview related to issues of racialisation, gender identification does not always result in a straightforward level of rapport (Phoenix 1994). More specifically, what does it mean for two white women to discuss ‘race’ when ‘race’ is not being attributed to the racialised ‘other’?

In fact, I became fascinated as to how and by what means our apparent shared sense of whiteness could be used to uphold racial boundaries and hierarchies. At certain points throughout the interview process, I felt consciously drawn into what I felt was a complicit whiteness (whilst also recognising that I must have also colluded with this – even unconsciously and at various levels) and this became a point of tension for me.

What became apparent was that, in the context of the interviewer-interviewee relationship, and at particular moments, we were experiencing and performing different articulations of whiteness. And I felt the tension of having to hold the silence around that. In effect, what I was experiencing was the ‘outsider within’ (Hill Collins 2004) status or what Twine (2010) calls the ‘insider-outsider’ position. Of course, the interviewee, who is also a white mother of mixed ‘race’ children, may have also been negotiating her own sense of shifting whiteness (which was sometimes articulated and sometimes not).

When I look back at my life experiences, particularly my early experiences of life in London, I realise that my understandings of the relevance of whiteness developed in the context of differentiation as the only white person amongst black work colleagues, numerous social settings and now, of course, my immediate family. I recollect a moment of being explained by one black work colleague to another as ‘she’s not white, she’s Irish’. Moments such as
these activated moments of self-questioning for me – am I not white? What does being white mean? As time went on, I became more aware of the positioning of the Irish in London at that time (which, in terms of my lived experience, was politically Black). It is fair to say, therefore, that I embarked upon a process of interrogating my own whiteness and its unexamined assumptions and although, I didn’t know it at the time, my whiteness was becoming racialised. I was particularly struck then, as I am now, by the sheer ordinariness of questioning one’s racial category in the context of the most banal, everyday encounters. And perhaps, even more significantly, how racial categories don’t always tell the whole story. Another sphere in which the questioning of racial identity came alive from me was in relation to mothering mixed ‘race’ daughters.

**Vignette Two - Mixed ‘Race’ Motherhood and the Vicissitudes of Shadeism**

I would regard coming to terms with the vicissitudes of shadeism as one of the most defining features of my experience of mixed ‘race’ motherhood. I can remember most clearly the moment, when my children were very young, that the politics of skin shade entered our lives. That is, as toddlers, both girls had absorbed the discourse that light skin is more socially acceptable (and desirable). I also remember when they started primary school and how skin shade hierarchy was enacted in playground politics. I remember being struck at the sheer amount of time that they would spend comparing skin shade and discussing its implications with a pragmatism beyond their years. And I remember feeling humbled, protective and helpless all at the same time. These complex emotions stayed with me and tend to re-surface particularly during those moments when the ‘white gaze’ rests for just that fraction of a second too long upon my dark-skinned daughter. Indeed, my preoccupation with this issue was, oftentimes, brought to the fore when skin shade dynamics entered participants’ stories (and I struggled with an intensity of feeling).
Vignette Three – The ‘Outsider Within’ (Nation)

My positioning during the course of this research study – that is, as an Irish woman living in London, researching in Ireland - also ‘tapped into’ some latent feelings. This invariably led me towards a consideration of the very broad definition of ‘insider’ status (Wiederhold 2014). I am an ‘insider’ inasmuch as I shared with the participants both the familiarity of a shared personal history (cultural traditions etc.) and childhood experiences. I can also lay claim to membership of the same province/county as many of my participants. I am also an ‘insider’ on the basis of racial categorisation (which, of course, inspired a sense of discomfort as I felt I had to assume an ‘unmarked’, rather than ‘marked’, position of whiteness). I have also been subject to the same circulating web of discourses in relation to ‘race’ and racialisation - homogenising discourses of white Irishness and my first experience of ‘race’, like thousands of my generation, was through exposure to the ‘black babies’ phenomenon and Trócaire boxes.

However, my initial experience of mothering a mixed ‘race’ child occurred in Britain which was at another point in its racial history and consequently, there are different meanings attributed to the transracial mother/child dyad. But, perhaps, the main point of difference between myself and the participants is that I did not have a place-based investment (Wiederhold 2014) in the future as I have made a conscious decision not to live in Ireland. At times, during the interview process particularly, this gave rise to feelings of ‘split loyalty’ which I felt needed to be handled delicately. I felt the need to keep to myself - as conceal is too strong a word – the deep emotional investment that I felt for a life lived elsewhere. Perhaps, at some level, I felt that my ‘real’ Irishness would be subject to scrutiny?

These reflections shed some light on the multiple layers of voice(s) in the research process. They emanate from a variety of sources: interaction with the participants and their life stories,
aspects of my lived experience and the specific theoretical lens brought to bear on this study. While my ‘insider’ status may have facilitated access to hidden knowledge of ‘race’ and racism in Ireland, this status did not, however, provide privileged access to knowledge as the ‘insider’ category, as demonstrated above, is mediated by several aspects of experience and identity. In a sense, therefore, I occupy the position of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ simultaneously.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how feminist research takes as its central objective the privileging of marginalised voices and experiences. My study contributes to this feminist endeavour by accessing lived knowledge which rarely gets articulated and is often, implicitly and explicitly, silenced by hegemonic discourse. I have outlined the philosophical and methodological foundations of this research and I have discussed how these underpinnings have shaped the research methodology, design and processes of data collection and analysis. In the following four chapters, I present the various layers of ‘voice’ of the activists, mothers and young people as I present and discuss my empirical findings.
Chapter Four: The Il (legitimate) Mixed ‘Race’ Citizen Subject

Introduction

In chapter one, I discussed how Irish state nation-building has, from its inception, been shaped by exclusionary ideologies which have attempted to construct a version of Irishness that highlights both religious and ethnic homogeneity underpinned by a taken-for-granted whiteness (Fanning 2012). Moreover, popular and political responses to immigration in Ireland have racialised ‘asylum seekers’ and ‘refugees’ as black (Garner 2004; Lentin and McVeigh 2006). This racialisation also extends to the category of ‘immigrants’ thereby perpetuating an historical tradition of racialised exclusion by state practices in relation to minority groups (McGinnity et al. 2006).

I further examined how the re-configuration of Ireland’s citizenship regime in the 2004 Referendum sought to re-affirm Irishness as firmly located within the realm of ‘blood-ties’ and kinship; a purity of ‘race’ that has evolved across the generations (Crowley et al. 2006). By thus privileging the principles of jus sanguinis, it is fair to say that racialised discourses of inclusion and exclusion are deeply interwoven in the very fabric of Irish society and its institutions (Ni Laoire et al. 2011) and, as such, have constructed a version of Irishness that ‘others’ and excludes the mixed ‘race’ person (Morrison 2004).

The crafting of a mixed ‘race’ category has, therefore, emerged as a site of political contestation and in this chapter, I examine two levels of contemporary mixed ‘race’ politics in twenty-first century Ireland. In the first section, I examine the everyday efforts of white mothers to establish their mixed ‘race’ Irish children as equal claimants of rights in the public sphere. In the second section, I focus on the political activism of key actors in the emerging mixed ‘race’ movement for recognition as legitimate citizens. In this manner, the
conceptualisations of key activists are positioned alongside empirical narratives of lived experience thereby providing multi-layered insight into the workings of mixed ‘race’ politics in Ireland. This chapter further employs an ‘acts of citizenship’ framework (see chapter two) which allows for an examination of the claiming of rights that are located at the limits of citizenship.

**Enacting Citizenship through Mothering Work**

In this section, I focus on the politics of reproduction and mothering as acts of citizenship. By acknowledging that critical questions about the nature of Irish belonging emerge in the context of everyday lived experience, I examine the potential for mothering practices to bring into being new political subjects.

**The Transracial Mother/Child Dyad: Interrupting Dominant Modes of Belonging**

This section will document the mother’s awareness of the differential positioning between her and her child(ren) (and black partner, if applicable) as regards legitimate claims-making. In this regard, Nessa, mother of Colum (12), Rian (9) and Mary (6), relates below her African husband’s discomfort in relation to accompanying her son to GAA sporting events:

> He said, ‘I never felt comfortable there’ and I didn’t feel comfortable there but I think, as an Irish person, I felt I had a right to be there even though I’d stand on the sidelines – I still feel enough confidence to stand there on my own because I thought – ‘I’m ok, I’ll stand here on my own as a woman from Ireland, with a right to belong’, but he didn’t – he was going into the unknown.

In the context of everyday interaction with the GAA, which has a deeply embedded association with nationalist ideology (see chapter one), Nessa interrogates the grounds of racialised belonging. Whilst there is an acknowledgement that her husband’s inclusion in the public domain is, at the very least, contentious, Nessa herself embodies and experiences her
own belonging in terms of ‘rights’ (‘as a woman from Ireland’). Although Nessa does allude to ‘the hierarchy of Irishness’ in Ireland which means that she does not always feel Irish herself, she is confident that she is able to perform Irishness if and when the situation demands and more importantly, that she has the right to do so. In essence, Nessa feels strongly that she has ‘the right to have rights’ (Arendt 1951) and it is precisely this ‘right to have rights’ that she would like to pass onto her children because it gives her confidence:

I want them [her children] to know that they are just as Irish as anyone else – they may have black skin but they are just as Irish – they have rights just like anybody else – but I’m not exactly sure how I am going to go about that.

There is almost a sense of urgency and anxiety in Nessa’s statement as she explicitly frames her family’s differential access to Irish belonging in terms of skin colour and (re)articulates her intention to position her children as rights-bearing subjects. It seems that Nessa is, in fact, narrating a moment of ‘becoming political’ (Isin 2002) as she demonstrates an awareness that citizenship, as an institution, despite claims to universalism, remains imbued with a subtext of ethnic and racial belonging (Erel 2013).

In fact, the transracial mother/child dyad, by the very fact of its presence within national space, challenges ideas of ‘a stable national identity based on kinship’ (Stevens 1999, p.9).

We can, therefore, view Nessa’s mothering practices as ‘a political intervention that challenges the notion of cultural homogeneity of the citizenry and the racialised hierarchisation of migrant and ethnic minority culture as well as the intergenerational reproduction of these’ (Erel 2013, p.971).

The activation of their children’s citizenship constitutes the political dimension of mothering work (Kershaw 2005). In fact, the majority of the mothers in this study, whether or not
explicitly espoused, assume a political position regarding racism (Hill Collins 1990). Vera, mother of Oliver (12), speaks of the all-pervasive nature of racism in society:

I think the issue is racism rather than his skin colour – I find the policing and scanning of books and movies for racism – I mean, in terms of just thinking back to his childhood – that has been the biggest challenge for me and it’s still a quandary for me – that is, if the environment is profoundly racist and I think that it is – how do you best support a child to deal with that because I think, rightly or wrongly, my tack was not to let it become normal – y’know, there needs to be some awareness of how that works so we can spot it in operation rather than just absorbing it as the way of things.

Vera demonstrates political mothering in action (and the acquisition of what Twine (2010) terms, ‘racial literacy’ - see chapter two) as she attempts to inculcate in her child a critical awareness of the structural dimensions of racism. In a similar vein, Helen, mother of George (17) and Liam (15), refers to a racist incident incurred by her son whilst playing gaelic football:

Liam was called (the n-word) on the pitch – but the GAA were very quick to act – and before Liam even got home that evening, I had the Chairperson of the Youth Board onto me to say that an incident had occurred and there was a hearing and all – but it was very interesting because during the hearing when I was asking them to write and re-iterate their policies on race to local clubs, the GAA fella says to me ‘emm, well, we don’t want to let this get out to the public domain’ – hence, the reason why they acted so fast.

Helen is a vocal opponent of racism:

I think Ireland is outrageously racist and we cannot even have that conversation - I mean the level of cowardice and ‘head in the sand’ stuff is just unbelievable – I just really feel that the government are not taking seriously the issues that are bubbling underneath the surface for these children – they are dispossessed – they are not integrated into society into any shape or form – I say to people ‘when my children bleed, their blood is red’- I don’t accept racism at any level – if I find there has been racism – I will call it – I have always called it – sometimes, I have had to fight about it – I have to keep fighting it – I know all the guards by name now – think they think I’m mad – but I say to them, I want it noted because I know they won’t do anything about it – just note it.

And, she encourages her son to do the same:

Liam doesn’t ever want to call it – he wants to ignore it – I say to him ‘Liam, you cannot let racism lie, you must call it’.

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12 An Garda Síochána, more commonly referred to as ‘the Gardaí’ or ‘the Guards’ is the name of the police service in the Republic of Ireland.
In addition to claiming citizenship on behalf of her children, Helen’s challenge to racism also constitutes an aspect of her own political citizenship (Kershaw 2010). By modelling strategies for the negotiation of racism, Helen strives to equip her children with what Hill Collins (1990, p.51) terms, ‘a powerful tool for resisting oppression’. In fact, through her initiation of ‘micro-political projects’ (Twine 2010) related to racism in the intimate sphere, we are enabled to see how Helen’s mothering practices provide a challenge to the public/private dichotomy.

Helen’s moment of ‘becoming political’ (Isin 2002), like Nessa and Vera above, is grounded in the marginal space which is occupied by her family constellation. She encourages her son to challenge racism from the standpoint of his mixed ‘race’ citizenship (as an emergent political subject) – to speak back, as it were, about the place allocated to him in the space of the nation-state (Rancière 2004). In stark terms, it seems that Helen’s emotional plea (‘when my children bleed, their blood is red’) can also be read as part of her wider struggle for a political voice (on equal terms) for her children.

Helen also references multiple levels of belonging (i.e. Irish and African) in her everyday negotiations of citizenship (on behalf of her son). Whilst attempting to assert her son’s ‘Africanness’ in the public sphere, she simultaneously seeks to substantiate his citizenship rights in the Irish state. Moreover, Liam participates in the quintessentially Irish sport of gaelic football. It seems, therefore, that Liam is (or can be), at once, both Irish and African.

However, despite Helen’s persistence regarding the pursuit of official channels of complaint (e.g. GAA Youth Board, the Guards), her son’s political claims are both privatised and diffused as he is constructed as a disempowered subject (i.e. by the Youth Board not acknowledging the racist incident in the public domain). This de-politicisation of his claim
means that, although subject to the prevailing order of domination, Liam is ultimately disallowed a voice.

This section has documented how the mothers have ‘become political’ through the acknowledgment of the racialisation inherent in the concept of citizenship and have subsequently attempted to stake rights-claims on behalf of their children. In the next section, I specifically examine the quotidian nature of claims making in the mother/child dyad.

**Everyday Narratives of Claims-Making**

I am interested in the everyday encounters through which citizenship and belonging become meaningful. To this effect, Ellie relates the following discussion with the manager of her daughter’s (Maya (4)) crèche:

> I did say something once to the manager – I said something that I would feel happier if there was more diversity within the crèche – and I did say that Maya had said that about wanting white skin – and the manager said, ‘ah, there’s no need to worry about that – I mean, she’s so pretty – everyone’s going to love her because she’s so gorgeous’ – and I thought, ‘you’ve no idea of the depth of it, it is so much more than that’.

There is a presumption of rightful presence (Squire and Darling 2013) (see chapter two) at work in the above localised encounter. In her attempts to re-orient the relationship between her mixed ‘race’ child citizen daughter and the state, Ellie attempts to frame her daughter’s status in political terms. The crèche manager, on the other hand, assumes a territorial claim over space through her conceptualisation of Maya’s racial status as potentially debilitating or as a ‘lack’ somehow – but a ‘lack’ for which her good looks may ultimately compensate. We can further see how the crèche manager’s expression of hospitality and/or demonstration of willingness to tolerate Maya’s racialised difference actually work to re-inscribe the host/guest pastoral relation (Squire and Darling 2013).
In effect, Ellie’s political claim was effectively trivialised through an appeal to her daughter’s good looks and simultaneously, Maya was constituted as a passive subject who is prohibited from inhabiting her citizenship. This can be read as part of a wider endeavour at state level to construct mixed ‘race’ citizens as ‘relentlessly responsible’ (Enright 2011, p.476) for their own sense of (non) belonging.

In Ellie’s interview, she further speaks about sourcing multiracial materials for the crèche (such as black dolls/books which portray diversity) as she attempts to live out her family’s ‘diverse Irishness’ (Enright 2011) in the public domain. We are, therefore, enabled to see how Ellie, by means of mothering practices in the private sphere, is challenging the racial particularity of the Irish citizenry. We further get a sense of the additional pressure which the white mother must bear in terms of striving for public sphere legitimacy for her mixed ‘race’ Irish child. Jane, mother of Sam (8), speaks about her intervention at her son’s school:

Sam was called ‘brown-head’ in the yard – but, I don’t know if the school understands about racism and I don’t really know how to approach them – because they don’t talk about racism as such – but I did say something to the teacher and she did say that they are going to do a little bit of stuff in class now – she said they would do some lessons around it but they haven’t yet – think they are gonna do it soon.

Jane struggles to assert rightful presence (Squire and Darling 2013) in this encounter with her child’s teacher in relation to racialised name-calling. Yet, Jane seems to have acquired a sense that political standing is already absent, or being denied, from the outset (as we note that she feels silenced to some degree). As such, there exists a lack of reciprocity in the relationship between Jane and the school, as a public institution. The school assumes authority and the incident is de-politicised to such an extent that Jane and her son are constructed as passive recipients of the school’s goodwill (or not) when choosing to address the issue of racism. Jane’s narrative of citizenship, therefore, attests to everyday experiences as ultimately circumscribed by the dualism of host/newcomer.
There is also a realisation on Alice’s (mother of Dan (10)) part that, despite the strong sense of Irish cultural identification she has tried to inculcate in her son (see chapter five), his position at the sharp interface between cultural ‘insider’ and racialised ‘outsider’ fails to insulate him from the perils of racism:

Even though it [the school] had all the Irishisms and the music and the history and the culture – there was a little bit of starvation there in the sense that the school is not very multicultural – now, I mean, I did my best, I worked with the Yellow Flag Campaign\(^\text{13}\) – I helped out and we planned all the curriculum and everything and the buy-in from the school was grand but I don’t think actually in terms of the reality of what the Yellow Flag was supposed to represent actually happened in the end – because, in the end, I had to move him from the school because he was called (n-word) on more than one occasion and it wasn’t dealt with properly – a lot of the kids in [the school] were very middle class and they used it – the shock-horror of it – ‘oh, but his mum is a nurse’ and all the different excuses they’d be coming up with and also not telling the parents and I said, ‘next time it happens, I want face-to-face with the parents’.

As part of her attempt to make sense of the lack of citizenship rights and entitlements accorded her son, Alice poses critical questions about the nature of Irish belonging in the above quote. In fact, Alice outlines the various ways she has fulfilled the requirements of a good citizen – she has evidenced her commitment to the nation-state by cultivating a sense of Irishness in her son and engaging with the school’s Yellow Flag programme (and even taught some modules on a voluntary basis). Yet, in the end, the promise of equal citizenship potentially offered by the powerful liberal democratic discourse of the Yellow Flag programme was cruelly withdrawn, when her son was called the n-word and the school failed to treat this incident as a legitimate concern.

In fact, Alice articulates how her son was deprived of the protection and dignity of citizenship in the strongest possible terms (‘there was a starvation there’) – that is, almost a failure to thrive in citizenship terms. This term encapsulates her son’s process of dehumanisation as he

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\(^\text{13}\) The Yellow Flag Programme was set up by the Irish Traveller Movement with the aim of celebrating cultural diversity. It achieves this by supporting schools through an 8 step programme (e.g. Intercultural Awareness Training) at the end of which they receive a physical yellow flag (to erect outside the school) (Irish Traveller Movement 2019).
was cast outside and constituted as a national abject (see chapter two). Indeed, one gets a sense that this ‘starvation’ seems to manifest as a withholding of a sense of security and safety for Alice and her son. This resonates with Berlant’s (2011) notion of ‘cruel optimism’ (see chapter two) inherent in the attempts to forge ‘a liveable life’, to feel anchored through a sense of home and belonging, that is constitutively excluding. There is also a re-constitution of social location at work here as Alice is denied validity as a claims-maker by allusions to the respectability and status of the parents of the alleged perpetrators (‘she is a nurse’).

The above narrative further highlights how the school re-orientates status on the basis of difference (Enright 2011). In fact, the host/newcomer framing of belonging invokes starkly uneven power relations as Alice and her son are constituted as disempowered subjects who must acquiesce to state authority and control. Alice elaborates below her son’s paucity of rights in this regard:

I was sat down in the office – and I mean, he [the headteacher] opened his red book, where all the incidents go into – they are all written in pen but this one was written in pencil – and he forgot himself and he said, ‘I wrote this in pencil because, you know kids, they are always changing their story’ – and I said, ‘so you mean all those stories written in pen, you mean to say they never told you a lie’ – so my son – I mean, it was written in pencil, he doesn’t have a voice, he doesn’t have a pen, he has a pencil – he has to be different – it can’t just be a pen like everybody else.

In accordance with a presumption of rightful presence (Squire and Darling 2013), Alice attempts to constitute her son as a political actor, as a claimant of rights, by exercising the power to dissent from the majority which is the citizen’s due. Or, in more specific terms, Alice is seeking an acknowledgement in the public domain of the specificity of her son’s racist experience. Rather than seeking inclusion, therefore, Alice is posing a challenge to hegemonic citizenship narratives.
But what happens instead is that debates around issues of difference become localised (i.e. whether to use a pen or pencil) and thus, evacuated of all political content. By recording the racist incident in pencil, there is almost certainly a potential ‘erasure’ of events as Dan is excluded from legitimate claims-making at a very vulnerable moment (in the aftermath of a racist incident). In short, Dan must be accountable for his own difference and he must work on his alternative political subjectivities in the private domain. The outcome of this incident, therefore, is that the hierarchy of citizenship remains intact and the hospitality frame (host/guest relation) is re-affirmed – in a sense, Dan’s difference may or may not be tolerated.

Alice continues by framing her demands within a wider political analysis:

They got the Yellow Flag and I mean, when I was teaching about the Yellow Flag – I did the introduction day, no teacher in there wanted to teach about interculturalism or diversity or racism – anything – there was a fear in them. So, I did the teaching in there because no one else offered to do it or wanted to do it – I mean, there can’t be equality without some sort of reflection on the policies the school already has and adopting them to reflect the current status – if they need to support equalising the playing field for children of mixed ‘race’ – also, how can we understand black or mixed ‘race’ kids if we don’t employ black teachers – because what I have seen is the teacher blaming the black or mixed ‘race’ child because these children are easy to see – both in school and in society in general – they are easy to see and identify and accuse and so, at a very young age, they are put in a position of having to defend themselves and so, they grow up with that and I think it’s very sad and very apparent in Irish culture – also, I don’t know how many teachers are doing intercultural studies in primary school – I mean, I don’t understand why we don’t have a black history month in Ireland.

We see political mothering in action as Alice, through an analytic frame of rightful presence (Squire and Darling 2013), interrogates the positioning of the mixed ‘race’ child citizen within the Irish state. Again, we can note the juxtapositioning of the celebratory aspects of the Yellow Flag programme and her political claims grounded in her son’s marginalised status. Alice highlights that there is, in fact, no formal requirement to teach principles of interculturalism and diversity in the school (which, in this school’s case, is being taught by means of the Yellow Flag programme).
But, we further acquire a sense of how Dan, in the context of the Yellow Flag programme, is passively positioned as the ‘ethnic other’ (Arat-Koc 2005). In a sense, he is obliged to proffer his ‘cultural diversity’ to the host community and they can choose to celebrate what is deemed to be its more palatable aspects – a kind of de-politicisation (exacerbated by neoliberal political rationality) through celebration. But, Alice advances a political claim for inclusion of the mixed ‘race’ child citizen in the body politic by seeking, in her own words, to ‘equal[ling] the playing field’. Her political demands are couched in discourses of rights and equality vis-à-vis mixed ‘race’ citizenship as she references the hypervisibility of mixed ‘race’ young people, the need for black teachers/black history month and the school policy framework. We can see that there is a disruptive dimension at work here that extends beyond and directly challenges the limits of hospitality – in fact, ‘delineates the contingency of citizenship itself’ (Turner 2016, p.143). In the next section, I discuss the mother’s fears for their children’s future in relation to citizenship status in Ireland.

A Citizenship Denied: Implications for the Future

Generally speaking, the mothers’ referenced an awareness of the marginalised positioning of their mixed ‘race’ children which, oftentimes, manifested in the expression of anxiety and fear for the capacity of their children to forge ‘a liveable life’ (Tyler 2013, p.12) in Ireland. In this section, therefore, I examine narratives which relate to how the mothers make sense of a promise of citizenship which has been denied. Ellie discusses mixed ‘race’ motherhood as engendering different levels of responsibility:

I feel that I have to make up for society’s failures – because society is going to fail her – it is definitely going to fail her – it’s failing her dad now – he can’t get a job here – he has had to go to (UK city) – I mean, am I wrong to expect that (husband) can be treated as an equal – it’s failing us as a couple because we are constantly having to prove something – so it’s going to fail her so I feel that, as her mother, I have to make up for that so I do get quite intense in my parenting.

She continues by stating:
And I think about the future a lot and I think of all the stupid questions that I have to answer now she is going to have to answer in the future.

Based on her husband’s experiences of racialised abjection, Ellie vocalises fears about intergenerational disenfranchisement and how that will affect her daughter, Maya. In fact, Ellie vividly portrays a family who lacks a secure foundation somehow or at the very least, is not allowed to flourish in neoliberal Ireland. We can see how Ellie actively refuses the abstract conception of ‘justice to come’ which is associated with a hospitality framing and instead, adopts a rightful presence perspective which exposes the workings of power to exclude (Squire and Darling 2013).

Ellie, therefore, contests the notion that, by simply broadening the scope of citizenship, we can ‘include’ the excluded. She is aware that her negatively racialised child is not experiencing linear progression into the time and space of the nation-state but rather, sees her daughter’s positioning as suspended in a state of (non) belonging, a ‘failed’ citizen, a national abject (Tyler 2013). Finally, Ellie’s allusion to the ‘stupid questions’ that her daughter will be forced to endure brilliantly encapsulates the lack of reciprocity between the mixed ‘race’ citizen and the state – that is, the mixed ‘race’ citizen as accountable for his/her own difference. Alice similarly reflects below about mixed ‘race’ motherhood:

You certainly become very aware of the ‘voiceless’ in society – you feel like your children’s voices are being halved or not being heard to a certain extent – you start to understand all the voiceless people.

Alice’s awareness of her child’s marginal positioning extends to an empathic identification with other minoritised groups but also manifests in uncertainties about the future:

One of my fears when I walk down the street and I see this generation of African and mixed kids is – they have been raised here, they are born here, they are second generation Irish – but I do get scared a little – I mean, how are they going to own their citizenship in this country?
Alice references above the positioning of the mixed ‘race’ child citizen in Irish national space. In fact, she seems to have acquired a sense of citizenship as an ‘abjectifying technology’ (Tyler 2013, p.53) which constructs ‘failed’ citizens who are both contained and immobilised within the state as its ‘interiorized other’ (Butler and Spivak 2007, p.16). Like Ellie earlier, Alice does not subscribe to notions of gradual linear progression from a state of exclusion to inclusion in the body politic as per dualistic notions of citizenship. Rather, by employing an analytics of rightful presence, she speaks about the possibility of the mixed ‘race’ citizen ‘owning’ or claiming future citizenship which, of course, directly challenges the power relations embedded in categories of host and guest. In fact, Alice appears to suggest a re-configuration of citizenship as necessary. Jane similarly expresses concern regarding her child’s absorption into the national framework:

I think it’s very hard – I remember being in the hospital in [Irish city] and there was an African doctor – I don’t know where he was from actually – and the woman in the next bed to me refused to be treated by him and just being so shocked and thinking ‘is this what my child has to look forward to’ – y’know, whatever about my partner.

And then:

I had a dream last year – I had a dream where Sam was being hurt by this boy – and was being really bullied by this kid- so I went to the house and the dad opened the door and I said, ‘hi, I just came to talk to you about your son’ and he said, ‘but, come on, your son isn’t worth as much as my son’ – something like that – ‘your son is not as important as my son so it doesn’t really matter that my son is being mean to him’ and I felt this moment of fury and then, I went, ‘yeah, you’re right’ – and I walked away – and I woke up just feeling so awful – I mean, is there a part of me that feels like that – that my son is less – because of his colour – is this something that I can completely disown and say that there is no part of me that feels that – or, is that dream just about my fear for him? – that dream really shook me – because I know in my heart and soul that I could not love my child more.

In this powerful rendition of her dream related to her son’s positioning, we can see how Jane’s fears and anxieties manifest at an unconscious level. Moreover, this dream represents such a deeply unsettling experience for Jane that she feels compelled to (re) assert her love for her son at the end of the narrative. In order to more fully understand how particular
hierarchies of ‘race’ shape these mother’s accounts, in the next section, I examine the
e endeavours by mixed ‘race’ activists to enact a rightful presence in Ireland

**The Mixed ‘Race’ Irish Citizen as a Legitimate Presence**

The citizenship claims that are enacted in everyday encounters by the transracial mother/child
dyad are both informed by and embedded in past injustices experienced by mixed ‘race’ Irish
people. In this section, I, therefore, examine the narratives of four prominent activists who are
attempting to bring mixed ‘race’ politics into the public domain by both ‘making present’
historical wrongdoing and the articulation of a rightful presence. Although both the time
frame and configuration of mixed ‘race’ politics differs between the mothers and the activists,
we are enabled to see how the struggle by the transracial mother/child dyad for political voice
is rooted in a collective politicised struggle that is only beginning to surface many decades
after the original public injury.

**Claiming Political Subjecthood**

In this section, I examine the activists’ claims for equal recognition from the standpoint of
mixed ‘race’ Irish citizenship. Mary, an activist, spent a large part of her childhood in a
Catholic-run state orphanage which she poignantly describes below:

Growing up in Ireland was an experience in the annihilation of the self – have you any idea
how damaging that is for a community’s ability to self-determine – to engage and to have
relationships – it’s absolutely soul-destroying – you exist in a perpetual state of gratitude –
you grow up feeling that you don’t have a right to exist – you grow up feeling that you don’t
even have the right to say I have rights – it’s just not part of your vocabulary – what is is
‘thank you so much’ or ‘I’m so grateful to you’ and if you step outside those perimeters you
are seen as a savage…as we become visible, we are developing our own language actually – I
mean, we are developing the language that best describes our experience, our feelings – when
you grow up being denied your basic rights, being denied the right to exist – with that comes
a denial of your ability to have feelings, to own anything and along with that comes a lack of
identity, you are not allowed to have an identity – other than what is prescribed for you which
is always negative – it’s always negative – for the first time in our lives, we are owning our
identities – essentially the campaign is about mixed race Irish learning to own their identities
for the first time in history – we’re standing up, we’re putting our feet on the ground – and
we’re looking up – we spent all our lives with our faces towards the ground.
Mary’s account is rooted in her lived experience of dislocation and loss whereby as a mixed ‘race’ child citizen she was stripped of all rights and dignity, dehumanised and rendered as a national abject (Tyler 2013). In a narrative structured by the host/newcomer dualism, Mary articulates the entrenched victimisation of ‘the perpetual state of gratitude’ that one must endure when passively dependent upon the goodwill of the host. Mary references the link between recognition and identity and explains how the identity of mixed ‘race’ Irish citizens has been both shaped and distorted by (mis) recognition which has acted as another form of oppression (Taylor 1997). She further talks about how the Association of Mixed Race Irish (hereafter called AMRI), by staking claims of recognition and belonging for mixed ‘race’ Irish people, is refusing silenced subordination and is oriented towards the exposure of the asymmetrical power relations at the core of host/guest relations and the racial hierarchy (see below). John, another activist, further elaborates:

It’s worth saying that recognition is one of the main objectives we have been campaigning for over the past few years – so, what do we actually mean by recognition for the mixed ‘race’ Irish community? It has many layers – firstly, it means that we wish to be treated as equals – viewed as Irish as anyone else – although we appear differently we want people to stop considering us as foreigners – just because of the colour of our skin – we want to be able to participate in normal life – and feel that we’re recognised as Irish – I mean, it’s going to take a long time for people to move away from the notion that to be Irish, you have to be white – whiteness and Irishness go hand in hand.

By articulating the tacit association which exists between whiteness and Irishness, John highlights the unique positioning of mixed ‘race’ Irish people vis-à-vis the racialised dichotomy of belonging. By seeking equal recognition and a racially inclusive conception of citizenship, the activists seek, therefore, to re-negotiate the conditions of the mixed ‘race’ presence in Ireland. Mary explains how the paucity of public language around ‘race’ has impacted mixed ‘race’ survivors of institutional abuse:

We felt very much that what was out there by way of support did not even acknowledge the mixed ‘race’ Irish experience in these institutions – and we wondered and we actually felt quite passionate about this – that all the apologies the Taoiseach did for the survivor
movement – it went completely over my head because I knew I wasn’t included – we just knew it did not relate to us (emphasis) – because all through the redress, not once was ‘race’ mentioned – though we raised issues about treatment based on ‘race’ we were told – this is the criteria under which your abuse will be acknowledged and they didn’t acknowledge we were in these institutions and for those of us who were in these institutions to have the abuse based on racism denied was simply yet more institutional abuse – instead, we are being told your stories did not exist.

In this regard, John refers to AMRI and the Mother and Baby Homes Commission:

As regards the Baby Homes Commission happening, we argued with the Minister for Children at the time – we argued that it is not acceptable that you have these investigations without considering the whole area around racism and discrimination in these organisations – because in the last enquiry into abuse in institutions – the whole issue of racism just wasn’t looked at – but now the Commission is actually tasked to look at ‘race’ – so, in a way, this is a form of recognition – but the most important thing is whether or not the issues of discrimination will be exposed in the reporting – and who knows? – this may even start off a debate in Ireland – as long as they recognise us in the Report.

AMRI is staking a rights claim by requesting that the discourse of ‘race’ be incorporated into public policy or more specifically, that the Irish government acknowledge racism as a specific factor in historical abuse. However, the Irish government is already complicit in reproducing a particular version of racial difference, which is the narrow migrant narrative as solely representative of racial diversity in Ireland (see chapter one). It is also worth noting that, during the late 1990s media exposure of abuse in Catholic-run state institutions for children (e.g. Goldenbridge), the negative racialisation of mixed ‘race’ children was neither addressed nor acknowledged (McVeigh and Lentin 2002). Indeed, it was the Traveller Support Movement (in the 1980s) which initially brought the discourse of ‘race’ into the Irish public domain by lobbying for its inclusion as a term of analysis in the examination of anti-Traveller discrimination (McVeigh 1992, 1996, 1998, 2007). Eddie, another activist, draws attention to how AMRI also lobby for public recognition for mixed ‘race’ citizens by means of an established group in the Census:

We’re not recognised as a mixed ‘race’ Irish group in the Census – we wish to be treated as equals – although in the Census, we are in there as either black or African, most of us would probably tick ‘other’ – we’re not recognised as a mixed ‘race’ Irish group in the Census.
Indeed, the Census (2016) has severely limited the choice of racial category for mixed ‘race’ Irish people and in actual fact, reproduces invisibility for this population through exclusion from the category of Irishness (Michael 2015). Eddie is effectively ‘talking back’ to the Irish state about failures to meet its obligations to all of its citizens. He is addressing the Irish state from the perspective of his mixed ‘race’ citizenship in an attempt to inhabit the national will ‘as legitimate partner[s] with other citizens in the allocation and contestation of political space, able as of right to make demands both on the state and on fellow members of the citizenry’ (Rancière 2004, p.70). The next section examines in more depth the unique positioning of the mixed ‘race’ Irish citizen, from the activist perspective, in relation to the racialised insider/outsider dichotomy.

**Ambivalent Positioning of the Mixed ‘Race’ Irish Citizen**

In this section, I examine how the ambivalent positioning of the mixed ‘race’ Irish citizen challenges statist framings of the host/newcomer. In the extract below, Anne (activist) flags the racialised positioning of the mixed ‘race’ Irish population:

Actually, all the organisations existing in Ireland are all about immigrants – they are dominated by white people waving flags about what great policies they have written around integration – and then, I get the African organisations saying ‘come and join us’ – again, we don’t want to be subsumed into an African organisation because we are mixed ‘race’ Irish (emphasis) – we’re not immigrants – there’s an expectation that if we join the Immigrant Council – what? – we’re declaring ourselves migrants – there’s no organisation that just talks about this new group of Irish people where they are not fair-haired or blue-eyed or culturally, they’re Irish but not just culturally, there’s a genetic link as well – how do you integrate that? – and there’s no organisation for that – we’re kind of lone wolves – we’re kind of lone wolves.

The racialised positioning of the mixed ‘race’ Irish citizen, as an indigenous minority person, subverts the rigid insider/outsider framework which dominates statist conceptions of belonging (Ní Mhurchú 2014). Indeed, the phenomenon of the racialisation of migration in the Irish context means that a ‘semantic association’ exists between the concept of ‘asylum seeker’ and ‘black person’ and of ‘asylum seeker’ with immigrants (White 2002) (see chapter
one). This, of course, has implications for the positioning of the mixed ‘race’ Irish citizen who, being racialised as black, is subsumed by the category of ‘immigrant’.

By embodying an unsettling mixture of Irishness and ‘foreignness’, therefore, mixed ‘race’ Irish citizens, both act ‘as a rebuke to the state’s attempts to preserve membership as racially homogenous’ (Enright 2011, p.469) and serve to highlight the inherent contradictions of narrow racialised principles of *jus sanguinis* (Ni Laoire *et al.* 2011) (see chapter one).

Although Anne makes reference to the unique positioning of mixed ‘race’ Irish (‘we are lone wolves’), she also extends solidarity (across racial fractures) to the Irish Traveller community:

> The community we have most in common with is the traveller community – I mean, there’s an ethnic group that has been horribly treated in Ireland – for centuries – and certainly in the institutions the only other group that had the same or an extra layer of abuse we had because of our ethnicity – I feel that I have more in common with the traveller community than I do with the African community – because I suppose it has to do with our establishment on the island of Ireland – it’s like we’re not new – and that’s the link – so I think there is probably a greater affinity with the traveller community because they too have been spat on – have been shunned in society and that’s the thing you see – the difference between the new Irish and mixed ‘race’ Irish is that we have been shunned – new migrants may be disliked but they are not ignored – we have literally been shunned – and by shunting us to the migrant community you are denying us an identity again, you are trying to impose an identity upon us.

Anne equates the positioning of mixed ‘race’ Irish people with that of travellers vis-à-vis nationalist discourses which have promulgated homogenising notions of Irish identity with exclusionary consequences for Travellers, black/mixed ‘race’ Irish and Jewish people (Fanning 2012). The ambivalent positioning of Travellers, therefore, also unsettles the racialised insider/outside binary and further provides testimony to the fact that Ireland has long experienced its own endogenous brand of racism (ibid.). Moreover, the negative racialisation experienced by Travellers confounds the notion that racism can be exclusively conceptualised in terms of the black/white paradigm (Garner 2004). Anne continues:
One of my arguments is this and it goes to the subject of identity as well – I mean, when you are black – as in black and from another country – Africa in the case of Ireland – the Irish feel that they can bestow their culture on you and if you mess up, they can take you out again – but with mixed ‘race’ Irish, they can’t do that because we are born and raised there – we have biological roots – this has always been a tension – an unacknowledged tension – for Irish people – it’s like ‘what are they’? – they don’t know quite what to do with us – I mean, I have an Irish passport but I’m not Irish – I’m not considered Irish – so, the core message that we are Irish and that we are mixed ‘race’ Irish – we feel it could be of benefit to helping Irish people to accept.

Anne considers the positioning of mixed ‘race’ Irish people vis-à-vis African immigrants, as both minority groups bear the inscription of ‘the racialised outsider’, which was, of course, institutionalised by the 2004 Citizenship Referendum (Lentin and McVeigh 2006). Anne directly brings the analytics of rightful presence (Squire and Darling 2013) to bear as she interrogates the power differential at the core of the host/newcomer relationship – that is, Ireland as the benevolent ‘host’ country which retains the capacity to ‘bestow culture’ on the grateful migrant. By further invoking ‘biological roots’ as grounds for mixed ‘race’ Irish belonging, Anne highlights the tension generated by the liminal positioning of such citizens whose claims for kinship belonging means that their citizenship cannot be ‘illegalized’ (Luibhéid 2013, p.196) to the same degree as could the children of the 2004 Citizenship Referendum (Enright 2011). In short, the mixed ‘race’ Irish citizen has proven impossible to exclude at the border and may, instead, potentially expose Ireland to ‘a new and destabilizing identity project’ (Arat-Koc 2005 cited in Enright 2011, p.470).

Such citizens’ presence in Ireland is not at the behest of the Irish people but instead, they exist as members of the body politic and therefore, must be accorded ‘governmental belonging’ (Hage 1998) as their political participation rests on a presumption of rights that is the citizen’s due. Moreover, the political rhetoric of the mixed ‘race’ Irish citizen cannot be dismissed as the voice of the ‘cultural (or ‘orientalised’) other’ (Arat-Koc 2005). Rather, the mixed ‘race’ Irish activists invoke discourses of justice and equality – discourses which are
grounded in historical analysis and framed in wider debates related to colonialism, globalisation and immigration. As such, the mixed ‘race’ activists speak with a language of entitlement which is bestowed by national belonging linked to ancestry, blood and birth in Ireland and what marks these citizens as distinct from immigrant groups. In fact, it could be argued that the notion of entitlement as articulated here echoes that by the white mothers earlier in the chapter. Whilst ‘the multicultural ethnic’ (Arat-Koc 2005) asks that their difference be tolerated, the political discourse exemplified by the activists bears the capacity to both prompt public debate and/or to demand critical engagement with the issues raised.

Immigrant groups do not potentially threaten taken-for-granted notions of citizenship. In fact, Honig (2001) ascribes a central role to ‘the good immigrant’ in relation to the re-invigoration of the nation and a (re) definition of the boundaries of belonging. That is, as long as ‘the good immigrant’ passively assumes his/her designated role within the liberal multicultural model of governmentality, then they can actually re-animate the nation as a desirable and worthwhile community. Indeed, liberal discourses of tolerance frame the ways in which minority groups are positioned – ‘they are part of “our” nation, but only in so far as “we” accept them’ (Hage 1998, p.89). In the extract below, Mary emphasises the links between majority Irish (white) and mixed ‘race’ Irish citizens:

“So, by pushing this message across, ‘we’re not a threat, we feel very Irish’ - I mean, I know the difference between barm brack and soda bread14, I can bake both (laugh) – in fact, some of our community still speak Gaelic and they live in Connemara 15 – they are fluent Gaelic speakers but what is changing is that the community are standing up and saying, ‘I’m Irish and Do One’ – basically, that’s what is changing thanks to our campaign – the core message is that this isn’t about guilt – it really isn’t about guilt – I like being Irish – I don’t want the Irish person to feel embarrassed about what has happened to my community – I don’t want you to pity us – it’s done – what I want you to do is to have a conversation with me – explore our commonality – explore that, rather than ‘oh my god. That’s terrible’!

14 Soda bread is a traditional Irish bread.
15 Connemara is a region in western county Galway which is strongly associated with traditional Irish culture. An Irish-speaking ‘Gaeltacht’ area is also located in Connemara and is an integral aspect of the region’s identity.
Mary’s account is permeated by notions of cultural authenticity (e.g. speaking Gaelic), perhaps, in order to demonstrate what Arat-Koc (2005, p.41) refers to as ‘an accumulation of national capital’. Racialised minorities are located differentially within the context of the multicultural nation and policy (Bannerji 2000). Therefore, the tenuous positioning of racialised minority groups within the national space creates a corresponding pressure to demonstrate allegiance to the nation (Arat-Koc 2005; Fortier 2005).

As an aspiring national, Mary thus voices a desire to ‘feel at home’ in the nation but she further seeks political participation which extends beyond the terms of ‘passive belonging’ (Hage 1998). Rather, Mary, in her capacity as an activist, seeks to inhabit the political landscape (i.e. ‘the nation belongs to me’ (Hage 1998, p.45)) and perhaps, even voice political dissent in a manner which is based upon a presumption of equal citizenship rights. So, whilst ‘passive belonging’ may denote ‘feeling at home’ in the nation, the terms of governmental belonging decree ‘the power to have a legitimate view as to who should “feel at home” in the nation and how, and who should be in and who should be out, as well as what constitutes “too many”’ (Hage 1998, p.45).

We can note also, that Mary invokes discourses of blood and kinship as grounds for participation in matters of national belonging (or, ‘governmental belonging’ (Hage 1998)). This may also be a strategy for establishing a clear differentiation between the positioning of mixed ‘race’ Irish citizens and African immigrants (who are negatively racialised). Mary also locates the political struggle for a mixed ‘race’ category within a broader context by emphasising the continuity of racial oppression across the generations:

I think we have a unique identity – and the other point as well is that it’s not just about the people who are in institutions – you have thousands of mixed ‘race’ Irish so we’re also speaking for the next generation, the second and the third in Ireland who are mixed ‘race’ because the experiences that we had growing up, they are still in place.
Mary articulates a sense of how the political activism of the generation (who were institutionalised) is legitimised in terms of the creation of political space for mixed ‘race’ Irish in the future. In the next section, I turn to an examination of how the activists frame their citizenship demands in the context of Ireland’s involvement in historical brutalities perpetrated in the name of ‘race’.

**Historical Continuity of Racial Injustice**

The mixed ‘race’ activists articulate questions at a wider level in relation to Ireland’s historical injustices. For example, Anne notes:

> It’s about letting people know that Ireland is not the insular little island that it likes to believe it is – it has a long history in Africa – look at the link between Limerick and Cork and the slave ships – there’s a long history – and then the Irish missionaries came and civilised the savages – and sent them back to Dublin for a proper education – actually, the language used around new migrants is either one of hate, or the language of the disabled – the language of ‘penny for the black baby’.

Anne’s political analysis references Ireland’s contradictory positioning in terms of world-power systems – particularly, in relation to the historical legacy of British imperialism and colonialism (Lentin and McVeigh 2002) (see chapter one). In fact, notions of whiteness and blackness, as racialised and politicised frames for understanding difference, have been a part of the Irish collective consciousness since the mid-17th century (due to Ireland’s involvement in slavery) (Garner 2007).

In her reference to the religious colonisation of Africa, Anne constructs African immigrants in terms of religious difference which aligns with the conflation in the 1937 Constitution of ‘Irish identity with Irish Catholic identity and constructs difference in religious rather than ethnic terms’ (Lentin 1998, p.10). Moreover, the ‘black babies’ phenomenon has meant that black people are discursively constructed as passive victims in need of charitable intervention
by Irish missionaries (Crowley et al. 2006; Fanning 2012). In fact, this hospitality framing has both shaped and informed current attitudes towards black (mixed ‘race’) Irish people by re-inforcing the distinction between guest and host (Fanning 2012; Squire and Darling 2013) (see chapter one). Anne further exposes the hypocrisy of the black babies phenomenon:

So, I remember the Irish being great when it came to the treatment of blacks in far away countries, but there were many ‘coloured’ (sarcastic tone) children hidden in orphanages in Ireland with little adoption opportunities - nobody ever talked about these children, this was a big secret.

Eddie continues this theme:

Ireland does not have a long history of race relations – I mean, they have a great history of sending missionaries to Africa – nuns and priests to proselytise – so that’s what people have seen – the Irish going out to Africa – and that sometimes feeds into the psyche of the Irish – it’s like, ‘we’ve always helped you’ – I hear black people are priests in Ireland now – it’s kind of reversed – I don’t think people have gotten their heads around that yet – the missionaries now coming the other way (laugh).

By exposing the asymmetries of power at the core of the missionary relationship, the activists are, in effect, writing the Irish state and church into historical acts of injustice. They are also further calling into question the discursive strategies which negatively racialise mixed ‘race’ Irish citizens by positing a link between missionary discourse and the prevailing public discourse of ‘race’ – that is, the narrow ‘grateful migrant’ narrative. By their invocation of discourses of equality and rights in their citizenship claims, the activists are seeking to insert in the Irish public sphere a more politicised version of ‘race’. That is, the ‘coloured’ children of the orphanages are now grown up and demanding ‘a place at the level of the established, settled, fundamental law of the state’ (Enright 2011, p.465).

**Concluding Remarks**

In this chapter, I have examined how the activists and mothers (on behalf of their children) have attempted to carve out a position as equal claimants of rights in the public sphere from
the standpoint of mixed ‘race’ citizenship. However, their efforts to carve out a mixed ‘race’
political category have been largely denied or even, illegitimised. Rather, at the level of
citizenship, racialised insider/outsider lines of membership are reproduced as whiteness
assumes both political and cultural centrality.

In fact, these mixed ‘race’ Irish citizens are constituted as ‘failed citizens’ or indeed, national
abjects who are located in the vulnerable position of existing outside citizenship entitlements
but yet, are forced to acquiesce to the full force of governmental power – in short, they are
both ‘expelled and contained’ (Butler in Butler and Spivak 2007, p.40).

The quotidian parenting practices of the mothers also provide a lens through which we can
view the emergence of new political actors. Their accounts highlight the informal encounters
(or ‘minor politics’) (Squire and Darling 2013) through which belonging is constituted and
citizenship becomes meaningful. By becoming aware of the mundane practices that
perpetuate or contest notions of prevailing citizenship, we can gain insight into the manner in
which citizenship is being re-configured from the ‘bottom up’, as it were (Turner 2016). As
opposed to being a formal status only, citizenship actually bears the potential to create new
modes of belonging (ibid.).

The experiences of the transracial mother/child dyad, who, at an everyday level, challenge
territorially bounded notions of the institution of citizenship, actually exceed the limits of
belonging, in a conventional sense. In fact, they are political actors whose struggle is deemed
to be ‘illegitimate’ when statist notions of belonging are applied (Squire and Darling 2013).

Moreover, as discussed in chapter two, the persistent tendency in dominant citizenship
scholarship is to assess belonging in accordance with the terms of the insider/outsider
framework (Ní Mhurchú 2014). However, through an act(s) of citizenship (Isin 2008) lens,
we are enabled to see that political struggle is not always oriented towards seeking a linear
inclusion within existing parameters of citizenship thereby reproducing the insider/outsider binary, but is rather about challenging existing rights regimes (Turner 2016).

An analytical framework of acts of citizenship, therefore, problematizes the notion that an us/them dualism must always be the entry point in any discussion or analysis of the politics of citizenship. Indeed, such a framework precludes analysis of the complex positionality of the transracial mother/child dyad who experience political belonging in a way which exceeds state sovereignty (inside/outside). This chapter’s narratives, therefore, suggest a need for a politics of citizenship that acknowledges the incomplete and fragmented nature of the subject (Kristeva 1991) thereby allowing us to move beyond the constant (re)negotiation of the racialised categories of us and them dictated by the sovereign binary.

In the next chapter, I consider how Irish national identity is lived at the level of the everyday by the transracial mother/child dyad.
Chapter Five: The Workings of ‘Race’ through Cultural Belonging

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I focused on the efforts by the transracial mother/child dyad and activists to re-inscribe their presence within discourses and practices of citizenship. Yet, the political autonomy of the mixed ‘race’ citizen is constrained as he/she is precluded from expressing belonging in terms of citizenship rights. Instead, we become aware of the privileged position of whiteness at the structural level as, at the level of citizenship, the insider/outsider dualism gets reproduced along racial lines. The question which concerns us in this chapter is, therefore, whether or not whiteness also assumes centrality at the level of national identity.

Hence, in this chapter, I set out to examine how national belonging is lived at the level of the everyday in the transracial mother/child dyad. This chapter focuses on subjectivity and political positioning as lived by both the mothers and their children and also, as produced in the relationship between the two (i.e. the mother/child relationship). I highlight the mothers’ efforts to secure national belonging on behalf of their children. Firstly, there is the promotion of a cultural identification with Ireland; secondly, there is the negotiation of transnational affiliations and finally, the invocation of hyphenated/hybridised identities.

I draw on Ní Mhurchú’s (2015) notion of ‘ambiguous subjectivity’ (see chapter two) which brings into play Kristeva’s (1991) notion of ‘foreignness’ and Freud’s notion of the ‘splitting off’ of the self to emphasise how strangerness within the self shapes an individual’s deep sense of Being. Therefore, framed by the work of Ní Mhurchú (2015) and Kristeva (1991), this chapter sets out to examine the complex positionality of the transracial mother/child dyad vis-à-vis Irish national belonging.
Familialised National Belonging

In this section, I examine narratives which focus on the mothers’ negotiations of mixed ‘race’ belonging on behalf of their children as this relates to an affiliation between family and nation.

Cultural (In) Authenticity

I am interested in how the mothers negotiate the dynamics of mixed ‘race’ belonging on behalf of their children through their relationship to national games, history and naming. In fact, a prominent feature of the mothers’ narratives was the significance of cultural ‘markers’ as affirmations of Irish belonging. Nessa speaks below about the cultivation of a proud affiliation with Irish-defined cultural practices:

On the point of sport, back into my ignorance, at the beginning, my obsession with ‘being more Irish than the Irish’ – and I got Colum into the local Gaelic club and he was doing hurling and football and of course, first they saw a Seán Óg Ó hailpín16 – that’s what he looked like and of course, I saw a Seán Óg Ó hailpín - they were like, ‘look at this fella’ – but what happened was – and probably it’s not in his blood – as the others came on and started progressing – he didn’t for a number of reasons.

By her suggestion that her son does not excel at hurling, because it’s probably ‘not in his blood’, Nessa draws on powerful, essentialist notions of belonging and an Irishness firmly located within the realm of ‘blood-ties’ and kinship. Moreover, the GAA, particularly in rural Ireland, carries symbolic weight in terms of Irish nationalism and pride and indeed, its representative quality as the ‘essence’ of Irishness has been projected onto discourses of Irish national identity (Holt 1989) (see chapter one). Alice further notes:

He had never hurled in his life because the only things he would have heard from me were the oul’ Irish stories because I went to a Gaelscoil17 and I would have spoken to him about

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16 Séan Óg Ó hailpín is a well-known Fijian-Irish hurler and Gaelic footballer.
17 A Gaelscoil is an Irish-medium school.
Cuchulainn\textsuperscript{18} – so I took him up to the club and he went onto the field and you’d swear he’d been training since he was about 4 – I mean, I’ve spoken about this to a few people and I mean, it was like, ‘well, I’m Irish - here’s my wooden stick and this is what I’m gonna carve out my Irishness with’ – and this is exactly what he has done – I mean, the fight, I mean the fight has to come from somewhere in your gut – I mean, 6 years of age – he goes onto a field and he’s like a greyhound chasing a rabbit – I mean, they love him – they’d put him in anywhere – I mean, it definitely is some sort of symbol for him – I mean, there is something going on deeper than just the sport – and I sent him to the Gaelscoil and he can speak Irish and the one thing I would say is – when he was younger, I would always sing to him ‘as gaeilge’ – to this day, if he is upset about something and I sing to him in Irish, we still have that.

Conversely, Alice expresses the view that Dan made a choice to achieve notoriety on the hurling field as a public sporting assertion of identity and/or as an attempt to ‘carve out’ his space in the Irish nation. She portrays Dan’s hurling prowess as a ‘fight’, or struggle for authentic Irishness, which, as Alice explains, is being experienced at an embodied level (‘the fight has to come from somewhere in your gut’).

Indeed, both Nessa and Alice’s invocations of a deeply embedded association between the GAA, blood (‘gut’) and raw belonging, make us aware of how notions of authenticity have become intertwined with the concept of nationalism. As discussed in chapter one, Irish nation-building, from its inception, has been shaped by exclusionary notions of cultural belonging (Fanning 2012). The mothers’ accounts above (implicitly, at least) also demonstrate a certain level of anxiety around the transmission of blood, kinship and/or the preservation of Irish cultural purity.

Cultural belonging as framed in terms of blood and ancestry can function as an oblique code for ‘race’ and racism whereby cultural practices are reified as expressions of a bounded national cultural identity (Miles 1993 as cited in Bhambra 2006, p.34). In fact, ‘discourses of race and nation are never very far apart’ (Balibar 1991, p.37) as ‘by seeking to circumscribe

\begin{footnote}{18}{Cuchulainn is an Irish mythological hero.}\end{footnote}
the common essence of nationals, racism thus inevitably becomes involved in an obsessional quest for a “core” of authenticity” (1991, p.49).

Alice’s account also articulates an emotional struggle to position her son ‘within the discursive terrain of the nation (al)’ (Lewis 2006, p.343) by invoking cultural identifiers including – tales of Cuchulainn, the speaking of the Irish language and even her son’s innate ability to respond to the soothing nature of an Irish song. It seems that, even in the intimate domain of the mother/child dyad (‘at the mother’s lap’), the child must be mobilised for an identification with the nation (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989). Indeed, the nation is constituted by what Ahmed (2000, p.99) describes as ‘the rehearsal of the public discourse of nationhood’ which consists of the invocation of national folklore, language and history as a way to imagine the ‘heart of the nation’ and to evoke shared memories. Through her assertion of her son’s ‘deep’ identification with Irish culture and nation, Alice performatively locates him linguistically and psychically in the national narrative. Jane similarly attests to the surge of nationalistic pride and/or fervour displayed by her son during the 1916 commemorations at his school:

It’s really interesting – all this 1916 stuff – because it’s the first time I heard him really proud to be Irish – but actually, it was more about ‘I’m really proud of the people who died for our (emphasis) country’ – but he is identified in that way – as other - and I think that is key – a key one for me – the sense of belonging – my son will always – constantly be seen as other – as outside.

It is noteworthy that Sam’s expression of authentic belonging is interlinked with the valorisation of nationalist heroes who, in his own words, ‘died for our country’ (emphasis added). However, it is perhaps even more noteworthy that, in the same passage, Jane quickly departs from a description of her son’s moment(s) of nationalistic fervour to make frequent

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19 The Easter Rising (or 1916 Rising) refers to an armed insurrection by Irish Republicans with the intent of ending British rule and establishing an Independent Irish Republic.
references to his status as ‘other’, as ‘outside’. It is as if her son’s fleeting moment of cultural identification with the Irish nation was just that – one moment of inclusion. Indeed, the ephemeral nature of sentiments and acts of Irish belonging and inclusion are a recurring feature of several interviews. It would seem that mixed ‘race’ Irish (non) belonging is constructed in and through simultaneous processes of affiliation and dis-affiliation (Lewis 2006).

The issue of ‘Irish names’ for the children was also raised as a trope of Irishness. In this regard, Nessa recalls a former conversation during which her husband’s Irish nationality was called into question and which leads onto a discussion of children’s names:

> And I said, ‘If I said Paddy Murphy was his name, you wouldn’t say anything – do you realise the amount of people in Ireland now who have names that aren’t Irish – if you are gonna go and make judgements of them, then what about the children of the future’ – there is an assumption made immediately because of your name – mostly, it is human nature but it is wrong – you know, (husband) insisted that the kids got Irish names because he knew that - and their surname isn’t even his name – it’s an abbreviation of his name because his name is so long – and I think that’s really sad – he really (emphasis) didn’t want them to have his name – but when it comes to your child – and of course, it would be easy for me and you to say, ‘stand strong’ – but when you, as an adult, know the road you don’t want your kids to take – we can stand strong because we didn’t feel it – but it is wrong.

Both Nessa and her husband see ‘Irish’ names as assuming a symbolic role in terms of the expression and reproduction of national identity (Stevens 1999). Indeed, as they anticipate the struggle to belong that their children will encounter, both parents feel obliged (albeit ambivalently) to negotiate on their behalf the Irish societal assumptions of an affinity between family and nation. In a similar vein, Jane notes:

> It’s funny – because my friend who is in (African country) now – she has called her kids (Irish names) – and I was thinking, ‘why did I not give Sam more of an Irish name’? – he’s got both our surnames but my surname is not obviously of Irish origin – so I mean, I was thinking that the other day – maybe I should have given him a really Irish first name – there would be that identity thing there then – at least with other people – like some sort of a tag.
Jane refers above to Sam wearing an Irish name ‘like some sort of a tag’ which provides evidence of his public commitment and/or attachment to the Irish nation (i.e. ‘the accumulation of national capital’ (Hage 1998, p.55)). In the British context, Fortier considers the significance of affect (e.g. pride) in demarcating the boundaries of belonging when she states that ‘talking the talk of national allegiance and pride makes the “other” one of us and the non-white skin colour is rendered irrelevant - their deracination makes them available to adopt the nation and available for adoption by the nation’ (2005, p.570; original italics). That is, a dialogic notion of recognition which is contingent upon the willingness of Sam to subscribe to the terms of national belonging. It is, as if, by proclaiming national pride, Sam will, at some level at least, be ‘offered an honorary belonging that is dependent upon [his] psychic and cultural movement into the bounds of the nation (al)” (Lewis 2006, p.343).

Moreover, this honorary belonging will be based upon a symbolic ‘erasure’ of skin colour or indeed, what Fortier (2005) refers to as the ‘peeling of the skin’.

This also foregrounds the role of reproduction as a means of nation-building (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989). As discussed in chapter one, Irish women have traditionally been defined in relation to their ‘childbearing role within the making of the nation’ (Luibhéid 2004, p.342). Moreover, reproduction of the nation’s population involves the transmission and mixing of blood and as such, there is an emphasis upon a shared substance (blood) which has an intimate relationship with nationalist ideology (Foucault 1978; Porqueres I Gené 2007).

Whilst the classical shift towards cultural racism (i.e. biological notions of ‘race’ couched in discourses of culture) (Stolcke 1995), means that it has become less acceptable to explicitly reference blood as a defining feature of ethno-national membership, as we can note in the narratives above, notions of blood persist in discourses of Irishness (Porqueres I Gené 2007). Moreover, the Irish nation is discursively constructed as white in the above accounts. In fact, the mothers’ understanding(s) of the nation could be said to be viewed through the prism of
their whiteness as discourses of nation and whiteness (‘race’) are reproduced at the level of quotidian family life (Moran 2004). As the mothers articulate above their struggles for belonging on behalf of their mixed ‘race’ children, we can note their implicit engagement with their own shifting sense of belonging. By mothering across racial borders, these women have failed to perpetuate the nation and have disarticulated the link between whiteness and Irishness. What, then, are the implications for the mothers’ positioning when parenting a child who is deemed to be a racialised ‘outsider’?

In any case, the interview narratives document the mothers’ increasing awareness that their child’s sense of belonging cannot be equated with that of their own, as her belonging has been ascribed at birth and generally speaking, has been re-affirmed throughout life. But, most significantly, the mothers start to conceptualise a role in its own right for the political subjectivities of their mixed ‘race’ children. In the next section, therefore, I examine how the mothers make sense of the complex subjectivities of their children as racialised belonging is negotiated vis-à-vis the African country of origin of their fathers.

Transnational Belongings

In this section, I examine how the mothers navigate their children’s relationship to national identity (both African and Irish) in the context of multiple and differentiated forms of belonging.

The Transnational Family Network

As well as the fraught negotiation of local familialised national belonging, the transracial mother/child dyad of this study is lived in and through a transnational family network. In this vein, both Jane and Nessa elaborate below the gendered and ‘raced’ demands being placed upon their family units (more specifically, their sons) by an African tribal system:
I mean, (partner’s) tribe is unusual – in that the men own the children – so that if the husband and wife split up – the children remain with the father – which is unusual – so I was told that right from the beginning that if we split up, they would keep Sam – and even the law in (African country) is that the child belongs to the father – if I was from (African country) and (partner) was Irish, Sam would not be entitled to (African country) citizenship – it is based on the father – so, yeah, (partner’s) family in (African country) very much feel that he is theirs – ‘you can go and get another one, he’s ours’ – but because of his colour as well – because he is so dark – like it happened a couple of times that people told me to give the child back – ‘give him back to his people, he’s not yours’ – I don’t know whether they’d thought I adopted him – so they were again trying to claim him – I definitely see it with Sam though – is that even though we live here, he does not identify as being Irish.

Jane describes how her son, Sam is recognised, hailed and claimed in the African country in question (‘you can go and get another one, he’s ours’). Moreover, it seems that he experiences legitimacy in the African public sphere – he is situated at the centre of political belonging (citizenship is based on the African father) and most significantly perhaps, there is no ‘peeling of the skin’ (Fortier 2005) required (Sam is hailed ‘because of his colour’).

Based on this recognition, one might expect that Sam would experience a stronger identification with Africa although this is not necessarily the case (see below). Nessa also explains below her relationship with her African mother-in-law (as she is part of an extended family system with transnational reach):

It’s a whole part of their tribal thing because (husband) is the first born and then there were 4 girls and the last born is a boy and he doesn’t have kids – the girls have all married into other tribes so basically, our kids are the only ones from the (name of tribe) because it comes down through the male line – so the granny kept saying to my kids ‘you are my real children’ – and (name of son), most of the pressure is put on him because he’s the only (name of tribe) boy because unless her youngest son has kids, there won’t be any others so she was basically saying ‘they are mine, the others aren’t mine, they are my grandchildren but they aren’t mine’ – y’know, she told me once, ‘they’re not your children, they are my (emphasis) children’ – and I was like this (amazed expression) – and then she told me that my house is ‘her house’ – I’m there because I’m minding her kids.

Both Jane and Nessa (and the two sons, Sam (8) and Colum (12)) must negotiate and/or challenge these power relations of gender and generation in the context of their everyday lives in Ireland (i.e. the male line of the tribe). Moreover, whilst Colum (12) expressed sentiments of non-belonging in the Irish context during his interview (e.g. ‘Ireland is a white
country but there are black people in it’), neither he nor Sam (above) articulate a sense of belonging to the African country either.

But, if these mixed ‘race’ young people are subject to a cultural value system that extends beyond national borders, then, what are the implications for their attachment to the Irish nation-state? In a country where Irish identity tends to be homogenised, are these young people destined to live lives suspended in a state of partial, or even denied belonging – that is, ‘in’ but not ‘of’ the country? The reality is that these mixed ‘race’ Irish subjects are not rendered intelligible by a linear narrative of belonging – that is, progression from here to there, past to present or non-citizen to citizen (Ní Mhurchú 2011). Rather, they vacillate between ‘the historical-spatial periodisations of outside/future and inside/present depending on the particular situation in question’ (ibid. p.170). There is a need, therefore, to rethink how citizenship can be lived in a non-intelligible manner which, as Ní Mhurchú (2014) suggests, is possible when the (non) belonging experiences of the mixed ‘race’ young people are re-theorised in accordance with the Kristeva (1991) notion of fragmented subjectivity.

But, can the young people be ‘of’ either country? Jane further states that her son, Sam (8), has been stigmatised as the racialised ‘other’ in the African context (i.e. labelled a ‘pointie’ on the basis of his mixed ‘race’ status and lighter skin shade) (see chapter seven). We can thus view these mixed ‘race’ young people as grounded neither in Irish nor African belonging, occupying a paradoxical, in-between space, positioned almost ‘as a form of ambiguity within, rather than a form of presence across several nations’ (Ní Mhurchú 2015, p.14). In fact, these young people are interpellated by a variety of discourses which may constitute them as either Irish or African, or indeed, neither at any particular moment in time. In actual fact, the political subjectivity of these mixed ‘race’ Irish young people is defined by
their ambiguous positioning somewhere in the nexus between inclusion and exclusion in both national contexts (ibid.).

The Irish mothers must also carry a burden of expectation in relation to these transnational cultural practices (e.g. bringing up children who are subject to the politics and workings of an African tribe). Indeed, the African country provides a different gendered and racialised basis for belonging than that available to them in Ireland (e.g. public sphere legitimacy) which could potentially undermine the status and authenticity of the transracial mother/child dyad in relation to belonging in Ireland.

**Ambivalent Positioning**

In this section, I examine narratives which highlight the paradoxical, in-between space of the nation as inhabited by these mixed ‘race’ young people. For example, Noreen, mother of Aaron (12), Justine (5) and Saul (3), states in relation to her eldest son:

> Well, he always includes his African side – definitely – like, he actually says to me, ‘mam, when I’m 18, I’m outta here, I’m going back to (African country) to live’ – he always says that – which is so shocking like – because the last time he went to (African country) he went without me and he loved it and he said, ‘when I’m 18, I’m gonna live over there’ and I said, ‘ok’.

We can see how the racialised dichotomy shapes possible positionings and performatively limits the possibilities of belonging in the Irish context. Aaron not only articulates a primary identification with (African country) but he also speaks his distance from the centre of the Irish national (‘I’m going back to (African country) to live’) where he has lived since birth. In fact, Aaron references ‘Africanness’ as part of ‘a homing desire’ (Brah 1996) which does not, in reality, mean a return to the homeland but instead, expresses a sense of connectedness to places which provide a sense of belonging (ibid.). Indeed, the ‘homing desire’ may be a
crucial aspect of how these mixed ‘race’ Irish young people make sense of ‘the multi-placedness of home in the diasporic imaginary’ (Brah 1996, p.197). Moreover, being constructed as the racialised ‘other’, perhaps Aaron’s dis-identification with Ireland is a strategy when ‘full belonging to or representation of the national by these groups is denied through the very process of minoritisation conveyed in the terminology of settled communities versus host nations’ (Lewis 2006, p.345).

The above quotation also excellently highlights the inadequacy of terms such as ‘Irish’ or ‘African’ (although, of course, applicable at some level) to capture the complexity of these young people’s experiences of belonging – experiences which actually extend beyond the logic of the sovereign binary (Ní Mhurchú 2014). But, when we begin from the premise of the political subject as fragmented, we can see that these young people are always connected to Irishness and Africanness in uneven and contradictory ways (Ní Mhurchú 2015).

In fact, as stated above, the neverending ambiguity actually translates to these mixed ‘race’ young people being regarded as neither Irish nor African (‘less than sovereign spaces’) (Ní Mhurchú 2015) as their political subjectivities are located somewhere in-between the categories of citizen and migrant. In critical citizenship studies, there is an increasing emphasis upon how the self is constituted through the social order in a complex and indeterminate manner (Ní Mhurchú 2015; Sajed 2013). In fact, the concept of irregular citizenship enables us to understand moments of subjectivity which are experienced as never having been or never being (original italics) because they are retrospectively undefined (i.e. access to belonging in neither country) as opposed to retrospectively defined (i.e. access to belonging in both countries) (Ní Mhurchú 2015) (see chapter two). Thus, the citizenship of
these mixed ‘race’ young people is defined by being ‘less than citizen’ whilst simultaneously experiencing a ‘less than migrant’ status (ibid.).

We further get a sense of Noreen struggling to grasp the almost indefinable quality of Aaron’s political subjectivity as she is rendered helpless and shocked (‘so shocking like’) as her child expresses nostalgic yearning for a ‘homeland’ to which she does not belong. Yet, Noreen’s quote above also highlights how sharp insider/outsider distinctions cannot do justice to the complex subjectivities of both mother and child for Noreen also experiences the all-pervasive influence of the ‘homeland’ through her son and must to a certain extent live out his political subjectivity. Tina, mother of Margaret (18) and Joe (16), also attempts to make sense of her daughter’s ambivalent positioning in the following narrative:

She calls herself Irish-African – but she considers herself more Irish than African – so, now her dad – his tribe is called (‘name of tribe’) – so, he would always say that he is (tribe) first and African second – but, she would always consider herself Irish first, then, African second – but, of course, he would always emphasise African – but, she lived in this country most of her life – nearly all her life.

Whilst acknowledging her husband’s deep-rooted tribal affiliation (‘he is (tribe) first and African second’), Tina directly counteracts this statement by re-asserting her daughter’s Irishness or ‘re-anchoring’ her in the space of the national (she is ‘Irish first, then African second’). Interestingly, Tina qualifies Margaret’s identification with the hegemonic national by grounding this claim in residence-based narratives of belonging (‘she lived in this country most of her life’). Although Tina references notions of territorial, as opposed to, blood belonging, we can note that both discourses are often interlinked as ‘blood and soil, far from being opposed, appear as variants of a single theme, that of the presence of the ancestors in the definition of the nation’ (Porqueres I Gené 2007, p.58).
There is almost a sense of oppositional cultures, or indeed dichotomous notions of purity (see below) at work in this account. Although Tina alludes to Margaret’s hyphenated belonging (‘she calls herself Irish-African’), it is a hyphen clearly structured by a hierarchy (i.e. ‘Irish’ is positioned first) which may, in fact, capture Tina’s intense desire to insert Margaret in the Irish national narrative. Indeed, it is almost as if Tina is struggling to incorporate the African identity or indeed, to speak it out of existence, to refuse it somehow. Perhaps, this is due to the ramifications for her and Margaret’s positioning in the Irish context if Margaret identifies as African.

But, Tina’s narrative is particularly interesting in another sense, as it provides further evidence of the ongoing interrogation of the category of Irishness which permeates mothers’ accounts and is mediated by notions of cultural purity. We can thus see how culture emerges as a key site of contestation and that Tina is, in fact, working through the complex relation which exists between Irish national belonging and ideas of cultural difference as she implicitly poses the question: ‘will my child’s cultural difference be absorbed by the Irish national’? or, perhaps, more specifically, ‘how much cultural dilution of Irishness is permissible’?

Tina’s narrative reminds us that the white Irish mothers of this study have been constructed by hegemonic discourses of Irishness premised on notions of cultural (read racial) particularism (as whiteness overlaps powerfully with Irish national identity (see chapters one and two). Moreover, as noted earlier in this chapter, this era is defined by the hegemony of ‘cultural’ racism whereby the concept of ‘race’ has become de-racialised and racial allusions are now coded in discourses of ‘culture’ and ‘difference’ (Garner 2004; Lentin and McVeigh 2006).
Thus, this section has demonstrated how these mixed ‘race’ citizens, who are effectively growing up across national boundaries, bring struggles over the meaning of cultural difference to the fore. But, the transnational affiliations of these mixed ‘race’ young people do not translate, however, to having a coherent presence across both countries. Rather, these young people experience (non) belonging in Africa and Ireland in contradictory and inconsistent ways as their subjectivities ‘ultimately escape the logic of statehood and its intelligibility by providing forms of being political which operate as an unnameable “haunting/hunted’ ambiguity’” (Weber 2011, p.115).

Finally, this section has documented how these white Irish mothers continue to frame citizenship and belonging for their children in relation to the Irish statist project but, there is no definitive moment in which these mixed ‘race’ young people shift from an ‘outsider’ to an ‘insider’ position (as sovereign autonomous subjects). Thus, having considered how the mothers negotiate the transnational belongings of their children, in the next section, I turn to an examination of the mothers’ efforts to construct mixed ‘race’ belonging by attempting to re-calibrate the national narrative.

**Hyphenated/Hybridised Belongings**

It is important to note that the mothers’ claims to belonging often worked in competing and/or contradictory ways. For example, the mothers’ narratives suggest a mounting awareness that their children are racially excluded from both the discursive production and everyday practices of Irishness. Indeed, the mothers’ consciousness of ‘race’ becoming the key excluding factor has been influenced to a large degree by the ‘raced’ realities of their children’s lives (see below and chapter seven).
In this chapter thus far, we are enabled to see how the terms of Irish belonging are both deconstructed and reflexively engaged with in the mothers’ accounts. At an implicit level at least, their narratives reverberate with questions related to who is allowed to be Irish? They are repeatedly attempting to resolve the issue of belonging by re-imagining the boundaries of Irish identity. In short, if the young people are not allowed to claim belonging as Irish, then, the mothers are forced to rethink the category of Irishness itself and indeed, often do so, by attempting to carve out a space for the political expression of multiple belonging(s).

‘Who is Allowed to be Irish’?

In this section, I examine narratives that highlight mothers’ attempts to construct an identity for their children which integrates aspects of both Irish and African. For example, as her interview progresses, Nessa informs us that she made a decision to shift orientation regarding the transmission of Irish-defined cultural practices to her children. In fact, the following interview extract between Nessa and her son, Colum (12) provides an example of how the pursuit of authentic Irishness may, in fact, be undermined by the lived realities of the children:

\[N\]: Do you feel C, that going to the Gaelscoil made you more Irish in a way?

\[C\]: No, I think it makes us look more black – if you see a black person going to an Irish school, you kind of go ‘that’s a bit weird’ – well, maybe not weird but you just stand out more.

\[N\]: Maybe you just think that.

\[C\]: No, you stand out more – because there’s so little black kids at the Gaelscoil.

We can see here a child who is ‘talking back’ to his mother about his racialised status and perhaps, even educating her on its pernicious aspects. But most importantly of all, we notice that Colum, in the above extract, both positions himself as black and conceptualises Irishness as a category from which he is excluded on that basis. Nessa continues by stating:
I’ve changed my attitude now because I did think, ‘oh, good, they’ll be able to speak Irish’ – now I think, ‘oh, for fuck’s sake, don’t be so thick, there’s plenty of Irish people who never play an Irish sport and have black skin and they are as Irish as anyone – so why are you trying to build them up’? – I mean, we’re in a ‘new Ireland’ now – with people of all different ethnicities who don’t hold a hurley in one hand and a fiddle in another – and they are just as Irish and that is a thing for me that I have come to accept – I kind of say to myself and say out loud to other people – so that was my push for them to go to the Gaelscoil.

Nessa envisions a ‘new’ Ireland where:

We all just don’t fit into one box and we are all just as Irish – if we don’t speak Irish, if we don’t do Irish.

We are made aware that Nessa quite firmly refuses what she refers to as her earlier ‘obsession of being more Irish than the Irish’ and attempts to construct an identity for her children that incorporates aspects of both Irish and African:

Well, I’ve moved forward on that and evolved – I know now that the thing to instil in them is that they are not just Irish, they are Irish-(African country)– that’s what they are – they have two identities and their identities are beautiful and mixed.

Ellie also states in relation to her daughter, Molly (4):

She’d often say to me, ‘I’m African’ and I say, ‘no, you’re not African, you are African-Irish – and if she sees someone with brown skin she says, ‘oh, they must be African’ – so she thinks that everybody with a darker skin tone is African – like, I don’t pretend that the difference doesn’t exist – I mean, for me, it’s a bit different because everyone I know is either Irish or African – being mixed also means bringing in different nationalities – like in the States or the UK, there are mixed ‘race’ families but both parents are raised in the one country – because everybody I know their parent would have been raised in very different ways – but I do have friends where the mother would try to slightly deny the African culture a little bit – the kids don’t have an African surname or African name or the kids don’t have any traditional African clothes – I mean, I don’t agree with that – like for me, that is creating something shameful – so I’m very much like, ‘you’re half African and you’re also half Irish’.

By considering hyphenated identities for their children, we can view both Nessa and Ellie above as attempting to encourage and affirm the incorporation of African culture and pride in their children’s identity. Indeed, there is a growing body of literature related to hegemonic discourses of Irishness which resist the construction of second generation and/or hybrid identities (e.g. Yau 2007). In this regard also, Gray (2006) considers Irish women in 1990s England who projected anxieties linked to notions of cultural and racial purity onto their
future second generation Irish children. Moreover, these women’s concerns regarding the intergenerational transmission of purity were mediated by conceptions of Irishness and Englishness as mutually exclusive categories deemed resistant to hybridisation.

So, although both Nessa and Ellie attempt to broaden the categories of Irishness by their invocations of hyphenated belonging, the discussions about hyphenated identity above are premised upon the idea that citizenship and belonging is still being framed by the Irish statist project. As such, there is a constant engagement with the state in terms of degrees of inclusion and exclusion. There still remains the assumption that the political subjectivities of the mixed ‘race’ young people can translate to a coherent identity (i.e. as a hyphenated national) when, in fact, these young people are constantly exposed to both Ireland and Africa in such a dislocated manner that their subjectivities exceed a hyphenated version of belonging (Ní Mhurchú 2015). In Jane’s narrative below, she highlights her struggles with the vicissitudes of hyphenated/hybridised belonging:

I suppose in some way – maybe the fact that I’ve always seen our life as being between the two countries – but I now recognise and accept that he [Sam] is more (African) – in his mind – and in the mind of the world maybe – so having said that, there are times that it really frustrates me that he doesn’t identify as being Irish – we live here – he’s brought up here – he has an Irish accent – I don’t know – I feel like maybe it is better for him to identify more as being (African) – it may be easier.

Jane had originally envisioned that Sam’s hybridised identity would provide access to both Irishness and Africanness in equal measure – perhaps, as a type of hybrid cosmopolitanism. But, in a sense, even though they are positioned between national discourses, it is not in the way that Jane had initially hoped. Instead of experiencing affinity across both nations, the reality is that her son belongs neither ‘here’ nor ‘there’ as he is suspended somewhere between the world of citizenship and migration (‘a cultural limbo’) (Sajed 2013).
In fact, these mixed ‘race’ young people disturb prevalent conceptualisations of hybridity as a notion of a person who articulates his/her cultural difference by moving seamlessly between two cultures (Sajed 2013). Rather, they occupy a liminal positionality and are rendered ‘unintelligible according to the master-narrative of sovereignty as they neither belong nor are they outsiders to the state’ (Ní Mhurchú 2015, p.14).

The above narrative further captures how Sam’s belonging is associated with an array of ‘temporal inconsistencies’ (Ní Mhurchú 2014, p.163). Although Jane originally positions Sam as Irish-African, she then speaks about his lack of identification as Irish and by the end of the narrative, she concedes that it may be more beneficial for her son to identify as African (perhaps, as an adaptive strategy to racialised exclusion). We can, therefore, see how these mixed ‘race’ Irish citizens cannot be located ‘within a sovereign spatio-temporal narrative involving coherent spaces of us/them, Irish/non-Irish, insider/outsider, there/here, now/then and movement in progressive time from one space to another space’ (Ní Mhurchú 2014, p.163).

But, we can also consider what is happening to the mothers here as they negotiate the unfamiliar landscape of their children’s (non) belonging. It is worth noting that the negotiation by these white Irish mothers of another national culture (i.e. the African country) has entered their lives as adults but, indeed, for their children, both Irishness and Africanness have been present and interlinked in their lives since birth. At the very least, from the mothers’ perspective, their children are in some sense, connected to a country which the mother may have visited a few times, or, as in the majority of cases, not at all.

We can see how Jane above projects her fears and anxieties about the future when she decides that her son may ultimately benefit from the pursuit of African belonging which, of course, resonates with Berlant’s (2011) notion of ‘cruel optimism’ (see chapter two). What
we see here, is, in fact, a mother who is seeking out the conditions of ‘a liveable life’ (Tyler 2013, p.12) for her son. That is, a sense of acceptance, attachment, security and safety – in short, a sense of ‘anchorage’ (2013, p.12). These conditions are being denied him in the Irish context and Jane thus expresses ‘cruel optimism’ (Berlant 2011) by remaining ever hopeful that Africa will provide for him. Indeed, it is important not to under-estimate the stark dilemma that the mother confronts in such a situation for, if her son is claimed by Africa and to some degree, renounces Irishness, then what are the repercussions for her own positioning? She will then, truly, be mothering an ‘outsider’ child.

Like Nessa above, Alice has similarly adjusted her thinking regarding notions of Irish cultural authenticity, and as we can note in the following extract, she attempts to distance herself from her former position:

I mean, this isn’t indicative of all people but some people say, ‘oh, if I speak Irish, then I am a real Irish person’ – there’s lots of little breakdowns of what Irish identity is gonna look like and that will be hard to challenge and you do find that alot of people send their kids to Gaelscoil because they want them to be accepted as Irish – because they will learn to speak Irish – they think that will afford them Irishness – and I get it but my thing is, he is going to own his Irishness by going ‘I don’t need all those things - I am me and that is enough’.......you are enough.

Alice has undergone a shift in perspective regarding the transmission of Irish culture. She now sees the articulation of a hybrid identity for her son as possessing emancipatory potential, as a route towards overcoming the ongoing struggle for cultural hegemony (Anthias 2001) between Irish and African belonging. An interesting feature of Alice’s narrative is that, like the majority of mothers in the study, it is steeped in discourses of cultural purity. However, it is as if she is attempting to re-work the notion of cultural purity by, in some sense, attempting to acknowledge ‘the inescapable impurity of all cultures’ (Ang 2001, p.194).
Alice’s narrative is also unique in another sense as she explicitly acknowledges Dan’s efforts to create his own trajectory of belonging and political subjectivities in their own right. But, as these mothers attempt to make sense of the subjectivity of their children by appeals to existing political categorisation, we are aware that the emphasis remains firmly on the sovereign autonomy of the nation-state. Moreover, the notion of the coherent subject persists – a marginalised subject who becomes absorbed into the national framework by adopting the hyphenated identity of African-Irish and/or a hybridised identity. But, in fact the political subjectivities of these young people are being experienced beyond sovereignty and are actually defined in the tension between inclusion and exclusion (Ní Mhurchú 2014).

In this section, therefore, the mothers engage in an interrogation of the category of Irishness, or perhaps, more precisely, ‘who is allowed to be Irish’? Through the invocation of hyphenated/hybridised identities for their children, these mothers attempt to re-frame the meaning of cultural difference at the level of the nation-state. But, as demonstrated in their narratives, issues of belonging cannot simply be resolved by a more expansive definition of Irishness.

**Concluding Remarks**

The chapter narratives suggest a transracial mother/child dyad that is deeply embedded in, and constrained by, hegemonic discourses of Irish identity. Yet, the mothers’ attempts to re-imagine the boundaries of Irish identity provide evidence that there is also a re-constitution of national identity happening at the level of the everyday in the transracial mother/child dyad. In fact, the mothers draw on several strategies of belonging (often working in overlapping and inconsistent ways) on behalf of their children – the transmission of an ethnically bounded cultural identification with Ireland, the negotiation of transnational affiliations and finally, the invocation of hyphenated/hybridised identities.
It is certainly apparent that, by means of their mothering practices, these women are not simply crafting nation-state citizens. Rather, they are effectively re-working notions of the family both at a local level and across transnational boundaries thereby subverting bounded notions of citizenship in both national contexts (Ireland and the African country). We can, therefore, view the cultural work of these mothers as acts of citizenship (Erel 2013; Isin 2008).

There is also a constant movement of insider and outsider status in the mothers’ narrative accounts (as relates differently to her and her child(ren)). Moreover, in the mothers’ attempts to re-appropriate the category of Irishness, there is a constant engagement with the state in terms of degrees of inclusion and exclusion. However, it is important to note that, although these racialised binaries are at work, the narratives move us beyond them in terms of both subjectivity and lived experience.

Indeed, the lived experiences of the transracial mother/child dyad cannot be defined in terms of the logic of statehood. As the chapter narratives have demonstrated, these young people are grounded in neither African nor Irish belonging. Although born in Ireland and Irish citizens, they are not recognised as Irish and in any case, their experiences of racialised exclusion interrupt their interpellation into the national framework. Moreover, these young people do not experience a sense of belonging in their father’s country of origin either (which they have visited occasionally, if at all). Therefore, their lived experiences do not translate to a coherent presence as either ‘Irish’ or ‘African’ (or indeed, a combination of both) but rather result in problematic claims of belonging in both national contexts – betwixt and between.

These mixed ‘race’ Irish citizens exist instead as ‘failed citizens’, as national abjects, at the periphery of Irish society. Indeed, Ní Mhurchú’s (2015) concept of ‘ambiguous subjectivity’ encompasses the constant ambiguity which defines these young people’s experiences of political identity and belonging.
The work of Ní Mhurchú (2011, 2014, 2015) and Kristeva (1991) points towards the need to re-think political subjectivity beyond conventional statist dualisms (us/them, inside/outside) which is possible when the (non) belonging experiences of the transracial mother/child dyad are re-theorised in accordance with Kristeva’s (1991) alternative framework of subjectivity (‘the subject-in-process’). Kristeva does not attempt to consider how a fragmented subject may be re-conceptualised in terms of a located presence (e.g. a hyphenated national). Rather, Kristeva’s understanding of ‘foreignness’, as a symptom which undermines notions of a stable, unified self, helps us understand subjectivity as fragmented in terms of temporal and spatial discontinuity.

Critical questions about the relationship between cultural difference and Irish national identity (‘who is allowed to be Irish’?) also reverberate in the mothers’ accounts which are mediated by notions of cultural purity. As culture emerges as a key site of contestation, we are reminded that ‘race’ thinking works through contemporary discourses of culture which both naturalise and classify the cultural attributes of human groups (Lentin and Titley 2011). Therefore, it is important to consider to what extent the mothers’ allusions to culture rest on underlying racialised categories (Gullestad 2004). In fact, the mothers are working with a notion of cultural belonging as framed in terms of a shared substance (blood) and ancestry which, of course, has an intimate relationship with nationalist ideology (and manifests in notions of racial purity (Foucault 1978)).

In any case, this chapter provides ample evidence that, in dominant discursive constructions, Irish national identity continues to be imagined as white. In the next chapter, therefore, I focus on the lived experiences and positioning(s) of the mother, as a member of the majority white racial grouping.
Chapter Six: Mothering ‘Outsider’ Children

Introduction

In chapter four, I examined the endeavours of the white Irish mothers to bring into being new political subjects but their mixed ‘race’ children are instead, constructed as disempowered subjects who lack public sphere legitimacy. In this chapter also, it became apparent that, at times, the mothers’ political claims-making was denied or even invalidated. In chapter five, as the mothers (and children) co-construct new versions of racial and ethnic identity, we can see how their narratives offer new framings of national identity. And once again, we witnessed how the mother’s insider positioning is de-stabilised through mixed ‘race’ motherhood.

Chapters four and five also examined how the racialised insider/outsider dichotomy is reproduced at the level(s) of citizenship, the state and national identity. Although both occupying the official status of Irish citizen, the white mother and her mixed ‘race’ child are subject to differential processes of racialisation. Therefore, in this chapter, using racialisation as an analytic lens, I shift the focus to a consideration of how the host/stranger dualism shapes the positionings and experiences of the white Irish mothers as they are, in effect, mothering ‘outsider’ children.

In the first section, I locate the dynamics of racialisation within the intimate space of the mother/child dyad as I consider how the white Irish mother negotiates discourses of belonging and exclusion on behalf of her mixed ‘race’ child, who is positioned differently vis-à-vis authentic Irish identity. In the second section, with whiteness reproduced as dominant at a structural level, I ask ‘what are the implications for the positioning(s) of the Irish mother, as the individual white subject’? I consider how the self-constructions,
experiences and ways of being of the white mother are shaped through ongoing negotiations of the racialised insider/outsider dichotomy. In particular, I draw attention to how the mothers narrate their own racialisation as white Irish in and through their motherhood of mixed ‘race’ children and in some cases, as partners of black men.

Insider/Outsider Narratives: The White Irish Mother

In this section, I shift the focus to the private domain, as I examine the mothers’ narratives in order to determine how they position their children in relation to the deeply entrenched racialised us/them binary. In the following dialogue, Alice and her son, Dan (10), refer to his experiences of aggression whilst playing hurling:

Alice: You need to understand that it is hard for an Irish boy to see a mixed ‘race’ boy who just comes along and never trained in his life and is fantastic.....and they are threatened by it.

Dan: I am mixed .....but mam, I feel more Irish because I wasn’t born in (name of African country), I was born in (name of Irish city).

The above dialogue highlights the ordinariness of racialising practices (Lewis 2007) as, in the context of intimate dialogue with her son, Alice (re) draws boundaries of belonging and concomitantly, locates her son ‘outside’ the nation. But, by drawing on dominant constructions of Irish identity as monoracial, Alice (as the mother) may lend authority to or even naturalise her son’s exclusion from prevailing definitions of authentic Irishness. We further acquire a sense of Dan’s heightened state of emotion as he invokes birthright claims of belonging in order to assert what he regards as his rightful position within discourses of Irish identity. To similar effect, Noreen discusses her son, Aaron’s (12) positioning:

Noreen: You see, in his class – like there’s a Chinese boy, a Romanian boy and – like it’s mostly foreigners that he pals with rather than the Irish – like it’s probably because they feel more comfortable together – they all feel the same – like, one boy is from China and he has a Chinese mother and father – so he is friends with the Romanian and him the Chinese boy – they are like the 3 really good friends in the class – and then, there’s one more (African) boy as well.
**Patti:** So, why do you think A feels more comfortable with these boys?

**Noreen:** Because they are all outsiders like – they are the same, you know what I mean.

We can see how mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion are at work in the above narrative, as Noreen implicitly denies her son a sense of belonging by referring to him as an ‘outsider’. Like the accounts of the mixed ‘race’ Irish young people in chapter five, there is also a notable lack of engagement with hyphenated identities in the above passage (e.g. the ‘Chinese’ boy rather than ‘Chinese-Irish’). Thus, it seems that, in as much as Noreen refers to her son in ‘outsider’ terms, neither are his Chinese and Romanian friends allowed to assume an ‘insider’ position (as they are referred to in terms of country of origin solely). Indeed, this may be indicative of the continuing slippage which occurs between the mixed ‘race’ Irish young people and recent immigrants. In addition, the mothers in this study generally exhibited a tendency to refer to their mixed ‘race’ children as not ‘fully Irish’. As Jane states in relation to her son, Sam (8):

but most of his friends are not fully Irish either – most of the kids are ‘one parent from one place – another parent from another’ – one parent not Irish – so I guess that means that they will all be dealing with that in different ways – they will all be dealing with ‘what does it mean to be brought up here’?

By her utilisation of the term ‘not fully Irish’ to describe children who have one parent who does not originate from Ireland, Jane reproduces the imagined authenticity of Irish identity (Hage 1998). Although, it is worth noting that, following the Citizenship Referendum 2004, the Constitution does, in fact, recognise citizenship by birth to individuals with at least one citizen parent. There is also an homogenising tendency at work here as all ‘outsiders’ are loosely categorised together which appears to act as a type of bonding mechanism while additionally, downplaying the salience of ‘race’ by giving an illusory sense of equality to those who are unequally positioned in the racial structure (Caballero 2014). Yet, by Jane’s focus on the young people’s negotiations of ‘what does it mean to be brought up here’? she
symbolically locates them in a liminal space (‘in, but not of, the nation’) as opposed to fully inhabiting their Irish citizenship. The following dialogue between Rachel and her daughter, Michelle (12) flows along similar lines:

*Rachel:* But in Michelle’s class – I mean, how many kids are actually Irish – like pure, proper Irish?

*Michelle:* Three or so...

*Rachel:* There are also mixed ‘race’ children as well, isn’t there?

*M:* Yeah, Polish, Russian, mixed ‘race’ – she is Chinese and Irish.

*R:* So, you see M is not even a little bit unusual (laugh).

At one level, it appears that Rachel’s invocation of liberal discourses of celebration of ‘difference’ is cited as evidence of the rich, multicultural tapestry of their everyday lives. Yet, at another level, there is continuous slippage as ‘Polish, Russian, mixed ‘race’’ are subsumed into the category, or the interstitial space of the national framework, occupied by those who are not ‘pure, proper Irish’. That is, as in Jane’s extract above (‘not fully Irish’), Rachel constitutes her mixed ‘race’ child as a liminal subject who embodies an unsettling mixture of ‘foreignness and Irishness’ (Enright 2011).

The above narratives further highlight the almost elusive or mythic quality of the category of ‘Irishness’ that remains firmly embedded in the public consciousness. For, it seems that these mixed ‘race’ Irish young people cannot just ‘be’ Irish but instead, they must aspire to be ‘fully’ or ‘pure, proper’ Irish. But, what does being ‘fully’ or ‘pure, proper’ Irish look like in the context of the contested terrain of Ireland’s inchoate multiculturalism? Perhaps, this is the essence of the perplexing question which underpins the mothers’ narratives above. We can further note Rachel and her daughter, Michelle’s (12) conversation below:

*Mum (Rachel):* How about that little girl who didn’t invite you to her party?

*Michelle:* The one in my class?
Rachel: I mean, she didn’t invite any of the children of colour, did she – it was only the Irish and the white that went to her party – I remember it was very obvious – I never forgave her – it was the instruction that the child was given from home – I suppose her parents wouldn’t be the type of people I’d mix with anyway – I think, there is an Irish traveller background there.

As Rachel’s definition of authentic Irish identity is explicitly interconnected to a putative whiteness, post-colonial narratives of ‘race’ and nation are interwoven into moments of intimacy between mother and child. By her conflation of Irishness and whiteness, however, Rachel not only promulgates homogenising notions of Irish identity, but further constructs her daughter as the racialised ‘other’ (‘the children of colour’). Moreover, in Rachel’s nuanced allusion to the ‘not quite white’ status of travellers, there appears to be a reconstitution of whiteness (as a social location) and/or a re-configuration of the racial order at work in the above account (see later in chapter). We can thus see how racialisation produces ‘hierarchies of insiderness’ (Lewis 2007, p.883) which actually exposes the internal contradictions of the workings of whiteness as a basis for a racialised definition of Irish identity (ibid.). As the interview continues, the following dialogue occurs:

Patti: Do you discuss issues of ‘race’ at school?

Mum (Rachel): Well, they did that stuff about keeping yourself safe, didn’t you Michelle?

Michelle: We did the history of this woman who wasn’t allowed to go onto a bus or something – I don’t know her name though – but that’s all really – I don’t think we did anything else.

Mum: How do you not know her name and you black (laugh) – you should know all about your history (laugh).

We can note that discourses of ‘difference’ are framed in terms of risk and distance in the above account as Rachel interpreted my initial question in terms of risk, or fear of the ‘other’, the stranger. In addition, although invoking a discourse of humour, Rachel further imposes a distinction between her and her daughter’s differential positioning within historical
trajectories of discourses of ‘race’. Indeed, it is as if the narrative silently acts back on Rachel to position her within a discourse of whiteness (Lewis 2007).

This section has highlighted the interconnections between mundane, everyday practices and the myriad dimensions and locations of the dynamics of racialisation (Lewis 2007). In fact, within the intimate space of the mother/child dyad, the mothers demarcate the limits of the Irish nation by summoning up discourses of whiteness as grounds for belonging. This enables us to see the workings of racialised relationships of power within the multiracial family - that is, how the white racialised identities of the mothers exist vis-à-vis the racialised identities of the children or more specifically, how the child’s positioning is produced in the context of the mother/child relationship. This is embedded in broader processes of racialisation as whiteness is co-relationally produced and manages to evade definition whilst systematically ascribing ‘race’ to others (Ahmed 2002; Bonnett 2000).

The white mothers of this study also differed as regards the extent to which ‘race’ and racism were absent or present in their narratives and imaginations of the self. In fact, the most common pattern was for the mothers to be located within a complex web of intersecting discourses of racialisation. In the next section, therefore, I examine how these white Irish mothers position themselves as ‘raced’ subjects. In particular, attention is drawn to how they make sense of their relationships to themselves as white and/or how this whiteness is practiced in the context of motherhood practices.

**Re-Narrating the Insider/ Outsider Narrative**

I now turn to a consideration of how the mothers discursively position themselves as they negotiate various manifestations of whiteness. I further set out to examine the extent to which these discourses reproduce, interact with and/or resist the workings of the racialised insider/outsider dichotomy.
Translators of Racial Meanings

In attempting to ascribe meaning to the racialisation of their children’s lives, some mothers draw on discourses which do not explicitly locate themselves, as white women. For instance, Tina, mother of Margaret (18) and Joe (16), asserts:

My negative experiences are always with black people - one of my priest friends said to me ‘life is tough for a white woman married to an [African]’ - my negative experiences are always with black people - particularly the [African] women – they think they know so much better than you – I mean, I have a lot of good friends who are [African] women – but, some of them (exasperated tone) – they know how to cook better, they know how to do hair better – they know how to do everything better than you – they know how to manage kids better – you see, I’m fed up of it from the day I started to even know [African] people – you know, ‘white people don’t have culture’ – ‘white people can’t make their children behave’ – and it’s bullshit – because I know how I grew up.

Tina takes on a discourse of ‘reversal of power relations’ in order to make sense of ‘the critical, racialising gaze’ (Twine 2000, p.103) which she experiences as being directed towards whiteness or more specifically, white womanhood and its intersection with gendered practices (cooking, hair styling and childcare). Twine’s research highlights how white mothers of mixed ‘race’ children are oftentimes, defined in accordance with essentialist understandings of ‘race’ as their mothering practices are evaluated for ‘maternal competence’ (2000, p.103) by extended black family members. More broadly, the notion of the good mother is denied to women who have transgressed racial boundaries (Britton 2013). Indeed, it seems that in the above account, Tina struggles to re-position herself within discourses of normative whiteness. She continues by stating:

His [Tina’s husband] family tell her [Margaret] constantly, ‘you’re black’ and it’s funny, one time when she was small and she was on one of the buses called (African phrase) – they are the busses that everybody squashes on in [Africa] – so Margaret was sitting next to the window – and anyway, the market women would come along and they would stand at the window and look in and one of them looks in – and (African phrase) is what they call a white person – it literally means ‘a stranger from a far shore’ – and they, usually say it to a white person – you don’t usually say it to a black person but technically, it could apply to any stranger – but, anyway, the woman looks in and she says, ‘hey, you’re a [‘white person’] – and Margaret draws herself up to her full 2 year old height – ‘I am not a [‘white person’], I am Margaret’ – and the whole bus cheered – I really enjoyed that – so, anyway, when she was
young, my husband’s family would tell her ‘you are black’ and she would say, ‘I’m Irish-African’ – and they’d say to her, ‘say it, I am black and I am proud’ and she’d say, I am light brown’.

Despite the competing discourses of blackness and whiteness that are at work in the above account, there is almost, on Tina’s part, a refusal of discourses of ‘race’ and racism. Rather, Tina seems to position herself as a mediator or translator of her child’s ‘raced’ experiences. Interestingly, Tina chooses to narrate episodes in her daughter’s life when she (Margaret) resisted and/or disrupted the readings of her racialised body. By utilising her daughter’s discourse of resistance in her storytelling, one gets a sense that Tina is adopting a defensive discursive strategy as a way of negotiating meaning(s) around her family’s ‘raced’ existence.

When I asked Tina about the racial terminology she uses to describe her children, she states:

They [white Irish people] are afraid to use the word black – you know, they say the word ‘coloured’ and then they say to me ‘what is okay to use’? – and I say, ‘it’s ok to say black’ – they are definitely afraid to say black.

Multiple and contradictory subject positions come into play in Tina’s interview narrative. Interestingly, in her reference to Irish people as ‘they’, Tina implicitly draws attention to her shifting sense of racial identity. Moreover, like the mixed ‘race’ young people in chapter seven, Tina describes above a phenomenon closely associated with racialised processes of othering – that of being rendered an expert on issues of ‘race’ and racism (‘they say to me ‘what is ok to use’?). Indeed, this would seem to point towards a disjuncture in Tina’s self-construction as white and Irish. Towards the end of the interview, Tina alludes to her children’s experiences of racism:

Now, another day, her and her brother were walking – and some traveller men were in the car and they shouted (n-word) to them – it’s ignorance – I mean, it didn’t bother them – they just laughed – I was walking with them – I said, ‘did that bother you’ – and they said, ‘no, they are ignorant feckers, why would it bother us’.
In an almost paradoxical manner, Tina attempts to impose meaning on the above racial incident by downplaying, or almost emptying it of racial content. By directing blame towards the Traveller men, hierarchical whiteness comes into play and serves to consolidate her position as a white Irish insider. That is, she produces whiteness in the above account through the construction of a racialised ‘other’ – the Irish Traveller who has historically been conceptualised as ‘outside’ whiteness (Fanning 2012) and in an ambiguous relationship to Irish identity (Gray 2004). In addition, Eavan, mother of Rick (16) and Jim (7), erases racialised inequalities by appealing to discourses of merit:

I know a lot of people who came here as refugees and they went through the system and they went through university and a lot of them are accountants and doctors – you name it, they are it – and they have really good jobs – it’s not about ‘race’ anymore – if you have the qualifications and drive – I think everybody can get a job – y’know, because of where I live – if you go into the shops or anything, there’s all different nationalities.

Eavan continues in this vein:

I mean, I know so many of my sons’ cousins and aunts who came here from (African country) as refugees when they were kids – they’ve got amazing jobs now so it is slowly filtering through – if people want to come here and get on – and make the effort to integrate – once they get involved in sports – like the football in Phoenix Park – or get involved in community groups or volunteering.

Eavan resists discourses of racialisation and draws instead, on a neo-liberal repertoire of discourses of meritocracy and individual progress. In fact, Eavan displays an almost proprietorial sense of her own Irishness (‘if they want to come here and get on’) which, of course, speaks to the power differential at the heart of the host/newcomer relationship (Hage 1998; Squire and Darling 2013). We can further see how Eavan constructs racialised boundaries of inclusion and exclusion by locating minority groups outside, or at the very least, in a subordinated structural position.

In the above accounts, it seems that the white Irish mothers are rendered anxious by the racialisation of their children and how this de-stabilises their own racial and cultural
belonging. It is only by re-narrating this insider/outsider racialising narrative and translating it anew that they can re-assert their own belonging and claim belonging for their children. We are thus enabled to see how the translation of racial meanings works to reproduce the insider-outsider dualism along racialised lines that re-affirm the mother’s positioning as white Irish insiders. It is like, at some level, the white mothers are attempting to protect their individual investment in their racial categorisation and the cultural capital that ensues from this (Moran 2004). The next section sees the mothers as further engaged in the work of translation as they frame the positioning strategies of their children through particular discourses of belonging.

**Shifting Subjectivities and Positionalities**

Discourses of liberal multiculturalism feature prominently in the mothers’ narratives. In fact, throughout her interview, Nessa actively constructs a discourse of the ‘new’ Ireland where we ‘celebrate differences’. She talks at length about how ‘we have to keep acknowledging and celebrating the fact that Ireland is diverse’. It is, as if, at some level, the multicultural mantra (‘we are all different but equal’) (Ali 2003) acts a source of comfort for Nessa; as if the words themselves performatively create a more inclusive Ireland:

> I mean, a lot of their friends would have parents from other countries – say, for example, Poland or Spain or that – so we compare it in that its equal to that – y’know, isn’t it great that their dad is from this country and your dad is from this country – but we’re not discussing the colour of it, you know what I mean – it’s just that there are all these major cultures coming together.

However, this liberal discourse of tolerance is imbued with a racialised subtext as whiteness is retained as the norm (‘we’re not discussing the colour of it’). As both ‘race’ and racism are culturalised in public, political and media discourse, Nessa takes up this discourse as a means of making sense of her world (‘there are all these major cultures coming together’). Thus, for Nessa, the issue of ‘race’ is discursively de-racialised which may mean that the everyday,
racialised experiences of her children may be located outside or beyond her discursive repertoire. Indeed, the tendency to frame ‘race’ in cultural terms (Lentin and Titley 2011) was a significant feature across several interviews (see chapter five). The mothers also tended to refer to Ireland as ‘so multicultural’ throughout the interviews:

Like we live in (name of area) and to be honest, it’s lovely and so (emphasis) multicultural – if anything, my kids are the norm – there’s a huge Muslim population and because of my kids’ colour – people from Algeria and stuff think that they are Algerian and then like, I don’t know how to explain it, you go into the playground and there’s like half-Spanish kids, half-Brazilian, like half-African – like, I love it – it’s brilliant – it’s so multicultural. (Eavan)

Or, as Rachel notes:

I suppose this town is so multicultural – so multicultural – that is what is so great about it.

Eavan continues by describing her son’s friendship group:

His group of friends is Belize, one of his friends is half-Turkish, one is Portuguese – one is half-Japanese.

There is a liberal, celebratory tone apparent in both the above accounts (Fortier 2005) as ‘race’ is framed in cultural terms. In fact, Eavan recites the various nationalities, cultures and ethnicities she encounters on a daily basis as ‘markers’ of a life lived in the ‘new’ Ireland. So, although subject to contemporary racialising discourses and practices, it is worth noting that the mothers took them up differently. In fact, a persistent feature of the majority of interview narratives was the co-existence of liberal discourses (‘we are all different but equal’) with accounts of everyday lives grounded in ‘raced’ reality. This, oftentimes, gave rise to inherent contradictions within the interview narratives themselves. For example, at the beginning of her interview, Nessa was adamant that the question ‘where are you from’? (in relation to the multiracial family) was a reference to their local origins:

I know some mixed families in Ireland say they keep getting asked, ‘where are you from’? but we don’t really – or I suppose, I just assume that they are saying, ‘what part of the country are you from’?
However, as the interview progresses, Nessa relates the following vignette:

It’s the constant ‘where are you really from’? – my son said to me one day that there was a boy in his football and his dad was from somewhere else and I said, ‘oh, right, where’s he from’? – and he said, ‘I don’t know but I’d really like to find out but I don’t wanna ask’ and I said, ‘why don’t you wanna ask’? – and he said, ‘because it upsets me so much when people keep asking me where I’m from’.

There was a further disjuncture between the espousal of liberal multiculturalism and assertions and/or claims of biological belonging enunciated by mothers on behalf of children (as we can note in the narrative accounts below). For example, Rachel asserts that mixed ‘race’ children

belong here as much as any of us – it’s not like someone coming over here from Africa – they are born here – it’s different.

But, what do these two discourses (biological versus multicultural) offer the white Irish mothers of mixed ‘race’ Irish children? On the face of it, both discourses offer a means of positioning their child inside national discourses albeit on different terms. By drawing on essentialist notions of biological belonging, I suggest that the mothers endeavour to re-assert their children’s insider positioning within the parameters of a limited and restrictive definition of Irishness. Indeed, as the racialised principles of sanguinity testify, the blood-based notion of belonging is a powerful and deeply entrenched discourse. This notion of belonging not only provides the lineage/ancestral connection which would provide generational continuity but would also, I suggest, honour the primordial bond which exists between mother and child.

The invocation of liberal discourse is more compatible with Ireland’s nascent multiculturalism. If culture is indeed substituted as a euphemism for ‘race’, then, this discourse offers her and her child a de-racialised way of being in the ‘new’ Ireland.
Essentially speaking, whilst biological discourses may provide a means for her child to fit into the narrow locus of Irish belonging, multicultural discourse allows a broadening of the category of Irishness itself. Thus, as a multicultural subject of the ‘new’ Ireland, her child could assume an insider position on ‘different but equal’ terms. In short, he/she can be ‘in’ and ‘of’ the country.

Several mothers established a differentiation between the positioning of their children and African immigrants and perhaps, even more powerfully, the positioning of Travellers, as articulated below by Helen, mother of George (17) and Liam (15):

> In fact, we are surrounded by council housing and social housing estates where immigrants and travellers are packed in, and then, my children get tarred with the same brush. Liam was mugged by two travellers.

She continues by stating:

> At this stage, there was a real surge in immigrants - it had started to happen - so, suddenly, you had lots of black people around and that actually caused more (emphasis) problems because there was a lot of racism towards the Nigerians particularly - I mean, George and Liam have really suffered as a consequence of the general racism directed towards African kids.

And finally:

> Liam actually refuses to acknowledge his African part – but anytime, he is asked, he will say he is Spanish and even, sometimes, he will say that he was born in Spain – and that is because he doesn’t want to be associated with immigrants.

As discussed in chapter one, state discourses regarding immigration have consistently promulgated the notion of ‘asylum seekers’ and ‘refugees’ who are racialised as black (Fanning 2012; Garner 2004). Thus, as we can see in the above extracts, Helen is refusing to be positioned by immigration as a racialising discourse whilst also invoking racialised discourses of Travellers. Tina further differentiates between her children and refugees:
I think, at the moment, there is a big issue with refugees – I suppose my kids have been privileged because they have moved in one circle – and I suppose sometimes my concern is when they move out of that circle – y’know, I just hate the phrase ‘our own’ – I don’t think that some people are capable of differentiating between one person and another – and if you are not homegrown and if you are black, then you shouldn’t be here – in their view – they all want to belong in some little trump-land – thankfully, Margaret is fine and gets on fine but I suppose she is quite light-skinned and maybe if you are mixed or lighter then you get on ok.

In the above accounts, both Helen and Tina seek out ‘markers of difference’ as a way of protecting their children from the negative racialisation experienced by African immigrants, refugees and travellers. Such markers include an appeal to the principles of *jus sanguinis* belonging, a depiction of Travellers as the ‘real’ outsiders, a nuanced allusion to class differences (‘my kids have been privileged because they have moved in one circle’) and even an implicit engagement with the workings of shadeism (‘maybe if you are mixed or lighter then you get on ok’) (see chapter seven).

In this section, we see the various discourses (liberal, biological and racialising) drawn on by the mothers as they attempt to position their children vis-à-vis the racialised insider/outsider dichotomy. Such discourses offer the potential for their children to occupy insider positioning (however tenuous) which, of course, means that the mothers are parenting insiders as opposed to outsider children. In the next section, I examine the narratives of the mothers who are more explicitly conscious of their ‘raced’ subjectivities as white.

**Reflexive White Subjectivities**

Several of the mothers’ narratives incorporate a critically reflexive relationship to whiteness.

**‘Ambiguous Insider’ Narratives**

In this part, I examine narratives which demonstrate the mother’s negotiations as relates to her lived experiences of whiteness. As Ellie, mother of Maya (4), notes:
It will often come up in conversation that my husband is African and my daughter is mixed—and sometimes people will say, ‘do you ever experience any racism’? and I say, ‘not the kind of racism you are talking about’—I mean, I think there are a lot of subtleties of ‘race’ that people are not aware of— I mean, I had friends say things to me like ‘I wouldn’t live out in (area), it’s full of Africans—oh, no offense, I didn’t mean Africans like (husband), you know what I mean’—‘well, no, I don’t know what you mean’—or ‘I wouldn’t have my baby in (hospital), there are too many Africans’.

She continues:

Sometimes I come away thinking, I didn’t protect her [daughter] there—I failed her in that moment—funny enough, it only happened at the weekend—we were around at a friend’s house and I had Molly’s hair in 4 little ponytails—she came in and everyone was like ‘oh my god, look at her hair’—as if it was something amazing and I thought, ‘it’s just a hairstyle’—and then one of the men in the group said, ‘oh, imagine doing that hairstyle on (his son), he’ll be a gangsta’ and then someone says, ‘oh yeah, straight out of Compton, whaaa’ and all this kind of stuff and I was just standing there and I could feel my heart racing and I was thinking—I just want to tell you to shut up—‘what’s gangsta about my child’s hair’?—what’s ‘less than’ about it?—If you’re talking about gangsta, then you are talking about drugs and crime, people getting shot—but I just stood there nervously and laughed—I went ‘aaaaahhhhaa’ (nervous laugh)—why the fuck did I just do that? Why didn’t I say shut up? Because I didn’t want them to feel awkward but why should I care? I should care about my daughter because first and foremost, it’s about how she feels.

Racism is articulated as a signifier of change in the above account as Ellie demonstrates a nuanced analysis of the workings of discourses of racism as relates to her everyday lived experience. Or, indeed, in Twine’s (2010) terms, she has acquired ‘racial literacy’. Ellie continues by narrating a racially charged episode where she finds herself situated along a continuum between the oppositional discourses of blackness and whiteness. In fact, Ellie’s account suggests ‘cultural insider-racialised outsider’ status as she attempts to re-align her racial vision in order to incorporate the world view of her mixed ‘race’ child. Twine (2000) compares this process to Du Bois’ concept of double consciousness (which describes ‘the sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others’ (2004, xiv)). It is, as if, Ellie must now carry her daughter’s blackness with her (for Maya was definitely hailed as black in the above episode and no doubt, in others). This certainly highlights the specific role of white mothers in multiracial families as relates to the reproduction of black subjectivities (Britton 2013).
So, what happens to the mothers’ white subjectivities in scenarios such as that related above? The mothers’ whiteness is irrevocably disturbed in a process which Twine and Steinbugler refer to as lifting the ‘white veil’ (2006, p.360). These mothers must now live out a new version of whiteness – a whiteness that is ‘raced’ through intimate association with blackness. Indeed, Ellie’s internal narrative provides insight into that moment of emotional intensity (i.e. when her daughter ‘becomes black’ (Lewis 2007)) and Ellie is forced to negotiate the ambivalent positioning of cross-racial motherhood.

However, Ellie was ultimately silenced by fear of becoming the ‘affect alien’ (Ahmed 2008, p.6) who, by bringing a critical analysis of racism to bear on the above scenario, becomes the harbinger of discord and ill-feeling and has the temerity to ‘trouble whiteness’ (Ahmed 2000, p.102). Ellie further expresses her frustration and exhaustion:

> The biggest issue is to break the stereotype – it’s tiring – it’s tiring to break the stereotype because I’ve been trying to do that for the last five years – I do have days when I think ‘oh fuck the lot of it, I’m leaving the country’ – you get so tired of it – I feel like saying to people ‘why can’t you just think outside the box and think maybe, maybe (emphasis) my life is not that different to yours’? – ‘my relationship is not that different to yours or my child is not that different to yours’.

In Ellie’s view, her family constellation is ‘fixed’ by racialised stereotyping (Fanon 2008) (see chapters two and seven) – a process of racial reduction, a one-dimensional view that renders the depth and complexity of their lives invalid. She describes a family that is unable to resist the defining power of racial categories and whose lives must be lived as possessing essentialised properties. As Ellie’s narrative further attests, the white mother experiences the racialised stereotyping attributed to her child and family – she is indeed, living a different type of whiteness. It is, as if, she must re-constitute a sense of self which accords with how her family is perceived and responded to by Irish society. Finally, Ellie’s tone of despair is
evident as she recalls her friend’s reaction to the structural racism experienced by her husband:

I remember saying to a friend, ‘I don’t know what we’re going to do like’ and she said, ‘but Ellie, that was gonna happen, y’know, what do you expect’? – well, I expect him to be treated as an equal and then when someone says that to you, it crushes you – maybe I am stupid to expect more – maybe I am stupid to expect that we are entitled to the same respect as everyone else?

We can note Ellie’s awareness that discourses of progressive liberal multiculturalism, which espouse values of equality and respect, fail to cohere with her family’s lived reality of lack of legitimacy in the public sphere (see chapter four). Ellie is also grappling here with the loss of whiteness (see later in chapter) as there is a realisation that the privileges accrued by her white status are not simply transferable to her partner and child. Rachel also comments on her perception of routine and subtle forms of racism that were not previously visible:

It’s quite invisible stuff really – you know, the kind of racism where people are throwing eggs at your front door – that would be almost easier to deal with – you know – otherwise, it just becomes the normal stuff that goes on everyday.

Rachel continues by citing an example of how racism has become embedded in the minutiae of daily life:

You know my mother does the Irish rant about all the foreigners coming in and I look at her and I go ‘hello’ (emphasis) – and she says, ‘I didn’t mean him’ (husband) – I can’t even get my head around that – I mean, what do you think my husband is – they say, ‘of course, I didn’t mean him’ (emphasis).

Besides the fact that, in the above account, her husband is regarded as being ‘whitened’ through association with her family and thereby, co-opted into a logic of sameness (Fanon 2008 – see chapter two), such scenarios must impact on Rachel’s self-construction as white and Irish. In fact, Rachel is effectively positioned as the ‘outsider within’ (Hill Collins 1990;
Dalmage 2001) as she must, at some level, re-negotiate the meaning of whiteness in the context of Ireland’s racism and shifting social order. Alice relates the following episode:

An [African] kid used to give Dan an awful time – one night, I thought, ‘I can’t do this anymore’ and I went out to the mum – and the mum basically said to her son, ‘look, that’s your brother, that’s your brother, you need to defend one another, you should not be in a position where you are going to give each other a hard time, there’s enough white people who will give you a hard time, that’s your brother’ – I was really amazed that she said that – it was quite powerful – now, I’m not saying that her son espouses that on the street but the mother was saying that – I mean, she was taking my son under her wing in the sense of ‘you’re with us’.

This account highlights the different ways of being interpellated as a white woman. Indeed, Alice’s sense of whiteness must be unsettled by the above incident as discourses of white Irishness, immigration and blackness all intersect and collide in her experience. Alice articulates that raw, powerful moment when she is forced to confront how her family constellation is discursively positioned – that is, she is mothering a racialised ‘outsider’.

Moreover, as a white woman, she is excluded from the moment of intimacy which unfolds between the African mother and her [Alice’s] son, Dan, as he is claimed in terms of kinship, as a ‘brother’. Finally, this scenario captures how essentialist notions of ‘race’ persist in the public imaginary, or more significantly perhaps, how racialised bodies are constructed by processes of racialisation and are regarded as possessing a permanent, fixed essence (Ahmed 2002) (see chapter seven).

Whilst in this section, the mothers have articulated moments in which their white insider positioning is de-stabilised to reveal their acquired ‘ambiguous insider’ status, the next section continues with a discussion of the mothers’ critical analyses of whiteness as a position of structural power and advantage.
Rendering Whiteness Visible

Several mothers’ narratives explicitly re-articulated both the meaning of whiteness in their lives and/or how whiteness is implicated in networks of power. In effect, they are ‘naming and speaking whiteness into discourse’ (Vass 2016, p.381). For example, Ellie’s observations on processes of racialisation related above prompt her to continue a discussion of whiteness and its attendant privileges:

I mean, there is so much privilege about being white in a white country – I can read stories about things in the States – I mean, did you see the story about the girl who was dragged out of her chair by the police officer – I mean, we all know that that would not have happened if she was white – and I can look at that and I can think that this is so sad but that is never gonna be me – I am never gonna be treated like that – and even if I were to go to a predominantly black country tomorrow – like (African country) – I’d still be treated as something special – we are privileged and as such, I never walk down the street and get instantly judged.

By her acknowledgement that processes of racialisation have marked her and her family differently, Ellie demonstrates her shifting subjectivities in relation to ‘race’. In her subsequent analysis of the discursive power of whiteness, Ellie, in a sense, decentres whiteness or renders whiteness visible (Dyer 1997). In fact, the notion of whiteness as unseen is closely interlinked with the workings of power and is only held by those who are positioned as white (Dyer 1997). To similar effect, Alice also examines her white subjectivity:

I think some people are afraid of ‘race’ – how are we going to solve it if people are afraid of it – y’know, but I don’t really think that white people can understand racism – like a white person cannot understand it if they cannot understand their privilege – I’m not gonna say that I understand my privilege 100% - but, at the end of the day, I am saying that maybe I don’t wanna be white if white represents something so ugly – I don’t mean I want to change my skin colour – I just don’t want to be that blind – I respect the black journey – but you also know that, as a white person, your journey is not that journey – as white people, the system does not get to define our (emphasis) experiences.
Alice articulates above an ambivalent attachment to, or investment in whiteness. In addition, through her engagement with its fluid and shifting nature, she highlights the category of whiteness as a social construction thereby rendering untenable any notions of whiteness as a stable racial category. Alice further demonstrates a sensitivity to racialised positioning when she asserts that phenotypically white people, living inside their own skin, are unable to grasp the full implications of blackness as lived (i.e. ‘the black journey’). Both Jane and Ellie speak below about how whiteness can be engulfed, or even annihilated, by blackness:

The reality is that they [mixed ‘race’ young people] are going to be identified as black – whatever way – I mean, when people look at Obama they see a black man – and again I have really mixed feelings about that – I think it’s wonderful that he’s seen as black because it’s so positive but on the other hand, I think ‘he has a white mother’ – where is she? – he’s not black, he’s mixed ‘race’ - I’m not saying that I don’t see myself as his [son’s] mother – it’s a tricky one – like the mixed ‘race’ child is definitely not equally white or equally black – it certainly upsets me about Obama – I mean, where is his mammy? (Jane)

I get pissed off when people refer to Molly as black - my friend refers to her as black – and I kind of think ‘I’m a white woman, how can my biological daughter be black’? – that’s denying that I’m even there – I mean, she is just as much me as she is him[husband]. (Ellie)

By articulating their struggles to retain a sense of whiteness, these mothers narrate lives subsumed by the visual and political weight, or valence, of discursive blackness. We are thus enabled to see the shifting subjective nature of their whiteness as it intersects with motherhood. Both Jane and Ellie must, to some extent, relinquish their own whiteness and reconstitute a sense of self. But, in order to realign her racial vision with that of her child, how much whiteness must be relinquished? Moreover, what are the implications of this loss of whiteness for the mothers’ insider positioning or more specifically, their project of securing insider status for their children? Thus, by the re-articulation of the meaning of whiteness in their lives, these women no longer occupy the default position of whiteness as a category of racial privilege and a condition of ‘structured invisibility’ (Frankenberg 1993, p.6).
In this section, I looked at how whiteness is inhabited, lived, resisted and erased in different ways and at different moments in these mothers’ accounts—oftentimes, in ways which subvert the reproduction of the insider/outsider dichotomy along racialised lines.

**Concluding Remarks**

This chapter provides insight into the variety of ways that ‘race’, specifically whiteness, is lived in contemporary Ireland. In particular, I have examined how the positioning of these women’s mixed ‘race’ children, as racialised outsiders, has impacted their subjectivities as mothers categorised normatively as white and Irish. I have further highlighted how the identities and subject construction(s) of those positioned as white are racialised, thereby opening up whiteness as a racial category. In societies structured by a white hegemony, ‘race’ is conventionally understood as a regime of looking whereby the ‘other’ is racially marked whilst the white subject retains an ‘unmarked’ status.

In the first part of the chapter, I located the dynamics of racialisation within the context of the mother/child relationship. Discourses of Irish nationhood pervade this intimate space and are reproduced at the level of daily life as the mothers demonstrate their attachment to ‘the white homogenous nation’ (Moran 2004) thus ideologically constructing and legitimising the dominance of whiteness. This allows us to see how the mother’s white subjectivities have become entangled with the racialised structures of Irish society. In fact, in such scenarios, we can regard the mothers as gatekeepers of the borders of the racialised community.

We further acquire a sense of how, at some level, the white mothers are attempting to protect their individual investment in their own racial categorisation and the cultural capital that ensues from this (Hage 1998). However, this is a complex, fractured and unsustainable process as during the second part of the chapter, we have seen how the totalising discourse of white insiderness is unsettled through mixed ‘race’ motherhood.
Like the white women of Frankenberg (1993) and Twine (2010), these mothers draw on various discursive repertoires as part of their sense-making in relation to the de-stabilisation of their positioning as white Irish insiders. What becomes particularly apparent is that the way they negotiate their lived whiteness at the level of the family has repercussions for racialised power relations at the structural level. This chapter has further demonstrated how the mothers attempt to position themselves as mediators or translators of their children’s racialised experiences of belonging. In fact, the mothers frame the positioning strategies of their children through particular discourses of belonging (liberal, biological and racialising).

It is particularly worth noting the mothers’ appeals to the Irish Traveller as the absolute racial ‘other’ thereby creating insider space for their children. Several of the mothers also demonstrated a critically reflexive relationship to whiteness.

Indeed, whatever strategy the mother deploys in her internalisation of whiteness as an aspect of the self, one fact becomes evident. These women have disturbed white claims to belonging and as such, are differentially positioned vis-à-vis white hegemony. This serves to highlight, once again, the limitations of statist conceptions of belonging as these women experience political subjectivity in a way which cannot be encompassed by sovereign dualisms of insider and outsider. In fact, the lived quotidian experiences of the transracial mother/child dyad could be said to exceed the institution of citizenship. However, by employing a Kristevan (1991) framework of citizen-subjectivity which re-works the manner in which we have conventionally theorised the ‘self’ in terms of spatial/linear temporal boundaries, we are enabled to capture the lived experiences of the transracial mother/child dyad.

In the next chapter, I specifically examine the positioning(s) and experiences of the mixed ‘race’ Irish young people.
Chapter Seven: The Racialised Body of the Mixed ‘Race’ Irish Subject

Introduction

Previous chapters have highlighted the narrow racialised principles of belonging and the racialisation of immigration in the Irish context (Garner 2004; Lentin and McVeigh 2006), as well as how the 2004 Citizenship Referendum enshrined a populist distinction between Irish and non-Irish thereby creating ‘a racialized two-tier system’ (King-O’Riain 2007, p.535) of belonging.

Whilst chapter four examined how the mixed ‘race’ subject lacks legitimacy as an Irish citizen in the public sphere, chapter five considered how mixed ‘race’ Irish young people are racially excluded from dominant discursive constructions of Irish national identity. As such, racialised insider/outsider lines of membership are reproduced and most significantly, perhaps, whiteness continues to be privileged at both the level of citizenship and national identity.

Whilst chapter six examined the positioning and experiences of the mother, as the individual white subject, in this chapter, I consider how this racialised dichotomy shapes the positioning and experiences of the mixed ‘race’ young people. This chapter, therefore, is driven by two questions. In the first section, I enquire ‘How do the young people narrate the racialisation of their lives and/or make sense of their positioning as racialised outsiders’? The second section addresses the question, ‘How do the mixed ‘race’ Irish young people negotiate belonging when subject to racialised exclusion’?

Following de Certeau’s (1984) conceptualisation of everyday life (see chapter three), I regard the young people as political agents whose political autonomy is exercised in the everyday domain by ongoing negotiation of their positioning and roles. Whilst this chapter utilises the
concept of racialisation as an analytical lens (see chapter two), any theorisation of ‘race’ must also take into account the ongoing saliency of racial categories and the very real and pernicious effects of racism (Riggs 2008). So, although beginning from an understanding of ‘race’ as a social construction, I further acknowledge that ‘race’ possesses a materiality that gets played out in racist practices (e.g. bodily stereotypes).

**Racialised Embodiment**

In this section, the mixed ‘race’ Irish young people document their inscription(s) into discourses of racialisation.

**Subjugated Racialised Subjectivities**

I am interested here in how notions of racialised difference both shape a particular world view and invest the young people’s bodies with meaning. There was a tendency, particularly at the beginning of the interview, for the young people to recount episodic acts of aggression (e.g. sniggering, negative comments about skin colour) as we can note below:

- Sometimes, the boys in my class laugh at African names and stuff. (Mary (6))
- Once a girl said she didn’t want to sit beside me because I am black. (Rian (9))
- There was one time when I was younger that a boy said to me that he was not allowed to play with me and when I asked, ‘why not’? – he said, ‘because you’re black’. (Aaron (12))

The majority of the young people conceptualise racism as aberrant acts and expressions of prejudice rather than being defined in terms of cultural beliefs and institutional policies and practices (Ní Laoire *et al.* 2011). Also, such retrospective accounts of name-calling draw attention to the young people’s moment(s) of ‘becoming racialised’ (Phoenix 2005). In fact, being hailed as black in the public domain may stir up complex emotions about the negative
meanings attributed to their skin colour. Essentially, the young people are articulating the moment when their bodies are marked as different, as bodies ‘out of place’, as the subject is ‘raced’ at the moment of articulation into networks of power (Ahmed 2002). Interestingly, Colum (12) initially refused notions of Ireland as a racist society, reiterating at regular intervals:

We are all just people, we are all just people
Or
But, I don’t really feel that people are racist
Or
No-one is being racist – no-one is being mean purposely or anything.

One gets a sense that Colum is, in fact, actively negotiating his positioning in relation to racialised discourses. Or, perhaps, grappling with what hooks refers to as the deeply held belief in ‘the myth of sameness’ and demonstrating a corresponding unwillingness to ‘subvert the liberal belief in a universal supremacy (we are all just people)’ (1992, p.167). But, what else is at stake for Colum in terms of his positioning vis-à-vis the prevailing racial order? We are further aware of the quandary that he finds himself in – any admission on his part that racism does exist will position him as the racialised ‘other’. Yet, Colum’s first utterance in the interview is grounded very firmly in racial politics:

I am brown because I’m not (emphasis) white

So, although Colum begins the interview with a positive assertion of his skin colour, it is an assertion that is understood and explained in terms of not being white (which is retained as the norm in Ireland). Perhaps, Colum is interrogating the power relations that constitute whiteness as the norm (Dyer 1997) and hence, his racialised body as the ‘body out of place’
(Ahmed 2002). In a sense, Colum has rendered whiteness visible by opening it up as a racial category and by so doing, disturbs, even momentarily, the conflation which exists between whiteness and Irish identity. And, as has been well-documented elsewhere, whiteness retains its power by being unseen (Dyer 1997).

In fact, the interview narratives provide ample evidence that the young people’s world view is based around pervasive, ideological racial dualisms – dualisms which they reproduce as they narrate:

Ireland is a white country – there are black people ‘in’ it – but it is a white country. (Colum (12))

I just think that black people don’t wanna be with white people and white people don’t wanna be with black people. (Tom (10))

I would never be like – ‘I’m black, I’m white or whatever’ – I mean, a lot of black people ask me ‘what do you identify with, black or white’? – I’m like, ‘neither, what do you mean’? – and they say, ‘if you had to choose’ and I say, ‘I don’t choose, I’m mixed, I’m both, I’m equal parts’ – a lot of people cannot get that through their heads – like a lot of African people think I’m trying to deny my blackness but I’m not – but I’m also white – I’m denying both, if you get me. (Margaret (18))

These mixed ‘race’ young people are negotiating two oppositional discourses of blackness and whiteness with both categories possessing natural, fixed attributes which are fundamentally incompatible (Ifekwunigwe 1999). But, Margaret also informs us above that in a racially polarised society, there is pressure to assume a single racial identity. In this regard, Margaret is attempting to make sense of her own racial identity by opening up an in-between space or perhaps, a multiracial identity whereby one is defined by one’s ability to simultaneously claim several identities. For, if Margaret opts for either racial category, then she risks re-inscribing the dominant black-white binary which perpetuates the asymmetrical power relations on which this dualism is established (Ifekwunigwe 1999).

Indeed, the pressure to assume a unitary racial category may also arise from society’s difficulties with negotiating the ambiguous phenotype of the mixed ‘race’ person which
provokes a crisis of meaning and which may work to ‘reinscribe the dominant white gaze’ (Fanon 2008; Haritaworn 2009). Or, perhaps, there is a realisation that if you are not phenotypically white, then, you are claimed by blackness and the essentialism of the one drop rule which, according to Ifekwunigwe (1999) still permeates the collective consciousness today (see chapter two). Whilst this section has discussed how the young people narrate racialised subjectivities produced by systems of power, in the next section, I consider how ‘race’ comes to be lived at the level of the body.

The Writing of ‘Race’ on the Body

I am interested in how racialised power dynamics are embodied by the young people and how this body, which bears a racial inscription, is lived (Ahmed 2002). In this vein, we can observe the following conversation between Nessa and her three children, Colum (12), Rian (9) and Mary (6):

\[N\]: Remember you said something before C, about sometimes when you see – like once we were in Dunnes or something – and you saw somebody – a little boy crying – and you said that you always want to help black people.

\[C\]: If I see – it has kind of changed now- but if I see – I don’t know – sometimes like I’d help all of them but I think it’s kind of – it’s like that film ‘In Pursuit of Happiness’ – I mean, I felt really sad in that film – if it was a white person, I wouldn’t have felt that sad.

\[P\]: Why’s that, I wonder?

\[C\]: Cos’ like it’s unfair what all the black people are going through – like, in the past – but like when I see a white person I think, ‘oh, there’s nothing wrong with them’ – I dunno.

\[M\]: It’s like white people are protected and not really black people because most of the time we see black people sitting on the streets.

\[C\]: It seems that way to us but really it isn’t.

\[R\]: I don’t really understand – y’know the way in America – on the news there’s been a lot of things about white gardai who have been shooting black people just walking down the streets – why do they do that when their President is black?

\[C\]: Well, they don’t like the President being black but they can’t do anything about it because he’s the President.
The classic dualistic motif persists as Colum, Rian and Mary narrate a world based on black/white social stratification and proffer observations related to the public ideologies which both demarcate and hierarchically structure blackness and whiteness. Interestingly, the above narrative demonstrates how the young people locate themselves within discourses of blackness – positioning strategies which are influenced by the narrative of white supremacy (‘it’s like white people are protected and not really black people’). In short, the young people are internalising the lesson that ‘race’ is not merely a description of racial differences but about both naturalising and investing these differences with meaning (Lentin and Titley 2011). The above narrative also demonstrates how socially available de-racialised discourses fail to map onto the young people’s lived reality. In particular, we can note how Rian (9) interrogates the post-race contention that ‘race’ is no longer a central organising principle, when she asks why racism continues to flourish (i.e. white gardaí shooting black people) when Obama is President.

Thus, the young people’s experiences are being translated through a politicised relationship to ‘race’ and racism but it further seems that there is a ‘turning’ towards black at a personal level. This manifests as a counter-discourse of solidarity which arises from empathic identification with experiences of racism which is learned at this young age. Like Colum in the previous excerpt, Rian (9) relates the following story regarding her empathy with a girl from school:

Her parents are from Ghana and she sometimes – and there’s this other girl and they got into a big fight at the start of this year – but now, they’re okay – but the girl would say stuff about her skin – and other girls would say something as well – and she would get really upset and I would have to talk to her.

Sam (8) also interprets his school yard experiences through a racialised frame:

Well, there was one time when like me and xxxx went up to somebody and asked them if we could play and they said ‘no’ and like we were all the brown ones – but, they were letting other people play that were white and I didn’t know if it was our colour or something else.
We can further note the dialogue between Maggie and her son Tom (10):

_Maggie:_ when he was doing the stuff at school about the civil rights movement – and how people were being targeted on buses and in shops and that - the segregated time in the States – that really got him anxious and worried, didn’t it, T?

_Tom:_ yeah, sometimes I was afraid to go into shops in case they were racist - I thought maybe they might do something to me because of the colour of my skin.

Tom responds to what he has heard in school and translates that to his everyday life. Indeed, Tom, like Sam above, is also negotiating the impact and meanings attributed to his skin colour in quotidian encounters. But, these mixed ‘race’ young people are also forced to assume responsibility for skin colour in another sense, as Dan (10) relates below:

_Dan:_ My friend (xxxx) said that he heard these jokes before – that that is what somebody said – and I said, ‘that’s racist’ and he said, ‘yeah, it is’.

_Mum:_ So, this is what kids are saying to you?

_Dan:_ no, they’ve heard it off other people and they are saying ‘is this racist’? and ‘what do you think about that’? – so I told him it was racist.

As Dan is appealed to as an expert as to what constitutes racism, he is somehow being rendered accountable for his skin colour. In fact, it appears that there is a form of exchange at work here as Dan, by acting as a translator/mediator in the negotiation of racial differences may potentially be offered token black ‘insider’ status which is yet another manifestation of racialisation (Erel _et al._ 2016). Michelle (12) must similarly bear responsibility for an African priest who is associated with her school:

_Like when he says something in an accent everyone is like this at me (staring expression) – as if like, you should get this and then they are really careful about what they say about him – it’s like ‘he’s so nice’ (fake voice) and you know, they look like they don’t wanna say something wrong._
The above scenario points towards Michelle’s inauthentic relationships with her white peers as her racial difference becomes that which must be benignly tolerated. Moreover, as the object of tolerance, she is regarded as possessing essential characteristics (Brown 2006). Whilst Michelle’s account highlights both the ordinary and all-pervasive ways that the bodies of these mixed ‘race’ young people are produced as ‘other’ and positioned outside Irishness, we are further enabled to see how processes of racialisation have reduced the wholeness and texture of Michelle’s life to a simple ‘raced’ narrative of skin colour (Fanon 2008) (see chapter two). In a similar vein, Margaret (18) states:

I know of a girl in my school who was black and she called another girl ‘a white bastard’ – and the white girl called her ‘a black bastard’ because the other girl said it first and of course, the white girl got suspended – nothing happened to the black girl – so like people were giving out about that, they complained to me and I was like, ‘I don’t want anything to do with this’.

We can note the circulation of de-politicised discourses at work in the above account as, similar to Michelle’s account above, tolerance is being utilised as a normative discourse which serves to naturalise difference (Brown 2006). In this vein, we can see how the above account is marked by a lack of awareness of the power relations which undergird racism (i.e. how the intent and implications of name-calling may vary across ‘race’) (ibid.). This narrative further highlights Margaret’s unique positioning at the uneasy interface of racialised dynamics for it appears that Margaret is being offered partial inclusion within whiteness based on a dis-identification with blackness. That is, by forfeiting any claims to offence as a demonstration of loyalty to her white peers, she will be rewarded with token black ‘insider’ status.

It is, therefore, interesting to note how Margaret self-positions in the above account. She, in fact, summons the powerful discourse of ‘reverse racism’ to make sense of the above incident (‘of course, the white girl got suspended’) on her token black ‘insider’ terms. In fact, one of
the conditions of tolerance is that the tolerated are not allowed to stake claims in the political domain from the grounds of their difference but instead, must live out this difference in a de-politicised manner (Brown 2006) (see chapter four).

Yet, Margaret’s racialised body tells a different story. We can observe how ‘us-them’ racial constructs based on phenotype saturate this encounter as Margaret is ultimately reduced to the sum of her black body, regarded as possessing essential attributes. For, in the end, Margaret is rendered accountable for the above incident by virtue of skin colour (‘they complained to me’). We can, therefore, see how the discourse of tolerance, in effect, reproduces racialisation through the essentialising of difference (Brown 2006). The mixed ‘race’ Irish young people of this study also narrate more explicitly embodied responses to processes of racialisation which can be explored through Fanon’s (2008) account of abjection as lived, as we can note in Margaret’s case below:

I do tend to find myself acting just that little bit more responsible than my friends just because I’m aware of the fact that I’m different – I’m the one that people will remember – so I do tend to make myself smaller – like in college I know everyone just because everyone remembers me – just because of how I look – like in ways that used to annoy me – but I’m kind of used to it at this point – I mean, you do it subconsciously – you don’t even realise – you make yourself small.

Margaret explains her adaptive strategies to objectification by the white gaze as involving both psychic and bodily processes (‘you make yourself small’) as racialised abjection both ‘takes over the mind’ and further, finds a way of ‘getting under the skin’ (Fanon 2008; Tyler 2013). We are enabled to see, therefore, how through the violence of racist interpellation in the context of everyday encounters, Margaret has internalised the white person’s vision of her ‘raced’ body (Fanon 2008). Margaret further informs us that:

And I got used to people looking at me from an early age – when little kids look at me, I just stare back at them – and then they get uncomfortable and look away – when adults stare at me, I look at them like, ‘what are you looking at’? – the kids I understand because kids will
look........but I suppose I do kind of understand when people stare at me – they are just not used to it like.

Margaret’s body, like the black body of Fanon, in the seminal episode of the white child’s exclamation ‘look, a negro’ (2008, p.113), is ‘sealed into the crushing objecthood of the skin’ (2008, p.82). If we focus on ‘race’ as ‘a regime of looking’ (Riggs 2008), we can see how the black body is dissected by the white gaze and assigned the role of embodying racial difference – that is, ‘race is in the eye of the beholder’ (Byrne 2006, p.16). Similarly, Michelle (12) notes:

I suppose I have gotten used to people asking me if I’m Irish – but it’s mainly people that I don’t know that ask me if I’m Irish – but the teachers in my school used to ask me all the time in junior and senior infants – and I used to just keep repeating ‘my dad is (African) and my mam is Irish’ over and over – I suppose I just got used to it.

Michelle, too, has acquired a sense that she is a passive recipient of the white gaze (‘I suppose I just got used to it’) and more significantly, that white people control the direction of the gaze (Fanon 2008). In fact, both Michelle and Margaret implicitly attribute authority to the white person in their above accounts. It is as if they have both internalised a sense of how they must live out their embodied blackness in the world – that is, as the black person subordinated to the white person by means of racialised othering (Fanon 2008). During the interviews, it further became evident that the young people proceed on the premise of a potentially negative reaction from white Irish people, as Rian (9) observes:

I don’t ever feel left out with my friends at school – all my friends in my class are kind of good – when we talk about racism they always talk about how it is wrong – like if they see something on the internet or TV they say, ‘that’s so racist’. 
It seems that these mixed ‘race’ young people must always interact with others in and through a sense of ‘race’. There is almost a kind of hyper-vigilance at work here as Rian appeals to the altruistic nature of white people to comfort her in the face of everyday racism. Margaret also alludes to the following encounter which is imbued with a racialised subtext:

One of my friends has a joke – well, we’re not friends anymore but like – one of the girls – you know how people make jokes like ‘oh, you Jewish bastard’ even if you weren’t – so she’d go to someone who was white and say, ‘you black bastard’ and then, everyone would turn and look at me and I’d be like, ‘whaaa’ – because I barely even heard it – and then, one of the girls said, ‘ah sure, Margaret can only be half-offended ‘ because I’m only half-black’ - so, anytime anyone says something and then they feel really uncomfortable – and then I say, ‘I can only be half-offended’ and then it kind of relaxes the mood and people think, ‘oh, she’s ok’ – instead of me looking at them like, ‘why did you say that’ – I mean, I just tend to blow it off – unless it’s something serious, I’m not gonna make a big deal of it.

There are some interesting power dynamics at work here. We can note that there are some subversive notions of political correctness being deployed and/or perhaps, a display of post-race irony (‘I can only be half-offended’). We can note that Margaret’s white peers have created space to articulate racist assumptions and yet again, Margaret is being called upon to express loyalty to whiteness, or in Fortier’s (2005) terms, a ‘peeling of the skin’ is required. It is almost as if a monoracial identity is being imposed upon her or perhaps, this encounter is yet another variant of the ‘what are you’? question (Williams 1996) which mixed ‘race’ people must endure on a regular basis. In a sense, Margaret is forced to choose where her loyalties lie and in addition, assume responsibility for easing any discomfort which may ensue as a result of potential racial tension (so as not to be the ‘affect alien’ (Ahmed 2008, p.6)). The final outcome of the above encounter is a re-configuration of bodily space as the white body is re-constituted as white through production of the racialised ‘other’ (Ahmed 2002). Whilst this section has examined how racialisation comes to be lived at the level of the body, in the next section, I examine how everyday claims to Irish belonging by the mixed ‘race’ subject are underpinned by racialised differentiations.
The Mixed ‘Race’ Subject, As Racialised ‘ Outsider’.

This section provides insight into how these mixed ‘race’ young people, as competent political agents (de Certeau 1984; Kallio 2007, 2008), negotiate powerful host/newcomer racialised dualisms in the context of everyday encounters.

‘Betwixt and Between’: Complex (Dis) Identifications

My focus here is on how the mixed ‘race’ Irish young people interact with dominant Irish societal assumptions independently through ongoing negotiation(s) of the racialised binary. As Colum (12) states:

Well, in Ireland, it’s not just that people are separate – but it’s just that Ireland is a white country – there’s black people in it – but when you think of it, there’s not that much – it’s not like there should be black people – it is a white country.

Colum responds to dominant national discourses which promulgate whiteness as a central aspect of Irish identity (Fanning 2012; Garner 2004). By so doing, we are enabled to see that Colum forfeits any personal claim to belonging as he articulates his positioning, as a non-white person, within the nation-state. But, this narrative is further infused with deep-rooted essentialist ‘race’ talk as Colum’s statement is predicated upon an assumption of the natural racial segregation which underpins racist ideology (and is derived from 19th century scientific racism and biological determinism) (Ifekwunigwe 1999). In terms of Colum’s personal trajectory of racialisation, we can observe that he has come to live his racial body, although discursively produced, as possessing ‘essence’ (Ahmed 2002). At one point, Colum relates that transitory moment of being allowed to experience insider status – that moment when he subverted racial categorisation:

C: Sometimes, I like it because when I say my name is (African surname beginning with O) – and then, they don’t think it’s an African name – so I am black but then my name is O.
**Mum:** Oh yeah – they try to put in the O apostrophe.

**C:** And then I say, no it’s just O without the apostrophe – it’s an African name and they are like – they wouldn’t expect it – then, they think, ‘oh yeah, that probably is an African name because he’s black’.

In an emotional disclosure, Colum relates how, at times, he momentarily possesses an Irishness that cannot be called into question as his ‘O’ surname provides evidence of kinship belonging. But, we can further glimpse how a brief moment of identification with the nation was, in a sense, overshadowed by a subsequent moment of non-belonging. In fact, this narrative brilliantly encapsulates how Colum is defined by both Irishness and Africanness in uneven and fragmented ways as he is interpellated by a variety of discourses which may link him to either country (Ní Mhurchú 2015). Yet, it is precisely Colum’s failure to present intelligibly within the national framework which acts as a mode of resistance (although it is not resistance as we would normally understand it) (de Certeau 1984; Kallio 2007, 2008; Ní Mhurchú 2015). In the following dialogue between Jane and her son Sam (8), she questions his rationale for choosing not to stake a claim to Irishness whilst living in Ireland:

**Mum:** Do you ever say to anyone in Ireland that you are half-Irish?

**Sam:** No (sarcastic tone – as in ‘that is so obvious’).

**Mum:** So, you always say that you are African, don’t you?

**S:** Yeah, but when I’m in Africa, I say that I am fully Irish.

**M:** Do you ever feel that people in Ireland are wondering if you are fully African – like ‘that boy is African’ because like you don’t see any difference with you and the other Africans, do you? I mean, so even though we are living here in Ireland, you don’t say you are Irish?

**S:** No, I’m African when I’m here (emphatic tone)....

**Mum:** What about the kids you know that have two African parents?

**S:** Well, if anybody asks them, they say, ‘I’m from Africa’ – and they have never even been there.
This narrative illuminates both the complex subjectivities of Sam’s lived experience of dislocation but, also a life deeply entrenched in racialised discourses of immigration and belonging. Whilst both Ireland and Africa are ever-present, Sam is constantly dis-engaged from both as opposed to engaging with either (Ní Mhurchú 2015). We get a sense therefore, of the constant ambiguity underlying his experiences of belonging (ibid.). Yet, as he selectively chooses which aspect of his identity to reveal, we can see how Sam, like Colum above, exercises agency by failing to present intelligibly vis-à-vis the state. Rather, Sam’s lived experiences point towards ‘in-between-ness’ as another mode of political identity and belonging (Ní Mhurchú 2015). Aaron (12) is also engaging with both Ireland and Africa in the following narrative:

*Patti:* When you said earlier that you would like to ‘go back’ to (African country), what did you mean?

*Aaron:* Well, in a way I would like to – because when I went there on holidays I instantly made friends on the first day.

*P:* Have you ever found it hard to make friends here?

*A:* Not really – but it’s a lot easier in (African country) – because like it’s easier to meet people – because they know I’m (African) – here when I first meet people I have to tell them I’m Irish.

The insider/outsider logic fails to capture the complexity of Aaron’s political subjectivities; he is disembedded from Ireland yet, remains enduringly attached to, and expresses a ‘homing desire’ (Brah 1996) for Africa. Conversely, we can note how Margaret (19) positions herself in relation to the racialised binary:

They [African cousins] say to me ‘you act white’ and I’m like, ‘I don’t act white, I act Irish’ – in America, it’s a black/white thing – but over here, it’s like, you’re either Irish or you’re not Irish – like racism is not against black people - it’s against foreign.
When Margaret is accused of ‘acting white’, she immediately transposes this onto Irishness and the racialised terms of Irish belonging. But, just as whiteness is subsumed by Irishness, the phenomenon of racialisation in the Irish context ensures that ‘foreign’ is equated with black. Thus, Margaret’s account serves to re-affirm the prevailing statist terms of belonging (white ‘insider’ versus racialised ‘outsider’). We can further acquire a sense of Margaret striving towards ‘insider’ status (i.e. whiteness) – a striving which may ultimately be rewarded with a type of honorary belonging (based on ‘peeling of the skin’) (Fortier 2005).

This brings us to yet another dilemma which features for the mixed ‘race’ young people. Although Margaret possesses equally black and white heritage, her whiteness is rendered invisible and/or even negated. At best, it is a version of ‘impure whiteness’ (Morrison 2004).

To similar effect, Margaret further relates the following account:

When I was working in the (name of venue) – when I was in secondary school - some people would say to me ‘where are you from’ and I’d say, ‘I’m Irish’ but they’d say back, ‘but, no where are you from’ – I’d say, ‘from here’ and then ‘but really where are you from’ – so depending on the age of the person, I would either leave it at that or you know, if they were an older person, I would eventually say it to them, ‘my dad is African and my mother is Irish’ – or I’d say, ‘my dad is from Africa’ – or ‘my mam is Irish’ – then one time, one guy surprised me when he said, ‘is your granny from (name of village) (laugh) – so someone there knew my granny.

In the above scenario, Margaret is either interpellated into the national framework (‘is your granny from’?) or, as is more likely, cast ‘outside’ the nation (‘where are you from’?). Through the intrusive speculation of strangers in prosaic encounters, we are starkly reminded that, indeed, it is Margaret, who must bear the burden of strangerhood in Irish society as ‘the work of the nation is done as much through the everyday encounters in public life as it is done through the political machinery of the nation-state’ (Ahmed 2000, p.98).

Margaret’s narrative further speaks to the normalisation of the ‘what are you’? (Williams 1996) encounter in the Irish context as she is obliged to invoke an oft-rehearsed repertoire of
formulaic replies and varying levels of self-disclosure (which are context-dependent) in response to intrusive reading practices. We can further view Margaret’s agency as she complicates assumptions and/or at some level, negotiates the ambivalent spaces(s) opened up by the speculative questioning (Haritaworn 2009). In essence, Margaret may be ‘fixed’ by the white gaze but she is attempting to exercise her capacity to ‘turn’ the gaze (ibid.).

But, we can further see how these mixed ‘race’ disjective reading practices are underpinned by asymmetrical power relations (Haritaworn 2009). In fact, mixed ‘race’ ambiguity may serve to re-inscribe the relation which entitles the white gaze to be directed towards the ‘other’ (ibid.). This is evident insofar as ‘the relation between knowing and looking is crucial: it is in the violence of the white gaze that they are known and this knowledge serves to constitute the subject as the one who knows’ (Fanon 2008, p.56). At the end of the above narrative, Margaret relates the subjective experience of being allowed to experience a momentary affirmation of belonging through ancestry and blood-ties (her granny).

This section shows how the positioning shifts within each narrative – shifting momentarily from inside to outside, betwixt and between – shed light on how this continuous process of (dis) affiliation with the national may impact on subjectivities and indeed, are lived out (Lewis 2006). The narratives further provide testimony to the fact that these mixed ‘race’ young people experience difficulty articulating a sense of identity within the existing statist framework (Ní Mhurchú 2015). Whilst this section has shown how these young people, at the level of the everyday, subvert traditional host/newcomer dualisms, in the next section, I examine how these young people make use of popular culture influences.
Reading ‘Race’ from Popular Culture

The mixed ‘race’ Irish young people, oftentimes, engage with popular culture in their negotiations of both exclusionary discourses of belonging and the politics of ‘race’ and racism. Take the following extract as an example:

_Colum_: Another thing I find is that I can’t picture James Bond being black.

_Patti_: Wasn’t there talk of Idris Elba being the new James Bond.

_C_: But, I think that would be terrible.

_P_: Why’s that?

_C_: Cos I just can’t picture a black person being James Bond or like in Mission Impossible.

_P_: Maybe it’s hard to picture it because we haven’t seen one yet? We couldn’t picture a black president until Obama.

_C_: Well, like I mean, if a black person was James Bond then all of the other people would be black – in most of them anyway.

_P_: Why do you say that?

_C_: It just would – well, then, like M16 would be in Africa.

_P_: How come it would be?

_C_: Cos’ everyone would be black and if they went outside, they would be in England and there would be white people there, so they would have to move it to Africa – they couldn’t do an all-black film in England or America.

_P_: Why do you think it has to be an all-black film?

_C_: But, it would (emphasis) be all-black.

_P_: Do you feel there is a reason for thinking that?

_C_: Because that is what things are like – it just would – then like Judy Dench and all of them would turn into black people.

_P_: I think there was a black actress in one of the recent James Bond films, wasn’t there?

_C_: Well, you see, there can be black girls in white places but there can’t be black men in white places – if the main character is black, then everyone else is black – if the white person is the main character, then you can throw some black people in as well – but if the main character is black then everybody (emphasis) is black – well, there might be a few white people but most people would be black.
I utilise this narrative to demonstrate how Colum explicitly and ably engages with the politics of ‘race’ by means of popular culture. Through the prism of James Bond films, Colum critically examines his position in a racial order that naturalises and normalises white privilege (‘because that is what things are like’), racialised belonging, the intersections of gender and ‘race’ and also, the impermeability of the black/white divide.

Interestingly, Colum self-positions within discourses of blackness and by so doing, may have found a way to safely explore the connections between his theoretical understandings of ‘race’ and his positioning in his social world. But, we can further view Colum as posing critical questions about the nature of Irish belonging here. As chapter four demonstrates, Colum, as a mixed ‘race’ citizen, lacks legitimacy at the level of the nation-state and therefore, his engagement with popular culture may provide a strategy for ‘turning away’ (even momentarility) from the national polity in order to experiment with various modes of identity and belonging (Ní Mhurchú 2016). This ‘turn’ towards popular culture can be identified as an act of citizenship (see chapter two) as Colum de-stabilises dominant modes of belonging (ibid.). Indeed, the deliberations over belonging continue as, in the extract below, Colum discusses the racial politics of gang warfare:

I was reading another book – and they wouldn’t let black people into a gang – I know like that gangs are bad – but this certain gang – they were an all-white gang – but then it kind of redeemed itself – because like the gang owner had a son and this kid was like screaming abuse saying ‘your dad is so racist, why doesn’t he hang out with the KKK’ and all that stuff – it showed that it was racist and it showed that it was bad – so it redeemed itself.

This story seems to greatly appeal to Colum’s sense of racial justice. We can see that Colum seeks to position himself as non-racist in the above account (as the norm against racism remains strong (Phoenix 2005)) and also, to structure his social world accordingly (i.e. the story ‘redeemed itself’). Popular culture, therefore, provides an important medium for reflecting acceptable ways of claiming blackness in Irish society as, by choosing to relate this
anecdote, one gets a sense that Colum is working through or, in fact, seeking to displace the anxiety generated by racism. In a similar fashion, Tom (10) states:

Sometimes, when I am watching TV, I see something racist – only sometimes – some films but I think they are usually based on a long time ago – from America – like in the golden globe awards – all the black people were like sitting at one table and all the white people at another table – and like sometimes you see things on the internet like when you search up someone – it’s all either black or white – and like Kevin Hart and all those – they are always hanging out with black people – and in all the cop films, if you are black you never have a white partner – you always have a black one.

Whilst reproducing the post-race thesis that racism is an historical phenomenon (‘based on a long time ago’), Tom’s critical reading of popular culture suggests an awareness of the ongoing salience of racial categorisation (and the hierarchical ranking of blackness and whiteness as noted earlier in the chapter). We can further see, how, in the above account, the process of racialisation (i.e. bodies coming to be lived as ‘essence’ (Ahmed 2002)) is being mediated by means of popular culture. Margaret also draws on popular culture to make sense of her racialised world:

I remember being so delighted when the cheerios ad had a mixed ‘race’ family – and there’s a baby ad recently where the father is white and the baby is black – or mixed ‘race’ – I remember thinking ‘I like seeing that’ – ‘I like seeing it’ – I never even thought about it until I saw it and I thought, ‘I like seeing this’ – it’s nice to see something different’ – it’s always like there’s a white family or there’s a black family – it was never like mixed.

She continues:

I had Samantha Mumba – I used to love her – I was about 4 when I found out about her and I remember I loved her – because she was like me – and I thought, ‘she’s like me’ – you do look for it – you subconsciously look for role models – and I did subconsciously think, ‘this one is like me’.

Margaret’s narratives are marked by a celebratory, jubilant tone as she sees her multiracial family constellation both normalised and reflected in popular culture. But, Margaret also seems to be engaged in the exploration of the ‘living out’ of a multiracial identity (i.e.
Samantha Mumba as role model) as an alternative articulation of belonging of life in the ‘new’ Ireland. Margaret can be seen to exercise political agency through experimentation with notions of fluidity (i.e. a ‘mixing up’ of national and global cultural references) and hybridity as a way of carving out a space of belonging within hegemonic narratives of citizenship (Ní Mhurchú 2016). Thus, in this section, we have seen how the young people, through the medium of popular culture, engage in what Ní Mhurchú (2016) regards as an ‘everyday de-stabilisation’ of dominant ideas of a unitary nationally defined culture (i.e. an act of citizenship (Isin 2008; Ní Mhurchú 2016)). In the next section, I discuss how negotiations of exclusionary discourses of belonging are negotiated at the level of the body.

The Body as Racialised Site of Conflict over Belonging

This section further evidences the centrality of the body in the young people’s mediations of racialised belonging. For example, Margaret draws on the black authenticity of her father in the following discussion:

My dad is very against tattoos and piercings – he went mental that I got that done – I told him about it and he flipped out – he said, ‘your skin is already something that holds you back’ – like I get what he means – I feel like I was very oblivious to that for a long time – I just didn’t see it but I get it now - so that is why my dad hates tattoos and that – because that will affect me more than my friends.

Margaret’s father, as the bearer of embodied blackness, has passed on to her his knowledge of the constraints of blackness as lived. Margaret narrates her trajectory in and through racialised subjectification in terms of a racial awakening (‘I just didn’t see it but I get it now’). Like her African father, Margaret now sees blackness as being biologically over-determined and moreover, the continuing power of racial categories to mark and define the black body. We can further witness the normalisation of the white body in the above narrative – in fact, it is black bodies, not white, that become corporealised (Ahmed 2002; Fanon 2008).
In the following extract, Margaret draws on discourses of skin shade in order to mediate her insider/outsider positioning:

Like, dad is a lot more aware of ‘race’ because he’s so (emphasis) dark and his nickname as a child was ‘blackie’ – he’s very dark so I think he’s a lot more aware of it than I am.

We can further view the potency of biological discourses as Margaret infers a causal link between her father’s skin shade, his experiences of racism and by association, his outsider positioning. By utilising whiteness as a reference point (see later in chapter), Margaret differentiates herself from the ‘truly’ black thereby consolidating her insider position within the national framework. Generally speaking, the concept of a skin shade hierarchy came into play in many of the young people’s accounts which, of course, has its roots in colonialist discourses and the essentialism of the one-drop rule (Ifekwunigwe 1999; Tizard and Phoenix 2002). The nuances of skin shade also featured in the dialogue between Alice, her son Daniel (10) and I:

**Patti**: How do you describe yourself?

**Dan**: I normally say that I’m a light brown boy.

**Mum**: Remember D, one time we were with your dad in the car and he was saying that you were black – you were very young at the time and you got very upset, do you remember?

**Dan**: Yeah – but that’s because I’m not (emphasis) black, I’m light brown.

**Mum**: That’s what you said – and when we got home, you were really adamant that you were mixed and that you weren’t black – and I said to you at the time that it matters what you feel and not others.

Once again, the black father features in order to lend authority to skin shade discussion. The above narrative further conveys the significance of ‘race’ to the self-construction of the mixed ‘race’ young people as Dan implicitly expresses a desire for normalising whiteness which may evidence an internalisation of the western hierarchy in terms of skin colour.
(Mama 1995). But, indeed, Dan’s desire for whiteness may also equate to a desire for Irish authenticity which whiteness, or indeed, the proximity to whiteness (‘I am light brown’) may afford him. Aaron (12) similarly notes below:

I feel that I am mixed ‘race’ but then, if people don’t understand I say Hispanic – because my complexion is more Hispanic - because, you see like, my skin is really light brown – like an Hispanic person.

Or, the following conversation between Nessa and her two daughters, Rian (9) and Mary (6):

Mary: I think I am my dad and my mam’s skin colour mixed together.
Mother: What if somebody asks you what colour you are?
Mary: I say brown or I say I’m tanned.
Rian: I say I’m tanned too.

In both extracts above, there appears to be an avoidance, or even resistance to ‘race’ as framing of identity and belonging. But, the young people are also simultaneously attempting to locate themselves on the border of whiteness (i.e. insider status) or perhaps, at some level, to blur the boundaries of whiteness and blackness. In fact, being ‘tanned’ entertains the possibility of whiteness as colour becomes ‘a detachable signifier’ or, ‘an adornment, rather than a stain’ (Ahmed 1997, p.160).

Thus, it becomes apparent that, whilst white people can possess a skin colour, it seems that black and mixed ‘race’ people speak in terms of skin shade. But, there is also another issue at stake here. These mixed ‘race’ Irish young people have also, as part of the racialisation process, absorbed the idea that the terms ‘black’ and ‘white’ do not simply reference skin colour but are actually racial identities. As there is no prevailing category of identity for mixed ‘race’ Irish, we can, therefore, observe these young people as attempting to craft new mixed ‘race’ subjectivities (e.g. ‘hispanic’ or ‘tanned’) as part of a gesture towards naming
their in-between conditioning. Sam (8) explains below the racialised connotations of being mixed ‘race’ in (Africa):

*Patti:* What do they call you in (Africa), Sam?
*Sam:* They call me ‘pointie’ – that’s because I’m mixed ‘race’.
*P:* And what does it mean?
*S:* Well, it’s because of my skin colour – you see, I’m not a point 5, I’m a point 7 or 8.
*Mum:* They used to say that to me all the time – ‘this one is ours’ – ‘he’s not a point 5, he’s a point 7’ – because he could nearly pass as pure (African).

Although there is a specific name for mixed ‘race’ in [African country], it further seems that the category of mixed ‘race’ lacks legitimacy in its own right (i.e. Sam is hailed as a ‘point 7’). There is also an attempt to impose monoracial norms which seems to be mediated by notions of racial purity. We can thus see how Sam exists outside of blackness or whiteness – that is, he is a skin shade as opposed to a skin colour. Indeed, several of the young people verbalised negative emotions related to skin colour and, in some cases, explicitly expressed a desire for whiteness, as we can note in Margaret’s case below:

> I remember when I was young, I thought, ‘I want to be white’ – ‘I want to be like my cousins’ – I remember my cousin said something to me one day like, ‘you’re dirty’…and like, a lot of my dad’s family are dark – they call me ‘whitey’.

Margaret is racially positioned somewhere between the two oppositional discourses of black and white – that is, being called ‘dirty’ (by white Irish cousins) and ‘whitey’ (by black African extended family). Due to processes of racialisation, Margaret is reduced to the sum of her racialised body and moreover, notions of biological and scientific racism both persist and find expression in the interview narratives (see Sam’s narrative above). More specifically, the narrative highlights, once again, the lack of a legitimate category for mixed ‘race’ Irish. It is
further interesting to note that even Maya (4), has absorbed the centrality of whiteness to her self-construction:

*Mum:* What colour is your skin, Maya?

*Maya:* Emmmmm, it’s kind of whitey brown.

*Mum:* Do you like having that colour skin?

*Maya:* Yes……

*Patti:* What do you like about it?

*Maya:* Because it’s a nice colour, and I think it looks nice.

Although Maya engages in a very literal discussion of skin colour, whiteness is retained as the reference point, as she defines her skin colour as ‘whitey brown’. As we continued our discussion, her mother, Ellie recounts the following episode:

*Mum:* Once she said to me, as we were walking to school – she was going through a very intense obsession with Elsa [Disney Princess] and she once said, ‘I don’t want to have brown skin. I don’t want to be different’. Do you remember that day when we were walking to the Montessori and you said that Maya?

*Maya:* That’s because I want to have white skin and golden hair – just like the way Elsa does – she has hair all the way down here (showing me length of hair).

*Mum:* Like, when I say, my heart broke, I actually came home and cried and I was thinking things like, ‘oh my god, I have failed her, I have done it all wrong’ (whispering).

We can see how racialised skin shade dynamics have insinuated their way into the heart of the mother/child relationship. Maya (4) is deeply invested in western notions of beauty and desirability (Tate 2007) and the normalising influence of whiteness which she mediates by means of popular culture. But, these mixed ‘race’ young people also draw on discourses of skin shade as a means of comparison with the positioning of other minority groups (i.e. relational positioning (Phoenix 2005)) or, as is the case with my study, as a way of creating a
distance between their positioning and that of more recently arrived African immigrants (who are negatively racialised). In this vein, Rian (9) relates an episode from school:

There are 3 girls in my school – they are from (Africa) and they’re not mixed – they have a deep, dark skin – and they get called names an awful lot and one time, their mam got really cross and the headteacher brought the mam into the office.

As Rian attempts to position herself in relation to her African peers, she seems to proffer skin shade as a contributory factor in the negative experience of racism – that is, skin colour as provocation somehow or even as a justification. But, there is a further implicit suggestion that ‘real’ blackness is associated with African immigrants, the racialised ‘outsiders’. In the following dialogue, Michelle also attempts to make sense of the implications of skin colour vis-à-vis insider/outsider positioning:

Michelle: In front of my friends, I call myself brown, but at home, I would say black.

Patti: Why do you think you change the way you speak about your skin colour at home and at school?

M: I don’t know….maybe, because my mam and dad say ‘black’ at home but at school, it is only people from Africa that are black.

Michelle resists the claiming of ‘Africanness’ in the public sphere which is semantically associated with ‘black’ and contiguously, ‘outsider’ status (White 2002). She opts instead for the term ‘brown’, perhaps, as a form of whitening herself through differentiation from racialised migrants. It is, indeed, worth noting that racialised discourses of immigration are a very strong and pervasive feature of the interviews with the young people of this study.

Along similar lines, Margaret states:

My friend always refers to like pure African guys who haven’t been here long – she calls them FOBs – like, fresh off the boat – I said, what is an FOB and she says, ‘fresh off the boat’ – I said, ‘whaaa!’ – so like if you are African and you are new and your accent is very thick, people are a little bit more wary of you.
Margaret also attempts to distance herself from recently arrived African immigrants (FOBs) whose presence in the Irish state may interrupt or even disrupt her interpellation into the national framework, as a mixed ‘race’ Irish citizen (Lewis 2006). The young people further summon discourses of ‘blood’ belonging as a form of distantiation from immigrants which indeed, demonstrates the potency of biological discourses. As Dan (10) notes:

I think you are Irish if you are born in Ireland – or you’ve got to have Irish blood – you can be born in Africa but your mam could be Irish or you could be born in Switzerland and your mam or dad could be Irish – then you are still Irish because you have Irish blood or Irish blood and African blood or Irish blood and Switzerland blood.

Margaret also draws on blood and kinship notions of belonging by emphasising her biological relatedness to her white mother:

When I’m with my mam, people think we look really alike – like, sometimes, people think I look very alike my mam – and I say stuff like my mam and I have mannerisms like her and everything.

Although positioned as outsiders by skin colour, these mixed ‘race’ young people demonstrate agency by means of a constant endeavour to subvert the ways that their bodies are marked and defined as ‘out of place’ (Ahmed 2002). They do this by invoking the logic of skin shade (e.g. whitey brown, light brown) and other positioning strategies such as notions of blood/descent, establishing a differentiation from African immigrants and in some cases, their dark-skinned fathers. It is as if a gap, or a space of negotiation, opens up between how they are positioned outside by biological signifiers yet, positioned inside through discourses of blood belonging. What seems particularly significant is that this insider/outsider positioning is being negotiated at the level of the body.
Concluding Remarks

These mixed ‘race’ Irish young people, who both trouble narrow racialised understandings of Irishness and the discreteness of racial categories, narrate their individual trajectories both in and through discourses of racialisation. Indeed, the mixed ‘race’ landscape remains firmly entrenched within the historical legacy of black-white social stratification. However, these narrow and rigid systems of black and white (which are both highly structuring but at the same time, fall short) fail to encompass the multi-faceted nature of negotiations of mixed ‘race’ and/or of processes of racialisation (i.e. racialised identities as socially constructed, fluid and dynamic).

Indeed, as we note the primacy of skin colour in the young people’s accounts of racialised abjection, we are reminded that discourses of racialisation reproduce the visible somatic differences upon which they are predicated (Ahmed 2002). Most significantly, we are made aware of how essentialist notions of ‘race’ prevail and as such, the desire for mixed ‘race’ belonging is perpetually denied because the young people are always reduced to the sum of their racialised bodies (Ahmed 2002). So, in effect, the logic of racial difference means that the young people’s attempts to advance insider status across a variety of sites (skin shade, Irish-born status) are oftentimes, constrained by the workings of the racialised insider/outsider dichotomy (Lewis 2006).

Indeed, the negative racialisation of these young people, who are ‘enmeshed within the interpellative fabric of everyday life’ (Tyler 2013, p.4) and their subsequent liminal positioning at the margins of the national space provide testimony to the structural consequences of the centrality of whiteness, as an institutionalised position of power. As such, there is no legitimate political category for the mixed ‘race’ Irish citizen. Instead of being designated as mixed ‘race’ Irish, they are, in effect, defined through their ‘non-
existence’ within the legitimate body politic (i.e. captured within territorial borders but stigmatised as ‘other’). Located betwixt and between the categories of citizen and migrant, these young people have difficulty articulating a sense of identity within the existing statist framework. We can note the young people’s attempts to ‘name’ their in-between positioning – they are ‘whitey brown’, ‘Spanish’, ‘Hispanic’ as opposed to being mixed ‘race’ Irish.

But, in fact, the political subjectivity of these mixed ‘race’ young people is defined by their ambiguous positioning, their ‘in-between-ness’, access to neither here nor there (Ni Mhurchú 2015). This ambiguity allows us to consider how political subjectivity operates outside a statist discourse. Indeed, a re-conceptualisation of subjectivity through the work of Kristeva (1991), as fragmented in terms of spatial and temporal discontinuity, helps us re-consider how we might engage with these young people’s experiences of political identity and belonging which lack intelligibility within dominant conceptions of citizenship.

De Certeau’s (1984) notion of ‘making do’ shows us how subjects entrenched within structures of domination may wield some degree of political agency and self-determination. The narratives above highlight how, within the context of the politics of everyday practices, these young people deploy tactical manoeuvres in order to re-inscribe their presence within discourses of citizenship (i.e. citizenship as ‘strategy’ in De Certeau’s terms) through a disruption of the dominant codings of the citizen and the outsider.

Finally, this chapter highlights how racial categories come to be lived on the body as everyday encounters are saturated by racialised us-them dualisms (Fanon 2008). This serves to demonstrate how issues of ‘race’ and racism still circulate as meaningful discourses which can be easily summoned to the forefront of public discourse particularly during times of economic instability and fracture. Most importantly, this points towards the ongoing significance of ‘race’ as a form of social division. Therefore, although socially constructed
initially to justify slavery and imperial conquest, racial categories are still constructed and lived as mattering.
Conclusion

This study has been guided by the overall question of how issues of ‘race’ and belonging are mediated within the transracial mother/child dyad in early twenty-first century Ireland. The following sub-questions added focus and depth to the overall question: ‘what can these experiences within the transracial mother/child dyad tell us about (a) negotiations of ‘race’ and racism within the private and the public sphere and (b) the specific relationship between ‘race’ and Irish national belonging’? And, ‘what are the particular positionings and experiences of the white Irish mother and the mixed ‘race’ youth citizen in Ireland’?

This study has demonstrated the workings of state and nation in the reproduction of racialised belonging through an analysis of the lived experiences and narratives of the white Irish mother and her mixed ‘race’ child (ren). In this regard, I found that the socially constructed racial category of whiteness is privileged at a structural level and remains a central organising principle of Irishness as a mode of national belonging.

The mothers’ narratives have highlighted the myriad ways of being interpellated as a white woman in contemporary Ireland. More specifically, I have examined how the identities and subject constructions of those positioned as white are racialised thereby opening up whiteness as a racial category. It, indeed, becomes evident that these women, by mothering ‘outsider’ children, are differentially positioned vis-à-vis white hegemony as their lived reality challenges notions of whiteness as stable, unchanging and as a lived position of privilege and power. Yet, the narratives also provide ample evidence that the mother’s conception of nationhood is predicated upon a deep attachment to an idealised whiteness and in actual fact, her white subjectivities are, at some level, entangled with the racialised structures of Irish society.
This study has also demonstrated that, despite the mothers’ efforts to publicly articulate their children as legitimate citizens, these young people are precluded from expressing claims of belonging in terms of formal rights. Rather, I have argued that the spectrum of political agency of such citizens is ultimately determined by notions of phenotype (and blood). I have further drawn attention to the governmental production of these mixed ‘race’ young people as national abjects, both contained and immobilised within the state, who must live out their difference silently, in a de-politicised manner, in the interstitial spaces of the national framework. These mixed ‘race’ Irish citizens are thus located in the vulnerable position of existing outside citizenship entitlements but yet, forced to acquiesce to the full force of governmental power.

In their stories of racialised abjection, the mixed ‘race’ young people narrate a lived reality shaped by black/white social stratification. In fact, their narrative accounts highlight the sheer ordinariness of being reduced to the sum of their racialised bodies as ‘us-them’ racial constructs based on phenotype saturate their everyday encounters. I have argued, therefore, that ‘race’ continues to be regarded as an intrinsic property of bodies and to possess ongoing salience as a socially significant and divisive factor both within the mother/child relationship and more widely.

This study has further shed light on how the narratives of the mother/child dyad offer alternative framings of national identity. In this regard, the mothers draw on competing and contradictory articulations of belonging vis-à-vis their children – the promotion of an ethnically bounded cultural identification with Ireland, the negotiation of transnational affiliations and the invocation of hyphenated/hybridised versions of Irish identity. Through their narratives, I have demonstrated that the mothers are implicitly posing critical questions in relation to the nature of Irish belonging (‘who is allowed to be Irish’?) which are steeped in discourses of cultural purity.
I also found a tendency to euphemise ‘race’ as culture as the articulation of exclusionary beliefs are mediated through cultural discourses, oftentimes, in a manner which denies the reality of racialised exclusion for the young people. It is further evident from my study that tropes of blood and kinship are repeatedly appealed to in both mother and child narratives which provide the racialised subtext of Irish national belonging by producing the ‘fictive ethnicity’ (Balibar 1991) around which it is organised. Indeed, the persistence of the everyday narrative which constructs Irishness as a pure ‘race’ (the ‘white homogenous nation’ (Moran 2004)) demonstrates the pervasiveness of nationalist ideology in contemporary Ireland. As the racialised principles of sanguinity testify, the blood-based notion of belonging is a powerful and deeply entrenched discourse.

In fact, nationalist practices of exclusion oriented towards the pursuit of the authentic and elusive sense of Irish national identity powerfully positions these young people as ‘outsiders’. Most significantly, post-colonial narratives of ‘race’ and nation are interwoven into moments of intimacy between mother and child which helps us understand how racialised belonging gets reproduced privately. This further demonstrates the tendency for racialised belonging in Ireland to be framed by a national, rather than a racial, paradigm.

The narratives have further revealed the everyday sites (i.e. school, crèche, sports clubs) through which citizenship becomes meaningful as the mother/child unit contests the allocation of space within the nation-state. Through a presumption of ‘rightful presence’ which is the citizen’s due, the dyad interrogates the asymmetrical power relations at the core of the racialised host/guest relationship. In essence, there is a re-configuration of citizenship occurring ‘from below’ as the transracial mother/child dyad seeks to re-negotiate the conditions of the mixed ‘race’ presence in Ireland. Moreover, the primary objective of the political struggle is not the attainment of normalised modes of belonging but rather, to
rupture hegemonic citizenship narratives by establishing a political legitimate category for the mixed ‘race’ Irish citizen.

This young person, who is rendered as a ‘national abject’ as opposed to being hailed as a mixed ‘race’ Irish citizen, is effectively deprived of a space in which to articulate his/her political identity and belonging within the existing statist (i.e. inside/outside) framework. In fact, their lack of a political category becomes starkly apparent when examined against the backdrop of the young people’s endeavours to carve out mixed ‘race’ subjectivities and/or formulate a terminology that gives expression to their in-between positioning (‘nearly white’, ‘Hispanic’, ‘tanned’).

Although it would appear that these mixed ‘race’ young people are, at once, both Irish and African, I have argued throughout this study that the reality is somewhat different. In fact, the cosmopolitan notion of seamless belonging across two nations which is promised by multicultural discourses is not available to these young people who articulate dislocation in relation to both Ireland and Africa. Rather, these mixed ‘race’ young people are suspended in the nexus between citizenship and migration, neither ‘us’ nor ‘them’, but constantly shifting within and between boundaries (Ní Mhurchú 2015). Such citizens, therefore, occupy an ‘ambiguous subjectivity’ (i.e. access to neither nor there) which constitutes certain lived experiences of political identity and belonging (ibid.).

In fact, this study has shed light on the constant movement of insider and outsider status in both mother’s and child’s lives (albeit differently). Moreover, although these binaries are at work, both mother and child interview narratives move us beyond them in terms of subjectivity and lived experience. In fact, the transracial mother/child dyad lacks intelligibility vis-à-vis recognisable and everyday use of categories such as us/them, inside/outside or African/Irish.
Therefore, I have argued that the lived experience of the transracial mother/child dyad is rendered invisible within dominant conceptions of citizenship which fail to incorporate alternative types of political subjectivity. However, we can create a space for the dyad’s articulation of political identity and belonging by a theorisation of political subjectivity through Kristeva’s (1991) work. Kristeva’s work provides an alternative framework for a conceptualisation of citizen-subjectivity which helps us move beyond notions of autonomous sovereign beings and state-centric linearities (inside/outside). Crucial to Kristeva’s work, then, is the idea that subjectivity must incorporate the Freudian notion of alterity which cannot be foreclosed. In fact, the categories of inside/outside do not feature in Kristeva’s theory of foreignness. The Kristevan theorisation of subjectivity allows us to shift from an understanding of Being as a metaphysics of presence defined vis-à-vis the state to a metaphysics of process – in short, modern subjectivity as a subject-in-process. Both Kristeva and Ní Mhurchú, therefore, suggest a politics of citizenship that extends beyond the conventional framings of subjectivity.

The knowledge produced in this study reflects both a particular moment in time and a specific constellation of mixed ‘race’ politics but certainly demonstrates how social change is occurring in, oftentimes, insidious ways. Displaced from the public sphere, the multiracial family constellation can be regarded as a micropolitical site where racialised identities are produced, negotiated and contested (Twine 2010). Moreover, through the appropriation of space for an articulation of political identity and belonging, the transracial mother/child dyad is actively re-framing nationhood and citizenship at the level of the everyday. The multiracial family formation subverts the cultural homogeneity of the Irish family (as reproduced in discourses of Irish nationhood) and in addition, notions of citizenship that focus exclusively on the nation-state. In the young people’s negotiations of belonging, they make appeals to popular culture and selectively self-disclose and/or invoke ambivalent identities in order to
articulate a sense of self and write themselves into the national narrative. All of the above actions/processes signify a performative politics of resistance that serves as a form of ‘everyday de-stabilisation’ (Ni Mhurchú 2016) of dominant modes of belonging and further attests to the resilient and resourceful nature of the transracial mother/child dyad.

This thesis makes a contribution to contemporary academic scholarship in relation to ‘race’, racism, citizenship and integration and to methodological debates which focus on the interviewing of mothers and children in relation to a sensitive subject area (‘race’). More specifically, this thesis is the first Irish-based (i.e. Ireland or the diaspora) study which focuses on the lived experiences of the emerging generation of mixed ‘race’ Irish young people and/or the white mother of the multiracial family formation. It further brings the theoretical domains of mixed ‘race’ and whiteness into dialogue to understand how ‘race’ impacts all members of an interracial family.

Through an engagement with the emergent field of Critical Citizenship Studies (CCS), which emphasises citizenship as a practice rather than a status or presence (sovereign presence), and by acknowledging the incomplete and fragmented nature of the subject, this thesis contributes to wider theoretical efforts to re-frame the politics of citizenship beyond statist conceptions of political subjectivity. Finally, this study has examined political subjectivity from a vantage point which is currently under-theorised within Critical Citizenship Scholarship – that is, the intimate domain of the transracial mother/child dyad.
References


*Bunreacht na H-Éireann* (Constitution of Ireland), Article 2.

*Bunreacht na H-Éireann* (Constitution of Ireland), Article 41.1.


*Fajujonu – v – Minister for Justice* (1990) i.l.r.m. 234.


Osheku – v – Ireland (1986) i.l.r.m. 733.á


# Appendix A: Table of Participants

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Appendix B: Sample Interview Guide for Mothers

Structure: Personal Details? Details about children? Details about neighbourhood?

Prompts: Names and ages of children? What school do children attend? Childrens’ interests?
Have family always lived in that area? How long have family lived in the area?


Structure: When you look back at earlier years, or even now, what is it like to mother a mixed ‘race’ child in Ireland today?

Prompts: What moments really stand out for you? During pregnancy/birth/adoption/toddler years/starting nursery/starting school/starting secondary school? Can you say something more about that etc?

Intent: Changes over the life course. Temporal nature of mothering mixed ‘race’ child.
Mother’s perspective.

Structure: Can you tell me a bit about what everyday life is like for you as the mother of a mixed ‘race’ child?

Prompts: with family? friends? In the locality? At the playground? Interactions with the school? Engaging in sporting activities? Community and leisure activities?

Intent: Everyday lived experiences? Positioning of the mother and child vis-a-vis Irish citizenship?
Structure: Based on your lived experience, what do you feel are the main issues for mixed ‘race’ children in 21st century Ireland?


Intent: Political perspective? Positioning of the mixed ‘race’ child?
Appendix C: Sample Interview Guide for Activists

General: Name, brief sketch of personal and career background?

Prompts: Personal Interest/affinity with the organisation?

Intent/Interest: Context/Rapport Building.

General: Can you tell me about the history/origins of the organisation? Organisational aims and objectives? What are the plans for future growth and development?

Prompts: Details about how the organisation has developed over time? Achievements and/or low points? Organisational links? Relationship of organisation to Irish NGOs?

Intent/Interest: Political Context.

General: How has life changed for the mixed ‘race’ person in Ireland over the years?

Prompts: Can you elaborate on the changes? Turning points? Has there been any progression? If so, what? If not, why is that?

Intent/Interest: Political context/Positioning of the mixed ‘race’ person in contemporary society.

General: What is the most significant issue being faced by mixed ‘race’ people in Ireland today?

Prompts: Why is that? Can you tell me more about that?
Intent/Interest: Political context/positioning of mixed ‘race’ person.
Appendix D: Information Sheet for Mothers

FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
INFORMATION LETTER

My name is Patti O’Malley and I am a postgraduate student at the University of Limerick. The purpose of this study is to try and obtain a better understanding of the everyday, lived experiences of the white Irish mother and her mixed ‘race’ child(ren). It is hoped that this information will help increase our understanding of what it is like to be a member of a multiracial family in Ireland today and/or shed light on the specific relationship between ‘race’ and Irish national belonging.

I will make every effort to facilitate you to contribute to this research in a manner and at times, that are convenient to you. I will be asking you to participate in two interviews which will be 1 to 1 1/2 hours in length. It is anticipated that the second interview will be with both you and your child, but only if you (and your child) are in complete agreement. If you like, we can discuss this further at the first interview. With your permission, I will record the interview(s).

Participation in this study is totally voluntary. You may withdraw your consent at any time; at which point, the recording will be destroyed. Neither you nor your child will be identified by name in this research project. Written transcripts will be made from the recording and the original recording destroyed. Written transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. This data will be kept for a period of seven years; after which time, it will be disposed of securely and confidentially. You will be given an opportunity to review the interview transcript(s) and any clarifications or edits you request will be made. In addition, a copy of the final research report will be available for you to read.

If you are willing to participate in this study, could you please complete the attached consent form. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me, Patti O’Malley (patti.omalley@ul.ie) or my supervisor, Dr. Breda Gray (breda.gray@ul.ie).

This research study has received Ethics approval from the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (2015-05-01). If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent authority, you may contact:

Chairperson Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
AHSS Faculty Office
University of Limerick
Tel: +353 61 202286
Email: FAHSSEthics@ul.ie

Kind regards

Patti O'Malley
Appendix E: Information Sheet for Young People

‘My Everyday Life’

My name is Patti and I am doing a project about what everyday life is like for you.

I would be really interested in talking with you and hearing whatever you would like to share with me about your everyday life (that is, your friends, school, hobbies and interests). Anything you tell me will be private.
Also, if you agree, I will be asking to come visit your school and perhaps, one of your after-school clubs just to watch and listen so that I can learn a bit more about what your everyday life is like.

It is totally up to you whether or not you want to take part. You can say yes or no. And if you say yes, and you change your mind during the study, that is fine too!
Please take your time about deciding whether or not you want to take part in this project and maybe discuss it with family and/or friends. Also, if you would like to know more about the project, please feel free to contact me yourself or ask someone you trust to contact me. My email address is patti.omalley@ul.ie.
Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and for your help.
Yours gratefully

Patti

Consent Form

If I decide to take part in Patti’s project called ‘My Everyday Life’:

- I understand that the interview will be recorded (but only if I give permission). If I don’t want the interview to be recorded, then recorder will be switched off.
• I understand that anything that I say will be kept private.

• I understand that I can change my mind about taking part in the project at any time – it is totally up to me.

If you understand and/or agree with the above statements, you now need to decide whether or not you would like to take part.

I have decided that I would like to take part in Patti’s project called ‘My Everyday Life’.

Please put a circle around either of these faces:
Signed........................................

Please print your name....................................................
Appendix F: Information Sheet for Activists

FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
INFORMATION LETTER

What are you being invited to do?

In your capacity as (Director/Member of Mixed ‘Race’ Organisation), you are being requested to participate in an interview of approximately one hour in length.

What is the focus of this research study?

This project aims to provide insight into how citizenship is ‘lived’ by the mixed ‘race’ citizen and also, how issues of ‘race’ and citizenship are negotiated by the white Irish mother and her mixed ‘race’ child(ren) who are positioned differently vis-a-vis legitimate Irish citizenship.

Where will the research take place?

The research will take place at a time and location that is convenient for you.

What are the benefits of this research?

- To raise public awareness.
- To inform key stakeholders (e.g. ‘race’- related NGOs in Ireland etc).
- To impact policy development.

What happens to the information?
Within the final report, you will be identified in your capacity as the (Chairperson/Director of .......)

**What if I do not desire to take part?**

Participation is voluntary. You are entitled to withdraw from the study at any point.

**What do I do if I’d like to participate or if I have any questions?**

Please feel free to contact Patti O’Malley (patti.omalley@ul.ie) or my supervisor, Dr. Breda Gray (breda.gray@ul.ie).

**What if I have any concerns and wish to contact someone independent?**

Please feel free to contact:

Chairperson of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee,
AHSS Faculty Office
University of Limerick,
+353 61 202286
Email: FAHSSEthics@ul.ie
Appendix G: Consent Form

FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSENT FORM

Consent Section:
I, the undersigned, declare that I am willing to take part in research for the project entitled ‘The Everyday, Lived Experiences of White Irish Mothers and their Mixed ‘Race’ Children’.

- I declare that I have been fully briefed on the nature of this study and my role in it and have been given the opportunity to ask questions before agreeing to participate.
- The nature of my participation has been explained to me and I have full knowledge of how the information collected will be used.
- I am also aware that my participation in this study may be recorded (video/audio) and I agree to this. However, should I feel uncomfortable at any time I can request that the recording equipment be switched off. I am entitled to copies of all recordings made and am fully informed as to what will happen to these recordings once the study is completed.
- I fully understand that there is no obligation on me to participate in this study.
- I fully understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without having to explain or give a reason.
- I am also entitled to full confidentiality in terms of my participation and personal details.

______________________________________         __________________________
Signature of participant                                               Date