

# **A Study of Subjective Understandings of Racism in Contemporary Irish Society**

**By**

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Claire Kealy, 2007.

**DECLARATION**

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

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This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated.

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **A Study of Subjective Understandings of Racism in Contemporary Irish Society** **Claire Kealy**

This thesis aims to study subjective understandings of racism in contemporary Irish society. This aim was achieved by combining a close examination of the available literature with fieldwork. The literature reviewed in chapters one and two, helped develop an understanding of 'race'-related terminology by examining the origins and development of racism. It covered a broad time period from ancient societies' understanding of the concept of racism to contemporary interpretations of the term. The literature review provided a solid foundation to identify and explore subjective understandings of racism in contemporary Irish society.

Chapter three sets out the research methodologies applied to conduct the fieldwork, which was carried out in two phases. The first phase consisted of conducting focus group interviews with participants in order to ascertain which issues participants regarded as of paramount importance. The issues identified as being significant were then included on the question schedule. The question schedule was then used in the second phase of fieldwork. The second phase consisted of conducting individual interviews.

The analysis process applied to the data gathered through the fieldwork is also discussed in chapter three. As previously stated, the data gathered from the focus group interviews was used to formulate the question schedule for the individual interviews. The question schedule was then used in the individual interviews to probe interviewees as to their subjective understandings regarding various aspects of racism. Therefore it was the data gathered from the individual interviews that constitutes the primary data in this research.

The data gathered from the individual interviews was set out in chapter four. The data was structured as follows; first the question, (as it appeared on the question schedule) was set out; this was followed with a table setting out the general and dominant themes, which arose in answer to the question. Finally, the examples of the participant's answers were provided to illustrate the themes, which arose in answer to each particular question. On completion of the analysis process, the findings which emerged from the data were set out and discussed to provide a clear picture of subjective understandings of racism in contemporary Irish society.

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## **Introduction**

The aim of this research was to study subjective understandings of racism in contemporary Irish society. Essentially, this research examined how individuals understand various aspects of the concept of racism in a modern Irish context. This included an examination of individuals' understandings of the grounds for racism and the various forms racism takes. It also examines whom the participants understand to be the perpetrators and victims of racism and whose concern or responsibility this issue is.

It was hoped that in achieving this aim, this research would provide a greater understanding of the concept of racism in the context of modern Irish society. A further hope was that by focusing on subjective understandings of racism, the findings of this research would be of use to public or voluntary sector bodies to identify and understand conceptual shortfalls in people's understandings and awareness of racism that they need to address in their anti-racist efforts.

The development of the theoretical framework of this study was influenced most significantly by the specific aim of this research. The aim of this research requires that 'theory/concept-generating research' be conducted (Grbich 1999:29). A requirement that sits comfortably within the interpretivist approach adopted as the aim of this research essentially requires the researcher to explore an area where minimal research has been undertaken and a particular aspect of that area is probed in greater detail.

Furthermore, the epistemological position taken in this research and the fieldwork methods employed allowed the issue to evolve during the actual research, avoid over- direction and address the issue of bias. Indeed the adoption of an interpretivist

approach and the subjective nature of this research required the researcher to be aware of her personal prejudices in order to develop unbiased empathy with the research participants' subjective understandings.

Moreover, the methodology adopted in this research first addressed the subjective element of the research question by formulating two objectives. The first objective was to identify issues surrounding the concept of racism, which individuals subjectively understood as important or significant. In practical terms, this involved the development of an interview schedule from the information provided by focus group participants. The second objective was to examine the issues included on the question schedule in greater detail to gain a deeper awareness of subjective understandings of racism using individual interviews.

Furthermore, the research methodology adopted in this study was qualitative in nature. This is first and foremost because this research is a piece of social research and research which is social in nature, is often aligned with qualitative methods. Furthermore, the qualitative approach adopted reflects the aim of this research, as qualitative research allows the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of particular phenomena within a certain context. Moreover, qualitative methods alone can achieve the specific aim of this research which requires that the data gathered looks beyond numbers, is rich in detail, and the methods used allow for sensitivity regarding this emotive and inflammatory issue. Finally the theoretical perspective adopted to frame the analysis of this research is the critical 'race' theory, which emphasises the socially constructed nature of 'race'.

This research was set out in the following manner. Firstly, chapters one and two contain a discussion of the material reviewed to provide a strong foundation for this research and alert readers to previous outcomes. Specifically, chapters one and two examine the origins and development of racism both inside and outside of Ireland, over a significant period of time, in an attempt to gain a broad understanding of 'race'-related terminology.

Chapter three entitled 'Research and Data Analysis Methodologies' first acknowledged the principal aim of this research; then related the aim to the theoretical framework adopted in this research to produce methods which help achieve the specific aim.

As previously stated the actual fieldwork was conducted in two phases. The first phase consisted of conducting focus group interviews with participants of a nationally reflective sample in order to ascertain which issues regarding racism were of paramount importance. The issues identified as being of paramount importance were then included on the question schedule. The second phase consisted of conducting individual interviews again with a nationally reflective sample in order to examine the issues identified by the focus groups as significant. Chapter three also sets out the analysis process applied to the data gathered.

Chapter four entitled 'Findings' sets out the data gathered from the individual interviews in a data matrix. Chapter five is the 'Discussion' chapter. It is essentially an analysis of the findings which demonstrates various aspects of individual subjective understandings of racism in contemporary Irish society.

# **Chapter One**

## **Literature Review**

### **‘Race’-Related Terminology**

#### **Introduction**

The objective of a literature review is to exemplify the type and quality of material that exists on a particular subject or subject area (Flick 2006). Furthermore, the information examined in the course of the literature review may help mould the aim or question, which the research strives to answer.

Indeed, the literature reviewed in this study helped to mould the principal aim of this research, which is to study subjective understandings of racism in contemporary Ireland. It was felt that this was a worthwhile aim which, when achieved, could help public and voluntary sector bodies to identify and understand conceptual shortfalls in people’s understandings and awareness of racism that such bodies need when addressing the issue of racism.

In pursuit of this aim, this chapter explores available documentary evidence in order to gain an understanding of how the concept of racism and other important ‘race’-related terminology have been interpreted and understood within academia. This provided a greater understanding of each concept explored. Furthermore, setting out an understanding of the concept of racism and other ‘race’ related terminology provided a foundation from which to begin achieving the aim of studying subjective understandings of racism in a contemporary Irish context.

## **Interpreting ‘Race’-Related Terminology**

‘The term “racism” is often used in a loose and unreflective way to describe the hostile or negative feelings of one ethnic group or “people” towards another and the actions resulting from such attitudes’ (Fredrickson 2002:1).

The phenomenon that is racism has been probed from many different perspectives and has been subjected to intense scrutiny. However, it must be considered that people, consciously or unconsciously, tend to heuristically interpret racism in a manner that reflects their personal beliefs. For example, academics from various disciplines (sociology, philosophy and anthropology) have attempted to define ‘race’ related terminology. However, the definitions that they offer should be read, bearing in mind that academics may tailor their findings in order to create a bias in favour of their own particular argument or discipline. Therefore, many of the definitions of ‘racial’ terminology that help provide an understanding of the concept of racism, must also be recognised as conforming to particular perspectives.

### **‘Race’**

“‘Race’ explains nothing; it is something that must be explained’  
(Barbara J. Fields cited by Ignatiev 1995:187)

Sociologist Ashley Montagu described the issue of ‘race’ as ‘an important subject about which clear thinking is generally avoided’ (1954:1). Garner uses this quote as an opening for his discussion of ‘race’ to illustrate the lack of clarity surrounding the subject (2004: 4). What is clear is that the term ‘race’ is complex, confusing and highly controversial. Banton states that ‘Much of the confusion started from attempts to find a place for the word ‘race’ in a classification scheme’ (1998:1). Furthermore he questions, ‘was it a synonym for variety or for species? And if it was only a synonym for an existing term, why should it be introduced?’ (Banton 1998:5). There is no definitive explanation of ‘race’, no one true analysis of its

meaning as definitions of 'race' are influenced by each society's norms and values, public opinion and how developed a society is.

Scientists in the nineteenth century tried to assert that 'race' was a static state, however, science was unable to determine how many 'races' existed or if 'races' existed at all. There is a consensus in modern natural science that 'racial' groups do not exist. Yet 'the general public' believe and indeed some modern researchers commence their research with the false premise that 'races' exist and the assertion that one 'race' is superior to another (Miles and Torres 1999:20). However according to Broyles 'researchers no longer set about trying to quantitatively prove that one race is superior to another' (1998:1). He continues 'Yet even today, scientists sometimes interpret data in such a way that the superiority of Whites is subtly implied' (Broyles 1998:1). Broyles uses Hubbard's criticism of sections of the scientific community to demonstrate this point. Hubbard claims 'that members of certain races are at a higher risk for various diseases than members of other races' (Broyles 1998:1). Hubbard,

*notes that these studies often only include data on age, race, and sex, without considering environmental factors such as income and employment. The studies imply that the increased risk of diseases is due solely to race (Broyles 1998:1).*

The world of academia, usually takes one of the following approaches to the use of the term 'race'. In the past there was vehement support for 'the notion that 'race' be bracketed every time it appears in social scientific discussions' (Solomos & Back 1996:1). Others believed that the word 'race' should be placed within inverted commas to indicate 'that the concept is a contested one' (Garner 2002:5). However, there are also those who argue the word 'race' should be used without punctuation. Using 'race' in this way asserts that the term has a categorical and accepted meaning. Those asserting that 'races' exist and that human beings can be categorised accordingly usually use this approach. The third approach, which will be discussed, is to not use the term 'race' at all as it diverts focus away from the

real issue, which is ‘discriminatory processes based on the idea that the human race is divisible into distinct categories called ‘races’ (Garner 2004:5).

This is the stance that prominent sociologist Robert Miles supports, who ‘challenges anyone to define ‘race’ unproblematically, and, indeed, critiques of Miles’ position do not satisfactorily explain what ‘race’ means’ (Garner 2004:5). Miles’ position stems from the fact that biologically ‘races’ were never proven to exist, though many tried. Montagu was in agreement with Miles. He also discouraged the use of the term ‘race’ and believed that its use should cease because of the ambiguity as to its meaning. The argument regarding how to define ‘race’ is, according to Garner, ‘*a circular and irresolvable one.*’ (2004:6).

While a sometimes pedantic debate over ‘race’ related lexicon still rages in academia, contemporary sociologists generally agree that ‘race’ is a meaningless concept because humans do not possess at birth definitive biological characteristics that can be attributed to ‘racial’ origin. This is clearly demonstrated by contemporary sociologists Solomos and Back who stated, ‘...we do not see race as a natural category in any sense, though it is often used as such’ (1996: xiv). Indeed, many members of society still use the term with little regard as to its meaning and view themselves and others as members of ‘races’. This is perhaps due to a human desire to relate social phenomena to biology and simple visual markers of belonging and difference making ‘race’ a social construct. Couple this with the ever-changing nature of society and the values that it places on human physical features and the result is that the term ‘race’ becomes a complex, confusing and highly controversial term. The principal aim of this research is to study subjective understandings of racism in a contemporary Irish context. Any attempt to gain an understanding of a complex concept like racism should clearly therefore be preceded by setting out related terminology such as ‘race’ and how it will be understood within the research.

Garner chose to use ‘race’ in inverted commas when discussing the issue indicating

that 'the concept is a contested one, whose meanings are not what they seems' and claimed that this is illustrated by making it 'a substantive abstract noun' (2004: 5&8). He is careful to point out that he does not use it to refer to a specific group of people. This research concurs with Garner's point of view and the word 'race' will appear in inverted commas. While this does not answer Miles' challenge to define racism unproblematically, it does recognise that the term 'race' is a source of confusion due to differing interpretations and understandings of its meaning. This chapter will continue by examining other important 'race'- related terminology.

### **Racism**

The principal aim of this research is to study subjective understandings of racism in contemporary Irish society. It is therefore logical to next examine the term racism to gain an understanding of how others have defined and understood it in an academic context.

Fredrickson's (2002) position is that an action should only be labelled as racist if the discrimination in question was against an unchangeable characteristic of the victim. Therefore, religious and ethnic discrimination cannot be labelled racism as the discrimination is against a characteristic or characteristics that can be altered. To clarify this point, he explains that 'a heathen can be redeemed through baptism...an ethnic stranger can be assimilated into a tribe or culture in such a way that his or her origins cease to matter in any significant way' (Fredrickson 2002:7). Therefore religious and ethnic discrimination should not, according to Fredrickson be labelled as racist behaviour but as a different form of discrimination. Fredrickson does, however, note that culture and ethnicity although 'fluid and subject to change' can contain 'set traditions which are as rigid as 'race'' (Fredrickson 2002:7).

Garner follows on from this point by stating that racism itself is a 'multifaceted and fluid pattern of social relations' (2004:19). Garner is referring to the volatility of

society brought about through continual change. The dynamic nature of fluidic racism within this context brings about different forms of racism from one society to another. This is because each society places different values on physical features and measures a person's worth, ranking them as inferior or superior to each other depending on whether their physical features are viewed positively or negatively by that society. Sociologists refer to the rating of human physical features as 'phenotypical interpretations' (Banton 1998:13).

The variety of definitions of racism that exist may be accounted for by the fact that they are based on different foundations or ideologies such as religious, natural science or social scientific beliefs. Indeed, even a brief examination of the historical theorisation surrounding racism – as provided later in this chapter - conveys a wide variety of theories regarding the notion of 'racism'. For example, within social science it was sociologist Gordon Allport's contention that racism is largely a result of ignorance and misinformation. In the 1950's Allport developed the contact hypothesis. It was both popular and influential and even formed part of the obiter dictum in the famous American case concerning the desegregation of classrooms, *Brown v. Board of Education* 344 U.S. 141 (1952). His hypothesis holds that close contact with persons from different 'racial' and ethnic backgrounds promotes enhanced tolerance towards those groups. Those who support Allport's contact hypothesis maintain that it reduces inter-'racial' prejudice and provides accurate and positive information regarding various aspects of a different 'racial' group. This positive information may then be generalised into a positive perception of the group as a whole.

It should however be noted that similarly a negative experience with an individual from a different ethnic group can equally create a negative stereotype of that particular ethnic group as a whole. There are those who disagree with Allport's theory and cite the desegregation of classrooms brought about by the *Brown v. Board of Education* case as evidence that it does not work. For example, Elaine Jones, the Director of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured

People's (NAACP) Legal Defence Fund has stated '... we're coming up now on the fiftieth anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education, and we have *not* lived up to the promise of that decision' (Terkel 2004:144). The Reverend Will D. Campbell agrees with Jones, 'To this day it still doesn't work' (Terkel 2004:148). This is a case in point, which demonstrated that interaction alone doesn't stop the occurrence of racism.

Definitions of racism in an Irish context are few. Loyal & Mulcahy's definition of racism in the 2001 report on Racism in Ireland explains that 'the term 'racism' refers to the representation of the cultures and ways of life of Black and ethnic minorities as inferior, or as a threat to the culture of the dominant group in society' and that it is used 'to rationalise the kinds of discrimination that they experience' (2001:7). This definition of racism incorporates the existence of a power struggle between the 'superior' and the 'inferior', a notion which has been included in definitions of racism since its inception. Indeed, Solomos and Back suggest that 'this usage of the term was first suggested by Ruth Benedict in her book *Race and Racism* which defined racism as 'the dogma that one ethnic group is condemned by nature to congenital inferiority and another group is destined to congenital superiority (1943:97)' (Solomos and Back 1996:4). Loyal & Mulcahy continue, 'In this sense, racism can also be seen as an exclusionary practice which occurs when a specific group is shown to be in unequal receipt of resources and services' (2001:7). Furthermore, Loyal and Mulcahy's report offers this broad definition of racism; 'any beliefs or practices which attribute negative characteristics to any group or persons either intentionally or unintentionally on the basis of their supposed 'race' or ethnicity within the context of differential relations of power' (2001:7). This definition was selected as it is comprehensive and conveys that racism, in an Irish context is not purely based on the physical, but is a multi-faceted prejudice. However, even such a broad definition doesn't amount to a definitive definition.

In fact, while it seems that a definitive definition of the term racism doesn't exist on

either an international or national basis, the consequences of racist ‘attitude and action’ are clear throughout history (Fredrickson 2002:9). They range,

*from unofficial but pervasive social discrimination at one end of the spectrum to genocide at the other, with government-sanctioned colonial subjugation, exclusion, forced deportation (or “ethnic cleansing”), and enslavement among the other variations on the theme* (Fredrickson 2002:9).

### **Discrimination and Prejudice**

Two other terms, which merit being considered when discussing ‘race’-related terminology, are discrimination and prejudice. In the general discourse of everyday life the words discrimination and prejudice are used interchangeably. They may be used to express a person’s taste, bias, slant or sway in a particular direction or towards a predisposed preference. The same two words may be used to describe inequality, intolerance, bigotry and chauvinism against age, ‘race’, gender or sexual orientation. Both words display a similar meaning and allow for wide application, however, the definitions of these words will differ depending on the context in which they are used. Furthermore, both definitions reflect that a wrong is being done to a person which -at least possibly- is due to ignorance.

Discrimination and prejudice may be defined in a legal context. Prejudice is simply defined as a *‘pre-conceived judgement’* (Murdoch 2000: 611). Discrimination is not given an exact definition as it is not a strictly legal term but legislation does provide that a person must not discriminate. Section five of the Equal Status Act 2000, sets out the ‘discriminatory grounds’ under which an action may be initiated. Those grounds are, according to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, colour, nationality, national or ethnic origin and membership of the Traveller community. The law does make exceptions under which a person may lawfully discriminate. Positive discrimination must however, bona fide intend to promote equality of opportunity.

Sociology requires discrimination and prejudice to be defined in a more specific context to be of use as a tool of analysis. Social scientists offer an abundance of definitions. There is however, a common thread that runs through many of these definitions. It is that discrimination should be treated as separate in meaning, but not completely unconnected, to prejudice. Indeed the Penguin Dictionary of Sociology directs its users to '*see: prejudice*' when looking up the word discrimination (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner 1994:99). Prejudice is given the following definition,

*This is a term usually used in the literature on race relations to denote an individual attitude of antipathy or active hostility against another social group, usually 'racially' defined. Prejudice, often the object of psychological study, is to be contrasted with discrimination, which refers to the outcome of social process, which disadvantages social groups 'racially' defined. Prejudiced individuals may participate in discriminatory activities but do not necessarily do so (1994: 276).*

This definition indicates that prejudiced thoughts may lead to actions that are discriminatory. Michael Banton offers the following definition of discrimination; 'To treat individuals differently because they are thought to belong in different racial groups is to discriminate' (1998:140). The most important word in that sentence is 'treat' as it indicates that discrimination requires action. Moreover, it conveys that such action changes a situation from one where a person harbours hostile thoughts or hateful feelings to a situation, where a person physically acts upon such thoughts or feelings.

Discrimination is therefore viewed as involving an action, which can be either discreet or obvious, and in which people are treated differently because of their 'racial' or ethnic background. The discriminator is therefore the personification of negative attitudes, thoughts and beliefs about members of a different group. Therefore, essentially, discrimination refers to a person's behaviour. If discrimination is one possible result of prejudice then prejudice can be viewed as a

process, or part of a process, which produces discrimination.

The terms prejudice and discrimination will be understood within this research as follows; prejudice in its most basic interpretation is to pre-judge. A pre-judgement is to form an opinion without a full assessment of all the facts. When a prejudiced feeling or idea is expressed it usually has negative and derogatory implications towards a minority group. Although, strictly speaking, prejudice may be a bias in favour of something, it is used most commonly to express dislike. Therefore, if prejudice is the holding of beliefs, which cause a person to view a group of people in a certain way, then discrimination is action based upon those beliefs and the discriminator is the personification of a discriminatory action. Put simply, discrimination is prejudice transformed into action and this clear statement is how the terms will be understood within this research. The fact that prejudice may be expressed through discriminatory actions creates a confused connection between the two terms.

### **Ethnicity**

Another term, which must be examined for the purpose of this research, is ethnicity. Ethnicity, a 'Greek-origin word', is essentially a socially defined concept based on cultural characteristics (Banton 1998:11). Anthony Giddens' definition of ethnicity provides a clear explanation of the term, 'ethnicity refers to the cultural practices and outlooks of a given community of people that set them apart from others' (1997: 210). He describes ethnic groups as 'culturally distinct' and possessing 'different characteristics' such as 'language, history or ancestry (real or imagined), religion and style of dress or adornment' (Giddens 1997:210).

It is also important to note that the terms 'race' and ethnicity are often viewed as interchangeable. There is however a clear distinction between the two concepts. Ethnicity is a product of learned behaviour within a particular environment while 'race' refers to an ascribed trait. This confusion often leads to ethnicity being seen

as the identification of ethnic traits. Lentin distinguishes between the term 'ethnic minority' - describing it as a 'fluid and floating' concept - and 'race', which is understood as a rigid and unchanging categorisation of people (2002: 232). This can have both positive and negative results. Constructive effects include the development of a strong and positive image about a particular ethnic group. This can be useful in promoting anti-racism. However, as with Allport's contact hypothesis, it may also lead to the development of negative stereotypes and the naturalisation of cultural identity (Harvey and McDonald 1993).

### **Ethnocentrism**

Mac Gréil in his revised study of 'intergroup relations' in Ireland explains another related term, ethnocentrism, as 'prejudices against a person because (s)he is perceived to belong to a particular nationality or culture' (1996: XIII&11). Mac Gréil's research, which was conducted in Ireland, found 'that there are signs of an overall rise in ethnocentrism' (1996: 11). It is worth noting however that when Mac Gréil compared his later research conducted in the 1990's, to the research he carried out in the 1970's, the results indicated 'greater enlightenment in the Irish people' regarding issues relating to discrimination (1996:11).

### **Ethnic Minority**

Another commonly used term in contemporary Irish society with little regard to its actual meaning is 'ethnic minority'. Simply put, an ethnic minority is one that is culturally distinct from the majority of the population with a sense of itself as a community also (Giddens 1997). The Travelling community in Ireland is a clear example of an ethnic minority group with a sense of itself as a community. It is culturally distinct from the settled community. This, however, is not a view shared by the Irish Government, which refuses to recognise the Travelling Community as an ethnically distinct group. This is evident in the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform's interpretation of the Equal Status Act 2000, which offers

protection to those, discriminated against based on their 'ethnic origin' or 'membership of the Traveller community'. By specifically naming the Travelling Community it conveys that the Government does not consider the Travelling Community to be a distinct ethnic minority group.

Lentin also draws attention to another term thought to be favourable to ethnic minority, which is 'minority discourse' (Lentin 2002:231). In practice it would seem that 'the term 'ethnic minorities' prevails in official anti-racist, academic and popular discourse' (Lentin 2002: 232). Lentin also comments on the general perception of ethnic minorities in Ireland;

*In the Irish context, there is a progressiveness (or perhaps a Chicago School-style 'evolutionary optimism'?) implied by the use of the term, adopted – in the wake of the European Year Against Racism (1997) – by government-sponsored bodies such as the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) and the Equality Authority. More specifically there is a celebratory implication in relation to Travellers – Ireland's largest racialised ethnic group – attaining the 'ethnic group' tag (2002: 232).*

Despite the positive connotation surrounding the use of the term in contemporary Irish society, it is evident that ethnic minorities are at a disadvantage economically, politically, socially and legislatively compared to the majority of the population. In fact the National Anti-Poverty Strategy 1997 - 2007 expressly sets out a number of key targets in relation of members of ethnic minorities (Comhairle, 2002). Finally it would appear that the term 'New Communities' is today popular in anti-racism literature. However this term is not without its limitations.

### **Xenophobia**

The term xenophobia, which describes 'a reflexive feeling of hostility to the stranger or other', was 'invented by the ancient Greeks' (Fredrickson, 2002:6). There are two essential elements with regard to how xenophobia is understood within this research. The first element is that xenophobia is based on a difference of

nationality. The second element is that the prejudice or discrimination experienced is based on that difference of nationality.

### **Conclusion**

The literature reviewed in chapter one provides an understanding of the crucial terminology required for studying the concept of racism. The term 'race' may be considered the most crucial and indeed the most complex of all terms examined because without a clear understanding of the concept of 'race' it is impossible to gain an understanding of racism, which is a fundamental concept in this research. However the other terms examined in this chapter; discrimination, prejudice, ethnicity, ethnocentrism, ethnic minority and xenophobia are all central to any comprehensive discussion of racism. Therefore it was necessary to explore the core meaning, which attaches to each term. The definitions provided are academic in nature and in particular derive from the discipline of sociology.

However to achieve the aim of this research it was necessary to go beyond merely exploring the sociological definition attached to the terms 'race' and racism and to gain a more intimate understanding of the concept, by exploring its origins and development. The literature relating to the genesis and evolution of the concept of racism derived from both international and domestic sources. Only by setting such wide geographical and time limitations on the literature, which could form part of this review, could a broad understanding of the concept of racism be gained.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

#### **The Origins and Development of Racism**

##### **Introduction**

This literature reviewed in chapter two traces the origins and genesis of the concept of racism, from racism in the ancient Greek, Roman and early Christian civilisations to the sociological theorisation of ‘race’ and racism in the twentieth century. It also includes a discussion of racism versus religious intolerance, examines how racism was re-defined in light of the theory of evolution and focuses on post World War Two attitudes to racism.

As this is a study of understandings of racism in a contemporary Irish context the literature review includes an examination of the development of racism and anti-racism in Ireland. This includes a brief examination of historical anti-racism efforts and more recent efforts such as the anti-racism campaign conducted by and on behalf of the Travelling Community as well as more recent governmental and non-governmental approaches.

The literature reviewed in chapter two further helped to mould the principal aim of this research by solidifying the foundation from which to begin achieving the aim of studying subjective understandings of racism in a contemporary Irish context.

## **Tracing the Origins and Genesis of Racism**

‘When exploring origins, one finds that beginning’ can be ‘as elusive as mountain summits: just as the topmost ridge seems to be reached, a further horizon rises up beyond it’ (Ross, 2005:17).

### **Racism and the Ancient World**

It is ‘the dominant view among scholars who have studied conceptions of difference in the ancient world that no concept truly equivalent to that of ‘race’ can be detected in the thoughts of the Greeks, Romans, and early Christians’ (Fredrickson, 2002:17). Indeed, classical scholar, Frank Snowden, ‘could find no evidence that dark skin colour served as the basis of invidious distinction anywhere in the ancient world’ (Fredrickson, 2002:17). That is not to say that these early civilisations did not categorise and discriminate, but they did not base their discrimination on the grounds of ‘race’. The early Christians also ‘celebrated the conversion of Africans as evidence for their faith in the spiritual equality of all human beings’ (Fredrickson, 2002:17). This is not to deny that there was ‘prejudice in antiquity’ (Fredrickson, 2002:17). However, such prejudice was not based on racism within a modern understanding of the term, as assimilation remained an ‘option open’ to those discriminated against (Fredrickson, 2002:18). Solomos and Back concur with Fredrickson to an extent stating,

*It is clear from research about ancient societies, ranging from Egypt, Greece and Rome that ideas about differences on the basis of colour and phenotypical features were to be found though they cannot by any means be compared to our modern notions about what is now called ‘race’ (1996:33).*

Furthermore, Fredrickson claims that racism ‘originated, in the fourteenth and

fifteenth centuries' (2002:6). The origins Fredrickson refers to are of religious discrimination that superseded specific 'racial' discrimination. Indeed Fredrickson qualifies this distinction stating 'The religious bigot condemns and persecutes others for what they believe, not for what they intrinsically are' (Fredrickson, 2002:6). However, even today there is much debate as to when a distinction between religious and 'racial' discrimination occurred.

Fredrickson cites Ivan Hannaford's *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (1996), which 'argues strenuously that no clear concept of 'race' existed before the seventeenth century' (Fredrickson, 2002:168). Hannaford is asserting that all forms of discrimination before the seventeenth century were motivated by religious intolerance or something other than 'racial' intolerance. Fredrickson is careful to make this distinction between 'racial' and religious discrimination.

There are those who disagree with Fredrickson's summation of the concepts of 'race' and racism in Greco-Roman antiquity. This includes 'Nicholas Sherwin-White in his study entitled *Racial Prejudice in Imperial Rome* (Cambridge, 1967), and Yves Dauge study entitled, *Le Barbare: Recherches sur la conception romaine de la barbarie et de la civilisation* (Brussels, 1981)' (Shaw, 2006:1). However, Benjamin Isaac goes a step further by rejecting all three authorities. Isaac refutes the idea that the ancient Greeks and Romans harboured ethnic or cultural prejudices but not 'racial' discrimination. Isaac argues that,

*most modern work on race, even by eminent scholars such as George Fredrickson and Michael Banton, has laboured under the combined misconceptions of modernizing definitions of race and a faulty knowledge of the ancient evidence on racism (Shaw 2006:1).*

Isaac claims that racism was 'invented in the context of the Greek city-state' basing this claim on a review of 'mainstream literary texts in Greek and Latin' (Shaw 2006:1). Specifically, Isaac 'describes and analyzes the nature of ancient ideas about race and racism that produced a systematic hierarchy of "superior" and

“inferior” human beings (Shaw, 2006:2).

### **Racism or Religious Discrimination**

The starting point for many discussions regarding ‘race’ and racism is the beginning of the eleventh century as it marked a time of change when ‘the attitudes of European Christians towards Jews became more hostile’ (Fredrickson 2002:19). Fredrickson believes that although racism and religious intolerance are distinct, religious intolerance ‘laid a foundation for the racism that later developed’ (2002:19). This change in attitude is illustrated by what was occurring at this time, namely the ‘Massacres of Jews’ which ‘began at the time of the First Crusade in 1096’ (Fredrickson, 2002:19).

The demonic characteristics attributed to members of the Jewish faith continued throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth century. This is clearly illustrated in the history of the Iberian Peninsula. The history of modern Spain and Portugal tells of times of peaceful co-habitation between a ‘multiplicity of cultures in Spain’ and times of bloody unrest between the Muslims, Christians and Jews (Hay 1996:150). The bloodiest were the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when Christian hatred of members of the Jewish faith resulted in their systematic expulsion from the peninsula. Indeed, Hay comments that the ‘notion of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood)’ developed as a result of ‘anti-Jewish activity’ (1996:70). This led to a common belief among Christians that Jews, were of an ‘evil disposition’ (Fredrickson, 2002:20). This demonisation of the Jews put them beyond redemption in the eyes of many Christians. They were no longer given the option to die or convert to Christianity, as it was believed that they could never properly convert, as they were innately evil. Cecil Roth, ‘a pioneering historian in medieval anti-Semitism,’ states that this created a view of Jews as “less than human” (Fredrickson 2002:21). Discrimination changed from religious intolerance to something else. Jews were not discriminated against solely because of their

religious beliefs but because they were believed to be congenitally evil.

Examples of the dissemination of defamatory propaganda regarding Jews throughout Europe include the rumour that they carried out ‘ritual murder of Christian children’ (Randell 1996:2). Such rumours have become known collectively as “the blood libel” (Randell 1996:2). This combined with ‘social tension, inflation’ and ‘the widespread employment of Jews in important offices’ and the result was ‘local and sporadic outbursts of anti-Semitism’ and ‘major upheaval in the pogrom of 1473’ (Hay, 1996: 151). The continued hostility towards Jews caused many to convert or at least pretend to convert to Christianity. This “crypto-Judaism” created communities of secret Jews, also known as Marranos, a term of contempt meaning “swine” (Chalmers 1996:3 & Randell 1996: 1).

For the purpose of this research it is important to question whether these anti-semitic attitudes were based on ‘religious zeal’ or ‘a passionate racial-ethnic hatred of the Jews’ (Chalmers 1996:5). If the persecution was based purely on religious intolerance then it begs the question as to why those who converted to Christianity continued to be persecuted. Furthermore, the introduction of the concept of *limpieza de sangre* “purity of blood” categorised people on more than just religious grounds (Chalmers 1996:5). Therefore it could be concluded that the motivation was for the most part religious. However, there is support for the idea that racism existed at the time of the inquisition; notably Spanish historian Américo Castro states ‘that Jewish “racism” long preceded the Spanish concern for *limpieza*’ (Chalmers 1996:5). Castro explains that ‘...purity of blood was the answer of a society animated by anti-Jewish fury to the racial hermeticism of the Jew’ (Chalmers 1996:6).

In the late Middle Ages ‘Catholic Europe expanded, conquering and colonizing the periphery of the continent’ (Fredrickson 2002:23). There was increasing intolerance ‘not only of Jews, but also of lepers and anyone whose beliefs or behaviours smacked of heresy or deviance at a time when religious and moral conformity were

being demanded more insistently than ever before' (Fredrickson 2002:25). There was 'prejudice and discrimination directed at the Irish on one side of Europe and certain Slavic peoples on the other' which 'foreshadowed the dichotomy between civilisation and savagery that would characterize imperial expansion beyond the European continent' (Fredrickson 2002:23). Later European colonisation of 'Asia, Africa and the Americas' were influenced by the idea that it was 'the civilised versus the savage' (Fredrickson 2002:23). It would however be misleading to suggest that the 'dark pigmentation inspired instant revulsion' (Fredrickson 2002:26). It is thought that prior to the 'middle of the fifteenth century, Europeans had little or no contact with sub-Saharan Africans' (Fredrickson 2002:26). Furthermore, 'Artistic and literary representations of these distant and exotic peoples ranged from the monstrous to the saintly and heroic' (Fredrickson 2002:26). However, 'the symbolic association of blackness with evil and death and whiteness with goodness and purity unquestionably had some effect in predisposing light-skinned people against those with darker pigmentation' (Fredrickson 2002:26). Yet it would appear that a Black Christian at this time was still more acceptable than a White Jew, conveying that intolerance was still based at least in part on religion and ensuring that the perpetual blurred line between religious and 'racial' discrimination remained hazy.

However, the situation in Iberia in the late Middle-Ages demonstrates that an 'association of Blackness with slavery was already being made' and that the Muslims were influential in teaching the Christians to make this association often portraying 'sub-Saharan Africans as...cursed and condemned to perpetual bondage' (Fredrickson 2002:29). This association was reaffirmed as 'Europeans were ceasing to enslave other Europeans' and 'African slaves became suddenly and readily available' (Fredrickson 2002:30). Fredrickson's claim is that this 'was at the root of White supremacist attitudes and policies' (Fredrickson 2002:30). Indeed the enslaving of a heathen has even been justified as a, 'missionary project' as 'the slaves' souls might be saved through contact with believers' (Fredrickson 2002:30). There is no doubt however that over time slavery became associated with

Blackness. However there are those who claim that viewing slavery as a colour issue is the product of 'our conditioned minds' (Allen 2001:358). Furthermore, there is no doubt that this form of discrimination created economic benefits for the European Empires and that this led to a need to justify slavery.

### **Redefining Racism: the Theory of Evolution**

As the period now known as The Enlightenment approached and the discipline of science developed, the notion of categorising humans came to prominence. During this period 'research workers struggled to come to terms with the evidence of evolution in nature and unequal development of human societies' (Banton 1998:5). Banton claims from the 'seventeenth century (if not earlier) to the present time' the central question which has not yet been satisfactorily answered is 'What is the nature of species?' (1998:19). He continues: 'in the eighteenth century authors tried to account for the differences between humans, such as those in skin colour' and a doctrine developed that 'race' and 'racial' categories were permanent (Banton 1998:5). While it was accepted that 'men could migrate and mate with stranger women, (the belief that) humans could not overcome the anthropological laws of permanence of type, the infertility of hybrids and the limits to acclimatisation' supposedly justified this theory (Banton 1998:6). There was a persistent rumour that a Black and White union had an, 'inability to produce fertile offspring' even though fertile hybrid offspring existed (Banton 1998:27). Banton describes the assumption of 'permanent difference' as a 'capital error' in the development of 'racial' theory (1998:6).

The continuous development of these theories illustrates the fact that science was developing but not always accurately. For example, the theory of 'craniology that had been pioneered at the end of the eighteenth century and was being obsessively refined by, among others, the American Samuel Morton and the Frenchman Paul Broca' (Lively 1998:106). This demonstrates a hunger on both sides of the Atlantic to gain an understanding of their place in the world by categorising humans. However, it is also clear that the development of craniology and later the influential

idea of 'phrenology (the study of the shape and size of the skull)' were an effort by the people who developed them, to assert the White persons superiority in a rapidly changing world (Lively 1998:48&49). This is clearly demonstrated in,

*the German, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach's 1795 fivefold division of mankind (Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, American and Malay) – which remained the basic classificatory system employed by the U.S. Immigration Service up until the 1950's (Lively 1998:48).*

Perhaps the best summation of the events and attitudes of this period is Burleigh's which states that 'From the eighteenth century, racial anthropologists used external physical criteria, frequently the starting-point for further gross generalisations, to legitimise their claim, to superiority over other peoples' (1997:156).

## **Sociological Theorisation of 'Race' and Racism in the Twentieth Century**

Many academics view the enlightenment period as the "era that doctrines about race came to be articulated in a consistent manner" (Solomos and Back 1993:32) and thus the beginning of the theorisation of 'race'. Garner amongst others however suggests that evidence of theorisation can be traced back to the pre-enlightenment period (Garner 2004:8). Whether it was the pre-enlightenment or enlightenment period that marked the origin of racism and in particular the biological concept of 'race', it was not until the early twentieth century that sociological theory regarding 'race' and racism developed, creating a polarised social concept of 'race'. This meant that 'race' was no longer viewed only from a strict 'biological standpoint' as 'a large body of people, relatively homogenous as to heritable, non adaptive features'. The development of the social concept allowed these 'sharp lines' to be bent and consequently 'there was a great deal of overlapping' (Queen and Gruener 2001:21)

Furthermore, many view the influential Chicago School of Sociology -established in the 1920's- as the foundation of modern sociological theory regarding racism. According to the University of Chicago's Centennial Catalogues it 'grew to prominence under Park'. Robert Park was 'one of the key early journalistic and sociological writers in this field' (Solomos & Back 1996:3). A key concept developed by Park was the idea of human ecology. This consisted of analysing society in a manner similar to the study of an organism, which is growing and changing. However, Park did not work alone and the body of work produced by the sociologists at the Chicago school became known as 'the study of race relations' with a particular emphasis on 'segregation, immigration and race consciousness in the United States' (Solomos and Back 1996:3). The school had a sort of revival after World War Two, when a whole new generation of students funded by the G.I. Bill 1944, entered the world of academia. These students are sometimes referred to as the "Second Chicago School" (Fine 1995). The research produced by both Chicago's first and second schools of sociology is still relevant though regarded as flawed by many contemporary sociologists. Modern sociologists, while trying to improve upon the work have found fault with the methodology used and the unsystematic use of data. Despite these perceived flaws the Chicago School of thought provided the impetus for further academic study.

One of the most famous theories to come from the Chicago school of thought was the 'race relations cycle'. Banton describes 'race'-relations' as 'an expression that first came into use in the United States in 1910 to denote relations between blacks and whites' (1998:2). There have been many variations of this model as it has been applied to different groups within different societies and cultures through the years but it is 'basically a model of the sequence that accounts for the integration of immigrants into a host society' (Harvey and MacDonald 1993:18). The important events in this cycle are competition, conflict, accommodation and assimilation. For example, the element of competition refers to limited resources including jobs, money and housing. The theory suggests that this type of competitiveness leads to conflict, which is eventually resolved so each side is accommodated and the

immigrant group assimilates into the majority population's culture. The 'race relations cycle', received criticism for several reasons. Firstly, it 'stood accused of being implicitly conservative and unable to articulate the theorisation of racism with the nature of a class divided and structural inequalities in power' (Solomos and Back 1996:11). Also, it was felt that the theory was too vague regarding each stage of the cycle. There was not enough information and guidance to back up the initial theory, leaving it open to criticism. The 'race relations cycle' is also considered flawed because it assumes that assimilation is the best outcome for both the immigrants and society in general. Banton objects not least in his opinion because it legitimises 'an obsolete and dangerous conception of 'race'' (1998:2). However, according to Harvey and Morag the 'race relations cycle' was 'originally more flexible, suggesting that the host culture would also evolve as a result of drawing on migrant culture' (Harvey and MacDonald 1993:18). This would suggest that the original theory provided for integration rather than assimilation. This is in line with modern thinking on the subject as it is thought the genuine desire to share is more beneficial to society than mere tolerance.

Another school of thought regarding 'race' which was widely embraced in the twentieth century was Social Darwinism. It formed the basis of the Third Reich's ideology regarding White supremacy. This popular concept has its origins in the late nineteenth century. It was born out of the ideas put forward by the Charles Darwin in his book "*The Origin of Species*" published in 1859. Social Darwinism is however, quite different to Darwinism and was developed by Herbert Spencer who coined the phrase "survival of the fittest". Spencer's theory of Social Darwinism was generally either oversimplified or manipulated. Darwin himself rejected the principle of Social Darwinism. It is said that the only real connection between Darwin and Social Darwinism is the name (Wilkins, 1998).

Perhaps the most dangerous manipulation of Social Darwinism was its inclusion as 'part of the framework for the development of Nazism' and eugenics (Steinberg 1997:20). Indeed, Fredrickson claims 'The word "racism" first came into common

usage in the 1930's when a new word was required to describe the theories on which the Nazis based their persecution of the Jews' (Fredrickson 2002:5). However, Banton explains that 'The meaning given to the word racism has changed from its original 1930's sense of a doctrine about racial superiority to one that is much less coherent but more comprehensive. Yet it remains a term of extreme opprobrium' (1983:2). The 'history of eugenics or the 'racial hygiene' movement' is associated closely with Nazi policy but it must be stated that it also 'belongs to Britain, the USA and Europe' (Steinberg 1997:20). It was Darwin's cousin Francis Galton who 'coined the term 'eugenics' to denote the science of 'fine breeding'' (Steinberg 1997:157). A scientific and dispassionate definition of eugenics is that it 'is a movement which aims to improve the genetic endowment of human populations by scientifically directed selection' (Sinnott et al. 1958:250). This definition continues,

*Thus the purpose of negative eugenical measures would be to diminish the incidents of undesirable traits by discouraging the procreation of carriers of certain genes; and positive eugenics would encourage the carriers of desirable genotypes to assume the burdens of parenthood (Sinnott et al. 1994:250).*

Indeed, 'Hitler and the National Socialists believed that intellectual and physical differences between people were indicative of their relative value in the human scale' (Burleigh 1997:156). This belief harks back to the theories of Morton, Broca and Blumenbach. Furthermore Burleigh states, 'This ideology had complex, long term origins, frequently drawing upon extremely venerable pathologies and prejudices' (Burleigh 1997:156). Specifically, the Nazis based their ideas on what they believed was 'The first comprehensive theoretical expression of racial ideology' (Burleigh 1997:156). This is a reference to de Gobineau's 'Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines'. De Gobineau's classification of human races grew out of the belief that the Whites were 'an "Aryan" master race' whose decline was coeval with inbreeding with 'lesser races'' (Burleigh 1997: 156). Furthermore, it was theorised that,

*Ongoing 'miscegenation' would eventuate in a Europe in which the population would be overcome by a dark desire to sleep, living insensitively in their nothingness, like the buffaloes ruminating in the stagnant puddles of the Pontine marshes (Burleigh 1997:156).*

The Nazis sought to remedy the situation through a combination of mass genocide of those they considered undesirable and repopulating with the 'master race' (Burleigh 1997:156). It is said that the third Reich's ideology 'came to reflect superpower anxiety about escalating postcolonial conflict and fear of expanding rival spheres of interest over vast territories, numbers of people and resources' (Goldberg 2001:163). This extreme solution was systematic in nature and incredibly effective. When the Nazi's regime was revealed to the world there was widespread revulsion. Nonetheless, elements of Social Darwinism's influence are thought to be still evident today in the development of,

*Cut throat capitalism in the United States. Here the ideology was that the cream naturally rose to the top; the successful made a lot of money simply because they were superior to the unsuccessful. Those who found themselves in poverty were poor because they were intrinsically inferior (Fancher, 2004).*

Another example of such manipulation of Darwinism includes, it being used to explain that White Protestants evolved much further and faster than other "races". This divisive method of categorising people remains, for some commentators at the heart of western culture. It has even been called the unofficial religion of the west (Midgley, 2004).

The huge amount of research, which took place in the early part of the twentieth century, was reflected in the growing level of interest in sociology and 'race'. This includes the work of Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel. It was clear that the two different concepts of 'race', biological and social, were well established. The biological concept of 'race' was based on the idea that physical differences are in themselves evidence that categories or 'races' exist. Anthropologist M.G. Smith offers this biological definition of 'race',

*Races are biological divisions of mankind differentiated by gross phenotypical feature which are hereditary, polygenic, and highly resistant to environmental influences, distinct and of doubtful adaptive value” (1986:27).*

Therefore, according to this definition, ‘races’ are seen as naturally occurring groupings of humans who exhibit obvious physical differences from one another. This concept echoes elements of Blaumenbach’s theory regarding human categorisation.

Biological definitions of ‘race’ are now generally rejected due to a lack of credibility (Miles and Torres 1999). There is no biological evidence to support the theory that ethnic minorities are intellectually or culturally inferior. Many view the biological argument as a convenient fiction that is used as an excuse for atrocities such as colonial oppression, slavery and genocide. When it was established that science could not prove the existence of ‘races’, it began to be seen as a socially defined concept rather than a biologically determined one based on physical characteristics. In order to understand the social concept of ‘race’, it is necessary to examine how society changed after the Second World War.

### **Changing Society, Changing Theory**

According to Solomos and Back in the post World War Two period, the debate regarding ‘race’ and ethnicity changed ‘especially in Europe’ due to ‘new patterns of international labour migration’ (1996: 53). It is not claimed that the concept of people relocating in order to gain employment is exclusive to the post war period rather that the patterns that emerged at this time were new and different. The most significant patterns being, ‘the movement of workers from less developed countries, for example from North Africa and the Mediterranean basin to Western Europe or from Latin America and Asia to North America’ (Solomos & Back, 1996: 53). There are ‘however, a number of historical specific variation’ and the

settlement in Britain of migrant workers from ex-British colonies is one such example (Solomos & Back 1996:53). Indeed, the migrant labour workforce became an important social group made up of 'racial' and ethnic minorities. Furthermore, it is also recognised that "immigration" has become an inextricable and important element in the articulation of contemporary racial ideologies and practices' (Solomos & Back 1996:54). Indeed this research aims to establish whether immigration is a key element in the formation of attitudes regarding racism in contemporary Irish society due to the increased immigration to this country experienced since the early 1990's. In a 1996 publication Solomos and Back state that there is no doubt that 'Migrants have become the main target of racist movements and organisations, though by no means the only ones' (1996:54). Furthermore, the politicisation of the issue of immigration caused immigration to become 'a new name, but one that is functionally equivalent to the old appellation of 'race'' (Solomos & Back 1996:55). This 'interlinkage between the politics of immigration and race' which 'has been evident in the context of Britain for some time' can perhaps be related to contemporary Irish society (Solomos & Back 1996:55).

In fact it seems likely that there is much that Irish society can learn from the theories developed and mistakes made in other countries. It is said that early sociological theories, which were developed in America regarding 'race' and racism translated well to European society except for 'a number of historically specific variations' (Solomos & Back 1996:53). However, by the 1950's the British began to undertake their own studies in 'race' relations as the presence of migrant workers was causing British society to change rapidly.

There were two primary concerns in early European attempts to theorise 'racial' and ethnic relations. The first was the patterns of immigration and incorporation into the labour market of ethnic minorities 'in the advanced industrial economies' (Solomos & Back 1996:53). The second was the effect of colonial history in determining popular conceptions of colour, race and ethnicity in European society.

Theories regarding patterns of immigration and incorporation into the labour market of ethnic minorities remain useful and relevant. However the fact that Irish colonial history differs from many other European nations sets Ireland apart. Therefore, theories such as John Rex's, which aimed to bring social class perspectives to the study of ethnic relations and John Miles' theory of 'racialisation' are applicable to contemporary Irish society. However there are differences between the Irish and British experience of racism and therefore variations in how applicable these theories and concepts are. But the achievement of the principal aim of this research, to study subjective understandings of racism in contemporary Ireland, could be aided by examining these theories to determine which elements are applicable.

Miles' theory describes a 'race' as a collectivity, which is defined using biological criteria that a society views as significant. The important point here is that these biological criteria that a society views as important have little intrinsic meaning apart from their social context. Moreover, because societies differ from one another in their views, it is possible that the same biological characteristics will be assigned different meanings in different societies. 'Race' is therefore a relative concept. Essentially 'racial' groups exist because a society defines them as such. Societies select seemingly important physical features and give them non-biological characteristics. This 'racialization' is clearly an attempt at understanding the factors that provide the motivation for racism. In spite of the fact that there is a vast body of research by various authorities that disproves the biological concept of 'race', this does not appear to dissuade people from continuing to believe its validity (Miles and Torres 1999). It should be stated that the conceptualisation of 'race' as a social, rather than biological, construct is a fundamental assumption of this thesis. However, although the biological concept of 'race' is considered redundant by natural science and indeed many in social science it is important to understand the perception of correlation between 'race' and biology when interpreting subjective understandings of racism in contemporary Irish society. A clear example of the promotion of a belief that there is a connection between the biological and 'race',

was the formation of the basis of Nazi ideology, which led to the implementation of eugenics and the 'final solution'. It is therefore the conceptualisation of 'race' as a social, rather than a biological construct, which is a fundamental assumption of this thesis.

### **'Never Again' Mentality Adopted**

The systematic nature and scale of the genocide carried out by the Nazis, which took place during World War II caused shock. This was followed by a concerted effort to put in place measures which would prevent future genocide through the establishment of the United Nations. The genocide that occurred in central Europe during the Second World War was certainly not the first example of what was later termed 'ethnic cleansing', that the world had witnessed. However as the League of Nations and the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) were being established to create stability throughout Europe and the world, bloody battles, which resulted in mass genocide continued around the globe. For example as the ECSC was being established in the 1950's the Mau Mau rebellion was gathering momentum in Kenya. South East Asia and in particular French Indochina was also in turmoil as well as Algeria. Each of these conflicts resulted from the countries' colonial history. Another thread of commonality which runs through each conflict is the racist attitudes which were held by the oppressor towards the oppressed. The Kenyan conflict is considered in more detail to demonstrate the racist overtones which were implicit in the conflict. However it is not clear whether racism was the motivation or excuse given for the actions of the Britons in Kenya or both. Furthermore, the genocide which took place in Kenya highlights the inconsistencies in the 'never again' mentality adopted by western Governments.

Kenya's struggles with British colonialism 'commenced after the Congress of Berlin 1884 and 1885 in which the continent of Africa was carved up and the spoils were divided between the European Imperial powers of the time' (Elkins 2005:5). Early on the British carried out surveys of the 'territory and its people for economic

potential and found the Africans lacking in nearly every respect' (Elkins 2005:2). The British concluded that they were 'Black and uncivilized'. (Elkins 2005:2). Despite the obvious potential economic benefits associated with exploiting far away lands, this was not cited at the time as the main reason for colonialism. The more palatable reasons given for their conquests were with regard to 'their superior race, Christian values and economic know-how' (Elkins 2005:5). Indeed, the British felt that they 'had a duty, a moral obligation, to redeem the "backward heathens" of the world' (Elkins 2005:5). According to Elkins, the British attitude with regard to Africa was that 'the British were going to bring light to the Dark Continent by transforming the so-called natives into progressive citizens, ready to take their place in the modern world' (2005:5).

However, 'what made Kenya unique in British Africa' was that the people selected to settle the colony were a mix of poor immigrants and aristocrats (Elkins 2005:9&10). It was felt that 'by virtue of their skin colour, White of all classes were the master race and therefore deserving of privilege' (Elkins 2005:12). This led to the development of 'virulent racist ideology' which 'grew more intense over time as the so-called native was moved along the racist spectrum from stupid, inferior, lazy and childlike to savage, barbaric, atavistic and animal like' (Elkins 2005:12). This shift along the spectrum corresponded with the 'natives' resistance to being colonized and the inevitable approach of a rebellion (Elkins 2005:12).

The story of the Mau Mau uprising, according to Elkins is one of 'wide-scale destruction in colonial Kenya and Britain's vigorous attempts to cover it up' perhaps an indication that the British knew that they were committing a wrong (2005:i). The Mau Mau rebellion, was 'a movement launched by Kenya's largest ethnic group, the Kikuyu, who had been pushed off part of their land in the process of colonization' (Elkins 2005:i). Prior to the outbreak of war the Mau-Mau movement had gathered momentum, this was in part due to the 'Oathing ceremonies', which were 'crucial to the solidarity of ordinary Kikuyu' (Elkins 2005:26). The British settlers viewed the oaths taken by the Kikuyu as 'barbaric

mumbo jumbo and further evidence of the backwardness and savagery of the Kikuyu' (Elkins 2005:27).

The war officially started in October 1952. The Mau Mau were, 'portrayed as a barbaric, anti-European and anti-Christian sect that had reverted to tactics of primitive terror to interrupt the British civilizing mission in Kenya' (Elkins 2005:i). This caused the western world to view those partaking in the Mau Mau revolution as 'criminals or gangsters' (Elkins 2005:i).

Like the Nazis, the British were 'meticulous' in the records that they kept regarding the detention camps. This care was extended to the destruction of documentation 'in massive bonfires' by the British in an attempt to cover up what had gone on (Elkins 2005:ii). It is hypostasised that these 'accounts ...challenged any notion that the British detention camps were civilizing' and demonstrate that they were essentially gulags (Elkins 2005:ii). Elkins estimates that the detention 'camps and barbed-wire villages' held 'nearly the entire Kikuyu population' (Elkins 2005:xii).

It was the 'Hola Massacre', which signalled the end of the conflict. On March 4, 1959, it was reported that 'ten detainees died at Hola Camp and that "the deaths occurred after they had drunk water from a water cart"' (Elkins 2005:344). In reality the detainees had died as a result of the implementation of the Cowan Plan, which promoted the use of violence against those who refused to co-operate. The British media and those in positions of authority brought the facts to light, which were that the ten detainees died as a result of violence as opposed to contamination. The British government defended its position and actions in Kenya,

*Stressing their government's success in winning the war against terrorism in Kenya, and with it conceded that one or two unfortunate incidents may have occurred but that they needed to be understood in light of the extraordinary achievements of rehabilitation in the face of unimaginable Mau Mau savagery (Elkins 2005:349).*

The controversy, which surrounded Hola made it 'simply impossible for the British

to remain any longer in Kenya' and measures were undertaken to 'decolonize' (Elkins 2005:353). The British retreated from Kenya in 1963 and post war Kenya became 'an independent nation' (Elkins 2005:354).

The Mau Mau rebellion provides an interesting example of the double standards regarding the 'never again' mentality adopted. It also demonstrates how the advent of television played a role in changing popular attitudes in Britain. The effect of this new and popular form of media was evident in post-war Kenya in which the future first President of Kenya, Kenyatta, 'made a remarkable, if enigmatic impression upon the British public when he gripped millions of viewers in their living rooms during a forty-five-minute interview on the BBC's television series, Face-to-Face' (Elkins 2005:359). The British public could no longer hold on to the attitudes with regard to their colonial history, which had circulated since Victorian times. When the British public were confronted with this particular interview, 'No one knew quite what to make of this man who spoke eloquently, wore a Western-style suit, and had no horns coming out of his head' (Elkins 2005:359).

Television also proved an influential medium in the unravelling of the Apartheid system in South Africa, which began to collapse in the latter part of the twentieth century period. It was influential in that westerners were more informed regarding the situation. Elkins makes the point that 'television cameras would...capture the brutal racism of the apartheid government, which allowed White policemen to open fire on a crowd of African demonstrators in Sharpsville, killing close to one hundred people and injuring countless others' (2005:355).

However, television did not eradicate the social ill that is racism. In fact, Garner continues his discussion of racism by focusing on the 1970's and cites Martin Barker's theory of 'New Racism' (2004:14). According to Barker's theory, the 1970's were the beginning of a new period in racism. This was due to developments in 'natural science (particularly socio-biology)' and the changing attitude of the British government and people which was, according to Garner, due

to the 're-politicisation of 'race'' (2004:14). Another reason that this new wave of racism emerged could be perhaps that the sensitivity towards discriminatory activities, which prevailed after the Second World War, began to be ignored and that the lessons learned from atrocities committed during World War Two were either being disregarded or forgotten, perhaps causing people to become desensitised as the distance between the atrocities of the Second World War and the present became greater.

The 1970's were also a period when the word 'race' began to be replaced with the word 'culture' (Garner 2004:14). Despite the adoption of new terminology it would seem that the old ideology regarding 'civilisation v. barbarity (represented by biologically determined social groups)' was still being promoted (Garner 2004:14). Garner continues by making the point that there was 'nothing new about sorting people into groups of civilised and uncivilised by reference to culture rather than physical appearance' (2004:14). As previously stated by Solomos and Back 'a new name, but one that is functionally equivalent to the old appellation' (1996:55). Garner illustrates this by pointing to 'the history of anti-Irish racism, anti-Semitism and anti-Traveller racism' (Garner 2004:14). Garner then contextualises his argument by explaining the phenomena that created the migratory patterns of people from 'broader sources' to 'developed Western economies', which continued until the 'mid-late 1980s' (Garner 2004:15). Having contextualised Baker's theory, Garner explains that essentially, 'new' racism is the belief that 'national territories are the monopoly of nationals' (Garner 2004:15). Furthermore,

*that threats to the well-being of the nation are embodied in the physical presence of minorities, whether Black or White, and the idea that these minorities have a number of negative impacts on the host society: competition for diminishing welfare resources, a drop in educational standards, the spread of illness, an increase in trafficking drugs and prostitution, higher levels of crime and insecurity (particularly in urban centres) (Garner 2004:15).*

The latter part of this theory regarding competition over resources resembles Miles'

theory of racialization, which indicates that theorists during this period were reaching the same conclusions. However, the attributing of the ills of society to the presence of newly arrived people is an age-old practice and one which continues to the present day. Indeed ‘Outsiders and ‘others’ have proven a suitable target upon which to place blame since the earliest human societies’ (Boxill 2001 cited by Culleton 2006:3).

This new wave of racism which occurred in Britain and other Western societies from the 1970’s onwards, took into account the physical presence of minority ethnic people in a country and linked a number of societies’ problems to their presence. Society’s ills could conveniently be blamed on the presence of minority ethnic people and their inability to either assimilate or integrate into society (Garner 2004). The use of the term culture allowed racist views to be aired without fear of being branded a racist. This provided those on the far right with ‘extreme nationalistic ideas to become legitimate and popular’ (Garner 2004:15). According to Garner the platform afforded to those with racist tendencies is evident ‘by the upsurge in support for far-Right parties across Europe at the end of the 1990’s and in the early twenty-first century’ (Garner 2004:15).

In summary it would seem that despite the lessons learned from the Second World War regarding how hatred and discriminatory practices can lead to mass genocide and the pledges that it must never happen again, popular racism was once again on the rise in the West, albeit on a smaller scale. Genocide was occurring around the globe even as the United Nation Charter was being drawn up. The development of television, which made the general public more informed, and the development of sociological theory to gain understanding of the general public’s racist behaviour, was equivalent to holding a mirror up to society. While this sparked sympathy and the adoption of a ‘new language of equality’ by Western democracies and perhaps quelled explicit acts of racism as it was ‘considered socially and certainly politically unacceptable to openly express opinions about ‘race’, it did not prevent the rise in popularity of far-right groups (Garner 2004:15). Furthermore, it did not

prevent genocide re-occurring in Europe between the Bosnians, Serbians and Croatians nor did it prevent the mass genocide, which occurred in Rwanda in the 1990's between the Hutus and the Tutsis.

The renewed focus on the sociological theorisation of 'race' and racism, which was experienced in many western countries during the twentieth century, did not take place in Ireland. According to Culleton, issues of 'race' and racism remained 'largely neglected by academic research in Ireland' (2006:3). As well as a lack of academic attention in the area of 'race' and racism in Ireland, a myth prevails that Irish society remained completely homogenous until the early 1990's. According to Dr. Ronit Lentin this is a myth that, 'can be easily refuted'. Lentin claims that,

*Multi-ethnicity, in-migration and racism are not new phenomena: Ireland has always been multi-ethnic; Travellers, Black-Irish people, Jewish people and other immigrants have been part of Irish society for centuries, and in-migration had always co-existed with emigration (2004:1).*

This is not to deny the sharp increase in migration since the mid 1990's, but simply to establish that it did exist prior to that time though numbers were relatively small. Ireland's historical and more recent 'demographic transformation' will be examined next in order to gain an understanding of the concept of racism and pointedly prevailing attitudes to racism in order to aid the achievement of the principal aim of this research to study subjective understandings of racism in contemporary Irish society

### **The Development of Racism and Anti-Racism in Ireland**

Research into racism in Ireland is relatively new. For this reason, there is little theorisation regarding the concept. However research is becoming more widespread. Conducting research into the concept of racism is important as it can aid in raising awareness of racism and combating it. Indeed this was previously

given as a justification for the formulation of the specific aim of this research, to study subjective understandings of racism in contemporary Irish society. The significance of such research is illustrated to an extent in the next section, which will focus on the development of racism and the consequential development of anti racism in Ireland.

### **Historical Development**

The historical development of the Irish anti-racism movement did not follow the same pattern as other western countries such as America and Britain. A leading authority in anti-racism in Ireland, Robbie McVeigh (2002), cites Daniel O'Connell's (1775-1847) efforts as a historical example of an anti racism effort. O'Connell has been described as 'the most popular figure in Ireland and among Irish throughout the world' (Ignatiev 1995:7). Furthermore, O'Connell was a celebrated barrister who campaigned passionately on domestic issues (an end to the Irish tithe system, prisoners' rights, law reform and free trade) and non-domestic issues such as the abolition of slavery in America. O'Connell's unwavering stance against American slavery provides an example of an early Irish anti-racism campaign. He was described as 'the single most important supporter that American anti-slavery had in Europe' ((Riach, 1977, cited by McVeigh 2002: 212). McVeigh continues by explaining how O'Connell was 'instrumental in drawing up an Address from the People of Ireland to their Countrymen and Countrywomen in America in the summer of 1841 that was signed by some 60,000 Irish people.' This document stated that America was 'cursed by slavery!' and called 'for liberty for all' (Cited by Ignatiev 1995:9-10). O'Connell highlighted the evils of the slave trade in Ireland and the rest of Europe and among the Irish in America. O'Connell did not, however, receive the unwavering support on this issue from the Irish people. In fact 'O'Connell's declarations aroused resentment in America' (Ignatiev 1995:7). He had hoped that those who had suffered oppression through colonialism would have a sort of empathy and feeling of unity with the slaves. After all, there are records of Irish people being sold as slaves in America. In fact, the Irish slave trade had its heyday (1649-1657) under Cromwell (O'Callaghan, 2001). Yet

O'Connell received limited support from his own people. Indeed the message sent back to Ireland was that Irish in America 'were not willing to look upon coloured people as their "brethren"' (Ignatiev 1995: 13).

### **Modern Development**

McVeigh continues by citing two more modern examples of Irish anti-racism. The first is the 1986 strike by Dunnes Stores employees and the Retail, Grocery, Dairy and Allied Trades' Association (RGDATA) union members who refused to sell South African produce while the apartheid system remained in place. The second is the Ireland East Timor Solidarity Campaign that he claims had positive anti-racism effects on Ireland (McVeigh 2000). In its presentation to the United Nations Decolonisation Committee the Ireland East Timor Solidarity Campaign highlighted the "terrible suffering that has been inflicted on our brothers and sisters in East Timor" and the "callous disregard for international law" (Fitzgerald 1998).

Despite these sporadic examples of anti-racism efforts and the efforts which were being made abroad, many in Irish society believed that Ireland was homogeneous and therefore racism was a problem that Ireland did not need to concern itself with. While the debate regarding whether Ireland was ever a homogenous society continues, few disagreed that Irish society was experiencing rapid change in the early 1990's. A symptom of this change was the 'in-migration flow' of ethnic minority people and in turn rising racism (Lentin 2002). Those who argue that Ireland was a completely homogenous society prior to the Celtic Tiger phenomenon ignore or dispute the difficulty which the presence of the Travelling Community poses to their argument. Furthermore, it may be argued that the anti-racism campaign to combat discrimination against Travellers, which was run by and on behalf of the Travelling Community, was Ireland's most prominent anti racism movement. The movement is considered in detail below as it provides an understanding of the Irish government's attitudes to the issue of discrimination and anti-racism.

### **Anti-Racism and the Travelling Community**

According to O'Connell's paper 'Policy Issues in Ireland' the governmental policies in relation to Travellers can be divided into three phases. The first was the assimilation phase of the 1960's by the newly established Commission on Itinerancy. The emphasis on assimilation is evident from the terms of reference set out in the Department of Social Welfares' Report of the Commission on Itinerancy, which undertake to "...promote their absorption into the general community..." (1963:10).

The Travelling Community commenced their anti-racism campaign as a reaction to the policy developed by the Irish government. In hindsight it would appear the government's policy was doomed from its inception due to the emphasis on assimilation through settlement. The government and the majority of the settled community viewed the policy as a positive solution, which would see the majority of Travellers settled, with a higher standard of living and a better quality of life. The solution offered by the Irish Government could be said to be reflective of the theory that Irish Travellers are the 'descendents of Irish peasants driven onto the roads out of economic necessity' referred to 'as the so called 'drop out' theory' (Culleton 2005:2). The policy proposed by the Government could therefore be viewed as a remedy for these 'drop outs' that are 'not functioning 'normally' within society (Culleton 2005:2). The Travelling community viewed the assimilation policy very differently. They felt that they were under attack and that they were being stripped of their culture. Indeed, '...efforts to assimilate Travellers through a process of forced settlement or through an education system which undermines their identity are viewed as ethnocentric' (O'Connell, 1997).

The establishment of the Travelling People Review Body, which reported some twenty years later in 1983, followed the assimilation phase. By the 1980's the government body had moved away from its draconian assimilation goals, towards a

less harsh yet still unsatisfactory integration phase.

*In the twenty-year period since the establishment of the Commission on Itinerancy, there was a noticeable shift in the understanding of the issues and in the language used to describe the problems. The term itinerant was replaced with Traveller and the terms absorption and rehabilitation were deemed unacceptable and were replaced with integration (O'Connell, 1997).*

Also the Review Body recognised 'the wishes of those Travellers who choose to remain on the road' (O'Connell, 1997).

The Government's change in attitude towards the Travelling Community is reflected in its attempt to use more respectful terminology as the publication of reports progressed. In fact, in the 1980's the Review Body went so far as to consider the desirability of having special legislation to outlaw discrimination against Travellers as a minority group but concluded that '...such legislation would be fraught with difficulties, especially in the absence of a precise legal definition of 'Traveller''. (Exchange House, Traveller Services, Literature 2005) However, the government nullified its own argument by not requiring that the term Traveller be defined prior to its inclusion in the Housing Act 1988, the Prohibition of the Incitement of Hatred Act 1989 or the Unfair Dismissals (Amendment) Act 1993 (Exchange House, Travellers Services Literature 2005). Furthermore, in 2003 the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Mr. McDowell confirmed the government's position regarding the recognition of the Travelling Community as a distinct ethnic group. In a written response to the question posed by Mr. Wall on the 15 October 2003 in Dáil Éireann in which he asked why 'the Government refuses to recognise the Traveller community as a minority ethnic group' (Dáil Debates, Vol. 572, 15 October, 2003). The Minister responded that the 'Government is not prepared to include in the report a statement it does not believe to be true, namely that Travellers are ethnically different from the majority of Irish people' (Dáil Debates, Vol. 572, 15 October, 2003). The Minister points out that 'equality legislation guarantees that they are explicitly protected' (Dáil Debates,

Vol. 572, 15 October, 2003). However, the Minister's carefully composed written response fails to explain or argue adequately why the Travelling Community should not be recognised as an ethnic minority.

As outlined earlier, a simple definition of ethnicity is that it 'refers to the cultural practices and outlooks of a given community of people that sets them apart from others' (Giddens 1997:210). Therefore it is a socially defined concept based on cultural characteristics, the most important word in that sentence being culture, as ethnicity is based on cultural criteria as apposed to biological or physical in the case of the concept of 'race'. The government appear to have contradicted their own policy regarding the Travelling Community, by on the one hand promising to protect the Travelling Community but then refusing to recognise them as an ethnic minority distinct from the majority population. Dr. Ronit Lentin agrees that the Minister's position is a backward step that will have a negative effect on the Travelling Community. Lentin (2004) argues that 'It has taken Travellers a long time to be recognised as an ethnic group' and that the Minister's position is 'Further limiting their rights'. Indeed, a United Nations committee which monitors the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, raised this issue with Junior Justice Minister Frank Fahey in March 2005. The UN committee enquired as to 'why Travellers are not treated as a separate legal group' (Irish Independent, 03.03.2005). To best answer this question it is necessary to examine what the government gains from adopting such a position. One possible answer is that it leaves the government free to legislate regarding a particular group without being accused of discrimination against that group, if the people who form the group are not recognised as a distinct group. Culleton explains, 'If Traveller are not an ethnic minority, any more that Ireland's schoolboys are, they can be victims of *discrimination* certainly, but not of racism' (Culleton 2005:6).

The third phase of government policy on the Irish Travelling Community was the intercultural phase, which was promoted in the Report of the Task Force on

Travelling People in 1995. By the time the Task Force reported in 1995 the issue of discrimination was becoming more prominent. In fact, 'Traveller support groups had made this a priority issue for the previous ten years' and this was reflected in the Task Force's report, which 'devotes a full section to the issue of discrimination' (Task Force on the Travelling Community 1995).

The Irish Government's ill-conceived policies of the 1960's regarding the Travelling Community were unsuccessful as Travellers resisted their implementation. It did however have a lasting effect. The Travelling Community appear to have mobilised in order to preserve their culture they needed to gain recognition and respect from the settled community. Indeed they set about achieving this by establishing agencies, in conjunction with members of the settled community and support groups such as the *Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group (DTEDG)* and *Harmony*.

The success of the Travelling Community's anti-racism campaign is still the subject of debate. They have however achieved a number of things. The most important to consider in relation to this research is whether the anti-racism campaign conducted regarding the Travelling Community provides a model which could possibly be implemented by others.

The Travelling Community have formed a number of strong alliances in order to further its own cause. An example of the formation of such an alliance is the Platform Against Racism. This 'independent initiative of non-governmental organisations' was established 1996 (Tannam 2002:196). Its founding members included the 'African Cultural Project, The European Union Migrant Forum, several Travelling community groups, and various ethnic minority groups' (Tannam 2002:196). Other examples of anti-racism alliances are the Limerick Network Against Racism (LNAR) and the Mid-West Against Racism, which were established in 1998. According to their literature the 'Mid-west Against Racism is calling on all like-minded individuals to stand in solidarity with asylum seekers and

refugees and to resist the attempts being made to stir up racist feelings in this country' (McVeigh 2002).

It would appear that Ireland's anti racism infrastructure developed as a result of grassroots efforts. Indeed, the government's inadequacy in dealing with the issue of racism is a common and recurring theme throughout the available anti-racism literature (McVeigh 2002). Much of the literature expresses the idea that the Government's failure to take action is sending out the message that racism is to some degree acceptable. However other literature praises the Irish government for taking action to promote anti-racism. One example provided is that all Irish political parties have signed an anti-racism protocol, which essentially requires that racism will not be used as a campaign issue (McVeigh 2002). This was in fact an initiative developed by the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI), a non-governmental organisation. Furthermore, governmental involvement in the anti-racism campaign is viewed in some of the anti racism literature as a double-edged sword in that the negative implications may outweigh the positive. The positive effects are that the issue is given national attention and a legislative footing. The negative effects or the outcome that some campaigners fear, are that the issue will be mishandled by the government and create a culture of discrimination (McVeigh 2002).

### **1997: European Year Against Racism**

1997 was an important year in the evolution of the anti-racism process in Ireland as it was designated the European Year Against Racism (EYAR) (Tannam 2002). A number of initiatives were put in place including the establishment of the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI), which pledged to advise the government 'with regard to racism, develop responses to racism and undertake initiatives, research and reports as appropriate'. (Tannam 2002:197). Furthermore, the Equality Authority and Tribunal were established under the Employment Equality Act 1998. Moreover, initiatives were put in place, to reflect a

consensus between non-governmental and governmental bodies. It includes anti-racism education, the promotion of interculturalism with initiatives such as the Chinese New Year Festival, which was celebrated in 2004 from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup> of January and from the 9<sup>th</sup> of February 2005. The Smithfield area of Dublin was 'transformed into Chinatown – a fusion of Asian and Irish culture'. The Dublin Chinatown Festival was established in March 2003; in association with the Dublin City Development Board and Dublin City Committee members include the Irish Chinese Information Centre, A.R.T.S Ltd. and the Lung Ying Dragon Sign Kung Fu Club. The Department of Foreign Affairs also supports the work of the committee. The festival committee's aims and objectives include: greater integration between the Chinese and Irish communities in the city; the promotion of education about the Chinese culture in the city; and raising the profile of the Chinese in the city. Such initiatives have been touted as an example of how Irish anti-racism policy should progress through education, as they demonstrate how community based organisations and the government can work together successfully on anti-racism initiatives.

### **Conclusion**

There have undoubtedly been a variety of radical political ideas, movements and individuals in Ireland regarding the concept of racism and indeed anti racism. However it is also clear that Ireland was a closed society in which church and state were largely united. Post World War II Ireland did 'open up' and became more secular, which was aided by our joining the United Nations on 14 December 1955, and perhaps more significantly Ireland joined the then European Economic Community (EEC) on 1 January 1973 following approximately a decade of unsuccessful attempts to gain entry. Ireland had a number of objectives when entering the European Union (EU) most of them economic. It was understood that for Ireland to become economically successful it would have to be less protectionist and more outward looking. Ireland reaped many rewards from its membership of the EU, which brought about rapid change in Irish society. While Ireland is today a

more open society, the people of Ireland have also had to adjust to the issues which arise in a more open society including changing how they view themselves from an inward looking island mentality to viewing themselves as European and indeed how they view 'others'.

This conclusion is drawn from the literature reviewed in chapter two which examines the concept racism, from ancient societies to the contemporary perspectives, in chronological order. It provides a broad but deeper understanding of the concept of racism and helps to build a solid foundation on which to base this research.

To gain an understanding of how racist attitudes have evolved throughout history the genesis of racism was traced back to the ancient Greeks and Romans in order to decipher whether the discrimination which existed in these ancient societies was based on 'race' or some other form of discrimination. This was followed with an examination of how the early Christians viewed racism, which led to comparisons between 'racial' and religious discrimination. This led to accounts of the experience of persecuted Jews on the Iberian Peninsula. This prompted the question as to whether the Inquisition was motivated solely by religious fanaticism or by 'racial' hatred. It was concluded that it would be impossible to deny the Inquisitors were motivated by religion but equally difficult to deny that there were elements of 'racial' hatred involved. This conclusion is indeed reflected in Michael Davitt's words when he commented on this period in history stating 'Like our own race they have endured a persecution, the records of which will forever remain a reproach to the 'Christian' Nations of Europe' (cited in O'Clery 1986:32)' (McVeigh 2002:214). Davitt identifies the Jewish people as a 'race' who were the victims of religious persecution.

The spread of Christianity and the era of Colonialism and Enlightenment occurred within a relatively short space of time. This caused racism to be reassessed and redefined and brought about widespread changes in attitudes. Perhaps most

noteworthy is the bold assertion of White Europeans of their “superiority” over Sub Saharan Africans, who they had had little contact with in the past. Furthermore, the Enlightenment saw the birth of many theories emphasising the need to measure and classify humans into ‘racial’ groupings.

Next the theorisation of ‘race’ and racism within sociology in the twentieth century and the emergence of the biological and social concepts of ‘race’ were focused on. This discussion was subdivided into theories developed prior to and post World War Two, to demonstrate the changes and indeed absence of change in attitudes. Despite the contributions made by sociological theory this absence of change was demonstrated in the accounts of the Mau Mau Rebellion in Africa. The discussion then moved on to the more contemporary British studies of racism and how history has repeated itself in the genocide which occurred in the Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian conflict and in Rwanda. Finally this chapter concludes with an examination of the development of racism and indeed anti-racism policy in Ireland. This includes a brief examination of selected anti-racism stances taken throughout history and in particular a look at government policy regarding the Travelling Community.

This chapter has provided an overview of the concept of racism in an international and national context within a broad time period. This was necessary in order to provide a solid base from which to explore subjective understandings of racism within contemporary Ireland.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Research and Data Analysis Methodologies**

#### **Introduction**

Through the process of researching the literature review it became apparent that while there is an abundance of information regarding the concept of racism available, very little of that data was produced in Ireland. Whether the lack of available research material is a failure on the part of the Irish government, Irish academics or a third party is uncertain. What is certain however is that there is a clear need for research to be carried out regarding how the concept of racism is understood in a contemporary Irish context.

This chapter sets out the research methodologies employed to gather and analyse data in order to produce findings and achieve the aim of this research.

#### **Statement of the Research Aim**

As previously stated, the fundamental aim of this research is to study subjective understandings of racism in contemporary Irish society. The literature reviewed in chapters one and two provide a broad understanding of the concept of racism and related terminology. Furthermore, the literature reviewed examines understandings of the concept of racism and indeed anti-racism in a contemporary Irish context. Together the literature review chapters provide a platform from which the research process can be launched.

The subjective element of the aim of this research is addressed through the research methodology adopted. This was achieved by formulating two key objectives. The first objective was to identify the issues surrounding the concept of racism that individuals subjectively regarded as significant, by conducting focus group interviews with a nationally reflective sample. The data gathered from the focus group interviews was used only to produce the interview guide for the individual interviews.

The second objective of this research was to examine the issues subjectively identified within the focus group interviews in greater detail, with a nationally reflective sample, to gain a deeper understanding of subjective understandings of racism in contemporary Irish society. It is the data which was gathered from the individual interviews that constitutes the primary data.

However, before setting out the specific epistemological approach adopted in this research it would be appropriate to consider the notions of qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to contextualise the specific approach adopted.

### **Quantitative Versus Qualitative**

Quantitative and qualitative research methods are in their simplest terms the ‘how many?’ versus the ‘why?’ Historically, the two categories were viewed as opposite or polarised stances. Indeed the term qualitative research has been defined as ‘any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification’ (Strauss and Corbin 1998:11). Quantitative research was for many years given greater weight by academic researchers than qualitative research due to a ‘societal tendency to believe in numbers’ (Krueger 1994:8). However in recent times qualitative research has gained popularity, validation and respect. This is reflected in the enormous number of qualitative focus groups carried out in the corporate world to gauge consumer trends. According to Boyd,

Westfall and Stasch focus groups are 'the most widely used method of securing exploratory data from customers' (1985:44). The focus group method is now firmly established as an essential tool of the marketing sector's trade. Greenbaum explains, 'Because of the quick turnaround time and accessibility of focus groups, many marketing professionals seeking information today immediately look to focus groups as a way to get answers to their questions' (2000:6). More significantly however the focus group interview method is now widely applied in social research. Indeed, Finch and Lewis comment on its increased application stating, 'The use of focus groups in social research increased considerably over the last two decades of the twentieth century' (Finch and Lewis 2003:170).

Furthermore the Irish government now recognises the importance of qualitative research in the development of policy. This is evidenced in the inclusion of qualitative research methods in a piece of research entitled 'Presentation of Research Findings on Opinions on Racism and Attitudes to Minority Groups'. This research incorporated 'focus groups' with the 'General Public' and 'mini-groups' with 'Ethnic Minorities' to gather data (KNOWRACISM/ Millward Brown IMS 2004:2). The inclusion of qualitative research in the development of policy at a governmental level is significant as it allows qualitative and quantitative research to share an equal and prominent platform.

When trying to decipher whether qualitative or quantitative methods are more valuable or appropriate, one must consider each method's relevance with regard to the aim of the research. An individual researcher from a particular discipline may still favour quantitative research over qualitative or visa versa depending on the appropriateness of the method to the research problem at hand. An illustrative example would be how natural science still relies heavily on quantitative research methods, while social science leans towards qualitative research. (Ritchie & Lewis 2003, Denzin & Lincoln 2000).

The decision to use a singular or multi-method approach is again best determined

by reflecting on the specific aim of the research. A researcher is usually presented with three alternatives. The first is the singular approach which allows the researcher to choose to apply quantitative or qualitative methods as stand alone methods of research. For example, it may be most appropriate to apply quantitative research methods only, where the research question simply requires statistical data to answer the question ‘how many?’

Qualitative research may also be appropriately applied as a singular method. This is commonplace, where a researcher is tackling a sensitive issue, or if a researcher wishes to identify themes or issues as opposed to statistical trends that arise in a specific study area. Indeed, it has been suggested that qualitative research is perhaps one of the ‘best strategy for discovery, exploring a new area, developing hypothesis’ (Miles & Huberman 1994:10). The clearest justification for choosing singular research methodology is to consider if qualitative or quantitative research methods alone will achieve the research aim, satisfactorily.

The second option is to adopt a multi-method approach whereby the researcher first carries out quantitative research and follows with qualitative methods. This particular approach was employed in the aforementioned research, entitled ‘Presentation of Research on Opinions on Racism and attitudes to Minority Groups’ (KNOWRACISM/ Millward Brown IMS 2004). The quantitative element of this research was carried out in 2003 in the form of a questionnaire (KNOWRACISM/ Millward Brown IMS 2004). The qualitative element followed in the form of focus group interviews (KNOWRACISM/ Millward Brown IMS 2004). This approach allows the researcher to identify trends relevant to the subject matter and then explore those trends in order to gain a deeper understanding of hard quantitative data. This multi-method approach is usually reserved for areas that have already received much attention from academia so that there is a wealth of material available. The concept of racism in an Irish context has not received much attention from academia, nor is there a wealth of material available. Therefore it was decided that this approach would not be appropriate (Tannam 2002).

The third approach which may be employed by a researcher is the opposite of the multi-method approach set out above. It requires that the researcher apply qualitative research methods, followed by a quantitative approach. This allows the researcher to gather information surrounding the research question before measuring the findings. Therefore the researcher is generating a hypothesis and then testing the validity of that hypothesis. This is appropriate if researching a previously sparsely researched area or a new aspect of a thoroughly researched area. The qualitative research will help produce data that does not already exist, which can then be statistically measured. Indeed the issue of racism is a thoroughly researched area in some aspects but not in an Irish context. Therefore this method may seem most appropriate. However, while the third approach of first conducting qualitative research and following with quantitative methods, was given much consideration, indeed, attitudinal scaling was researched in detail, it was ultimately abandoned in favour of the first approach.

The reasons for this were that the third approach did not lend itself to the achievement of the specific aim of the research like the first approach. The aim of this research essentially requires that understandings of the concept of racism be identified and examined. Qualitative methods are particularly appropriate when identifying themes or issues in a specific study area. This research does not require the measurement of understandings identified. In fact it was never intended to produce statistical data, to measure how racist we are as a nation. This research aims to look beyond numbers to individual understandings of the concept of racism in a contemporary Irish context. Qualitative research methods can help to provide the rich detail required. Also qualitative research is thought to be more appropriate when dealing with particularly sensitive or inflammatory issues. The employment of a singular qualitative approach also reflects the subjective nature of the aim of this research and the time and resource limitations in which it had to be conducted. As previously stated the clearest justification for choosing a singular research methodology is to consider if qualitative or quantitative research methods alone

will achieve the aim of the research satisfactorily. Qualitative research methods alone can achieve the aim of this research, as they are the ‘best strategy for discovering’ and ‘exploring a new area’ (Miles & Huberman 1994:10).

### **Epistemological Position**

The epistemological position taken in this research can be defined broadly as interpretivism. The following sections will set out how interpretivism is understood within the context of this research and justifies its selection by demonstrating how it relates to the methodology selected to achieve the principal aim of this research.

Schwandt describes interpretivism as a ‘sensitizing’ concept, one that “‘merely suggests directions along which to look’” rather than “‘provides descriptions of what to see’” (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:118). This theory ‘incorporates a diverse range of ideas and approaches’ (Davidson & Layder 1998:30). However, there is a common thread which runs throughout the various approaches to interpretivism which is that they are all ‘concerned, in some sense or another, with problems of language or meaning in relation to the “‘interpretive understanding’” of human action’ (Giddens 1982:23 cited by Davidson & Layder 1998:30).

Interpretivism was utilised in this research in order to gain a holistic understanding of ‘a person’s motivation and intentions’ for a particular action (Davidson & Layder 1998:31). The technique of interpretation promoted by Weber was called Verstehen, a German word which is ‘usually translated as understanding’ (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner 2000:374). Davidson and Layder explain that ‘Verstehen essentially involves the attempt to understand social action through a kind of empathetic identification with the social actor’ (1998:31). The method requires that the researchers put themselves in the place of the research participant, in order to ‘grasp the meanings, motives and intentions behind their actions’ (Davidson & Layder 1998:31); in order to ‘build up a picture of how the world appears to others and the choices and constraints they perceive’ (Davidson &

Layder 1998:31).

Furthermore, the nature of the research allows for the easy adoption of an interpretivist approach. Indeed, the interpretivist nature of the objectives are clear in that the focus group interviews were employed in order to identify various suggested directions that this research could take and this strongly influenced the formation of the question schedules for the interview process. The questions were selected after reflecting upon the data collected in the focus group interviews and in conjunction with the interpretivist approach in order to gain an understanding of the participants' understandings of racism.

The interpretivist approach was also influential in determining how the gathered data would be analysed. It is acknowledged that within the interpretivist perspective 'there is an inevitable "interpretation" of meanings made both by the social actors and by the researcher' as previously discussed (Miles and Huberman 1994:8). It is important that the researcher is aware that the analysis of qualitative data is a task 'requiring plenty of care and self awareness on the part of the researcher' (Miles & Huberman 1994:10). However, the interpretivist perspective also accepts that researchers 'are members of a particular culture at a particular historical moment' and as stated earlier, the 'interpretivism is concerned with the researcher as a subjective being' (Miles & Huberman 1994:8, Denzin & Lincoln 1998:32). This does however create the necessity for the researcher to reflect on their own likes, dislikes, opinions and natural prejudices regarding the particular issue being researched and attempts to set them aside. It is after all easier for a researcher to set aside such ideas when aware that they hold them. On reflection it was acknowledged that this research was conducted with the awareness that the researcher was part of the dominant culture within contemporary Irish society.

A further method of avoiding over-interpretation of the data in the analysis process is to stay 'close' or 'use the language' used by the interviewees, in the output from the analysis process (Spencer, Ritchie & O'Connor 2003: 222). This was adhered to

throughout the analysis process. However, the analysis process employed in this research is not 'semantically based' (Spencer, Ritchie & O'Connor 2003: 222).

### **Subjectivity Versus Objectivity**

This research has adopted a subjective approach, therefore it is necessary to debate the pros and cons of a subjective approach as compared to an objective one. As previously stated interpretivism is concerned 'with the researcher as a subjective being' (Denzin & Lincoln 1998:32). There is however, a general assumption that quantitative research methods are objective in nature while qualitative methods are subjective. Indeed, the subjective nature of qualitative research is one of the main criticisms of it. Miles and Huberman, advocates of the qualitative approach, warn, 'We need to keep working at sensible canons for qualitative data analysis, in the sense of shared ground rules for drawing conclusions and verifying their sturdiness' (1994: 2).

The subjectivity of qualitative research can however be subdivided into two categories. The first is the researcher's personal subjectivity and the second is the respondent's subjectivity. As previously discussed, a researcher can avoid or at least minimise, allowing their personal beliefs affect the research by first being aware of their own beliefs and values, then consciously putting them aside to avoid creating a bias. Also, this helps to avoid imposing boundaries upon the research before it has even begun. According to Bacon,

*the chief obstacle to the growth of knowledge was excessive self confidence among research workers unable to recognise how they were blinded by their own prejudices and superstitions; to avoid error, they should purge their minds of preconceptions* (Banton 1998:8).

However there are also those who will argue that the mind cannot 'be purged of preconceptions' (Banton: 1998:8)

A practical measure undertaken, in this research to negate the affects of the researcher's personal subjective bias was to carry out focus group interviews. The intention here was to identify a number of key issues to be included on the question schedule and researched further instead of just including what the researcher considers important. The respondent's subjectivity on the other hand should not be altered prior to participation in the research process. Rather the participant's response should be empathised with in order to gain a detailed knowledge of participant's understandings of racism in contemporary Irish society.

### **Sampling Process**

Much of the existing and available research regarding racism in a contemporary Irish context, while insightful and in-depth, focuses on particular ethnic minorities and how they relate to the rest of Irish society. For example, the comprehensive work conducted by Pavee Point focuses on the Travelling Community and the promotion of their human rights. Other research focuses on ethnic minorities in a particular geographical area. For Example, Dr. Mac Gréil's (1977) study entitled 'Prejudice and Tolerance in Ireland' compares 'Dublin of 1988-89 with Dublin of the early 1970s' (Mac Gréil 1996:xi). This study examines the attitudes of Dubliners only. Other examples of research which focuses on inter-ethnic interaction among the capital's population includes Loyal and Mulcahy's, (2001) publication entitled, 'Racism in Ireland, The Views of Black and Ethnic Minorities.' A more recent example is a report entitled 'Building Solidarity Across Communities'. This report found that 'Social interaction between immigrant communities and the native population is "virtually non-existent" in Dublin's South inner city' (Irish Times 29.01.2004).

This research was intended to be inclusive of members of what is termed in this research 'the dominant group in Irish society' and members of 'new communities'. However on completion of the focus group interviews it was found that the government at various levels and non-government organisations were influential

regarding individuals' understandings of racism. It was therefore deemed necessary to include a third category of participants entitled 'Individuals Working within Particular Organisations'. The creation of a third category would allow specific questions regarding specific issues to be put to those working in a particular organisation. This would allow for the gathering of a diverse range of understandings.

### **Overview of Sample Categories**

**Table 1.1 (a) 'Individuals Working within Particular Organisations'**

Four interviews in total were conducted with participants in this category. The participants were specifically selected because of the positions they held as 'Individuals Working within Particular Organisations'. The four candidates described their ethnicity as Irish and included a politician, a member of An Garda Síochána and two individuals working for non-governmental organisations (NGO). The selection of participants correlates with the issues raised in the focus group interviews and subsequently formed part of the question schedule as each participant represented a particular body or institution, which was referred to within the question schedule.

For example, the issue of the government is raised in questions five, six and seven on the question schedule. This includes examining the government's efforts to combat racism, to take leadership on the issue and the role of local government. Therefore, it was deemed appropriate that a politician be selected as an interviewee to discuss the government's efforts regarding racism. The politician selected was a member of Fianna Fáil, the political party in power at the time this research was conducted. However this was not the rationale behind his selection. Rather, he was selected because of his knowledge and understanding of central government.

Question eight discusses the role of members of An Garda Síochána. Again it was

decided that this question should be put to a person with some authority or specialist knowledge on the issue, ideally a member of An Garda Síochána.

Question nine enquires as to the role of NGOs with regard to the issue of racism in contemporary Irish society. Individuals working for the Irish Refugee Council (IRC) and the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) were recruited as participants in order to gain knowledge of understanding regarding racism held in that sector.

**Table 1.1 (b) ‘Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society’**

(Loyal and Mulchay 2001:7)

Eight interviews in total were conducted with this category. This category is essentially reflective of the majority of the population in contemporary Irish society. That is, the 3,584,975 people who defined themselves as Irish in the 2002 census. Therefore, the sample should be as reflective as possible of those 3,584,975 individuals who make up the dominant population in contemporary Irish society.

Furthermore, participants were categorised according to their age, gender, the location where they live, be it rural, suburban or urban and their employment status to create a cross-sectional sample, which reflects the composition of the dominant group. The sample includes two participants within each of the following age brackets, 18-30, 31-40, 41-55 and 56 years plus. There were also an equal number of male and female participants, which is again reflective of the 2002 census figures, which showed that the gender breakdown was 1,778,980 males and 1,806,365 females. The categorisation of participants into rural, suburban and urban dwellers provided another basis upon which to assess subjective understandings of racism. Finally the type of employment or indeed the absence of employment was used as an indicator of a person’s life stage and socio-economic position within contemporary society.

**Table 1.1 (c) ‘New Communities’**

Ten interviews in total were conducted in this category, two more participants than included in the previous category. The reason for this was that some of the participants representing ‘New Communities’ had poor language skill. This prevented some interviewees from fully expressing themselves and providing the depth of contextual detail sought. It was therefore necessary to conduct an additional two interviews with members of ‘New Communities’ in order to remedy the situation.

As with the previous category participants were selected to reflect the ethnic minority populations now present in contemporary Irish society. However the fact that there were no exact figures available at the time this research was conducted breaking down the numbers of people from different ethnic backgrounds present in Ireland made it difficult to create a truly reflective sample.

This selected sample is reflective of available estimated figures and statistics. The 2002 figures available from the Central Statistics Office put the number of Poles living in Ireland at 2,124. The Polish embassy estimated that the number of Poles resident in Ireland in April 2006 was approximately 120,000 (Sunday Business Post, 2006). However these figures were recorded prior to the inclusion of ten new accession States to the European Union. The preliminary 2006 census report does not provide updated figures. However according to an Irish Times article ‘Up to two million Poles have left their country since 2004 EU Enlargement. The most popular destinations are, so far, the United Kingdom and Ireland’ (Irish Times, 2006). The Minister for Justices did call for greater ‘minority ethnic participation in the Census’ (Department of Justice, Ministerial Address 2006). However the most recent census carried out on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2006 was criticised for not providing ethnic minorities with the opportunity to be represented properly on the census form. The problem of ethnic minority ‘invisibility’ via official statistics surveys, census data was highlighted prior to the 2006 census (Amnesty International 2004). Indeed, a

seminar which focused on the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic Women in 2004 found that ‘Without official recognition in government reports and statistical data, no account will be taken of the needs of Black and minority ethnic women and services will not reflect the reality of their experiences. (Amnesty International 2004).

The sample compiled in this research reflects the figures put forward by Dr Mary Gilmartin. Dr Gilmartin ‘estimates’ that there are an estimated 150,000 Polish, 60,000 Chinese, 45,000 Lithuanians, 30,000 Latvians and 28,000 Nigerians living Ireland (Irish Times 2006). Therefore, the majority of interviewees were Eastern European, Asian or African. The sample was also compiled according to interviewees’ age, gender, location (where they live in Ireland), the amount of time they have been present in Ireland and their country of origin (See Table 1.4).

Members of the Travelling Community and Protestants were not included in the sample for this research. The reasons for this are that although both are arguably Ireland’s longest established minority groups their recognition as ethnic minorities is still the subject of much debate. The focus of this research is on the newer ethnic communities within contemporary Irish society as both the Travelling Community and Protestants have been researched in some detail the past. It also could be argued that while there is a commonality in the discrimination that they experience, Travellers and Protestants are not affected by exactly the same challenges as members of the newer ethnic minority groups. For example both Protestants and the Travelling Community have established roots in Ireland over time, while many of the members of newer ethnic minority groups are first generation immigrants. Furthermore the perceptions held by many members of the majority of the population towards Travellers and Protestants which can lead to discrimination, differs from the perceptions and prejudices held towards newly established ethnic communities. For example a Traveller may be discriminated against due to their nomadic tradition, while a newer ethnic minority group may receive discrimination because of their skin colour.

Sampling is the selection process which determines who will become a participant in research. There are two types or categories of sampling - probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is where each member of the research population has a known probability of being included in the sample. Probability sampling is usually aligned with quantitative research while non-probability sampling on the other hand deals with all forms of sampling that are not probable, and it is a qualitative research method. Furthermore, as this research is qualitative in nature, it will focus on non-probability sampling methods. Non-probability sampling is often aligned with the interpretivist approach.

This was deemed appropriate because an,

*accurate count of all the ethnic minorities present in Ireland was needed but could not be obtained, since those organisations with official responsibility for policy development and social planning have not recorded the numbers of ethnic minorities in the country (Loyal and Mulcahy 2001:10).*

When the non-probability method of sampling is utilised in research, not every person in the population has an equal chance of selection. Instead the research 'concentrates on a small proportion of the overall group – a *sample* of the total' (Giddens 1992:672 & 673). Therefore the sample is usually quite small. This method of sampling can provide more detailed and 'very accurate indications' (Giddens 1992: 673).

Particular methods can be applied to select participants from the population in a fair and equal manner. The first method is convenience sampling and as the name suggests it allows the researcher to select participants that are accessible and available (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam 2003).

Snowballing is the second method of non-probability sampling, which requires initial contact with an individual known as a gatekeeper or small group of people.

This initial contact is then used to establish further contacts (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam 2003). The researcher must justify why he or she should be granted access to the people in question. A gatekeeper is therefore a person in a position of power who can afford protection to those the researcher wished to access.

The third method of sampling is purposive or theoretical sampling. According to Silverman the two 'are often treated as synonyms' (2006:307). Furthermore, Silverman explains why such treatment may be justified 'the only difference between the two procedures applies when the 'purpose' behind 'purposive' sampling is not theoretically defined' (2006:307). The purposive or theoretical methods of sampling allow the researcher to pick the people who will be included in the sample. This gives the researcher a certain amount of discretion with regard to who should be included or excluded as long as the decision to include or exclude a person is justifiable (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003).

The recruitment of focus group participants involved elements of purposive and snowballing sampling. The purposive method of sampling allowed for the selection and inclusion of particular people from both the dominant group in society and new communities. This allowed for a certain amount of rootlessness with regard to ensuring that those participating in the focus group represented a range of the targeted sample population. The purposive method was also invoked in the selection of 'Individuals Working within Particular Organisations'. The snowballing method was also incorporated into the research process. With regard to the 'Dominant Group' and 'New Community' contact was made with a number of organisations. The purpose of the research was outlined to the organisation representative who then acted as a type of gatekeeper who could grant or deny access to participants. The use of these methods avoided putting undue pressure on potential participants. It also meant that those who agreed to take part in the research had a genuine interest and were therefore more reliable 'Individuals Working within Particular Organisations'. Although the initial contact was purposive the snowballing method was also invoked which determined who it was

would actually be interviewed. The purposive method enabled the targeting of certain respondents due to their characteristics or other attributes. This makes it subjective in nature, as the researcher must form an opinion as to whether the respondent is suitable or not based on certain attributes. For example, the selection of those who would participate in the individual interviews was based primarily on whether they fitted within one of the three defined categories and secondly, whether they were articulate and willing to take part.

**Individual Interview Sample Profile**

**Table 1.2 Participants: Individuals Working within Particular Organisations**

<b><u>Identification</u></b>	<b><u>Age</u></b>	<b><u>Gender</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>
Political Representative	41/55	Male	Suburban
Non-Governmental Organisation Representative	18/30	Female	Suburban
Non-Governmental Organisation Representative	18/30	Female	Urban
An Garda Síochána Representative	41/55	Male	Urban

**Total number of participants: 4**

**Table 1.3 Participants: Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society (Reflective of the population in general)**

<b><u>Identification</u></b>	<b><u>Age</u></b>	<b><u>Gender</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>	<b><u>Occupation</u></b>
Interviewee 1	18/30	Male	Rural	Student
Interviewee 2	18/30	Male	Urban	Employed (Full-time)
Interviewee 3	31/40	Female	Urban	Employed (Part-time)
Interviewee 4	31/40	Male	Rural	Employed (Full-time)
Interviewee 5	41/55	Female	Rural	Employed (Full-time)
Interviewee 6	45/55	Female	Urban	Employed (Voluntary)
Interviewee 7	56+	Female	Suburban	Retired
Interviewee 8	56+	Male	Suburban	Employed (Part-time)

**Total number of participants: 8**

**Table1.4: Participants: New Communities  
(Reflective of the population in general)**

<u>Identification</u> Country	<u>Age</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>in Ireland</u> <u>of Origin</u>
Interviewee A E. European (Poland)	18/30	Female	Urban	7 months
Interviewee B E. Europe (Poland)	18/30	Male	Suburban	<2Years
Interviewee C Belarusian	18/30	Female	Suburban	<5 years
Interviewee D African (Zimbabwe)	31/40	Male	Urban	> 4 years
Interviewee E Asian (Korea)	31/40	Female	Suburban	<5 years
Interviewee F African (Nigeria)	31/40	Female	Urban	<4years
Interviewee G Middle Eastern (Afghanistan)	41/55	Male	Urban	> 2years
Interviewee H African (Congo)	41/55	Male	Urban	>2 years
Interviewee I E. Europe (Lithuania)	41/55	Female	Suburban	<4 years
Interviewee J European (Belgian)	56+	Female	Rural	<18years
<b>Total number of participants: 10</b>				

### **Sample Population**

The three groups set out in table 1.1 make up the sample population for this research. The three groups share a number of commonalities in that they can provide opinion and anecdotal evidence regarding their lived experience which formed their understanding of the issue of racism albeit from differing perspectives and backgrounds. It is the sample population's differing backgrounds as well as identifiers such as age and gender, which allowed participants to be chosen so that they would be reflective of the sample population.

Specifically, the 'Individuals Working within Particular Organisations' were identified and categorised according to their age, gender and the location in which they resided. The age category could be further subdivided into age group 18-30, 31-40, 41-55 and 56 plus. The category of location in which participants reside was subdivided into urban, suburban and rural.

The next category of participants, the members of the 'Dominant Group in Irish Society' were again identified and categories were according to age, gender and location. However they were also categorised according to their occupation. Participants were selected with consideration of their age and gender to provide range and be reflective of the actual population. Location and occupation were also considered to provide a balance within the sample. Also occupation was subdivided into the employed and unemployed, whether the participant work full-time, part-time or in a voluntary capacity; occupation was also recorded as student and retired.

The final category of participant, the 'New Communities' were identified and categorised according to their age, gender and the location in which they reside but also according to the duration for which they had been present in Ireland and their country of origin. This information allowed for the selection of participants who had been in the country for different lengths of time. The duration ranged from seven months to eighteen years. Furthermore, the country of origin category

allowed participants to be selected who would be representative of the estimated figures of members of new communities present in Ireland.

### **Data Collection Methods**

‘The carpenter selects tools that are appropriate to the task at hand, and so too the researcher selects methods that fit the specifications of the problems?’ (Krueger 1994:42).

#### **Focus Group Interviews**

‘. . . a superb mechanism for generating hypotheses when little is known’  
(Wells, 1974, taken from Mercer 1992:77).

Though a focus group interview can be utilised at any stage of the research process, in this study they were conducted at the preliminary stage of the fieldwork research. Having provided a starting point, the focus group interview method also allowed this research to address and overcome the problem of a lack of available material regarding racism in a contemporary Irish context. It was hoped that the data generated from the focus group interviews would provide insight into issues relating to the concept of racism, which were of paramount importance to participants. The issues identified were then used to form the question schedule. This was the sole purpose of the focus group interviews. A further justification for the adoption of the focus group interview as a research method is that it would allow the researcher to deal with complex and sensitive issues while ensuring that participants felt comfortable speaking in a confidential environment.

Merton, Fiske and Kendall are credited with developing the term ‘focus group’ in their 1956 landmark publication, *The Focused Interview* (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:364). However, the history of this method can be traced back to the early part of the twentieth century when social scientists began to have ‘doubts about the accuracy of traditional information gathering methods’ (Krueger 1994:7).

According to Krueger 'Stuart A. Rice was one of the first social scientists to express concern' with regard to the need for change in interviewing technique, in the 1930's. (1994:7). However, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) have traced the existence of focus groups back to the mid 1920's. The focus group method continued to grow in popularity within academia throughout the 1930's and 1940's, particularly in social science (Krueger 1994). However, the focus group method also grew in popularity outside of the social science field and outside of academia, for example, Thompson and Demerath, in 1952, used focus groups to look at management problems in the military (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). Krueger (1994) also points to the employment of focus groups by the military, as a method of increasing morale among soldiers during the Second World War.

Focus group interviews continue to be a popular qualitative method employed in modern academic research. In modern sociological research, focus groups are viewed as 'a special type of group in terms of purpose, size, composition and procedure' (Krueger, 1994:6). With regard to the group's purpose Krueger advises that each focus group interview should be 'carefully planned' in order 'to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest' (1994:6). The size of a focus group is still the subject of much debate. Those who profess expertise in conducting focus group interviews disagree about the number of participants that should take part, suggestions range from as few as six participants to as many as twelve. For example, Mercer (1992) advises that a focus group should usually have six to ten members. Malhotra (1999) recommends eight to twelve focus group participants when carrying out market research. However, Malhotra (2000) revised this recommendation just a year later, claiming that six to twelve participants is appropriate when carrying out a focus group.

Then there are mini-focus groups, which are focus groups which contain 'four to six participants' (Greenbaum 2000:234). The adoption of a mini focus group would assist with regard to practical considerations such as the difficulty regarding the recruitment of participants. Indeed, initially there was difficulty surrounding the

recruitment of participants which reflected the population range required. Such difficulties could be attributed to the issue of inequality between the facilitator and participant. In this research participants did not acquire any material or monetary gain for attending the focus group, whereas the facilitator did gain valuable data from the meeting. The inequity regarding what is gained offers participants very little in the way of incentives to give up their time and attend a focus group. Therefore, after numerous attempts to hold formal focus group interviews it was deemed necessary to approach the carrying out of focus groups in a more informal fashion. First it was necessary to identify an appropriate sample, which could be approached in their natural setting.

Greenbaum claims that ‘Other than the absolute numbers of participants in the sessions, there are no substantive differences between mini-groups and full groups’ (2000:3). In this research, the use of focus groups with a fewer number of participants satisfied concerns over the implications of using a large or ‘full group’ when discussing an issue of a sensitive and emotive nature (Greenbaum 2000:232). Furthermore a large number of participants can lead to a cold group that is, a non-responsive one (Krueger 1994). The employment of a mini focus group, on the other hand, would allow each individual more time to contribute to the group discussion. There are those who claim focus groups should never be employed when discussing issues of a sensitive nature, traditionally these would be issues such as personal health, finances, sex and religion (Greenbaum 2000). However, Greenbaum notes that, advocates of the focus group interview, regardless of whether it is full, mini, a triad or dyad group, claim that the focus group interview method provides “safety in numbers” to the participants when discussing sensitive issues (2000:20). That is, the participants share the focus. They do not have to answer every question or provide an opinion on every issue raised.

Debate over the size of the group may appear pedantic but it is in fact central to the success of the interview and the quality of the information obtained. If a group is too small participants may feel exposed and uncomfortable and if the group is too

large discourse may become dominated by the stronger characters in the group, leaving quieter but no less important opinions unheard. Therefore, it is the objective of every facilitator to create a comfortable environment where volunteers feel able to divulge their true feels on a particular issue. Mini focus groups were employed in this research.

Having decided on the approximate number of participants that will participate in each focus group, the next issue to consider was who would participate in the focus group interviews. A delicate balance had to be struck. Participants needed to represent a range of the research population and had to have something in common. However, they should not be too familiar with each other. A successful focus group should adopt the characteristics of a natural conversation whereby ideas and comments are put forward by participants, which influence or even change the opinions held by other members of the group. Krueger makes the point, when discussing the advantages of focus group interviews, that ‘People are social creatures who interact with others. They are influenced by the comments of others and make decisions after listening to the advice and counsel of people around them’ (1994:34).

It must be stated that each method of data collection has its strengths and weaknesses. Focus group interviews are no exception. Perhaps one of the biggest weaknesses regarding the focus group method for this research was the difficulty associated with recruiting volunteers to participate.

The general rules are that participants should be ‘reasonably homogeneous and unfamiliar with each other’ and represent the range of the target sample (Krueger 1994:17). The success of the recruitment process is usually reflected in the atmosphere in the room and whether it encourages participants to open up and contribute or intimidates them into an awkward silence. If participants feel ill at ease or on an unequal footing they will be less likely to contribute. For this reason, it is advised to maintain a level of anonymity throughout the focus group interview

(Krueger, 1994). However, it is also advised that participants have something in common, ideally something that relates to the issue (Krueger, 1994). Creating an atmosphere which is conducive to a successful focus group is difficult to achieve. For this reason, after numerous unsuccessful attempts, due to a lack of incentive for participants to give up their time to hold a successful focus group, it was decided to carry out a number of focus group interviews with a limited number of participants.

### **Individual Interviews**

‘Historically the method was called “conversation with a purpose” or “guided conversations”’ (Merton, 1990:x).

One of the first decisions a researcher must make when taking on the task of employing individual interviews, is which particular type of interview to employ in order to yield the best data. Therefore it was necessary to consider the aim of the research and what it proposed to achieve. Ritchie and Lewis discuss a method of interview whereby ‘the interviewer asks key questions in the same way each time and does some probing for further information’ (2003:111). This was interesting because the interview guide that was informed by the themes identified in the focus group interviews, would be put to each interviewee in order to identify their subjective understandings of racism. It also provides continuity in multiple interviews.

The inclusion of a question schedule as part of the methodology for collecting data was appropriate because this research area is new (both to the researcher and in a more general sense, as the issues of racism and ethnicity have received little attention in Ireland when compared to other western countries).

The next decision a researcher must make when employing interviews as a research method is whether the interview technique adopted should be an unstructured or semi-structured method of interviewing (Sarantakos 1993). In an unstructured interview, there isn’t a set of question to be followed and the interviewer is able to

add questions if and when desired (Sarantakos 1993). An unstructured interview requires comprehensive preparation. Ideally the researcher should raise a few key issues to be discussed and then probe for detail while letting the respondent do most of the talking. Also the interviewer must remain in control of the interview and draw the respondent back to the central issue when an avenue of discussion has been exhausted or when the conversation trails off into irrelevant territory. The interviewer must also consider the issues surrounding control. Control usually requires that a balance be struck between allowing the interview to flow freely and making sure that all necessary issues are raised and discussed adequately. The advantage associated with this particular method is that different information is obtained from each respondent. It also allows the interviewer more freedom to deviate from a strict questioning schedule.

According to Ritchie and Lewis 'There are different models of semi-structured interviewing and terms are not necessarily used consistently' (2003:111). For this reason it was important to define what semi-structured interview means within the context of this research. In simple terms the semi-structured interview is a combination of unstructured and structured interviews. The structured interview is considered to be quantitative in nature while the unstructured interview is qualitative. Furthermore in semi-structured interviews 'questions are normally specified, but the interviewer is more free to probe beyond the answer in a manner which would appear prejudicial to the standardisation and comparability' (May 2001:123). However within this research it was felt that the researcher should have the freedom to probe beyond the set questions when appropriate. For this reason there was a degree of flexibility in the questions put to interviewees in that the interviewer was able to probe interviewees further on an issue about which they had special knowledge. For example, when interviewing a member of An Garda Síochána, the Garda was asked about the An Garda Síochána's attitude regarding racism. This same question was put to every interviewee. However, because the Garda had specialist knowledge of the institution of An Garda Síochána, the Garda being interviewed was probed further on the issue, than other interviewees.

Patton warns however, that ‘the quality of information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer’ (1990:279). Heeding this warning, it was decided that it would be unwise at masters’ level to carry out an unstructured interview. It would be more beneficial to conduct semi-structured interviews, as it is most appropriate to the fulfilment of the objectives of this research.

Each interview was audio recorded, this was for practical reasons as it was difficult to conduct an interview and note all that is being said simultaneously. The position regarding the recording of interviews was set out in the consent form, which was signed by each participant before they took part in the research. The consent form states, ‘All interviews will be recorded’. This tape was stored securely until it was transcribed and was then destroyed (See Appendix 1).

## **Research Design**

There were a number of practical elements to consider before conducting this research, which included the manner in which data would be collected, the analysis of the collected data and the consideration of ethical issues. The data collection process was considered first.

### **Data Collection - Focus Groups**

The first method of data collection employed was focus group interviews, which were conducted for the sole purpose of informing the question schedule. The focus group interviews were conducted in the following way after a number of failed attempts.

First it was necessary to identify a place where potential participant could be recruited. An adult educational and training facility was considered appropriate because it could potentially provide a reflective sample with regard to age, gender, the location in which they reside, and occupation. Those attending the education

and training facility had a diverse range of occupations and reasons for attending. Also participants who participated in the focus group interviews were both members of the dominant group and members of new communities present in Ireland. The gatekeeper was approached and provided with information regarding the aims and objectives of the research. In this research the gatekeeper granted access and advised that the best time to approach students would be during their class breaks. The gatekeeper made an announcement in class regarding the time, date, location and topic of the focus group. Signs were also erected stating that the focus group was taking place.

The focus group interviews were conducted in the canteen of an adult educational and training facility during student break times. Furthermore the focus group interviews took place at the start of the academic term and consisted of students from several different courses. Therefore the participants were not overly familiar with each other but did have their educational pursuits in common. The focus groups commenced with the facilitator approaching groups and introducing herself, briefly explaining the nature of the research and topic to each group and asking if they would consent to participating in a focus group. Those who did consent were asked to read and sign a consent form indicating their willingness to participate. Five focus groups were conducted in total and the number of participants in each group numbered between four and seven participants. No focus group was composed wholly of members of new communities. There were however, focus groups, which consisted of members of the dominant group in society only. The actual composition of the focus groups is set out in tables 1.5-1.9.

### **Focus Group Interview Sample Profile**

**Table 1.5: Focus Group 1**

<b><u>Identification</u></b>	<b><u>Age</u></b>	<b><u>Gender</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>
Participant 1 (Irish)	18-30	Female	Urban
Participant 2 (Irish)	31-40	Female	Suburban

Participant 3	(Irish)	31-40	Female	Rural
Participant 4	(Irish)	31-40	Female	Suburban
Participant 5	(Irish)	41-55	Female	Suburban
Participant 6	(Irish)	56+	Female	Suburban
Participant 7	(Irish)	56+	Female	Rural

**Total number of participants: 7**

**Table 1.6: Focus Group 2**

<u>Identification</u>		<u>Age</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Location</u>
Participant 1	(Irish)	18-30	Male	Urban
Participant 2	(Irish)	31-40	Male	Urban
Participant 3	(Lithuanian)	31-40	Female	Rural
Participant 4	(Irish)	31-40	Female	Rural
Participant 5	(Irish)	41-55	Female	Suburban

**Total number of participants: 5**

**Table 1.7 Focus Group 3**

<u>Identification</u>		<u>Age</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Location</u>
Participant 1	(Irish)	18-30	Male	Suburban
Participant 2	(Portuguese)	18-30	Female	Urban
Participant 3	(Irish)	18-30	Male	Rural
Participant 4	(Irish)	18-30	Female	Urban
Participant 5	(African)	31-40	Female	Suburban

**Total number of participants: 5**

**Table 1.8: Focus Group 4**

<u>Identification</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Location</u>
Participant 1 (African)	31-40	Male	Urban
Participant 2 (Irish)	41-55	Male	Suburban
Participant 3 (Irish)	41-55	Male	Suburban
Participant 4 (Irish)	41-55	Male	Rural
<b>Total number of participants: 4</b>			

**Table 1.9: Focus Group 5**

<u>Identification</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Location</u>
Participant 1 (Irish)	41-55	Male	Rural
Participant 2 (Irish)	41-55	Male	Suburban
Participant 3 (Irish)	41-55	Female	Urban
Participant 4 (Irish)	56+	Male	Rural
<b>Total number of participants: 4</b>			

The five interviews were conducted over two days. Three were conducted on the first day and two of the second. As the focus group interviews proceeded, the themes and issues identified were noted and later formed the basis of the question schedule used in the individual interviews.

Preparation is central to the success of a focus group interview, as it allows the researcher to reflect on what needs to be achieved from the focus group interviews. The focus group interview plan was as follows; to begin the participants would be given an overview of the topic and research. The outlining of the research topic

would act as a stimulant for discussion. Participants would give their opinions and provide anecdotal examples of their experiences. The facilitator would try to allow the discussion to flow naturally without interruption and just note the issues that arise. To conclude a successful focus group, an ending question would be put to the group. According to Krueger (1994) there are two types of ending question and the inclusion is crucial to the analysis.

The first is the ‘all things considered’ question. This type of ending question allows the participants to reflect on the discussion that has taken place and then state what they believe is the most important issue regarding the focus group topic. The second type of ending question suggested by Krueger is the ‘summary’ question. This type of ending question requires that the researcher give a summary of the discussion and then ask the participant if they agree with the summary given. This may be followed by what Krueger calls the final question, which asks, have we missed anything? Participants would then be given a chance to respond, correct any errors they feel have been made in the summation of the group’s thoughts and make any further comments that they feel are relevant. It was important that the researcher was clear regarding the issues raised by the participants, as they would form the basis for the questions asked in the one-to-one interviews.

### **Data Collection - Individual Interviews**

Following on from the of the focus group interviews as a method of gathering data, it was decided to next employ individual, semi-structured interviews. However, before arriving at this decision, the pros and cons of other data collection methods were considered closely. The usefulness of each method was tested against how well it fulfilled the aim of this research.

Each interview was held on a face-to-face basis and was in-depth and semi-structured in style. Each interview lasted between forty-five minutes and one hour in duration. The level of openness achieved during a one-to-one interview can

depend very much on the questions posed and indeed how those questions are posed. Therefore the preparation of the question schedule was central to the success of the interviews (See Table 2.1). Much care was taken to phrase questions in a way that would encourage open and honest conversation. The interviewer at the end of each interview wrote up an observation note. This only served as a reinforcement of the content of the interview in the interviewer's mind and allowed the interviewer to gain a greater understanding, on a conscious and subconscious level, of the many aspects of the interview. The use of observation notes has the dual purpose of aiding in the analysis process, as the observation notes allow for clearer recollection of the data collected and ultimately a more vivid and illuminating analysis and interpretation of the interview data.

### **Data Analysis**

'Humans are not very powerful as processors of large amounts of information; our cognitive tendency is to reduce complex information into selective and simplified gestalts or easily understood configurations' (Miles & Huberman 1994:11). The oversimplification of data in this manner raises questions regarding the validity of the qualitative analysis process. For this reason, it is important to state how the data collected will be analysed and displayed. Qualitative data analysis has been defined as 'consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display and conclusion-drawing/verification' (Miles & Huberman 1994:10). Indeed, each of the three elements identified in this definition plays a part in the analysis of the data gathered in this research. However before detailing how interpretivism influenced the analysis process it is important to state that the analysis of this research is framed by the critical 'race' theory, which emphasises the socially constructed nature of 'race'. An understanding of the social construct of 'race' as apposed to the biological was discussed within the literature review and is fundamental in underpinning the theoretical framework of this research.

The interpretivist perspective was adopted in this research. Indeed, the influence of

the interpretivist approach is evident in the formation of the aim and objectives of this research and on the choice of methods to gather data. The interpretative approach to analysing data is an interactive process between the researcher and the respondent. The researcher may exert great influence over the analytical process but so too could the respondent. The interpretivist approach demands that the researcher reflect on these influencing factors and include them in the data analysis process. The influence of the interpretive approach in the analysis of the focus group interviews is exemplified in the inclusion of an ending question. The utilisation of an ending question allowed the researcher and the participants to reflect on the discussion, which has taken place. The influence of the interpretive approach is also apparent in the analysis of the individual interviews, in that a question schedule was designed so that the same questions were asked of each interviewee. This was useful from an analysis point of view as the data collected could be analysed by correlating the answers received to identify emerging themes.

### **Analysis of Focus Group Interviews**

All five focus groups were initiated in a similar manner with the researcher asking about the meaning and significances of racism in contemporary Irish society. The discussions started with participants struggling to define and explain the concept of racism. This was followed with participants expressing their experience of racism and/or racist incidents that they had witnessed. Following Miles and Huberman's advice regarding qualitative analysis and the need to isolate patterns and commonalities so that they can be taken out 'to the field in the next wave of data collection' it was decided that the recurring themes of defining racism, individual experience of racism and the experience of witnessing a racist incident merited inclusion in the question schedule and are included in questions one and two (1994:9). Furthermore, it was felt that the inclusion of the three themes, would provide a good starting point for the individual interviews, as it would enable the researcher to explore subjective understandings of the concept of racism. It should

be noted that while each focus group grappled with trying to define racism and discussed their experiences of racism and racist incidents which they had witnessed, the pattern of the discussion varied from group to group from this point on and a variety of themes emerged. As the discussion continued, racism was generally identified within the focus group interviews as a social problem. However, participants struggled when trying to express the extent or enormity of the problem and how it had changed in the recent past. Furthermore some discussed racism within their locality and others discussed it on a national scale. It was decided that a question addressing the extent of racism as a problem in contemporary Irish society should be included as the third question on the question schedule.

The initial inspiration for the inclusion of question four on the question schedule came from the data collected in the focus group interviews. However, the specific wording of the question was inspired by the findings of Loyal and Mulcahy (2001) publication 'Racism in Ireland: The views of Black and Ethnic Minorities'. It was noted that in some of the discussions in the focus group interviews there was great confusion surrounding how to identify and to refer to ethnic minorities and indeed how to identify and refer to themselves. Participants tiptoed round what is termed in this research, 'race'-related terminology in the literature review. For this reason interviewees participating in the individual interviews were asked how they define themselves and were given the following three words to consider; nationality, ethnicity and religion.

The next theme to emerge from the focus group interviews related to government. This ranged from anecdotal evidence about local government to participants raising questions and expressing opinions regarding central government's policy on the issue of racism, "What have the Government done? Nothing, they don't care about racism" and "McDowell is always on about immigration". It was decided that a question regarding the role of the government should be included on the question schedule as it was felt that further exploration of this issue would help to achieve

the principal aim of this research. In practice, this was subdivided into three questions five, six and seven to incorporate a discussion on central government, local government and individuals or groups who had taken leadership regarding racism, all of which were issues raised in the focus group interviews.

Another issue which came to prominence during the focus group interviews, was the attitudes held by members of An Garda Síochána regarding the issue of racism in contemporary Irish society. In particular, some focus group interviewees discussed the role of An Garda Síochána in assisting integration and offering protection to those at risk of suffering a physical racial attack. Again it was felt that a question regarding the attitudes of An Garda Síochána merited inclusion on the question schedule as they were perceived as having a role regarding integration and it was therefore necessary to examine the attitude held by the Guard interviewed and how the other interviewees perceive the Gardai and the attitudes they hold.

The final issue to emerge from the focus group interviews was with regard to the role of non-governmental organisations. This cropped up as a reaction to an argument made by some focus group interviewees, that central Government was not doing enough to combat racism. The role of non-governmental organisations was then debated. It was felt that a question regarding the role of non-governmental organisations merited inclusion as focus group participants had expressed their opinions on it and those opinions were related to the issue of the role of government. It was felt necessary to explore the argument, which linked government and non-government organisations to the issue of racism in contemporary Irish society. Furthermore, it was felt that it would contribute to the principal aim of this research.

The conclusions drawn in the analysis of the data collected 'is very dependant upon the researcher's interpretations' (Mercer 1992:77). It was felt that this could be remedied to some extent by including an ending question on the question schedule. Initially, it was intended that the inclusion of an ending question would allow both

the interviewees and interviewer to reflect upon the discussion which had just taken place. Usually an ending question provides an opportunity for both the researcher and the participant to state what they believe were the most important issues discussed during the interview and try to agree on a summary. However, this proved of limited use, as it was difficult for the researcher to summarise the discussion without making the interviewee feel that they were being judged or categorised. A request by the interviewer that the interviewee summarise what they had just discussed caused confusion and discomfort, as it appeared that the interviewee felt under pressure to make a coherent argument having expressed opinions on a diverse range of issues. This was not conducive to promoting discussion. Therefore the ending question and question schedule were altered and interviewees were instead asked if they had any concluding comments to make. This proved more fruitful as it provided interviewees with a chance to reflect on the discussion but also provided them with the option of declining to answer the question. The output of the analysis of the focus groups was used to produce the question schedule, which was then applied in the next phase of fieldwork.

Finally, the analysis of the data gathered through focus group interviews as set out above demonstrates that at least two ‘concurrent flows of activity’ were incorporated into the analysis of the focus group interviews (Miles & Huberman 1994:10). Namely, data reduction and display in the form of a question schedule. The third concurrent flow of ‘conclusion-drawing/ verification’ will be incorporated in the analysis of the data gathered from the individual interviews conducted (Miles & Huberman 1994:10).

**Table 2:1 Question Schedule**

**Question Schedule**

1. Define/ Explain your understanding of racism.
2. Have you ever experienced racism as a victim or witnessed a racist incident?
3. To what extent is racism a problem in contemporary Irish society?
4. How important are the following three terms in defining or describing yourself?
  - Nationality
  - Ethnicity
  - Religion
5. What do you think of the Irish Government's efforts to combat racism?
6. Has any individual or political party taken leadership on this issue?
7. Are you aware of any efforts by local government regarding racism?
8. What is the attitude of members of An Garda Síochána regarding racism in contemporary Irish society?
9. What is the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in regard to the issue of racism in contemporary Irish society?
10. Do you have any concluding comments that you would like to make or is there anything you would like to say that you feel you didn't have a chance to say during the interview?

### **Analysis of Individual interviews**

According to Greenbaum 'It is easier to analyse the output from one-one research than from focus groups' (2000:17). He explains 'the listener/ viewer has to assimilate the information from only one key person rather than a group, so the task of understanding the key outputs from the session is much easier' (Greenbaum 2000:17). The deconstruction process surrounding the data gathered in the individual interviews in this research involved the consideration of the participants' responses to the issues raised in the question schedule. According to Ritchie, Spencer and O'Connor there are two key stages in the analytical process. The first is referred to as the 'data management' stage (2003:219). This is similar to the already mentioned 'data reduction' process discussed in Miles and Huberman's definition of qualitative analysis (1994:10). The second stage or step in the analysis process referred to by Ritchie, Spencer and O'Connor is the 'descriptive or explanatory accounts' stage (2003:219). This is again comparative to the 'data display and conclusion-drawing/ verification' stage mentioned in Miles and Huberman's definition of qualitative analysis (1994:10). Although the steps undertaken or stages involved in the data analysis process are given different names by different authors they are essentially describing the same process whereby the researcher must reflect on the information obtained through the interview process and display the themes and issues which arise. Furthermore both stages intertwine during the actual data analysis process.

From a theoretical point of view it would appear that when the interpretivist approach is adopted there are some common features, which 'recur' in most qualitative data analysis (Miles & Huberman 1994:9). Miles and Huberman set out the following six 'analytical moves,' which they state can be applied to qualitative analysis, which is being conducted within an interpretivist perspective (1994:9).

**Table 2.2: Classic Set of Analytical Moves**

‘Classic set of analytical moves’	
1	Affixing codes to a set of field notes drawn from observations and interviews
2	Noting reflections or other remarks in the margins
3	Sorting and sifting through these materials to identify similar phrases, relationships between variables, patterns, themes, distinct differences between subgroups and common sequences
4	Isolating these patterns and processes, commonalities and differences, and taking them out to the field in the next wave of data collection
5	Gradually elaborating a small set of generalisations that cover the consistencies discerned in the database
6	Confronting those generalisations with a formalised body of knowledge in the form of constructs or theories

(Miles & Huberman 1994:9)

As previously stated the data being analysed at this stage is the primary data, which was collected through individual interviews. The first analytical move set out by Miles and Huberman directs the analyst to affix ‘codes to a set of field notes drawn from observations and interviews’ (1994:9). This is similar to the ‘data management’ process set out by authorities such as Ritchie, Spencer and O’Connor (2003: 224). However, Ritchie, Spencer and O’Connor argue that coding is a term with quantitative overtones and that the term indexing is preferable (2003: 224). Indexing can be described as listing themes as they emerge. Coding on the other hand implies that the themes which arose have already been anticipated ‘as in

coding open-ended answers in a questionnaire' (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003: 224). It was felt that at such an early stage in the analysis process, listing is sufficient, as being too precise is 'often inappropriate at an early stage of thematic allocation' (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003:224). The initial list or index of themes may change as the themes become more or less significant in the analyst's mind as the analysis process proceeds. Furthermore, in this research, the indexing process was carried out manually in a systematic manner without the aid of a computer package such as CAQDAS.

Instead the analysis method framework developed by Ritchie, Spencer and O'Connor (2003) was utilised. It is based on the work done by the National Centre for Social Research in the United Kingdom, which was carried out in the 1980's and which is now highly regarded and widely applied to qualitative research (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003). This 'matrix based' process 'facilitates rigorous and transparent data management' (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003:220). A key benefit associated with this method of analysis is that it allows the researcher to remain focused as they move through the research due to the 'thematic framework' (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003:220). Essentially this method of analysis will enable the researcher to 'classify and organise the data into key themes, concepts and emerging categories' (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003:220). However, there are some preliminary steps in the data management process, which must first take place. The first preliminary task when analysing qualitative data is to become familiar with the data in order to gain an overview of the range and depth of the gathered data. At this early stage the data was still raw and needed to be displayed in a logical manner so that the analysis process could take place. Therefore it was necessary to study the notes made during the focus group interviews, the transcripts of the individual interviews from audio tape recordings and the notes taken during the individual interviews. It is noted that 'transcripts of tapes can be done in many ways that will produce rather different texts' (Miles & Huberman 1994:10). The individual interviews were transcribed verbatim from the audiocassettes so that the conversation, which took place

between the interviewer and the interviewee, were accurately represented in the transcripts. The familiarisation stage is viewed as 'building the foundations' of the analytical process (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003:221). Only by completing this stage can a researcher gain an understanding of the rich detail contained in the 'mass of unwieldy, tangled data' which will provide the 'richness and holism' to the output of the analysis process (Miles and Huberman 1994:10) (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003:214).

Having become acquainted with the raw data it was necessary to re-examine the aims and objective of the research. It was also necessary to once again study the sampling strategy employed in this research and to profile the interviewees to ascertain if there were flaws or 'highlight any potential gaps' in the research that would hamper its validity (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003:221). The familiarisation stage of the analytical process is complete when the analyst feels that the 'diversity of circumstances and characteristics within the data set has been understood' (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003:221).

On completion of the familiarisation stage of the analytical process the analyst should identify 'the initial themes or concepts' which are emerging from the data (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003:221). This is achieved during the familiarisation process by labelling the themes or concepts which emerge in order that they may then be analysed further. This is in line with Miles and Huberman's second step on their list of classic 'analytical moves', which advises the researcher to make 'notes reflections or other remarks in the margins' (1994:9). The themes and ideas identified could then be categorised and placed on the data matrix, then compared and contrasted using 'associated analysis' in order to gain a knowledge of the 'substantive nature' of individuals' subjective understandings of racism (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003: 225). Miles and Huberman describe this process succinctly in the third step on their list of classic 'analytical moves' as 'Sorting and sifting through these materials to identify similar phrases, relationships between variables, patterns, themes, distinct differences between subgroups and

common sequences' (1994:9). The second step illustrates the employment of the interpretivism as the researcher is essentially engaged in a process of interpretation of meaning. This requires the analyst to be aware of the subjective nature of the interpretations they make.

The analysis of the focus group interviews provided information which was used to formulate the question schedule, which was in turn used to conduct the individual interviews. The individual interviews were the second phase of the data collection process. The output from the data gathered through the individual interview process was used to formulate the findings of this research and ultimately achieve the principal aim of this study.

Having identified the initial emerging themes and concepts from the data through familiarisation, that list was then refined by re-categorising and re-examining the gathered data. Miles and Huberman advise the analyst to gradually elaborate on 'a small set of generalisations that cover the consistencies discerned in the database' (1994:9). This process is also referred to as 'unpacking' as the analyst must unpack the detail and determine what distinguishes the various emerging themes (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003:229). The specific actions taken with regard to the analysis of this research was to put all the individual interviewees' responses to each of the questions together. For example all the answers provided in response to question one were put together. After the initial familiarisation process was complete the emerging themes and concepts were noted and indexed. The answers provided to each question were then divided into three categories, 'Individuals Working within Particular Organisations', 'Dominant Group in Irish Society' and 'New Communities' and the data gathered was displayed in chapter five entitled 'Data Display'. Indeed this meant that two of the 'three concurrent flows' had been incorporated into the analysis process namely data reduction and data display; the third flow being conclusion-drawing/ verification.

To fully implement the fourth step in the 'classic set of analytical moves' the

responses provided to each question were analysed again and the themes and patterns, which emerged, were indexed and compared with those which initially emerged. This was a laborious process as even fleeting references made within the data to issues regarding racism had to be identified and where possible related to the themes already identified.

The 'matrix' or framework set out in chapter five of this research did not take the form of a formal data matrix but rather, the main issues which emanated from the answers provided by the respondents to each question on the question schedule were listed (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003:221). Each list was then compared and contrasted through associative analysis to examine the links between themes which had emerged in keeping with step five of the 'classic analytical moves' (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003:235). This was appropriate in this research as it was felt that if a formal matrix was constructed it would remove the data from its original context, and might compromise the essence of the data. Moreover, the summarising of material was kept to a minimum as it was felt that if the data was summarised and condensed too much it might remove the thick detail or 'richness' which is central to achieving the aim of this research (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003:231). This was in keeping with the interpretivist approach. However a certain amount of summarising was required during the analysis process, so the detail could be unpacked from the data, but the data was not altered significantly from its original form. A summary is deemed appropriate if it provides a 'window to the data' so that the data can be explored in detail (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003: 231).

The process of analysis was repeated for all the answers provided to each question. This is reflected in the output of the analysis process, which displays themes, which emerged and examining any associative links. The answers provided illustrate individual subjective understandings of racism held by participants within the three categories. These findings (subjective understandings) were then related back to the literature reviewed.

The final step in the analysis process was to set out and examine the attitudes which had emerged from all the answers provided by respondents to see if and how answers were linked or associated. This was achieved by analysing the dominant themes to emerge during the analysis process. These links between themes were identified and compared using an associative analysis technique, to examine whether there was any commonality between them (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003). The analysis of the focus group interviews already indicated that there was a casual link made by participants between the issues of government policy and non-governmental organisations. It was therefore decided that it was necessary to explore other links between the dominant attitudes (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003). Finally, it was hoped that by analysing and displaying the emerging patterns relating to subjective understandings of racism and by further analysing any links that emerged and relating them back to the research set out in the literature reviewed this would help to achieve the principal aim of this research.

It should be stated that Miles and Huberman (1999) do provide one more step in their set of classic analytical moves as set out in table 2.2. It states that the analyst needs to confront 'those generalisations with a formalised body of knowledge in the form of constructs or theories' (Miles & Huberman 1994). This was achieved in part in this research by referring to the literature review throughout the analytical process, as this is the foundation on which this research was built. The 'constructs' and 'theories' contained within the literature review help to explain the basis of many of the findings extrapolated from the collected data (Miles & Huberman 1994:9). Furthermore, the theoretical perspective of this research, set out at the beginning of this chapter provides an anchor for the analytical process applied in this research.

It was hoped that on completion of the 'data management' or 'data reduction' process the collected data would have changed from its raw form to a more succinct version of the original form, essentially 'distilling the essence of the evidence' as

set out in chapter five (Miles & Huberman 1994:10, Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003:229).

In this research the data was displayed following the structure of the question schedule. The themes which emerged through the answers expressed by participants when answering the questions posed by the interviewer, were displayed in the same order in which the questions were asked on the question schedule. Furthermore the respondents and the answers they provided were divided into three categories for analysis purposes. These themes were then subdivided into either dominant or marginal themes. The dominant themes displayed in more than one category or by a number of respondents in one category were then compared and contrasted. This helped build up a clear picture of what the researcher was finding as the analysis process progressed and gave shape to the 'conclusion-drawing and verification process' (Miles & Huberman, 1994:11).

In the data verification stage the researcher is 'noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configuration, casual flows and propositions' (Miles & Huberman 1994:11). This would however be difficult if not impossible without first displaying the data in a clear and consistent manner. The conclusions which emerge throughout the data analysis process, become 'increasingly explicit and grounded' as the analysis process continued (Miles & Huberman 1994:11). It is however necessary that the arguments made and conclusions drawn be verified. This was achieved by linking them back to the literature reviewed. Validity is achieved when, 'The meanings emerging from the data have been tested for their plausibility, their sturdiness, their "confirmability" – that is their validity' (Miles & Huberman 1994: 11).

### **Ethics**

A researcher must consider the ethical implications of their research prior to conducting any research. Ethical issues can arise at a variety of stages when

conducting social research and relate directly to the integrity of a piece of research. Therefore it is necessary to demonstrate a clear understanding of the core ethical principles which apply when conducting research. To gain a clear understanding of the core ethical principles it was necessary to consult the principles and guidelines set out by the Sociological Association of Ireland (SAI) and read the data protection legislation.

The SAI have reviewed the ethical codes of British, American and Australian sociologists and developed their own principles and guidelines. The guidelines set down by the SAI state that a researcher should read and incorporate the requirements for doing ethical research as set down by the Institute within which the research is being conducted. This research was conducted at Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) therefore approval was sought and received from W.I.T.'s. Research Ethics Committee. In order to obtain ethical approval from the institute's ethics committee it was necessary to demonstrate that:

- The research did not involve any tests or procedures which might carry a risk to the health and well being of any person participating in the research.
- The researcher was qualified to deal with the ethical issues that arise.
- The participants would be approached through gatekeepers.
- The research sample was not compromised. The sample in this research consisted of adults selected from the general public, over the age of eighteen.
- Informed consent was required from each participant prior to his or her participation in the research. The informed consent forms adhered to the Sociological Association of Ireland's Ethical Guidelines.
- Confidentiality: any identifying information would be changed. Furthermore, any identifying information would be stored in a secure place and destroyed on completion of the research.
- The Data Protection Act 1998-2003 was read and understood.

The SAI guidelines also urge researchers to consider the ethical issues particular to the subject area being researched and whether there is a prospect of causing harm to

participants. Furthermore, with regard to the issue of informed consent, the guidelines state that research participants should understand:

- What the research is about.
- The purpose of the research.
- The nature of their involvement in the research.
- That their participation is voluntary.
- That they may withdraw at any time.
- How the data relating to them will be stored. (i.e. encoded, stored in a secure place and destroyed when the research is complete).

Indeed each of these questions was considered and answered prior to obtaining consent from participants as is evidenced in the consent form (See Appendix 1). Other considerations suggested by the SAI are with regard to the safeguarding of participants' privacy and taking steps to ensure that participants will not be deceived about the research and its purposes.

The ethical principles set down by the SAI were considered prior to and throughout this research. The ethical issues were also scrutinised by the WIT ethics committee prior to granting approval. Having satisfied the SAI and WIT ethical guidelines this research was able to proceed with integrity, which is central to every piece of research.

### **Conclusion**

This research methodologies chapter aims to answer three specific questions.

1. What is it this research aims to achieve?
2. How will it achieve those aims?
3. Who will participate in the data collection process?

The first question regarding what it is this research proposes to achieve is answered

at the beginning of this chapter. The principal aim of this research is set out under the heading 'Statement of the research aim' as it is necessary to be clear about the aim of the research prior to any discussion regarding the theories or methods applied. The principal aim of the research is to study subjective understandings of racism in a contemporary Irish context. The epistemological approach adopted in this research reflects that aim. The actual theoretical approach adopted within this research was broadly defined as interpretivism and is reflective of the aim of this research.

The second question regarding how the aim of this research will be achieved is answered in the selection of methodology to achieve the aims of the research. The methods selected include focus group interviews and individual interviews all of which fit within the interpretivistic approach adopted. Indeed, it was felt that the methods adopted worked best for this research as they allowed for the incorporation of the interpretivist approach which was influential in this research including the concepts of understanding and empathy. Indeed, it was very important when conducting both the focus group interviews and the individual interviews that the interviewer understood and empathised with the interviewee's point of view. Furthermore it was also important that the interviewer resisted condemning any opinions expressed so that interviewees felt they were able to express their opinions in an accepting environment.

The third question which chapter three aims to answer is who will participate in the data collection process. The question is answered in the discussion relating to sampling. There is a comprehensive explanation of the individuals who took part in both the focus group and individual interviews. This not only sets out background information on the interviewees but it also demonstrates how the interviewees have been categorised for data analysis purposes.

This chapter also sets out and justifies the analysis process adopted in this research. The approach adopted in analysing any piece of research is hugely important, as it

must reflect the theoretical perspective adopted within the research. Furthermore it must demonstrate how the methodology adopted within the research is being applied in order to achieve the aim of the research. Only by setting out the theoretical perspective and methodology which will be applied to analyse the data gathered, to achieve the aims of the research, can validity be ensured. The theoretical perspective adopted throughout this research was interpretivistic. The interpretivist approach was influential in determining how the gathered data would be analysed because of the co-elaboratory nature of the data collection methods employed namely focus group interviews and individual interviews. It has also been demonstrated in this chapter how the analysis of the focus group interviews helped in the formation of the question schedule and how the 'classic set of analytical moves', which were developed by Miles and Huberman within the interpretivist perspective, were employed (1994:9). The 'moves' provided guidelines within the qualitative framework, which allowed the data to be transformed from its raw state to a more manageable form. The result of this process is illustrated in the next chapter entitled 'Data Display'. Displaying the data in this manner was an essential part of the analysis process as it meant that the data reduction and display sections were completed. It also allowed the analyst to move on to the next stage, 'conclusion-drawing/ verification' (Miles and Huberman 1994:10), allowing the analyst to work with the data to extrapolate finding and ultimately achieve the aim of this research. The principal aim of this research requires that the analyst identify and extrapolate the participant's subjective understandings of racism.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Findings**

#### **Introduction**

The findings set out in this chapter are the result of analysis of the primary data gathered in this research. For display purposes the participants were divided into three categories, 'Individuals Working within Particular Organisations', 'Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society' and participants who make up Ireland's 'New Communities' (Loyal & Mulcahy 2001:7). There was also a methodological reason for dividing participants into three categories. It was thought that the inclusion of a diverse range of participants would help to ensure that the understandings of one particular group would not dominate this research. The findings are presented to illustrate the general themes which emerged throughout this study regarding participants' subjective understanding of racism. These general themes were then analysed further to decipher the dominant themes which emerged in answer to each question posed on the question schedule. A theme was deemed to be dominant when expressed by two or more interviewees whether they share the same category or are in different categories.

#### **Question schedule, Question 1 – Define/ Explain your understanding of racism**

The first item, which was explored with interviewees, was their understanding of the term 'racism'. An understanding of how interviewees define or explain this concept is central to exploring and gaining awareness of their subjective understandings of the concept in contemporary Irish society and achieving the

principal aim of this research. Furthermore, gaining an understanding of how each individual interviewee understands this vital concept is in keeping with the interpretivist approach. Specifically participants were asked to define or explain their understanding of racism.

**Summary of answers to question 1:**

There was little consensus among all three categories on what actually constitutes racist behaviour and therefore racism. The similarities which did arise, formed the dominant themes as set out below.

**General themes:**

**Individuals Working within Particular Organisations:**

1. Formal/ reflective definitions provided.
2. The categorisation and treatment of human beings as superior or inferior.
3. Personal versus institutional racism
4. Raised question: What actually constitutes racism? Lack of consensus in answer.

**Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society:**

1. Less formal definitions.
2. Lack of tolerance for difference.
3. Raised question: Who should bear burden of encouraging integration?
4. Racism defined in terms of xenophobia (Difference of country, nationality and culture).
5. Confusion regarding definition of racism. Interviewees discussed effects rather than defining the term.

**New Communities**

1. Diverse range of definitions – negativity, skin colour, institutional
2. Racism defined as xenophobia and otherness
3. Extreme examples of racism (Hitler, KKK)
4. Hurt experienced by victim
5. The categorisation and treatment of human beings as superior or inferior

**Dominant themes:**

1. The categorisation and treatment of human beings as superior or inferior.
2. Racism defined in terms of xenophobia.

**Individuals Working within Particular Organisations**

The interviewees in this first category incorporated words such as “prejudice” and “intolerant” into their definitions of racism. The inclusion of these words caused the definitions they provided to sound somewhat formal, indicating that the respondents had previously reflected on the definitions provided. For example, the

definition of racism provided by the politician of “acting in a prejudice way, intolerant way.... not making them feel as welcome or as involved as they would be if they were in their own background” resembled the grounds set out to establish discrimination under the Equal Status Act 2000. Section 3.1(a) of the Act states discrimination occurs when ‘a person is treated less favourably than another person is, has been or would be treated’.

The definitions provided by the participant working for the NGOs, were more academic in tone. Both recognised that racism is a “very broad” concept, which incorporates a number of elements. The participant from the NCCRI explains her organisation’s position “in the NCCRI, what we say is that racism is made up of three components, power, prejudice and a notion of superiority or inferiority”. This is similar of Loyal and Mulcahy’s contemporary definition of racism in an Irish context as discussed in the literature review. Loyal and Mulcahy’s definition of racism refers in particular to the majority of the population or the ‘Dominant Group in Irish Society’ representing ethnic minorities as inferior, essentially implying that the majority of the population or the ‘Dominant Group in Irish Society’ believe themselves to be superior (Loyal and Mulcahy, 2001). Indeed, the notion of one ‘race’ believing that it’s superior to another was a common and recurring theme throughout the literature review.

The participant from the IRC explained that racism could range from “personal racism between two people all the way up to institutional racism”. The NCCRI representative also subdivided racism into “direct racism” and “institutional racism”. The NCCRI participant defines direct racism as “the individual acts of an individual person so for example that would be aggression, verbal abuse, those kinds of things”. Loyal and Mulcahy’s definition also incorporates the notion of direct racism. The participant from the NCCRI on the other hand described institutional racism as “certain policies and certain legislation...by government...lead to a racist attitude or even racist treatment even if it is unintentional”. The representative then illustrated this point with an example of

both blatant and subtle cases of institutional racism,

It's obvious in apartheid South Africa where Black people weren't allowed vote, they weren't allowed vote in certain areas that kind of thing, it's written directly in to the law. Or it can be very subtle where if you look at the education system in Ireland, how come Travellers, children from Travelling Communities tend not to access education or tend not to access the same benefits from the education system as a settled community person.

The politician's definition of racism was preceded by the idea that racism is "adopting a view or a position about somebody based on the colour of their skin". This is reflective of Fredrickson's (2002) definition of racism, which states that an action should only be labelled as racist if the discrimination in question was against an unalterable characteristic of a person. However the politician continues by stating that the position may be adopted due to "their ethnic background". Fredrickson (2002) would not concur as he has stated that discriminatory behaviour based on anything but a persons 'race' should not be labelled as racism but as another form of discrimination. This would appear to be central to gaining an understanding of racism as it is generally understood by the three interviewees already discussed that racism is a form of discrimination but what is unclear is which forms of discrimination actually constitutes racism.

The Garda's definition of racism was less succinct than the other interviewees in this category. Furthermore, rather than defining or explaining the term racism the Garda proceeded by categorising racists. He commenced by stating "my definition wouldn't be the ideal one" and went on to explain that he can "define between a real racist and a person who has only become a racist or a person who is not a racist at all but may utter words about Blacks or whatever. I can put them into categories". An analysis of this statement shows that the garda refers to three categories, the first is the "real racist", second is the "new racist" and the third is "not a racist but may utter words about Blacks or whatever". The third category is

similar to what the representative of the NCCRI defined as direct racism that is “the individual acts of an individual person so for example that would be aggression, verbal abuse, those kinds of things”. However the anecdotal evidence, which the garda uses to demonstrate what he meant by a person who is not a real racist appears to convey that the garda does not view this behaviour as serious or worthy of intervention. The garda explains,

I had to go to a call where a man there, his daughter was pregnant she couldn't get a house. There was a Black woman living across the road, who had a house and this guy started calling her names and abusing her. You see he had got a letter that day from the housing authority saying that the daughter wasn't going to be housed, she was pregnant, I think she had three kids, she was an unmarried mother, she was getting her money from the state, but still they wanted a house to get her out of the house. She didn't want to go to the flats she wanted a house.

Having told this story the Garda then asked the researcher “Would you class him as a racist?” It was felt that perhaps the interviewee was trying to gauge whether what he had said was acceptable or not to the researcher. However he seemed to disregard the researcher's affirmative answer and continued by making the point that “If he was a real racist he'd hate Travellers, he'd hate Blacks, he'd hate Pakistanis and he'd hate the Indians”. The Garda's explanation of “not a real racist” implies that this member of An Garda Síochána does not view the use of verbal ‘racial’ abuse as serious unless the “not a real racist” displays hatred towards all ‘races’ not just one particular ‘race’. Then the “not a real racist” becomes “a real racist”.

The garda then defines a “real racist” as those who “are responsible for hate sites” on the World Wide Web. Furthermore they “are born racist, they just hate people because they are different”, alluding to the idea that racism itself is an innate characteristic. This is perhaps a new element to the nature versus nurture argument, which has long raged within sociology. With regard to racism it poses the question

as to whether humans possess at birth biological characteristics that can be attributed to racial origin. Today sociologists and science in general, agree that humans do not possess innate characteristics, which can be attributed to 'race'. However the idea that racism is an innate characteristic possessed by humans at birth has received little attention. The Garda concludes his definition of racism and classification of racists by stating that "the most dangerous racism of all is the educated racist" and warns of the dangers of the "ultra right wing".

From the answers provided by the various 'Individuals Working within Particular Organisations' it could be said that each interviewee in this category has provided a definition of racism with a certain degree of authority. The manner in which the definitions were delivered conveyed that the interviewees believed that they had provided an applicable definition of the term. This is not to say that the interviewees believed that their definitions were the one true and correct definition of racism but that it was correct for the aims and objectives of their organisation in the context of contemporary Irish society. It is interesting therefore that there was very little consensus between the definitions provided.

### **Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society**

The definitions provided by 'Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society' were less formal and authoritative than those provided by the previous category. The interviewees often spoke in half sentences. However; there were a number of recurring themes which emerged across the various age categories. Inequality, exclusion and "difference" were mentioned several times in various guises. In particular interviewees discussed difference of culture, colour and nationality when defining racism.

A number of the interviewees referred to the very contemporary situation regarding immigration in Ireland and the issues of assimilation and integration on a community level in their definitions of racism. As the female from the highest age

bracket put it “racism is when people are not being accepted in a community”. It would seem that this statement and the sentiments expressed by other interviewees within this category answer the question: “what are the effects of racism,” rather than defining or explaining what racism is. As with the first category there is no clear consensus on how racism should be defined.

There were two male interviewees in the age bracket of 18-30 years. The younger of the two interviewees in this age bracket who grew up in a rural location describes his occupation as, student. The other male interviewee lives in an urban location and explained that he is in full-time employment. For identification purposes the younger of the two interviewees in this age bracket will be described as a ‘student’ while the other interviewee will be described as being ‘in full-time employment’. When asked to define or explain racism the student explained how he doesn’t hate, “coloured people” and “wouldn’t refuse to sit beside a coloured person on the bus or anything” but that he hated the way “the Polish more so, can’t speak English”. The other interviewee in the age bracket defined racism as “discrimination because someone is from a different country or a different colour”.

There were two interviewees in the 31-40, age bracket, one male and one female. The male interviewee defined racism as “treating people of different races unequally”. The female interviewee defined racism as, “someone’s from a different country and you don’t like them” demonstrating a more xenophobic attitude. The two female interviewees in the next age bracket of 41-55 years defined racism using similar language, despite the fact that they were from different socio-economic backgrounds. One interviewee was living in a rural setting and provided the following information to describe herself. She stated that she works as a civil servant and a mother. She defined racism as “prejudice against somebody who is not in the narrow sense from your country”. She then continued broadening her definition to include prejudice due to “different religion or gender or sexual disposition”. This definition is similar to the definition provided by the politician in the first category as it includes the use of the term “prejudice”. It further suggests

that racism is a form of discrimination but conveys that there is some confusion as to which particular forms of discrimination constitute racism. Again Fredrickson's definition states that racism can only occur if the discriminatory act is against an innate characteristic possessed at birth (2002:7). Religion is not an innate characteristic and therefore discrimination against a person's religion is generally not labelled as racism but as religious persecution or anti-semitic or even sectarianism. However gender and sexual orientation are indeed biological characteristics possessed at birth yet discrimination on these grounds is not labelled as racism.

The second interviewee in the age category of 41-55 lives in an urban setting. She does voluntary work and is not married and has no children. She defined racism as "People being discriminated against, on account of their colour or their coming from a different culture not being granted equal status like everybody else in society". His definition is reflective of Loyal and Mulcahy's as set out in the literature review. Loyal and Mulcahy include "exclusionary practices" in their definition, which they believe occurs due to inequality. The interviewee also refers to inequality. However she explains that it is due to discrimination based on colour or otherness.

The female interviewee in the highest age bracket of 56 years plus defined racism as, "when people are not accepted" because they "are from a different minority regardless of where they come from". Having defined the term the female interviewee went on to air her views on the direct provision policy which applies to asylum seekers stating that those seeking asylum should be given "a work permit even while their visa is being looked at". It was her belief that this would provide "personal satisfaction that they are actually doing something". The interviewee also commented on the differing reactions to racism by young and old, "Young people seem to integrate better than older people". This indicates that while this particular interviewee welcomes the integration of 'New Communities' in Irish society, she believes that perhaps others of her generation are not as open to the idea. She sees the integration taking place among young people as hopeful and in almost a throw

away, remark states “it won’t be so alien to that generation”. This gives an interesting insight into how some members of the older generation view the changes taking place in Irish society.

The male interviewee in the highest age bracket defined racism in the following manner “It’s really just different nationalities, different cultures, coming into this country and how you actually get along with them”. He continues “I mean for us as a kind of race it’s highly unusual for a huge influx of non-Irish nationals. Now for people who have never left his country, I lived in England for three or four years, I met different cultures, different people from different parts of the world and you just get use to them”, alluding to Allport’s contact hypothesis as discussed in the literature review. The interviewee’s statement also refers to the Irish people as a ‘race’ and suggests that we were a homogenous population until the early 1990s when there was an increase in immigration to this country. This was also discussed in the literature review and was described as a myth, which prevails but ‘can be easily refuted’ according to Dr. Ronit Lentin.

Another interesting issue to emerge in the answer provided by the male interviewee in the highest age category of 56 years plus, was the idea of who should bear the burden of encouraging integration. This idea was explored by McVeigh (2002) when examining the development of the anti racism movement in Ireland. The cyclical nature of organisations, which promote anti racism, of initial success and ultimate failure and the onus placed on ethnic minorities to convince the majority that it was wrong to be racist against them rather than sharing the responsibility with the majority of the population who have the policy and decision making power all form part of McVeigh’s discussion which was referred to in the literature review. It is also reflective of what is described in this research on the achievements of the Travelling Community’s anti-racism campaign. It was stated that the Travelling Community’s campaign could be viewed as a model, which could be implemented by others. However this raised the question as to whether it is ideal that the ‘New Communities’ have to convince the majority of the population not to

be racist against them.

### New Communities

The answers provided by interviewees within the category of ‘New Communities’ were even more diverse. This perhaps reflects the fact that the interviewees are from different countries and living in differing circumstances in Ireland. For example among the sample there are economic immigrants, asylum seekers, those who have moved here for personal reasons and one interviewee had refugee status. The answers to this question ranged from defining racism as “not being White”, something negative with exclusionary consequence, a problem involving a lack of communication and pre-conceived notions to a mention of Hitler, skinheads and the Ku Klux Klan. The notion of ranking humans as superior and inferior and xenophobia are also discussed. One interviewee chose to ignore the question put to him and took the opportunity to express what he has interpreted as a racist incident, which he experienced as a victim.

There were three interviewees, two female and one male in the age category of 18-30 years. The Eastern European female interviewee didn’t offer a definition or explain the term racism. However the female interviewee from Belarus explained her understanding of racism as being “negative” about someone’s “nationality” but she continues “it is more than nationality” by explaining, “You live in Ireland, I come to your country, you don’t like it” and similarly she explains “maybe me don’t like it when people come to my country”. The male interviewee from Eastern Europe explained his understanding of racism as follows “Racism? Black people, White people yes. I don’t like racism, I don’t like Hitler, do you understand, I don’t like skin heads”.

There are again three interviewees, two female and one male in the next age category of 31-40. The male interviewee from Africa explained his understanding of racism “let’s say you have got different individuals coming from different,

maybe different countries...they may be, you know, not interacting together but like they have got like big views about each other, just because they don't know each other, but know what is happening in your lives, it can like happen, me and you are neighbours, you know we don't know each other and then someone might say in that case, he is a bit of, you know.... because we don't know each other, we don't know our backgrounds and we don't communicate with each other".

The female interviewee from Asia explains her understanding of racism as "somebody hurt other people's feelings or to treat badly" illustrating the personal effects of racism. The other female in this category is from Africa. She explains her understanding of racism, "It mean, maybe that feel like that we are not White or something like that". The interviewee's definition is exclusively associated with skin colour.

In the next age category of 41-55 years there are two male and one female interviewee. The male interviewee from the Middle-east provides the following answer "you know some people they are, racist or not, but am, my question is why they are asking us to you know for example, why you come to Ireland and that is the main question". The interviewee tells of an experience with his doctor and specialist in which he believes they displayed racism. The interviewee explained "I was sick I go to visit my GP...he is in the city centre he has some office. When I went there he told me the first time I visit him and he told me why you come to Ireland. He did not ask me what is your problem? Or why you are sick? Or for example like this, straight away he told me why you come to Ireland". He continues "So the next time I was in the hospital, yes, and then I had an appointment for some problem in my body, you know, the specialist she was asking same question... maybe there is racism policy, I don't know". The interviewee has raised the issue of institutional racism. In particular he has clearly expressed that he believes that a link was made between his status as an asylum seeker and his feelings that he had been discriminated against.

The other male interviewee in this age category is African. He provided the following answer when asked to define or explain his understanding of racism. The interviewee explains that in his “previous profession, I used to deal, I used to deal with a a lot of European people” and explains that he feels that the “main problem is the concept of Western superior...that most of Negro, Black people, they are second-class citizen and this is the problem”. The interviewee also explains where the idea of superiority came from “We have our style of hair and we have our skin colour ...Honestly you know most African countries have been colonised, you know that we should breath, eat, wear like Western people and if you don’t do like that you are primitive” but he concludes “you know those kinds of concepts for me today are old fashioned”. He continues to make his point stating, “I’ve been in Egypt I see all pyramids I say “Oh my God, these people a long time ago, where they got this intelligence”. I see the big universities in Cairo they say that even Jesus Christ was studying there...but why Western people they think that they are very superior”. The interviewee then offers his opinion of the cyclical nature of power in the world, “I believe this world is like a tyre, you know, the tyre is going like that today, (he motions a circle with his hand) I reckon they are up, but I am happy themselves they say in 2030 maybe China will build up, you understand and this is why I say that African long time ago they have been up because this world move like a tyre”. Speaking about Ireland the interviewee states, “I read in newspaper this country ten years before people they were living very, very poor... The economy poor, now everything is changed and this is what I see in my views scientifically what is the life but to say that such race they are primitive because their skin is coloured Black or brown or because they don’t speak proper English or maybe they have been colonised that means that they are racist they are bastard they are whatever name they call us”. The interviewee also explains that he has considered the concept in a religious context and explains that “I think the problem of racism we can see it in the bible because I do believe that if God created one race this kind of problem will not be...if there was only White race all people the same colour...no White colour...the big problem, the issue of racism as a concept as an ideology as a Christian we shall see in the Genesis in the bible I don’t believe, if

God created all people and same colour of skin that kind of people will not be.” The interviewee’s assertion that God created different ‘races’ is clear. However, he does not offer an explanation as to why God would create different ‘races’.

The third and final interviewee in this age bracket of 41-55 years is a female Eastern European interviewee. She explains her understanding of racism by reflecting on the first times she heard the term. Firstly she explains that she is from a former communist country that was very closed, “you wouldn’t see people from another country, you can hear only some news, you know, but this news was not all the time the truth. The first time, I think I hear of racism was in America and the Ku Klux Klan. After when I start studying, racism I understand more is not only colour but is [the interviewee searches for the right word]”. The interviewee experiences difficulty in translating the word she wants to use and explains, “...it’s culture, it’s tradition”.

The Belgian interviewee in the highest age category explained racism as “People coming from different countries, thinking they take jobs”. The interviewee is describing something similar to Baker’s theory as set out in the literature review whereby citizens believe that there is a threat ‘to the well-being of the nation’ which is ‘embodied in the physical presence of minorities’ (Garner 2004:15).

**Question schedule, Question 2 – Have you ever experienced racism as a victim or witnessed a racist incident?**

This question can be divided into two parts. The first part of this question enquires as to the interviewee’s personal experience as a victim of a racist incident. The second clause in this question enquires as to the interviewee’s experience as a witness to a racist incident or incidents. An understanding of how interviewees define being a victim of, or a witness to a racist incident provides further insight into how interviewees define racism and their understanding of the concept. Not only would this aid the achievement of the principal aim of this research but also seeking clarity regarding how a term is understood is reflective of the interpretivist

approach adopted in this research. Specifically, participants were asked have you ever experienced racism as a victim or witnessed a racist incident?

**Summary of answers to question 2:** Three distinct elements arose in the answers provided by interviewees to question two. The first was the formation of a pattern in how interviewees from different groups answered this question. The second was the references made to the different forms of racism. The other element to emerge in the answers provided to this question was the acknowledgment of the insidious form in which racism permeates through contemporary Irish society.

**General themes:**

**Individuals Working within Particular Organisations:**

1. Pattern/ trend emerged whereby interviewees generally answered ‘No’ to being a victim of racism and ‘Yes’ to having witnessed racism.
2. Those who answered yes to having witnessed racism often provided anecdotal evidence or spoke of personal and institutional racism
3. Alluded to the insidious form in which racism permeates through society.

**Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society:**

1. Pattern/ trend, which emerged generally mirroring, the attitudes displayed by the Individuals Working within Particular Organisations.
2. Direct and institutional racism were alluded to in the examples provided.
3. The insidious form in which racism permeates through society discussed in the examples provided by interviewees

**New Communities:**

1. Pattern/ trend which emerged, differentiated from the pattern identified in the previous two groups. The majority of interviewee in the category entitled ‘New Communities’ answered ‘No’ to either ever experiencing or witnessing racism. Those who provided anecdotal evidence of racism they had either experienced as a victim or as a witness were easily physically distinguishable from the members of the dominant group in Irish society. Indeed, the female Korean interviewee stated, “Here, I think it is worse for Black people than Asian people”.

**Dominant themes:**

1. The emergence of a pattern in how interviewees from different categories responded regarding whether they experienced racism as a victim or a witness.
2. Citing personal racism and institutional forms of racism as examples of the types of racism experienced.
3. The insidious form in which racism permeates through contemporary Irish society.

### **Individuals Working within Particular Organisations**

The interviewees who represent institutions or bodies mainly answered the first part of this question in the negative except for the participants from the NCCRI who felt that she had perhaps experienced racism abroad. All interviewees in this category were able to provide examples of racist incident, which they had witnessed. The participant from the NCCRI stated that she had witnessed racism in both her personal and professional life. The participant from the IRC spoke of witnessing passive or casual racism and the politician provided an example directly related to his work.

The representative of the NCCRI explained, “I mean I am a White settled woman living in Ireland, so in terms of the context of Ireland I would have very rarely have experienced racism, I may have experienced some verbal abuse while in the U.K. or Germany, but not in Ireland”. The participant continued by explaining that she had “witnessed racism many times” both in her personal and professional life and went on to provide anecdotal evidence of both. In a personal capacity she explained, “I have a good friend from the Nigerian community...her car outside her front door was burnt down as a threat to tell her to leave the housing estate”. In her professional capacity the participant states that she has witnessed numerous racist incidents. These racist incidents include the denial of employment to “an African man living in Port Laoise”. She also mentions incidents where people have been denied access to housing and explains “an Irish person would have rang up and asked for an appointment to view the house...when the landlord discovered the person [the potential new tenant] was Black or of a different nationality [the landlord] would refuse to rent the house”. She points out the illegality of such action “now that’s illegal under the Equal Status Act”. The NCCRI representative also lists the denial of access to education and the circulation of hate mail as other racist incidents that she has experienced as a witness. These examples demonstrate racism in both its individual and institutional forms.

The IRC participant spoke of her “passive” or “casual” experience of racism. She commented that Irish people “even just in shops ...you see people get very impatient ...they see a different skin colour they are not going to be able to have you know proper English. They [Irish people] are very impatient and quite dismissive in a lot of cases”.

The politician shared what he described as “a number of pretty unpleasant personal experiences” of racism and while he was not the victim he was with a person who was. He explained, “There is a particular friend of mine who is Black. He happens to be an Irish citizen, naturalised Irish citizen but nonetheless he is Black and he was helping me with some of my political campaigns in recent years and I experienced considerable disquiet among my own party supporters, for example who thought it was you know a bad thing”. He continues “now it is hard to know what their motives were, the expressed motive was that it would have been damaging for me politically to be seen canvassing with a Black person”. He explains, “That was if you like the polite expression, I think a lot of them were just unhappy that I was that closely associated with a Black person and on a couple of occasions when we would call to people’s houses he would be abused in my presence and I found that very unpleasant”. The politician then recounts what he describes as “one very unpleasant incident...where the man of the house came out and shouted at the two of us and told my friend to get off his property and all that you know”.

This question was not specifically put to the interviewee representing An Garda Síochána as it was felt that this question was sufficiently answered through the anecdotal evidence the Guard provided when explaining his definition of racism.

### **Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society**

The pattern whereby interviewees answered the first part of the question regarding their experience as a victim of racism negatively and the second part of the question

regarding their experience as a witness to a racist incident in the affirmative continued within this category. Indeed all interviewee except for the female in the age bracket 31-40 years answered 'No' when asked if they had ever been the victims of racism. It would seem that some interviewees felt that they could not be the victims of racism because they are White. This was indicated in the manner in which it was implied that the question was in some way not applicable to them. The female interviewee in the age bracket of 31-40 years described an incident where she felt that she was the victim of racism within her workplace. However, when asked if she had ever witnessed a racist incident the interviewee answered "No, not really". The interviewees who stated that they had witnessed a racist incident told of incident including racist, "jokes" and blaming "Blacks" for the car parking situation.

The male interviewees in the age bracket of 18-30 both followed the pattern by first answering that neither had ever been the victim of racism but had witnessed, incidents, which were racist in nature. The student spoke of his experience, which occurred while working in a previously held part-time job. He explained that the fact that migrant worker "couldn't speak proper English" annoyed his boss and that his boss would then call the worker racist names. The other male interviewee in this category, in full-time employment, spoke of witnessing general 'racial' verbal abuse but did not refer to a specific incident.

The male interviewee in the 31-40, age category answered the first question negatively and the second question positively. He stated that he had never been the victim of racism but that he had witnessed racism stating "maybe in the likes of joking but not necessarily in an actual more serious situation". The female interviewee did not follow the pattern, which was previously established. She stated that she felt that she had indeed been a victim of racism and referred to an incident, which had taken place in her work place, "this one came out demanding tissue she was very saucy... I told her where the toilets were and she said, "You get it"". When asked where the woman was from, the interviewee responded, "I don't know, she was Black". The interviewer asked the clarifying question, "and this was racism

against you?” The interviewee responded, “Yes”. When asked if she had ever witnessed a racist incident, the respondent answered “No not really”.

The next category comprises two females between the ages of 41 and 55 years of age. They shall be differentiated within this data as a rural dweller and an urban dweller. The answer provided by the rural dweller, when asked if she had ever experienced or been the victim of racism was “sexism yes but not racism”. However when asked if she had ever witnessed a racist incident she replied “oh yea, oh yea frequently”. When asked if she could provide an example the interviewee obliged with examples from both her personal and professional life, “literally the first thing that comes to mind is where I work...the car parking situation is pretty critical and for some strange reason a lot of Black people come into the lane or the little road where I work...and park their cars”. She continues “I see and I hear my neighbours here complain about Black people driving badly, parking badly, driving cars that are uninsured or not taxed or, whether they have their facts right or not. There is definitely a kind of painting them all with the same brush”. The interviewee explains that this attitudes is not only one held by her neighbours who are members of the dominant group in society but also by those in positions of authority and gives the example of the traffic warden, “complaining about the way those “Black people park”“. The interviewee adds, “I see that constantly”. The interviewee then provided an example of racism that she witnessed in her personal life. “Another form I would see it would be in jokes...passing on text messages”. In particular, the interviewee states “they would think it is funny to tell you a joke about a Black person or a Romanian or something like that still”. The interviewee then elaborates on the use of the word still, explaining “Even now days we all think we are broadminded”. The interviewee continues, “Without lecturing the person I would let them know...I would generally say that it’s pretty disgusting you shouldn’t really be passing that around”. It is the comment “without lecturing them” which is perhaps most telling as the interviewee has displayed her obvious discomfort with the racist joke, however she displays discomfort in communicating that to other members of the dominant group in society. What this example alludes to is, again the insidious

form in which racism circulates within Irish society. The other interviewee in this category identified as an urban dweller, stated that she hadn't personally experienced or witnessed a racist incident, "Can't say I have, no".

Similarly, the female in the highest age bracket in this category answered "No" to either experiencing or having witnessed a racist incident. While the male interviewee in this age bracket of 56 years plus answered, "When I was in England, no" to the question about his personal experience of racism as a victim. When asked if he had witnessed racism he replied "up to about two years ago there were a lot of coloured people in the town queuing up for their benefits in the post office and it was them who were causing the problems, because sometimes their benefits wasn't there, you know and they'd lose the head, you know, and then the staff are upset and then the whole queue starts to get upset". The interviewee described this as "reversal of a racist incident", indicating that his definition of racism would be where a White person is racist against a Black person.

The interviewee concludes his answer regarding the witnessing of a racist incident by stating "I've never seen anyone in this town, slagging off, giving out to, having a fight with people because of their colour". He also explains that "Racist jokes are gone out the window you know...I'm a member of the Labour Party and there are two coloured people in our branch of the Labour Party. Now they're extremely cute as well, there's no nonsense about them. They want to be housed in the area and they feel that by joining a political party they have a better chance and if there's a TD in the Party, it's a sensible move for them". The inclusion of the word "cute" could be interpreted as referring to either physical appearance or being smart. It was felt that the interviewee was using the word to indicate that he thought the individuals in question were smart. This is evident from the way he describes their actions as "a sensible move".

### New Communities

The female interviewee in the age bracket 18-30 years from Eastern Europe answered “No” when asked if she has ever experienced or witnessed racism. The other female interviewee in this age bracket from Belarus also answered “No” to both having experienced and witnessed a racist incident. The male interviewee from Eastern Europe also said, “No” and added, “I fight against racism in Poland”. When asked if racism is extensive in Poland the interviewee States “No, but kids he doesn’t understand that, he is I don’t know...he likes Hitler and I don’t know, screaming Nazi [slogans], I don’t like this. I’ve been in [inaudible] do you understand this...it’s a subculture he doesn’t like skinheads”. When asked if there are a lot of skinheads in Poland to fight the respondent states “Now no, five, ten years ago yes”. In the literature review, the point was made that the “new language of equality” adopted by Western democracies did not prevent the rise in the popularity of the far right (Garner 2004:15). It would appear from the respondent’s answers that a certain section of Poland’s population, a new democracy emerging from communism, were also attracted to the ideology of far right politics.

The answers provided by the interviewees in the age category of 31-40 years were mixed. The male interviewee from Africa provided anecdotal evidence of a racist experience “it was me and these other two guys just walking around, one guy comes to you and say “why are you here” you know, “go back to Africa” you know all those things you know”. The female Asian interviewee in this age bracket answered “No” that she had never been the victim of racism but that her friend had and explained “when he went to the shop, the shopkeeper threw his change on the desk...he was very angry about this...he asked the shopkeeper why did you do that, because I’m Korean and he [the shopkeeper] said, “take your money and go”. The interviewee tells of another racist incident experienced by a female friend, she explains, “the other thing my friend walk along the street and somebody ask to her where are you from, she tell them I’m from Korea they ask did you eat dog before, she was very angry and they ask “will you go to the pub drinking with us” and she said “no, no” but they grab her arms...two old men already drunk”. The

interviewee concluded however that she believes racism is suffered most by Black people in Irish society, “Here, I think it is worse for Black people than Asian people”. It would appear that the theory and rumour which circulated during the enlightenment period as set out in the literature review are not that far removed from the attitudes and understandings held by people in contemporary Irish society. Indeed, the biological definition of ‘race’ which as stated in the literature review, is generally rejected within sociology due to a lack of credibility, it would seem from the data displayed is still deemed valid among a certain section of contemporary Irish society.

This general lack of understanding is again demonstrated by the third interviewee in this age category, an African woman, who explained that she did not consider herself to have been a victim of racism. When asked if she had experienced it she said “Yes” and explained “the time I am pregnant very sick, I feel sick, I sick on the street, I saw one man say “can’t you go to your country...here is not your country, go to your country”. The interviewee continues, “I feel like maybe the man...he don’t understand, if you understand he won’t do that”.

The answers provided by the interviewees in the next age bracket of 41-55 years were generally positive. The interviewee described as being from the Middle East answered, “No” when asked if he had been the victim of racism but has already told of his experience with the doctor and the specialist, in his definition of racism. The interviewee is clearly angry and frustrated about this experience but stated that he was not sure if this qualifies as racism. When asked if he has witnessed a racist incident the interviewee answers “No”. The African male in this category did not offer his opinion and the female Eastern European interviewee tells of her experience of racism with the aid of anecdotal evidence. She explains that her window was broken but she is not sure if it was racism or “maybe only young people’s joke, bad joke”.

When asked about her experience of racism the interviewee in the highest age

bracket explained that she had experienced racism but that she was not the victim. She went on to tell of an incident in Belgium where young people were fighting and that she felt that the Belgian people were “afraid to say anything”. When asked if she had witnessed a racist incident in Ireland the interviewee answered “No” adding “but I think there are a lot of people saying that they don’t like it, it’s under the surface”. When asked to explain what she means by under the surface the interviewee explains, “They receive prams and food and they are not working, and so the Irish people say, we are poor people also here too and they receive nothing”. When asked who receives the prams and the food the interviewee explains, “Black people that I saw”. Furthermore, she stated that, “I think you have that with the elderly people, young people they don’t see the difference”. It should be noted that the racist incidents described whether by a person who has experienced it as a victim or as a witness is mainly verbal abuse. Physical abuse did not feature.

**Question schedule, Question 3 – To what extent is racism a problem in contemporary Irish society?**

Racism was identified within the focus group interviews as a social problem. This question was therefore asked to gain an understanding of the individual interviewee’s perception of the extent of racism as a problem within society. It was hoped that interviewees’ responses would provide an indication of understandings held and aid the achievement of the principal aim of this research. Furthermore, this question is open to wide interpretation by participants. It was therefore interesting to note how participants provided direct answers regarding the extent as well as answers which incorporated other issues.

**Summary of answers to question 3:** The opinions expressed by interviewees with regard to the extent of racism as a problem in contemporary Irish society differed within each category of participants demonstrating that the question was interpreted and answered in a number of ways. There was however a general consensus among respondents that “racism is increasing as a problem”. This is despite the fact that there was little consensus on what actually constitutes racism in the definitions provided by participants. The dominant understanding, which emerged as an

indirect answer to this question, was the perception of asylum seekers and refugees as parasitic in nature.

**General themes:**

**Individuals Working within Particular Organisations:**

1. Extent of racism – diverse range of opinions, from description of the extent of racism as latent, increasing to a huge problem.

**Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society:**

1. Extent of racism – diverse range of opinions from description of the extent of racism as “still fairly huge” to “don’t think it’s a problem”. A number of interviewees were unwilling to comment on extent on a national level, preferring to discuss it on a local or community level. The rationale – “lack of understanding” and “it’s a new issue”.

2. Perception that members of new communities are parasitic in nature.

**New Communities:**

1. It was generally agreed that racism in contemporary Irish society is not extensive; Indicating that racism is more of a problem for those who are easily physically distinguishable from the majority of the population.

2. Xenophobia/ ethnocentrism and the perception that asylum seekers and refugees are parasitic in nature were alluded to in examples provided by interviewees.

**Dominant themes:**

1. Understandings regarding the extent of racism.

2. Xenophobia/ ethnocentrism and the perception that asylum seekers and refugees are parasitic in nature

**Individuals Working within Particular Organisations**

The two participants from NGOs who work closely with victims of racism use alarming terms such as “a huge problem”. The politician expressed difficulty in answering this question. He explained “it is hard to get to the extent” he continued “in many ways it is latent, sort of under the surface” making reference to the insidious nature of racism in Irish society a point which is picked up on again by an interviewee in the next category, The participant from the NCCRI qualifies her statement that racism is an increasing problem by stating that “we’ve always had racism in Ireland and we’ve seen that in the assimilation of the Traveller Community and we’ve seen our attitudes towards the Black and Asian community”. Furthermore the NCCRI participant warns that in Ireland there are “increasing

levels” of “institutional racism or indirect racism” which she defines as an “access” issue. In particular, “equal access to health services, to employment, to education”.

The participant from the IRC concurs that racism is a “huge problem” and moves to apportion blame and expresses her opinion about the government and its inability and lack of leadership regarding the issue of racism, “it is something that has not been addressed at all...by the Government properly I mean in terms of you know solid workable measures rather than just total unrealistic kind of photo shoots now and again”. The IRC participant moved on to outline how much “our society has really changed” from a “very homogenous kind of White Catholic society”. She explains, “in the last ten years we have had I suppose, I mean lots of immigration you know from, em, non nationals a lot of Eastern Europeans, em, a lot more refugees now come to the country compared to say during the eighties or the early nineties”, She continues “specially here” referring to the capital city stating that the city is “unrecognisable” when “compared to a decade ago”. Having highlighted the increase in immigration into Ireland the participant makes the point that “these people are now part of our society so you know they have every right to be treated the same as Irish citizens”. The garda indicated unwillingness to answer this question.

### **Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society**

The interviewees in this category are also in agreement that racism is a problem in contemporary Irish society. Again this is despite the fact that there is little consensus as to what constitutes racism. The lack of consensus as to what racism actually is, is reflected in the diverse answers to this question. Some interviewees protest that they are unqualified to comment on a national level and prefer to offer personal opinion based on what they have observed in their own community or locality.

The male interviewee identified as a student did not comment on the extent of

racism while the other male interviewee in the age bracket of 18-30 identified as in full-time employment agreed it is “a problem” but did not indicate the extent. The male interviewee in the next age bracket of 31-40 years states, “I don’t know if I’d say it’s a big problem” and goes on to list his reasons for stating this. This includes a “lack of understanding”, the fact that racism is a relatively new issue which Irish people have had to deal with and the perception that “refugees or whatever is getting more from the government than our own citizens”. He also displays a belief that time and “education” will aid integration. The female interviewee in this age bracket seems to have interpreted this question as to what extent are members of new communities a problem in Ireland and provides the following answer. “From my point of view and most people I know, they get too much and the Irish people are just putting up with it, they won’t speak up for themselves”. When asked to clarify who is getting too much? She responds “Well they all are, as in the foreign nationals and the whole lot, they are coming into the country and they’re getting their digs paid and getting cars, they’re getting everything we had to work all our lives here and were getting nothing, they seem to be getting everything hand over fist, people say they’re not but everyone knows they are”. When the interviewee was pressed to state who exactly “they” are, she explained that “the asylum seekers more so they seem to be getting more but say as in the Polish and all that, that come here to me they’re taking all our jobs I know they’re working for pittance but they’re forgetting we have children who have to go looking for jobs”. Mac Gréil’s definition of ethnocentrism as set out in the literature review states that it is ‘prejudices against a person because (s)he is perceived to belong to a particular nationality or culture’ (1996: XIII&11). Both interviewees in this age category displayed that they either hold or perceive that there is an ethnocentric attitude within contemporary Irish society.

The female interviewee in the 41–55 age brackets, living in a rural setting regards racism as “still a fairly huge problem” and answers this question by once again referring to the insidious form racism appears to take in contemporary Irish society, a point which she raised in answering the previous question. She explains that “a

huge amount of people preface a racist remark by saying something like “I am not racist but”. She continues, but in a slightly different context, it is called “not in my back yard syndrome”. The interviewee offered this explanation “we all want to believe that we are broadminded and inclusive of everybody but deep down our remarks, you know, our attitudes are coloured by some form of racism”. The other female interviewee in this age bracket who has been identified as an urban dweller simply stated, “I think it’s [racism] very real”.

The female interviewee in the highest age bracket discusses the extent of racism on a local and national level. On a local level she tells of a housing development in her locality in which ethnic minority and ethnic majority people live and reports that there is good integration between them. She reasons that they are “fitting in very well” due to the fact “that their children are going to school, they are working”, that is to say that they have the same opportunities as the majority of the population. She does however display concern “for the older group” (referring to older children and young adults) who come here when they are “twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two maybe even eighteen I think you know that they need that bit of extra.... help”.

The interviewee moves on to praise the students who rallied for the return of Olunkunle Eluhanla a deportee. The interviewee also refers to a deportation case in Athlone “where two mothers were deported and the children were left behind”. It could be concluded that the interviewee is equating deportation with racism. In summing up the extent of racism in Ireland the interviewee explains, “this thing about racism like you know it’s something that we never really had to deal with to the extent that they might have done in England and they might have done in different places”.

The male interviewee in the highest age bracket tells of his observations within his locality stating, “I don’t think it’s a problem in Ireland. I don’t really know what happens in other countries or outside my own area – but I do think that there are now less coloured people in the town now than there was previously. There’s a good

few Filipino, they seem to mainly be involved in the health sector of this country. Lithuanians and the Latvians that I know are working in different hotels in this town; I know a few personally, working menial jobs when they are highly qualified. They work below their status”.

### **New Communities**

The interviewees in this category generally agree that racism is not an extensive problem in Ireland. However a number of Eastern European interviewees state that it is perhaps more of a problem for people who are physically distinguished from the majority of the population again equating racism with colour. This is reflective of the sociological idea of ‘phenotypical interpreted’, which was previously discussed in the literature review (Banton 1998:13). The idea refers to rating human physical features either positive or negative. It would appear participant understand ‘dark pigmentation’ in particular, is a physical feature which receives a negative rating within contemporary Irish society. (Fredrickson 2002:26)

The female Eastern-European interviewee in the 18-30 age bracket continuing on the same theme explains that she feels racism is not a problem for her but that it is for other people, “Sometimes I think yes, but not me...I hear about this...that Irish people not everybody but some people don’t like Black people because they think that they come, arrive here don’t work and take money from the government, they don’t want to work”. The interviewee continues, “I think people from Africa arrive here and they want many, many children they want because after they get more money when they have more, maybe three, four child”. The interviewee appears to distance herself from this statement by emphasising that she works with a Black woman and “she is really, really good person” but that this is what some Irish people believe. The interviewee’s answer demonstrates that discrimination in contemporary Irish society again goes beyond xenophobia or ethnocentrism as the discrimination is based on skin colour in particular. Furthermore, the interviewee has demonstrated that there is a perceived link between being Black and being an

asylum seeker or refugee. There is also an attitude that asylum seekers and refugees are parasitic in nature.

When asked if racism is an extensive problem in Ireland the male interviewee in this age category again equates racism with skinheads stating, "I don't know. I don't see a lot of skinheads". The interviewee seems to only see racism in the context of very specific Nazi ideology and the female interviewee from Belarus simply answers "No not a big problem". This suggests that perhaps Ireland is a culture where racism takes a more subtle form, which makes it harder to detect.

The African male interviewee in the next age bracket of 31-40 years expresses difficulty in answering this question. It would appear that the interviewee feels that he "can't be too judgmental" as he is not part of society due to his asylum seeker status and therefore doesn't really have a right to say anything.

The female Asian interviewee in this age bracket answered, "Yeah, I think so". When probed further she stated that "it's hard to explain". The third interviewee in this age category was the African woman who explained simply that, "Ireland good...it is not too bad". These are contrasting answers. The interviewees in this category appear not to want to say anything too negative about Irish society though whether this is because they feel intimidated, they are being polite or it is due to insufficient language skills is unclear.

The next age category of 41-55 years comprising two males and one female interviewee, again offered differing opinions on the extent of racism in contemporary Irish society. The male interviewee described as Middle-Eastern answered, "No I don't think so, is not a big problem because you know everybody it is not racist". He continues, "I don't know about all Ireland...but I met a lot of people who are very kind good people".

However the female interviewee from Eastern Europe stated that while she has not

experienced racism some of the congregation at the church she attends have, “I only hear about some people talk from South Africa... I know some people in my church these people suffer, painting of the wall”. She adds that she believes that this is an increasing problem “more, more, more not nice atmosphere yes. It’s not with me it’s with some people in the church”. When asked if this is happening mainly to Black people she replies “Yes” and continues “It’s not physical [assault] you know it’s only maybe put some shit near their door”. This again raises the issue of a link between racism and colour.

The interviewee in the highest age bracket responds, “I don’t think so” when asked if racism is extensive in contemporary Ireland. She explains that it is a “bigger problem in Belgium, France and even Germany, there is a lot of things happen there”.

**Question schedule, Question 4 – How important are the following three terms in defining or describing yourself?**

- Nationally**
- Ethnicity**
- Religion**

Participants were essentially asked to define themselves, with consideration for three particular concepts. The three concepts were then listed for the participants. Some participants discussed all three and debated their importance. Others latched on to one or two of the terms and explained their understanding of and the importance of the term, ignoring the other(s). Furthermore, it was observed that in general this question made respondents (particularly the ‘Individuals Working within Particular Organisations’ and the ‘Members of the Dominant Group in Society’) uncomfortable and in some cases even defensive. Some of the reactions indicated that the participants from the majority of the population felt that the question was at best, a little unorthodox and at worst, an undermining of their privacy or something taboo. This could be explained due to the personal nature of

the question. For this reason, the issues that emerged in the answers to this question from the categories entitled 'Individuals Working within Particular Organisations' and 'Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society' will be displayed together under the headings nationality, ethnicity and religion. It will be demonstrated that there were similarities in the answers provided by members of both categories. Furthermore there was a notable shift in emphasis in the answers provided by members of the 'New Communities'. This question was included on the question schedule in an attempt to clarify how people identify and refer to themselves and others. However the answers provided highlight the commonality and differences in understandings regarding the three concepts.

**Summary of answers to question 4:** The answers provided to this question indicate that the groups entitled 'Individuals Working within Particular Organisations' and 'Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society' have similar understandings regarding each concept. While the interviewees in the category entitled 'New Communities' differ in the importance they attach to each concept.

**General themes:**

**'Individuals Working within Particular Organisations' & 'Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society':**

Nationally – Source of pride but note of caution.

Ethnicity – a number of interviewees didn't understand the concept of ethnicity or had no opinion regarding the concept.

Religion – There was an unwillingness to speak, personal, not something to define oneself by publicly. A number of interviewees expressed tolerance of other religions.

**New Communities:**

Nationally – Most interviewees simply stated their nationality others stated it and indicated that it was not particularly important. Only one interviewee indicated that it was a source of pride.

Ethnicity – Some interviewees didn't understand the concept, others displayed confusion.

Religion – The most important of the three concepts in defining themselves.

**Dominant themes:**

Nationality versus religion, it is clear that the 'Dominant Group' in society view nationality as most important in defining or describing themselves, while religion was identified as most important to interviewees from 'New Communities'.

## **'Individuals Working within Particular Organisations' & 'Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society'**

### **Nationality:**

From the answers provided it appears that participants from these groups viewed their nationality as a source of pride. The female participant in the age bracket 41-55 years, who has been described as an urban dweller, responded stating that her nationality is “Important, very important, it’s made me who I am. I’ve inherited it, a whole set of traditions, my identity. I mean I wouldn’t be who I am without it”. The male interviewee in the highest age bracket explained, “Oh, I’d be extremely proud to be Irish, particularly when I leave this country”. The same sentiment was expressed by the male interviewee in the age category of 18-30 years who stated that it was “very important especially when away”. The female participant in the highest age bracket agreed that it was important in defining herself stating, “It is very important to me”. This was echoed by the politician who explained, “Being Irish, I’m proud of it. I like the fact that I am Irish”. However this same respondent went on to offer a note of caution by explaining that there is “too much emphasis placed on it as a concept in itself and you know that leads to intolerance, leads to friction”. These sentiments were echoed by the participant from the IRC who provided the following words of caution, “It is something that has become less important to me as I have learned the difficulties and the complete turmoil it can cause”. The participant from An Garda Síochána stated “Where I’m from doesn’t really matter...I would prefer to be neutral, not from anywhere because some of the things you see and people representing certain nations would make you sick”. The other interviewees stated that they are Irish but did not comment beyond this.

### **Ethnicity**

The reactions to the concept of ethnicity can be divided into two broad groups. The first were those who confessed that they did not understand the term “I don’t know what you mean by it” or did not have an opinion regarding the concept “I wouldn’t really think about it in my own situation to be honest”. The second category

consists of those who view ethnicity as a sort of extension of nationality. The participant from the NCCRI explained this notion “My identity is Irish, which I would think is my ethnicity or my culture as well as my nationality”. The participant from the IRC was in agreement with the NCCRI participant with regard to the similarities between nationality and ethnicity and it was recognised that this was particular to Irish people’s perceptions of themselves. “I think in Ireland it is very much tied in with your nationality”. The IRC participant then offers an explanation for why people hold this perception “...we are so used to living in a like homogenous climate of society...I don’t think we had any need previously to establish ourselves as a separate ethnicity, ethnic group”. The female interviewee in the 41-55, age bracket who has been identified as an urban dweller stated when asked about her ethnicity, “I’m proud of them” and used the word “belonging” and “identity” to express her understanding of the term. The male interviewee in the highest age bracket of 56 years plus responded, “I don’t have the language and I don’t play GAA football...but I love Irish music and I’m proud of that”.

### **Religion**

It would appear from the answers provided by interviewees in the dominant group that religion is viewed as something very personal and not as something to define oneself by publicly. This was intimated from the participants’ tone and body language when answering this question. Several of the Irish interviewees enquired in an accusatory manner as to why religion was being discussed when the issue presented to them was racism. Body language such as arms being folded and a sudden unwillingness to speak also indicated that the interviewees were not comfortable with this question. Several interviewees stated that they were “Catholic” but did not wish to expand on how this defined them. Some participants stated that they were not religious but displayed compassion to those with faith. Similarly, other participants who stated that they were religious displayed a tolerance of other religions. The female interviewee in the highest age bracket of 56 plus stated, “religion is very important to me” and continued, “I don’t think anyone should be persecuted for their religion or ridiculed”.

The participant from the NCCRI explained how she was “influenced very much from a Catholic background”. Furthermore, she explains “While I don’t practice religion, a lot of the Christian values, I’ve been brought up with them, which has defined who I am now, whether I want to acknowledge it or not”. The participant from the IRC made a similar point when she acknowledged that religion “definitely influence the way that you know we perceive the world and look at things”. The urban dwelling, female interviewee in the age bracket of 41-55 years described her religion as been “Very important to me” but did not expand further. The male interviewee in the highest age bracket stated “I’d be a practicing Roman Catholic and I’d regard myself as a good Christian”

### **New Communities**

The male interviewee in the age category of 18-30 years defined himself according to his nationality, which is Polish, he didn’t understand the term ethnicity and with regard to religion states, “I believe in God but I don’t believe in church”. The female interviewee in the same age bracket answered that she is “Belarusian” when asked about her nationality, but states that this is not important to her. She didn’t understand the term ethnicity and explained that she is Catholic but that this is not important to her either. She did however go on to explain that “my son will be christened in the Catholic Church in Ireland” but that this is because her “parents are Catholic orthodox”. The other female interviewee in this age category did not provide an answer to this question.

The male African interviewee in the next age bracket of 31-40 years answered, “Ok, to me it makes no difference, like where I come from”. He continues, “When people ask me you know, if they ask me where you come from yea, I tell them I am from Africa, if they don’t know anything about Africa I explain to them you know about Africa how it is and yea”. Furthermore the interviewee explains that when he thinks about ethnicity “I think culture” but doesn’t elaborate beyond demonstrating

an understanding of the term. Finally with regard to religion he states, “I am religious, I am a Christian”. The interviewee reflects “you know all these things they go together...yea, it is a combination”. The female Asian interviewee in the category defined her nationality as “Korean”, her ethnicity as “Asian” and her religion as “Catholic” but did not elaborate appearing a little uncomfortable with the line of questioning. The other interviewee in this category is an African female. She stated that her religion was the most important of the three concepts to her stating that she would prefer to be identified “As a Christian” rather than as Nigerian or African.

The Middle-Eastern male interviewee states, “My nationality is that I am from Afghanistan”. When asked if this is important to him he replies “Of course”. With regard to the term ethnicity the interviewee indicates that he knows what the term means, “I understand from my language what it means” and that it is also important to him. The interviewee also indicates that his religion is important to him and explains “I am a Muslim but I am not like other Muslim people they are making trouble”. After making this initially defensive remark the interviewee continues “I like my religion, I love my religion everybody does so I don’t think you know anyway it is not problem with my religion over here”.

The African male interviewee in this category first discusses ethnicity in terms of culture but not his own culture but the culture within Irish society. He states “the culture of this country at the weekend is really, really drunkenness, ok, should I say that because Irish people they have culture to drink you know of drunkenness that they are primitive”. He describes his ethnicity as something to “be proud about and this is a gift of God”, but comments that his nationality was something he didn’t choose. Regarding his religion he states that it is complex as he was raised in a Catholic family, “the background of my family they were Roman Catholic you know because of colonisation”. He states that “Congolese people they are 85 per cent of the population they are Roman Catholic”. However he explains for various reasons he has changed to the Protestant church.

The female eastern European interviewee in this age bracket explains when asked about her nationality, “Of course I am Lithuanian”. She does not understand the term ethnicity and succinctly states that she is a Catholic and that this is very important to her. The interviewee from Belgium defined her nationality as Belgian; she did not however define herself according to her ethnicity or religion.

An analysis of the data conveyed a clear differentiation of understanding between the categories. It was this difference in understanding regarding the importance of each concept by different categories of respondents, which was the dominant finding.

### **Summary of Participants’ Understandings of Nationality**

The majority of interviewees defined their nationality as Irish and described it as a source of pride. However, the gushing enthusiasm with which some interviewees claimed Irish nationality was not mirrored by interviewees from the ‘New Communities’. Many interviewees in the ‘New Communities’ category simply stated their nationality. Others stated their nationality and then stated that it is not important to them. One interviewee commented that his nationality was something he had no choice about. The Afghan interviewee was the only interviewee from the category entitled ‘New Communities’ to convey that his nationality was a source of pride. When asked if it was important, he answered “Of course”. The lack of importance attached to the concept of nationality by interviewees from the ‘New Communities’ may as an interviewee explained in part, be due to the fact that it is also a source of “intolerance” which “leads to friction” and can cause “complete turmoil”. The negative aspects of an over zealous emphasis on nationality were also highlighted by interviewees from the category entitled ‘Individuals Working within Particular Organisations’. In answering the question: “how important is the concept of nationality in defining or describing yourself,” it is clear that the interviewees who define their nationality as Irish, rank it as important. However, there is also

recognition by a number of interviewees within that category that too much emphasis on the concept of nationality can be a source of conflict. The interviewees from the categories entitled 'New Communities' regard it as less important in defining themselves than the other two categories.

The concept of nationality previously featured in some of the participants' answers regarding how to define or explain racism. This indicates that it is important in terms of how some interviewees understand the concept of racism. Furthermore the discussion of 'race' related terminology in the literature review shows that the concept of nationality is central to the definition of xenophobia and ethnocentrism, both of which feature in participants' understanding of racism (MacGreil 1996: XIII&11).

### **Summary of Participants' Understandings of Ethnicity**

The term ethnicity caused some confusion. A number of interviewees from the categories entitled 'Individuals Working within Particular Organisations' and 'Members of the 'Dominant Group in Irish Society' explained that they didn't understand the term and therefore didn't offer an explanation as to the importance of the term. This was also the case when interviewees within the category entitled 'New Communities' were asked how important their ethnicity was in defining themselves. The majority of interviewees in this category communicated that they either didn't understand the term or displayed some confusion when attempting to answer. All interviews were conducted in English. This meant that interviewees who didn't speak English as their first language were at a disadvantage when trying to express themselves. Therefore, it should not be concluded that these interviewees did not have an opinion regarding the concept of ethnicity but rather may not have understood or were not fully able to express their opinion on such complex concepts through English.

The interviewees within the categories entitled 'Individuals Working within

Particular Organisations’ and the ‘Dominant Group in Irish Society’, who did answer, described Irish ethnicity as a sort of extension of nationality. The participant from the IRC explained, “In Ireland it is very much tied in with your nationality”. The male interviewee in the highest age bracket talked about the Irish language, GAA football and Irish music when discussing ethnicity. Furthermore, the interviewees in the category entitled ‘New Communities’ who did understand the term ethnicity communicated that they understood but did not elaborate beyond explaining that it’s “important” and “a gift of God”.

The general lack of understanding and confusion surrounding the term ethnicity in contemporary Irish society could point to the finding that ethnicity is not important. However, it would seem on closer inspection of the data that ethnicity is an important concept by which people define themselves. However, people do not recognise it as ethnicity but rather nationality. The similarities between the definitions of nationality and ethnicity in Ireland are according to the IRC participant because there was “no need in the past to differentiate between ethnicity and nationality due to our homogenous past”.

Ethnicity was defined in the literature review as referring ‘to the cultural practices and outlooks of a given community of people that set them apart from others’ (Giddens 1997:210). Furthermore ethnic groups are described as ‘culturally distinct’ and possessing ‘different characteristics’ such as ‘language, history or ancestry (real or imagined), religion and style of dress or adornment’ (Giddens 1997:210). Nationality is a much narrower concept than ethnicity and essentially describes the status of belonging to a particular nation. The ‘Dominant Group’ interviewees who demonstrated such pride in their nationality appear to be incorporating elements of ethnicity into their definition. The interviewees from the ‘New Communities’ category attached little importance to the term nationality and those who understood the term ethnicity equated it with culture. This demonstrates that unlike the findings from the answers provided by the members of the ‘Dominant Group in Irish Society’ nationality and ethnicity are treated as separate

entities. As for answering the question as to how important either of these concepts are to the interviewees, it may be surmised that both nationality and ethnicity are hugely important to the 'Dominant Group in Irish Society'. However the interviewees generally defined the combined concepts as nationality. The interviewees within the 'New Communities' category did not appear to consider either concept particularly important.

### **Summary of Participants' Understandings of Religion**

The atmosphere and rapport between the interviewees from the category entitled 'Dominant Group in Irish Society' and the interviewer immediately changed when the concept of religion was brought up. The discomfort and hostility it caused among interviewees from the 'Dominant Group in Irish Society' was in part it would seem because the interviewees felt that they were being asked to discuss something very personal. This is evident in the response of several interviewees who simply answered "Catholic" and did not elaborate. However other interviewees did elaborate, stating that they were religious and displayed tolerance for other faiths. A number of interviewees stated that they were not religious but displayed compassion for those with religious beliefs. Furthermore, one interviewee discussed the influence of Catholicism in her life because she was raised within Catholic teachings. She also spoke of its importance even though she no longer practises. Only one interviewee (female 41-55, identified as an urban dweller) from either the category entitled 'Representative of Particular Bodies or Institutions' or the 'Dominant Group in Irish Society' described religion as "very important" but did not elaborate again indicating in a quiet tone that her beliefs were something personal not to be shared.

This was in complete contrast to the answers provided by the interviewees in the 'New Communities' category. The interviewees within the 'New Communities' category expressed different beliefs but the majority emphasised religion as important in defining themselves. The emphasis placed on religion is clear in the

answers provided by a number of interviewees. The male interviewee in the age bracket of 18-30 years stated that his nationality was Polish and did not understand the concept of ethnicity. He spoke the most with regard to his religion he stated, "I believe in God but I don't believe in the Church". The female Belarusian interviewee in the same age bracket answered the questions regarding her nationality and ethnicity in a similar manner to the previous interviewee but stated that her religion was Catholicism and although she stated that religion is not important to her, she did state that she was going to have her child baptised in a Catholic church. Another example of the importance of religion to interviewees from 'New Communities' in defining themselves was found in the answer provided by the female African interviewee in the age bracket of 31-40 years who emphasised her religion throughout. She indicated that religion was the most important of the three concepts and that she would prefer to be identified "as a Christian" as apposed to as an African or a Nigerian. The male Middle Eastern interviewee in the same age bracket had stated that his nationality was important and that he understood the term ethnicity but did not elaborate. However he became most vocal regarding his religion stating that he was a "Muslim". He first explained that he was not like "other Muslim people they are making trouble" but after this initial defensive remark he changed his tone and explained unapologetically "I love my religion". The female Eastern-European interviewee in the age bracket of 41-55 years also described her religion as "very important".

One interviewee in this category either did not comment regarding their religion. Another stated that none of the concepts were important in defining himself; rather it was really a "combination" of all three. The general understanding conveyed however, was that religion was important to the majority of interviewees in defining themselves and there was no indication that any interviewees were hesitant in expressing this.

The overall findings from that data collected from interviewees' answers to this question were that the 'Dominant Group in Irish Society' emphasised the concepts

of nationality and indirectly ethnicity in defining themselves and displayed discomfort in discussing their religious beliefs. While the interviewees from the 'New Communities' emphasised their religious beliefs as important in defining themselves and paid little attention to the concepts of nationality and ethnicity. This demonstrates that very different emphasises was placed on the three concepts by the members of the different categories. These findings may explain, in part the lack of consensus between the answers provided and the members of the three categories to other questions.

**Question schedule, Question 5, 6 & 7:**

**What do you think of the Irish Government's efforts to combat racism?**

**Have any individuals or groups taken leadership on this issue?**

**Are you aware of any efforts by local government regarding racism?**

The question relating to the role of government was divided into three questions in order to reflect the findings of the focus groups. The data gathered from the focus groups interviews demonstrated that participants had differentiating understanding of who is making an effort regarding the issue of racism. The central government's policy, a lack of leadership and the efforts of local government regarding racism were all raised as issues by focus group participants. A common thread which runs through each question is that they each provides participants with an opportunity to communicate who they think is responsible for dealing with racism in contemporary Irish society.

**Question schedule, Question 5 - What do you think of the Irish Government's efforts to combat racism?**

This question was asked in an effort to establish whether participants were aware of any initiative by the Irish Government to discourage racism or indeed promote anti-racism initiatives and established whether such initiatives had any impact on understandings of racism. The perception gathered from the focus group interviewees was that the Irish Government have done very little to discourage

racist behaviour or indeed promote integration. It was therefore decided that this question should be put to participants in order to establish whether this was a common understanding.

**Summary of answers to question 5:** Three dominant themes emerged in the answers provided to question five. The first was the attitude of disappointment regarding the government's efforts to combat racism. The second was that racism was identified as a nebulous issue unless directly affected by it. The third was a general lack of awareness of any efforts by the Irish Government to combat racism. Another theme emerged with regard to the insidious nature of racism in contemporary Irish society. This attitude was already identified as dominant in the answers provided to question two.

**General themes:**

**Individuals Working within Particular Organisations:**

1. Racism was expressly identified as a nebulous issue, unless directly affected by it.
2. Attitude of disappointment regarding the government's efforts to combat racism.
3. Insidious form of racism in contemporary Irish society.

**Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society:**

1. Racism was implicitly identified as a nebulous issue.
2. Attitude of disappointment regarding the government's efforts to combat racism.
3. Lack of awareness of any efforts by the Irish Government to combat racism.
4. A small number of participants were satisfied with the Governments efforts.
5. Others provided examples of areas that need improvement.

**New Communities:**

1. Lack of awareness of any efforts by the Irish Government to combat racism.
2. A number of interviewees didn't answer stating that they were not qualified to answer; others demonstrated discomfort in providing an answer.
3. Subtle nature of racism in contemporary Irish society.

**Dominant themes:**

1. Attitude of disappointment regarding the government's efforts to combat racism.
2. Racism was identified as a nebulous issue.
3. Lack of awareness of any efforts by the Irish Government to combat racism.

**Individuals Working within Particular Organisations**

"How much is enough?" was the response from the politician when asked about

the government's efforts to combat racism. He discussed some of the positive steps taken by the Irish government. However after listing the government's various actions he commented that the government are "Probably not making it enough of a priority because you know, I suppose on the scheme of things, in modern Ireland it rates below hospital waiting lists". He continues "racism seems to be a little bit nebulous unless you are directly affected by it". The interviewee alludes to the insidiousness of racist behaviour among the Irish dominant members of society "I don't think many people go out to be consciously racist, they don't decide that that is how they are going to behave; it's just, you know, part of their background, that's their culture, their education, their upbringing". This again demonstrates that subtle nature of racism in Irish society.

The participant from the NCCRI stated that her "personal response would be no" to the question regarding the Government and whether their efforts to combat racism are extensive enough. She does however also provide an organisational response, which stressed the complexity of answering the questions presented, "...there are many key actors involved in challenging racism. The government, civil society, the public sector, the trade unions, everyone has a part to play in challenging racism". The NCCRI participant then listed the government's actions in recent years, such as "equality legislation" which "has a race ground in it", "a three year national action plan against racism", the ratification of "the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination", the "inclusion of Black and ethnic minorities into the Gardaí" and a "three year 'KNOW RACISM' campaign". The NCCRI participant does however note that there is "still an awful lot more to do", such as the need to focus on institutional racism in particular. The participant notes: "There are very few barriers to stop institutional racism occurring because of its subtle form". Furthermore the participant stressed that the government needs to do more work, "around the perception of refugees and asylum seekers, or how migrant workers or how the Travellers are perceived".

However after levelling such criticism at the Irish Government for its shortcomings

in dealing with the issue of racism in its various guises the participant from the NCCRI appears to pull back and once again emphasises the Government's achievements and compares them with other European Union countries, "our equality legislation would be seen as one of the most progressive in the European Union". The participant continues "We are one of very few countries who have completed a national action plan against racism" and concludes on a cautiously optimistic note, "I would say that the government have achieved an awful lot but again there's still and always will be more to do". The participant then provides an example of an area that needs much attention by the government, "We need to look at hate crime". This would suggest that the representative is concerned about racism in less subtle forms.

The participant from the IRC is less cautious and offers an emphatic "No, absolutely not" in answer to the question whether the Government's efforts regarding the issue of racism are extensive enough. The participant recognises the fact that the government "raises awareness" but she described their efforts as "tokenistic" and complained that the Government "are not being pro-active enough".

The interviewee from An Garda Síochána again expressed discomfort with the question. He protested, "That's an unfair question" and explained, "See I'm working for the Government". However he did continue by explaining the actions taken by An Garda Síochána to combat racism. "We have 145 Ethnic Liaison Gardaí around the country. There's supposed to be one appointed in each police station to ensure that ethnic minority people, that these police officers can liaise with some of their leaders or their church leaders or some people in their community to make sure, to find out what it is they need from the police and us to reassure them Garda services are available to them. So we are trying". However as the interview progressed it emerged that Ethnic Liaison Officers receive little support in that role. The role is "an add-on role" to the guards' other duties and its success depends very much on how much attention and support it receives in each

individual station. It also emerged with regard to the training that Guards receive in Templemore, that the issue of racism is barely touched upon.

### **Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society**

The answers provided by the interviewees in the next category were more diverse, ranging from those who felt that the government were not doing enough to those who were satisfied with the government's efforts. Another interviewee asked, "What can they do?", while a number of interviewees provided examples of initiatives that they felt the government should give backing to and areas that need improvement. Also two interviewees associated this question with racist remarks made by government officials.

The interviewee in the age bracket of 18-30 years, identified as a student, explained that he was not aware of any efforts by the government to combat racism. The other interviewee in this age bracket, identified as being in full-time employment, also conveyed that he was not aware of any initiatives, answering "No, not really".

The female interviewee in the 31-40 years age category answered "No" when asked about the Governments efforts to combat racism and explained "all they want is the money, if they take in more, they get more money, that's all they want". The male interviewee in this age bracket on the other hand stated that he was aware of an anti-racism ad campaign "but other than that I could not honestly say I'd know of much that they have done". When asked for detail about the ad campaign the interviewee responded, "It was about racism or something, or something like that, eh, I can't remember the exact details".

A female interviewee in the next age bracket of 41-55 years, from a rural background responded to the question about government efforts to combat racism by stating, "I think the first thing that goes through my mind is Conor Lenihan's remarks about the Turkish people". The interviewee is referring to the Minister of State for Overseas Development's comment to Socialist Party TD Joe Higgins that he should "stick to the kebabs" a remark which was aimed at Mr Higgin's work

with the Turkish employees at the construction company Gama (Irish Times 20.05.2005). However, the interviewee is still supportive of the government and offers these words of praise. "I do believe yea, Ireland has come a long way at an institutional level in trying to overcome all kinds of em, exclusion whether you know, it is against disabled people or whether it is racism or yeah, I do feel they are trying to bring in a lot of legislation to combat that". The other interviewee in this age bracket did not agree, and answered, "definitely not, no". She then speaks of a particular group with which she has had contact: "Women in hostels living on €19.30 a week, their institutionalised, they're all there for a couple of years, they find it hard to adapt to life outside. They suffer social exclusion, loneliness, isolation".

The female representative in the highest age bracket of 56 years plus did not believe that the Government's efforts were enough, which was surprising, as she has up to this point demonstrated great optimism regarding the issues of anti-racism and integration. The same interviewee stated earlier that racism was not a problem in contemporary Irish society and could provide no examples of either a personal experience as a victim of racism or an experience of witnessing racism. It was therefore unexpected when this interviewee answered, "No, enough is not being done". The interviewee spoke venomously about problems in the health service. "Money wasted on Consultation reports...people on trolleys in hospitals". However, when the interviewee's attention was brought back to the issue being researched, the interviewee responded "Oh racism, em, well we have had a few Government representatives who have used racist remarks about people like you know down through the years and em, I don't know, I can't really...say, you know for me, what can a Government do?". The anger the interviewee held towards the government did not extend to the issue of racism. Furthermore, the interviewee asked the question "what can a government do?"

The male interviewee in the highest age bracket in this category made a different point. He discussed ghettoisation stating that "housing them all together in blocks of twenty...not a good idea, people think they're getting all the houses". He went

on to emphasise the need for the Government to mix the types of people housed in proximity to each other stating that the council “can’t fill it with all single mothers either, you have to get the mix right”. The interviewee also commented that if non-nationals were housed in close proximity to each other the result would be that “people are saying I’ve been on the housing list six years and that Black fella over there...”. He concludes however that “if a White family got the house before them they’d be giving out”. However the interviewee concluded, “To be quite honest about it, I don’t know what the government is actually doing to combat racism but as I said to you, in this area, I don’t think we have a problem, I could be speaking with my eyes closed but I’m fairly sure I’m not, before you came to interview me, I asked a few people like my own sons, friends and the parish priest and certainly there isn’t much going on here”.

### **New Communities**

The answers provided by members of new communities were also diverse. They ranged from those who stated that they believed that the government were not doing enough or that they were simply unaware of any of the Government’s efforts, to those who did not offer an answer as they felt unqualified because they were not Irish, not part of society. Another interviewee expressed a discomfort with discussing anything political. The male Eastern-European interviewee in this age category stated “I don’t know what is doing, your government about this racism”. The Belarusian interviewee had not heard of any efforts by the Irish government to combat racism.

In the next age bracket of 31-40 the African male did not offer an opinion on the Irish Government nor did the African female. It could be inferred that as the male interviewee was an asylum seeker and the female interviewee held refugee status that they were unwilling to criticise, while entrenched in the process. The female Asian interviewee responded that she had seen “advertised on the T.V....about racism” but couldn’t give an example of any other initiatives.

The interviewees in the next age bracket of 41-55 years displayed discomfort with being asked about politics. The male Middle-Eastern interviewee stated, “I don’t know, I don’t know about that because that is politics” displaying a clear unwillingness to discuss anything political. The male African interviewee in this category explains, “I don’t think so” when asked if the Irish Government are doing enough to combat racism. He continued by explaining “I have honestly bad experience since I came to seek asylum but I prefer to say since I came in exile because I think that I am here for a political reason”. It is not clear if the interviewee is speaking about his personal experience or whether he is speaking about his experience of Irish politics. The Eastern-European female interviewee categorised in this age bracket answers, “No I don’t think so”.

The Belgian interviewee in the highest age bracket remarks on the subtle nature of racism in contemporary Irish society. “They never talk about racism here really, you will never hear a programme on the radio or on the television, you think that sometimes there is something but it is not a big discussion about it”. When asked why she thinks this is, the interviewee answers “maybe there are more important things and it stays on the side. I don’t know”. However then she states, “We had the same problem in Belgium and we ignore the problem for years and then when some problems happened then they start to talk about it but it was too late, it’s now they should talk about it, you see the children they will have children here, they will grow up”. The interviewee also warns that “Black people, they are more the target than eh, Russian people or the other people”; indicating again that ‘phenotypical interpretations’, in particular, skin colour is a ground for racism in contemporary Irish society (Banton 1993: 13).

**Question schedule, Question 6 - Have any individuals or groups taken leadership on this issue?**

This question was specifically asked to establish whether there was a particular person or group within contemporary Irish society who could be identified as taking leadership regarding the issue of racism and therefore influential over

participants' understandings of racism. It was hoped that the answers provided would give insight regarding participants' understandings of the Irish government's leadership or lack thereof, on the issue of racism. The question does not specifically ask about government leadership and was therefore open to interpretation by respondents, which is in keeping with the theoretical perspective adopted in this research.

**Summary of answers to question 6:** There was not a general consensus in the answers provided to question six. A number of individual politicians, political parties and grassroots groups were named. Some were named only once and others names recurred and were discussed both in a positive and a negative manner.

**General themes:**

**Individuals Working within Particular Organisations:**

1. An Taoiseach, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister for Justice and Sinn Fein were all named as taking leadership on the issue.

**Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society:**

1. The Minister for Justice, a Labour Party TD and a number of anti-deportation activists were named as having taken leadership on the issue.

2. A number of interviewees communicated that they either didn't know any individual or group that had taken leadership on the issue or stated that they had no interest in politics.

**New Communities:**

1. Praise and dissatisfaction with the Minister for Justice were expressed.

2. A number of interviewees stated that they didn't know of any individual or group that had taken leadership on the issue.

**Dominant themes:**

It would appear that there was generally either a lack of awareness or a negative impression of individual or group responses to taking leadership on the issue of racism. Those who were mentioned include:

- An Taoiseach, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister for Justice.
- Sinn Fein
- Individual Labour Party TD
- Grassroots groups

### **Individuals Working within Particular Organisations**

The Taoiseach, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Justice all received praise from the politician for taking leadership on the issue of racism. Séin Fein also received praise from both of the NGO participants.

The politician expressed support for the government stating that the government have run a “high profile campaign, the Taoiseach fronted it...the Minister for Foreign Affairs was involved, the Minister for Justice, you know, it was pretty high profile in that sense”. Furthermore he states that “it is not a day-to-day issue and therefore you know, em, I would not know to the extent to which individual members of Government are you know, giving leadership shall we say on a daily basis”. It is clear that the politician does not view the issue of racism as a priority.

Sinn Fein received praise from the participants working for NGOs. The participant from the NCCRI recognised Sinn Fein’s efforts regarding the issue of racism, stating “Sinn Fein have a very good anti-racism policy in terms of what their manifestations on challenging racism and promoting equality on paper look very strong. They have access to anti-racism training from us for all their political candidates and they are quiet visible in anti-racist, em, in coming to campaigns against racism and promoting cultural, so they’ve been visible”.

The representative also gave details of the NCCRI’s protocol for political parties regarding elections. “We asked political parties to sign this protocol which sets out a number of standards. Its aim was to ensure that the local elections were free from racism. So, for example we saw in the general elections a couple of years ago people were using issues of racism and immigration and Travellers to get votes. So it was an anti immigration, anti-Traveller, anti-Asylum Seeker stance and they used that to get votes in the general election”.

The IRC participant named Aengus O'Snodaigh, Sinn Fein's Dublin South Central T.D. as a person who had taken leadership on the issue of racism and stated "he is very interested in the area and he would raise a lot of em, parliamentary questions with Minister McDowell on our behalf". The IRC participant continues "...we would send him in questions to ask and he would ask them in the Dáil then. He is very good about it to be honest, I mean nearly every question that we send into him he would get around to asking em, but that would be I suppose specifically related to asylum and refugee issues but I mean that is inherently linked to the issues of racism I think". Indeed, the 'interlinkage between the politics of immigration and race' was first examined in the literature review in a British context (Solomos and Back 1996:55). It raised the question as to whether this link could also be made in an Irish context. The member of An Garda Síochaná didn't answer this question.

### **Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society**

The interviewees in this category also expressed a diverse range of opinions in answering this question. A number of interviewees stated that they didn't know of any person or political group who had taken leadership on the issue of racism while two interviewees in the same age category offered diametrically opposed opinions on the leadership shown by Minister McDowell, one praising him for promoting inclusion while the other called him a racist. Praise was also offered to anti-deportation activists for taking leadership on the issue of racism and a Labour Party TD.

The interviewees in the age bracket of 18-30 years identified as a student stated that he was not interested in politics, "I wouldn't really be interested in anything like that". The other interviewee in this age bracket expressed similar sentiments stating that he doesn't really "follow political...politics".

The male interviewee in the 31-40 years age category doesn't offer an opinion on whether any individual or group has taken leadership on this issue stating, "I wouldn't follow politics that closely". The female interviewee in this age category

also answers this question negatively with a simple “No”.

The female interviewee in the next age category of 41-55 and from a rural background offers praise for “Michael McDowell, the Minister for Justice em, you know I think he is, in a wide range of issues he is, em, trying to be more inclusive. I suppose I am looking at the broad picture (interview interrupted) yea I mean across the spectrum of ah, in combating exclusion whether it is you know against disability, against race or whatever it is Michael McDowell is taking steps to combat that”.

The other interviewee in this age category disagrees. She states, “Nobody I know has taken leadership, Mr McDowell... his comments are very racist his hocus pocus. He said “I’m sick and tired of all those people with their cock and bull stories and if he had his way he’d meet them at the airport and send them back again”... but sure that’s against all regulations, you don’t meet people at the airport, your following the conventions on refugees and giving them due process”.

The female interviewee in the highest age category of 56 years plus refers to two specific anti-deportation cases, which were commenced at grassroots level when asked whether any person or group had taken leadership regarding the issue of racism. The interviewee stated, “Em, off hand I can’t put a name on the person who actually fought to have the young fella...sent back home here” referring to the deportation and subsequent repatriation of Nigerian man, Olunkunle Eluhanla. She also makes reference to “the two people down in, and the people down in Athlone...I think from right across the board, I think you would find that there was an outcry from public representatives down in the Athlone area over the two mothers who were sent back”.

The male representative in the 56 years plus age bracket who has already stated that he is a member of the Labour party picks a Labour TD to praise. When the interviewer enquires as to what exactly the TD has done in relation to the issue of racism, the interviewee replied that the TD “signs up non-nationals to vote in local

elections” and is “highly involved in Irish immigration abroad”. He explains that the TD is “trying to get money from the government because it is recognised that 40% of the Irish who went abroad in the 50s and 60s are now living on the streets of London, areas of Manchester and all that”.

### **New Communities**

Minister McDowell’s effort regarding the issue of racism again received a mixture of praise and dissatisfaction. Praise came from the male African asylum seeker in the age category of 31-40 years and contempt was displayed by the other male African asylum seeker in the age category 41-55 years. The interviewee displaying contempt did offer praise to the Labour party but noted that they are not in power at present. None of the three interviewees in the age category of 18-30 years can offer the name of any person or party who has taken leadership on this issue.

The African male in the next category of those aged between 31 - 40 years of age responds, “I say mostly, mostly is trying is let’s see now em, McDowell, McDowell yea I think yea...yes, I think he has tried all he can, you know”. The female Asian interviewee answered with a groaning, “No” when asked about leadership regarding the issue of racism in Ireland but did explain, “When I meet people they always asking me, did you have experience about racism? I said no”. This perhaps displays a social consciousness regarding the issue of racism by her friends. The African female interviewee did not respond.

In the next category of interviewee aged between 41 and 55 years of age the interviewee identified as a Middle-Eastern male stated, “No, I don’t know”. The African male interviewee explains “Ah, the powerful man here McDowell this man in my view if their own people, Irish people they hate him do you think I will have any sympathy to him? And the party who he came from do you think they will have sympathy to people in my situation?” The interviewee explains further, “from my question you can see directly my opinion”. The interviewee continues, “I don’t

think that there is any party until now you know which, maybe Labour because I have been in contact with some Labour leader.” Then he warns, “...you know, politician, you know, they have double face, you know, no politician you will never, never know the face of a politician; I used to say to people that politicians they are like small animal which they call chameleon, chameleon we have a lot of in our country, I never say it here in Ireland and those type of animals God created them with cunning I mean”.

The female Eastern European interviewee within this age category does not comment. The Belgian interviewee in the highest age category answers, “I have to be honest no”.

**Question schedule, Question 7 - Are you aware of any efforts by local government regarding racism?**

This was the final question in a series of three questions, which were asked in an attempt to identify who was perceived to be responsible for the issue of racism in contemporary Ireland. Furthermore it was felt that this question fitted with the principal aim of this research as an understanding of people’s awareness of an issue could provide an indication of their overall subjective understandings of the concept of racism.

**Summary of answers to question 7:** Some interviewees demonstrated an awareness of efforts by local government regarding racism while others displayed a total lack of awareness or perhaps interest. Again others observed a perception that, members of ‘New Communities’ are viewed as parasitic in nature.

**General themes:**

**Individuals Working within Particular Organisations:**

1. Lack of awareness of efforts by local government regarding the issue of racism.
2. Awareness of efforts by local government regarding the issue of racism – individual politicians named.
3. Suggested that institutional structures should give leadership and that Local Councillors could be effective in combating racism.

**Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society:**

1. Lack of awareness of efforts by local government regarding the issue of racism.
2. Racism not viewed as a priority by local government.
3. The perception of certain members of new communities is revisited.

**New Communities:**

1. Lack of awareness of efforts by local government regarding the issue of racism.
2. Lack of interest in politics and lack of interest by politicians in ‘New Communities’.
3. The perception of certain members of new communities is revisited – interviewee states that local politicians are not interested in asylum seekers.

**Dominant Themes:**

1. Lack of awareness of efforts by local government regarding the issue of racism.
2. Awareness of efforts by local government regarding the issue of racism.
3. Perception of members of new communities as parasitic in nature.

**Individuals Working within Particular Organisations**

The interviewees in this category emphasised the importance of institutional structures and commented on the positive and negative efforts of local government as well as the different approaches or policy required for urban and rural communities.

The politician fused his answer to the question about leadership regarding the issue of racism and local government stating “I think it is important that Government with a small ‘g’ if you like am, in that I mean institutional structures generally em give leadership you know”. He explains that they need to “make sure that you know whatever they can do to avoid it is done so that there is a cultural, if you like or backdrop in which you know, we are not going to become a racist society or going to allow ourselves become a racist society”. The politician also explains, “I have had some direct personal experience [of racism] em, but I also, you know, had a tendency before that to feel that we should be em, trying to you know show, em, an inclusive em, welcoming, em, face to people coming into the country, mainly based on our own, you know history and background Irish people in many parts of the

world benefited from em, you know being shown a welcome, maybe they weren't welcomed as you like, looking back we seem to think, oh yea, the Americans welcomed us with open arms in fact they didn't really, you know they were much more racist than any Irish in nineteenth century United States as there is in Dublin today".

However the politician states that this should be viewed as something that contemporary Irish society can learn from "learning from that we should be trying to make sure that that does not happen again. You know em, what happened in the Balkans, what happened in central Africa em, East Timor, any other regions in the world where there has been you know conflict ongoing in our generation and most of the root of them is ethnic and racist or 'racial' tension". When asked if he had a specific policy regarding racism the politician answered "No" but does stress the need to "lead by example". The politician then once again refers to the insidiousness and subtle form of racism in contemporary Irish society and states "I try to you know make a point I suppose when I am in company or in [the company of] my political colleagues of you know saying something is wrong if I think it is wrong, to be racist it is wrong to make, you know jokes about Black people or whatever or to use terms that you know people use when they think they are in like minded company because I think that is part of the disease you know that you might, to somebody's face be polite and pleasant and then you are with your cronies in the pub, tell jokes about you know niggers and that sort of thing and I would always object if that happens in my presence and people maybe think I am a bit of a fusspot or whatever".

As with a previous question, the participant from the NCCRI makes both positive and negative comments in answering the question. Regarding the positive actions taken by local government or indeed individuals the NCCRI participant states, "I think there are some local politicians that are doing an awful lot of work. I mean we hear about them here". She provides the specific example of a local politician "in Galway who would help the Galway Refugee Support Group" by offering "support

to people from ethnic minorities who were going up for local elections last year and has done some work around the political system and understanding the political system with them”. She provides a further example of “people in Dublin, in my constituency in the position of local councillor there. In his professional and in his personal life has been committed to challenging racism”. The representative also refers to the work of Joe Costello of the Labour Party and Michael D. Higgins in a positive light.

The negative comments about local government are aimed at “politicians that use the race issue and you see a lot of that in Cork and Kerry. So the likes of your man with cap...Jackie Healy-Rae”. She continues “And you have people standing on an anti-immigration, em, or standing in local elections for anti-immigration”. The NCCRI participant also makes reference to Justin Barrett and his use of the immigration issue to campaign against the acceptance of the Nice treaty, as an example of the negative use of the ‘race’ issue. The participant is however quick to point out her perspective on the reality of the situation which is that the use of the ‘race’ issue in this way is wrong; however there are very few who will speak out against such actions and that none of the “political parties will make it a central issue for them. There are no votes in it”. Furthermore, she states “Very often when we’re talking about minority groups there’s very low voter participation, voting by the Travelling Community, many of our ‘New Communities’ don’t have the right to vote in general elections so until people have the right to vote I think then you will see more of a commitment by individual politicians taking on the issues that concern Black and ethnic minority groups”.

The IRC participant notes the differing approaches by urban and rural politicians. “I know there are people say in urban areas who would take a stance on it and who would use it, you know as some sort of a platform but I think maybe in rural areas where I think beliefs and things need to be challenged more”. She elaborates “local Councillors are the ones that are on the ground and would have daily contact with their constituents...I mean I think they have shown support em, if you look at the

case of the two women who were, the two mothers who were deported from Athlone a couple of months ago around the same time as Olunkunle Eluhanla, the Nigerian student em, there were local Councillors up there speaking on their behalf, speaking out you know saying they were well integrated into their community and that they will be missed and you know they were campaigning so I think that is an example of how it can, you know how they can carry out advocacy and you know on refugees' behalf...they could in effect have a very good effective link”.

### **Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society**

The interviewees in this category generally commented that they were either not aware of any efforts by local government or that they were not interested in politics. One interviewee commented that she had heard local politicians on the radio discussing the issue of racism and another interviewee stated that the mayor had taken an interest in the issue. The two eldest interviewees in this category commented on integration in their locality rather than local government as such.

The interviewees in the age bracket of 18-30 years identified as a student reiterated that he had no real interest in politics. The other interviewee identified as being in full-time employment explained that he “wouldn't know the names of any local politicians”.

When this question regarding the efforts of local government to combat racism was put to the female interviewee in the 31-40 years age category she replied “not that I know of” but did explain that she would “hear them on the radio”. When asked if any politician had raised the issue of racism on the radio she replied that “people would be ringing in giving out and then you'd have the politicians saying but they're not doing this, it's the government who are giving them this”. The male interviewee in this age category reiterated that he wasn't that interested in politics and that “it's more the general issues that I'd be more, that I'd keep an eye on”.

The interviewee in the 41-55 years age category, from a rural background stated that “it [racism] has not been a priority” in local politics. The interviewee is involved in her community through her job as a civil servant. She continues: “inclusion in general terms has come up in recent years when it comes to maybe inclusion of young people in decision making, inclusion of disabled people, we have never addressed the issue of race”.

The interviewee then explains how her efforts to be more inclusive were ignored “I certainly on a personal level I have raised it with the festival you know, about you know having some form of recognising their culture. We have Irish cultural activities during the festival you would have maybe international bands playing you know, but there is never, it appears to me, there has never been any invitation to them to present their cooking”. Having observed a festival flyer the interviewer points out a possible contradiction by enquiring about the advertised Chinese market being set up as part of the festival. The interviewee responds “but that is purely commercial...that is not an attempt to include Chinese people...it is purely commercial they are invited in, they are inviting in the Chinese community to sell their food or their, em, whatever they are going to be selling”. The interviewee continues “I think it is going to be, I don’t know whether you saw the French market last year...the French market is touring Ireland as well and it is purely commercial”. She adds “it’s hugely expensive...it has nothing to do with inclusion”. This casts doubt over the value of such an initiative. Indeed, such an initiative, except on a larger scale was included in the literature review as an example of consensus between government and non-government bodies. At least this was the impression formed from the literature reviewed. Reflecting on the issue of inclusion within her own community the interviewee adds “I am not sure what numbers of Eastern Europeans we have, they are probably mainly probably EU citizens and employed you know, they might not be as marginalized as the Africans maybe”. The other female interviewee in this category stated that, “The mayor ...seems to be pro integration and attends various functions”.

The female interviewee in the 56 plus years age bracket did not comment directly on the efforts of the local government to combat racism but does instead explain her perception of local attitudes regarding refugees and asylum seekers. The interviewee states "...sometimes people get the wrong end of the stick, they think that because somebody has said it to them or they have heard it somewhere that you know, that the refugees or the asylum seekers or the ethnic minorities whatever you know, they are whatever they are in the country em, whatever status they are here under, that they get everything and we would have had that going around. Why are they able to get cars? Why are they able to get telephones? Why are they able to have houses? Why are they getting rent allowance? ...but they get it because if they don't get it where are they going to go and the Government have bought hotels, have bought apartments blocks and everything and have used them. Out in Mosney they have, they have taken over Mosney and they have housed people there in mobile homes and in the Mosney complex. Down in Athlone they have done the same thing and em, they have put in mobile homes, a hundred mobile homes into a field for people but you will find that it is not just the ethnic minorities here that people are giving out about, they give out about their own as well getting a house ahead of them, ...they will give out...and they will give out about somebody getting you know that they might have gone for a job and the other person got it like you know that that is people like you know and they will, they will say how come they got a house and my daughter didn't and she is on the list for eight years". These comments are similar to those expressed by the garda in his anecdotal examples of how to define a racist. The male interviewee in this category stated that he hadn't "seen any problems" in the town regarding racism and that it's "not really an issue" but did express a need to "be on the look out". He stated that "I always say hello and they are friendly back". Although the interviewee creates a positive image, and make it clear that this is not his understanding of racism but an attitude, which he has observed.

### New Communities

The interviewees who answered this question reiterated that they either didn't know any local politicians or they did not feel that they were part of contemporary Irish society and therefore could not comment. Furthermore those who expressed an interest in local politics and made attempts to meet local politicians were unsuccessful.

Neither the male or female Eastern-European interviewees within the age bracket of 18-30 years commented on local government's efforts to combat racism; the female interviewee from Belarus replied, "I don't know".

The African male interviewee in the next age category of 31-40 years stated, "I have not got to a stage of you know, like you know just to, to join in a political [party] in Ireland...you know sometime I might, yea...yea in the future". He did explain, "I was trying to find out about how our TD, our TD in Waterford, and they told me he is up by the what do you call it, Tax Office up there, I don't know...But then I went, because I wanted to go maybe to meet him to find out you know, I don't get to meet him". The interviewee was unsuccessful. The female Asian interviewee again answered the question regarding government stating that she is "not interested in politics".

The only response in the next category of persons aged between 41 and 55 years of age this question came from the male interviewee described as Middle-Eastern. Having gained the impression that many of the interviewees from the New Communities were not responding to the question about government's efforts regarding racism and leadership on the issue it was decided that the question should be rephrased to suit their particular situation. When asked if he had contact with any local politicians the interviewee who was an asylum seeker living in direct provision accommodation replied "Here?" "Why they come here to ask us how are you, because nobody cares about us, yes, nobody cares about us. You know we are nothing, we are asylum people we are nothing, nobody come nobody cares about

us... They don't have the time and they don't care about asylum people, asylum people is like you know like piece of wood".

**Question schedule, Question 8 – What is the attitude of members of An Garda**

**Síochána regarding racism in contemporary Irish society?**

This question formed part of the question schedule as it had been raised as an issue in the focus groups interviews. It specifically asks about participants' understandings of attitudes held by members of An Garda Síochána regarding racism in contemporary Irish society. It was essentially enquiring as to the perceived attitudes within the institution of An Garda Síochána. Gaining an understanding of such attitudes fitted with the principal aim of this research.

**Summary of answers to question 8:** The dominant themes identified were an overall negative attitude toward the institution of An Garda Síochána and the attitudes they hold regarding racism. However there were hints of optimism regarding the future dotted throughout participants' responses.

**General themes:**

**Individuals Working within Particular Organisations:**

1. An Garda Síochána have not reached their potential yet (Institution of An Garda Síochána flawed, limited - need for new policy to be implemented).

**Members of the Dominant Group within Irish society:**

1. Not aware of attitude within An Garda Síochána.
2. An Garda Síochána are afraid of being accused of racism and therefore don't fully implement the law.
3. An Garda Síochána are fair to all people they deal with/ not heard any negative stories
4. An Garda Síochána are only human but should rise above racism.

**New Communities:**

1. Not sure of attitude within the institution of An Garda Síochána.
2. Interviewees express both bad and good experiences with An Garda Síochána.

**Dominant themes:**

1. Negative attitude but hint of optimism for the future.
2. Guard's perception on the attitude within the institution

### **Individuals Working within Particular Organisations**

The interviewees in this category discussed institutional racism and described the institution itself as “flawed” and “limited”. The participant from the NCCRI was more specific in her answer pointing to specific problems such as the need for relevant legislation and confusion regarding the role of Ethnic Liaison Officers and Immigration Officers. The participant from the IRC was more general suggesting that the Gardaí had not reached their potential regarding the issue. Finally the Garda explained his understanding of attitudes of members of An Garda Síochána regarding racism in contemporary Irish society.

The politician stated that “This is probably a gratuitous thing to say but I would guess that the Gardaí would probably be as institutionally racist as any group in Irish society possibly a little bit more so I think they would have an instinctive or bit of a subconscious bias against any non Irish”. The politician continues by providing anecdotal evidence to support this claim, “I have heard for example the way they might refer to Travellers, you know in a non Garda sort of way the word “knacker” is used. I suspect that you probably hear the equivalent to an Eastern European or a Black African from the Gardaí”.

Speaking of his relationship with members of An Garda Síochána the politician explains “I have sort of a casual, a very good relationship with the local Gardaí because I would know most of them and I would be dealing with them on a whole range of issues”. He concludes, “I don’t think racism has ever cropped up.”

The participant from the NCCRI was concise in her answer. She talked about relevant legislation, the Gardaí Racism and Intercultural Unit, the role of Ethnic Liaison Officers and the reporting of racist incidents. She concluded that there are positive and negative attitudes held by An Garda Síochána regarding to the issue of racism but that ultimately the Gardaí as an institution are flawed adding, “At the moment they’re limited in their support”. She qualified this statement by explaining, “there is a Racial and Intercultural Unit in the Gardaí and it’s made up

of two people...now I mean that needs to be further resourced. Ethnic Liaison Officers have been placed in each station around the country, except their role isn't clearly defined or there isn't a strong commitment from many stations to promote the role of Ethnic Liaison Officer and very often it is included under the remit of looking after immigration issues which are two very different things because the person who is responsible for immigration issues has a different relationship with migrant and asylum and refugee communities than would an Ethnic Liaison Officer". Furthermore, she states that there are problems with the Gardaí "complaints procedures" and provides anecdotal evidence, "...we've had incidents where people wouldn't have been supported by the Gardaí when they have brought claims of racism to them." However, she concludes positively, "but then we have a very good Intercultural Unit and you have a commitment by certain stations to improve relations with Black and ethnic minority groups".

The participant from the IRC is also critical of An Garda Síochána stating "they have the potential" to help combat racism. However she continues "I don't think they use that potential or I don't think it is yet a focus of their work, em, it is something that they are dealing with now, you know, there has been a lot of business about the Garda recently but they are in dire need of anti racism training, human rights training which is extremely important". The participant is then more specific..."they have, they set up Ethnic Liaison Officers...which is a positive step, em, it is a good thing, but I think there could be more and I think they could be, I think involve themselves more on the ground. I think there is a danger of them being just a figurehead again a tokenistic kind of thing...and I think every Guard should be given anti racism training especially in urban areas like Dublin where racist attacks, and well abuse anyway takes place on a daily basis and it is something that is not acceptable any more not that it ever was but certainly not now".

In response to this question the Garda spoke about the role of An Garda Síochána regarding racism in contemporary Irish society. This included mention of policing

multicultural Ireland, liaising with ‘leaders of ethnic minority groups’ and monitoring racist incidents and the role of the intercultural unit. The impression formed was that the unit was not hugely influential on members of An Garda Siochana.

The issue of the Irish language requirement is also raised with regard to the recruitment of officers from New Communities. When asked what the policy was at the time of the interview the interviewee stated, “The policy is yes they are very welcome to join the police however they have to have Irish...that again eliminates”. The interviewee continues, “I think that to be representative of the community we have to recruit ethnic minorities”. He illustrated his point with the following example “...Chinese for example you have probably unofficially 40,000 Chinese here that is only 1% of the population, how many Chinese police officers have we got? Nil, that is not very representative of that ethnic minority, it is not very fair”. He continues, “I would urge the Government to review the policy in this area, I would start recruiting”.

When asked if he sees anything else standing in the way of a person from a new community becoming a police officer the interviewee responded “Ah, well no, just basically that if you are Black would you like to be, would you like to join the police here, be the only Black person, it is a good question”. He stresses this point by stating “To join the police force as a Black Nigerian whatever is a challenge, it would be like you going to Nigeria and being the only White police officer, say for among thousands of police officers, you would feel, wouldn’t you feel a bit funny?” The interviewee then continues by discussing the difficulties Black people encounter living in Ireland. His observations are based on his experiences. He explains “Talking to a lot of people here, depending on where you are living, life can be quite difficult for Black people, the more Whiter you become you don’t get as much slagging off”. He also states, “Everyone is stuck on referring to people from Nigeria as committing fraud but we don’t hear about those who come here who have been the subject of torture, who are coming here because they feel that

this is a democratic society and that they can enjoy their fundamental human rights”.

The next question put the Garda participant was when did racism become noticeable or a topical issue for the Gardaí in Ireland. The interviewee responds, “Not until about em, I suppose 1999...it really only started then”.

The final issue raised with the interviewee was with regard to the types of crimes being committed and whether this would be an issue, which An Garda Síochána would have to consider. The interviewee answered, “Not really no, there is not really no, crime is crime”. He continued by making the point that “The media... they hype up this a lot”. The interviewee continues “look at the murders that have happened here, there have been savage killings here and Irish people, you don’t have to be Black to cut off two limbs or whatever you know it looks better because years ago in films and TV remember...you see these people running around pots with boiling water... and people love that you know it will sell papers, it looks good and it is a good story”.

### **Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society**

The opinions expressed by the interviewees in this category varied. Some participants stated that they didn’t know what the gardaí’s attitudes were regarding the issue of racism. One participant stated that she believed that the Gardaí were afraid of being accused of racism and therefore do not fully implement the law when dealing with ethnic minorities. Nobody categorically denied that racist attitudes exist within the institution of An Garda Síochána but one interviewee did presume that they are fair to all and another stated that they are only human.

The interviewee in the age bracket of 18-30 years, identified as a student, stated “I don’t know if the guards are racist, like I wouldn’t have any dealings with them” while the other interviewee in the this age bracket stated “ I don’t know if the guards are really racist”.

The male interviewee in the age category of 31-40 years of age is unsure as to the attitudes regarding the issue of racism within An Gardaí Siochana. This is clear from his answer “I imagine they do but I honestly couldn’t say”. The female interviewee in this category felt quite strongly that “...if my tax or insurance is up on the car I’d be nabbed straight away...but we have people driving around with no tax or insurance in foreign cars and in Irish cars and the cars aren’t roadworthy and they’re just driven but if I have a light busted or whatever I’d get pulled in”. When asked if she believes that the guards turn a blind eye to these reckless road users, she replies “Yes”. When she is questioned further as to why she thinks the gardaí do that. She replies “To me, I think they’re afraid they’ll be up for racism if they stop them”. The interviewee is suggesting a strange contradiction in that she believes that the gardaí are indeed racist but that they don’t act on it for fear of being accused of racism.

The female interviewee in the next age category of 41-55 years, from a rural background comments “I don’t know em, I think, I think they are only human so, they are coloured by prejudice as well you know inherent in them they might have their own prejudices, they should obviously rise above that as upholders of the law”. She continues, “...but I know in the way that they treat young people that they don’t rise above their prejudice...so I’m assuming that they don’t rise above it when it comes to ethnic minorities”. The other interviewee in this category commented that, “I presume they would, they would have to extend their protection to asylum seekers like anyone else”. Furthermore she stated that she had not heard any negative stories in her contact with asylum seekers. The female interviewee in the highest age category did not express an opinion in answer to this question. The male interviewee in this category stated, “I don’t really have a clue what power the gardaí have”.

### New Communities

The interviewees in this category answered this question by providing anecdotal evidence of how they were personally treated by members of An Garda Síochána. Some of the participants told of positive experiences, some told of negative experiences and some told of both positive and negative experiences.

The female Eastern-European interview in the age category of 18-30 years did not provide an answer. When asked about the role of An Garda Síochána the Eastern-European male interviewee responded “I don’t like, no, maybe not I don’t like but” and stopped talking. The interviewee was asked to elaborate but declined. He was then asked if he had had an experience with the Gardaí, the interviewee answers “...small...” and appeared unwilling to give more information. The interviewee was then asked if he thinks that he was treated differently because he is not Irish. He answered “Yeah”. It transpires that the interviewee was detained for being drunk and disorderly and brought to a Garda station. He stresses that this was a once off “mistake” that he made. However when asked again if he thinks that he was treated differently by the gardaí because he is not Irish the interviewee appears embarrassed having told this story and answers “I don’t know”. The other female interviewee in this category, a Belarusian woman states that she has only had contact with the An Garda Síochána “when I change my green card”. When asked if she was treated well the interviewee explains that in Belarus if you have a problem, “you afraid to go to garda”... “and here you have problem you go to garda, it all time help for you”. The interviewee continues by telling of her experience as an immigrant with the police. She states that there is no problem “if you are legally in Ireland” and offers praise for the “Immigration Officer” with whom she deals with. When asked how she communicates with the guard and whether a translator is provided the interviewee explains “...if I no understand he translates the same for children”. The interviewee clarifies that she means that the garda uses simple English”.

The interviewees in the age category of 31-40 tell of differing experiences. The African male is positive regarding his contact with the members of An Garda

Síochána. He explains, “some of them are very friendly anyway, yeah, you meet them in the street, hello, hi, we can talk, we can chat”. When asked specifically about their attitude with regard to racism he responds, “Em, I don’t know to what extent”...but concludes, “If I have a problem, yea, I would”.

The female Asian interviewee in this category described her experience with the guards as “not good”. She stated that her husband had been involved in a car crash and the guard she was dealing with “he didn’t want to speak to me...because I’m foreigner I cannot speak English, he prefer to speak with my Irish friend”. The interviewee was then asked if this made her angry. She replied stating, “At the time I was not angry, I can’t really think but now yes, I think I would have understood, he should have taken the time to explain it”. The interviewee was then asked if she thought the garda’s actions were racist and she answered, “I’m not sure”.

The female African interviewee within the age category of 31-40 years tells of a negative experience with the police, “They are too slow to work...I feel that the man he don’t understand”. She continues, “One day somebody fight me, I called the police, they said, they are coming, this thing happen 12 midnight...till the next day they did not come...they came the next day at 12[noon]”.

The interviewees within the next category of 41-55 years also responded to the question regarding the role of An Garda Síochána by telling of their positive and negative experiences. The male Middle-Eastern interviewee stated, “No, I don’t have any problem with Garda to call to go there... The Gardaí is very important”. The African male interviewee did not respond and the female Eastern European woman tells of “an experience ...where some man tried to make for me big problems and I [feared] for my life and for my daughters and I go to gardas and want to explain but I not talk very good English”. The interviewee was then asked if she thinks that the guards treated her differently because she is not Irish. The interviewee answers, “Um, I think so yeah, garda is not ready for people from other country”.

**Question schedule, Question 9 – What is the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in regard to the issue of racism in contemporary Irish society?**

This question formed part of the question schedule, as it was an issue raised by participants in the focus group interviews. Furthermore it was felt that an understanding of perceptions of the NGO sector would aid in the achievement of the principal aim of this research.

**Summary of answers to question 9:** The three dominant themes which emerged in answer to this question, were firstly with regard to the role of non-governmental organisations in contemporary Irish society. The second was the notion that many non-governmental organisations which work in the area of racism, have religious connections. The third was that the voluntary work being carried out by asylum seekers is acting as a form of integration.

**General themes:**

**Individuals Working within Particular Organisations:**

1. Interviewees were aware of NGOs and involved with them, mainly through their employment.
2. Role of the NGO - provide where government fails, critical voice of democracy/part of thriving democracy.

**Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society:**

1. Interviewees were mixed in their awareness of NGOs but generally not involved with them.
2. Role of NGOs discussed on a local community level.
3. Connection between NGOs doing anti-racism work and religious organisations.

**New Communities:**

1. Connection between NGOs doing anti-racism work and religious organisations.
2. Voluntary work conducted by asylum seeker promotes integration.

**Dominant themes:**

1. The role of the NGOs in contemporary Irish society.
2. Many anti-racism organisations have religious foundations/ connections.
3. Voluntary work carried out by asylum seekers encouraging integration.

**Individuals Working within Particular Organisations**

Interviewees in this category answered this question in different ways. Some spoke

of the NGOs that they were aware of and members of while others stressed how important it is that NGOs exist because they are a critical voice in democracy. The point was also made that NGOs provide where the government fails to provide.

In response to this question the politician stated that he is “a member of Amnesty International, I have been for many years”. He also commented on two groups in his locality that he was aware of which promote “intercultural and interdenominational contact between you know new comers to the town of whatever religious or ethnic background”. He acknowledges that both groups are religion-based organisations nonetheless in his opinion they seem “to be working well”.

The participant from the NCCRI explained that “we live in a democracy, you have to have a critical voice, that’s what NGOs do, but also it is something that they should not have to do, end up providing services or supports to groups in the absence of the government doing it themselves which should not happen but that is what has happened as a result of the government not providing particular supports and resources to certain groups. The NGO sector ends up having to do that”. The representative of the IRC explained that “...the whole point of the existence of an NGO, I mean the name Non Governmental Organisation is to counter Government policies and Government stances on things am, but I think you know it is, you know as part of a thriving democracy it is important to have NGOs...it is healthy you know to argue things and debate things and to not necessarily agree with Government and it is important to have kind of a watchdog. I suppose that is what we are really”.

### **Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society**

The interviewees in this category provided a range of differing answers. The interviewees in this category did not really discuss the role of NGOs in regard to the issue of racism in contemporary Irish society rather they shared their awareness of NGOs in their locality who did work relating to the issue of racism. Some interviewees did state that they were not aware of any NGOs doing anti racism

work or promoting integration. Those who were aware of NGOs doing anti-racism work stated that the NGOs had religious foundations. One participant spoke of her involvement with an NGO, which promotes integration.

The male interviewees in the age bracket of 18-30 years both stated that they were not aware of any NGOs which do work with regard to racism in contemporary Ireland. The interviewee identified as being in full-time employment stated, “I can’t think of the names of any”.

The female interviewee from the age category of 31-40 years answers “not really, no idea” when asked about the role of NGOs in regard to racism in contemporary Irish society. The male interviewee in this category is aware of anti racism groups within his work place but not in his general community.

The female interviewee in the next age category of 41-55 years, identified as a rural dweller answered “I would be aware of their existence” but states “I am not really involved with any organisations dealing with racism and that”. She tells of an organisation she is aware of which, “teaches English to a Black woman in her own home on a voluntary basis so I would be aware through her of the difficulties maybe that Black people have or ethnic minorities have and you know, her positive approach to them”. The other female interviewee in this category who has been identified as an urban dweller states that she is actually “involved in a community integration project for asylum seekers and refugees” and tells of the difficulties they have experienced in obtaining government funding. She also expresses a “desperate need for a drop-in centre and information”. Furthermore she explains the role of the community organisation was to “befriend and support refugees” and that the organisation had religious foundations.

The female interviewee in the highest age category of 56 years plus demonstrates an awareness of an organisation in her community which promotes integration and which has religious connections. She explains, “It was done through the Catholic church”.

### New Communities

One interviewee in this category spoke of feeling welcome. Another spoke of receiving support from the church she attends and another interviewee spoke of the support she received from an organisation which provides child-minding services. Furthermore, two interviewees spoke of the voluntary work that they do. The two interviewees who spoke of the voluntary work which they are involved in were asylum seekers and due to the asylum status are not permitted to work and try to fill their time by volunteering. The organisations that the men volunteered to work for were Oxfam and a youth group. Although presumably neither of these organisations' main aim is to promote anti-racism in contemporary Irish society it would seem that they have a role to play in the integration of asylum seekers who choose to take up voluntary work. The male interviewee in this age category states that he believes that Polish people are "Welcome". It is not clear whether he believes other nationalities are less welcome or whether he is speaking about personal experience because he is Polish.

The male African interviewee in the age category of 31-40 years states "I do voluntary work, I wanted to find something like to do...when I came here, so they told me you know I should get in contact with the... Enterprise Community, you know, yeah, so I wrote to them and e-mail and everything you know I checked on the Internet, they have got members. They do help you on if you want to maybe if you want to volunteer, maybe to help, anyway you know, but they didn't reply me back so, yea. So I still wait, maybe they might reply me, or they might be too busy or something." The female Asian interviewee did not comment on the role of NGOs regarding the issue of integration and answered, "No" when asked if she was aware of any NGOs such as integration projects in her community. The female African interviewee names a particular organisation, which helps woman by providing a child minding service. It is not clarified how this organisation operates but the interviewee, a single mother, did explain that it is very important to her.

The male Middle-Eastern interviewee in the next age category of 41-55 years explained “No...I have contact only on working with voluntary...youth project” but he did not wish to elaborate. The male African in this age category did not comment.

However the female Eastern-European interviewee spoke of the support she receives from the church she attends and praises the pastor who “is Irish” who offers support to all churchgoers. The Belgian interviewee in the highest age bracket answers “No” when asked about the role of NGOs stating that she is not aware any groups that do work relating to the issue of racism.

**Question schedule, Question 10 – Do you have any concluding comments that you would like to make or is there anything you would like to say that you feel you didn’t have a chance to say during the interview?**

The majority of interviewees declined the opportunity to answer this question. However those who did demonstrated a certain amount of reflection on the issues which had been discussed during the interview.

**Individuals Working within Particular Organisations**

The politician took the opportunity to advocate that “perhaps people in positions of public leadership shall we say like public representatives” should take “unpopular stances”. This was an unexpected revelation from a politician. He had already been open with regard to his fellow party members’ feelings regarding canvassing with a Black man. It was clear he was unimpressed with the attitudes that they had displayed. Furthermore, he acknowledged that any effort to “change people’s basic nature and instinctive reaction” would be problematic but provided the following starting point: if “someone tells a joke about you know, a Black person and uses the word “nigger” or whatever and everybody laughs, I think people have got to stop

doing that and say “you can’t say things like that, I am not going to listen to you if you are going to say that”. However he acknowledges that it’s “a different story when they are your pals that you have to confront”. He concludes that taking a stand against the spread of such an insidious form of discrimination will “cause you to lose friends very quickly”. The remarks regarding public leaders’ need to take responsibility regarding the issue of racism and the dominant majority’s need to be aware that the holding of certain attitudes suggest this can lead to serious problems in society. The interview had felt like a process where the interviewee came to understand the issue of racism and his own stance on the issue a little better. The interviewee had displayed an understanding of the term racism and its effects. Furthermore he had demonstrated that he was offended by racist behaviour but perhaps the realisation which descended on him was that this was not enough if he was still willing to tolerate racist remarks. Indeed, the insidious form racism takes in contemporary Irish society was referred to several times by the participants.

The participants from the NCCRI and IRC did not make any concluding comments. The Guard concluded by acknowledging that there may be resistance to approaching the police regarding a racist incident but reiterated that “we are here, this is our job...we are at the early stages of this and we need to get this right”.

### **Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society**

Neither of the male interviewees in the age category of 18-30 years availed of the opportunity to make concluding comments. Furthermore both expressed relief that the interview was finished and the male interviewee identified as being in full-time employment enquired as to whether his answers were “right”.

The male interviewee in the age category of 31-40 years stated that he believes that education and contact are important to promote anti-racism in contemporary Irish society, “I think people do need to be educated more and I think its as simple as coming into contact with these people”. He also comments on the “clannish” nature

of society stating that, “certain towns in Ireland would be more clannish against others” and that what is often labelled as racism is perhaps just a manifestation of this clannishness. The female interviewee in this age category commented that “one thing I do and it winds me up big time is with all the people that are coming in is, we’ll say people that are Irish, that have worked all their lives, elderly people more so, they’re being left on trolleys and you have coloured people and people that are not coloured, what do you call it foreign nationals, they’re getting the beds before us I’m sorry, I think that’s out of order, I think we’re after building this country up, we should have priority, I know it’s wrong but why should we be left on trolleys when there’s twenty Black people or foreign national in a bed in...and the old who’ve worked all their lives and put everything into the government and we’re left on trolleys, don’t agree with that at all, that kills me”. When asked whether that is the government’s fault or the “foreigners” fault the interviewee responds by acknowledging that it’s the government’s fault but continues by providing anecdotal evidence of a Black woman insisting on being seen ahead of other patients and being accommodated by the doctor as the doctor feared that she would be accused of racism if she didn’t accommodate the woman, “they are the first people who will say you’re racist”. The interview ends with the interviewee stating “My daughter says I’m racist, at this stage I think I am because what you see they’re getting away with and we don’t get away with it, you know it’s not that we don’t get away with it, we have more respect than to do what they do”.

The female interviewee in the age category of 41-55 years, from a rural background stated, “I suppose you have made me think a little bit.” Speaking about her rural community she says “I suppose it is regrettable that they have not taken any steps at all toward you know welcoming foreign nationals”.

The female ‘urban dwelling’ interviewee in this category commented, “I welcome all minorities regardless of where they are from and that I wish them luck”. She emphasised the need for integration in the community to prevent ghettoisation stating there is “no point coming to a country or a town and not being part of the

community like you know in their own little, that they would stay in their own minority, it is better for them to come and to get involved and to be part of what is going on because there is no better way of actually being accepted in the community than being involved”. The male interviewee in this category did not make a concluding comment.

### **New Communities**

Four of the interviewees from the new communities made concluding comments. The male interviewee from Eastern Europe who is aged between 18-30 years stated again that he believes that Polish people are “Welcome”. The Asian female interviewee commented that “I feel Black people is more difficult to live here than Asian people”. When asked, why do you think that is, she stated, “some people they don’t like Black people.” When asked again why, the interviewee didn’t answer directly but instead told of an experience on public transport where there was “a Black man with a White girl pushing a buggy and the Irish people look at them weirdly...they think Black person get money from government”. The other interviewee who made a concluding comment was the female Eastern European participant in the 41-55 years age category. She stated, “I think I understand Irish people because it was a closed country and when people came here quickly from another country you know, Black and White, you know, Irish people’s reaction I understand because like me, if in my house will come some people...I ask what you want? You know ...and after slowly I looking at these foreign people and....start talking and maybe these people is nice and welcome in my house”. The interviewer clarifies that the participant is suggesting that perhaps like Lithuania opening up after communism, Ireland was a closed country that is opening up to new people coming in. The interviewee agrees. This would support the notion that the issue of racism in contemporary Irish society is still at the embryonic stage.

The Belgian participant in the highest age bracket supports this point stating that she, “would like if people could understand each other” adding “I suppose it will

with time, like your generation when you come together and the future generation when you have children, I hope something will be done”.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter sets out both the general and dominant themes extrapolated from the analysed data. These general themes, which were selected from the data, represent the findings of this research and demonstrate participants’ understandings of a variety of issues regarding racism. The analysis was conducted on a question-by-question basis and the findings were displayed in a systematic manner to illustrate the cross-section of understandings of racism across the three categories of participants within each question. It was necessary at this stage to lay out the participants’ responses in this methodical fashion so as to ensure transparency. Furthermore a data display table was included under each question to provide a clear visual representation of the data.

The general themes were discussed and where appropriate related back to the material contained in the literature review. The findings were then re-analysed to determine which themes represented the dominant findings of this research.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Discussion**

#### **Introduction**

The principal aim of this research was to study individual subjective understandings of racism in contemporary Irish society. This aim was achieved by conducting individual interviews and analysing the gathered data. The themes which emerged from the primary data proved numerous and diverse. In the previous chapter these themes were examined in detail in order to try and understand the meaning which participants attach to various aspects of the concept of racism. The participants' comments were then, where appropriate, related back to the literature review and compared with other participants' understandings to examine whether participants' understandings of the aspects of racism in question were well developed or misunderstood. Furthermore analysis allowed dominant themes to be extrapolated from the data. As previously stated, a dominant theme is one which was expressed by two or more interviewees whether they share the same category or are in different categories. Both the general and the dominant themes are considered in order to answer a number of key questions regarding participants' subjective understandings of racism.

#### **1. What do the participants understand as the grounds for racism?**

Participants indirectly expressed what they subjectively understand as the grounds for racism when answering the question 'Define/ Explain your understanding of racism'. The themes or findings extrapolated from the answers provided were set out in the previous chapter. The findings convey that participants in the category

entitled 'Individuals Working within Particular Organisations' understand racism as the categorisation and treatment of human beings as inferior and superior. However, participants in this category also demonstrate confusion, in that they understood racism as a form of discrimination but were unclear regarding what actually constitutes racist behaviour and therefore racism. Indeed this lack of understanding as to which types of discrimination constitute racism was evident when attempting to trace the origins of racism in the literature review, which demonstrates that discrimination did occur in ancient civilisations, through to the colonial era and in post World War Two conflict such as the Mau Mau rebellion. However, it is not always clear whether this was discrimination based on 'race' or some other form of discrimination. This demonstrates that the confusion as to which forms of discrimination constitutes racism, found in the answers provided by participants, is not unique to contemporary Irish society. Both the notions of superiority and inferiority and discrimination may be interpreted as what the participants within this category subjectively understand as the grounds for racism. Furthermore, the understandings expressed were supported and added to in the answers provided by participants in other categories.

The answers provided by the participants in this category entitled 'Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society' indicate that participants understood the grounds of racism to be a lack of tolerance for difference, the holding of a xenophobic attitude as well as the unequal treatment of humans.

The participants from the category entitled, 'New Communities' supported the notion that xenophobia and otherness were grounds for racism. Furthermore the categorisation and treatment of human beings as superior or inferior was again used to explain the concept of racism.

The dominant themes, which emerged from participants' explanations of the concept of racism, convey a tendency to categorise and treat others as superior or inferior and the second was that participants defined racism in terms of xenophobia. These dominant themes are considered in more detail in order to decipher whether

they can be interpreted as what the participants understand as the grounds for racism.

### **The categorisation and treatment of others as superior or inferior**

The participant from the NCCRI included the first dominant theme in her answer by emphasising the idea of racism as ‘power, prejudice and a notion of superiority and inferiority’ in her definition of racism. Furthermore, notions of superiority and inferiority were alluded to by interviewees in the category entitled ‘Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society’ through the inclusion of the recurring themes of inequality and social exclusion. The inference being, those who do not receive equal treatment or are socially excluded are treated as such because they are understood to be inferior. The notions of superiority and inferiority also emerged as a recurring theme from the definitions provided by interviewees within the category entitled ‘New Communities’. Indeed, the notions of superiority and inferiority were expressly included in the definition provided by the male African interviewee in the age bracket of 41-55 years. The interviewee first explained his experience with “European people” stating that “the main problem is the concept of Western superiority” and the notion that “Black people, they are second-class citizens”. He also discusses the notion of Black people being perceived as “primitive”, he strongly disputes this idea and concedes that “today” this is an “old fashioned” view. However, the answer provided in both categories indicate that it is the ‘Westerner’ who is understood as superior and “Black people” who are understood as inferior. This is a clear indication that not only is the concept of superiority and inferiority alone a ground for racism but that this notion is based on the social construct of ‘phenotypical interpretations’ and in particular, skin colour (Banton 1998:13).

Indeed, the participant’s understanding is supported in the historical accounts set out in the literature review, of the Mau Mau rebellion. During the rebellion the British media portrayed the Mau Mau as ‘barbaric’, ‘anti-European’, ‘anti-

Christian' and 'primitive'. The garda explained how this perception still influences understanding in contemporary Irish society when discussing the sensationalisation of racism and crime in the media. He stated, "The media...they hype up this a lot...look at the murders that have happened here, there have been savage killings here and Irish people, you don't have to be Black to cut off two limbs or whatever you know it looks better because years ago, in films and TV remember...you see these people running around pots with boiling water...and people love that, you know, it will sell papers, it looks good and it is a good story".

The male African interviewee in the age bracket of 41-55 years made another reference to a group of people who she understands to be inferior or primitive. He explains, when discussing the term ethnicity, "the culture of this country [Ireland] at the weekend is really, really drunkenness, ok, should I say that, because Irish people they have culture to drink you know of drunkenness, that they are primitive".

The notions of superiority and inferiority were also implicitly incorporated into explanations of racism provided by other interviewees from the 'New Communities'. Indeed, the female Asian interviewee in the age bracket of 30-41 years, provided an illustrative example of how the understanding that someone is inferior to you, can be a ground for racism. She explained that racism occurs when "somebody hurt other people's feeling". The notion of superiority and inferiority can be implied into this definition, as it may be that the perpetrator of racist and hurtful remarks categorises themselves as superior and their victim as inferior and are therefore able to look down on the differences that they perceive. This rationale may also be applied to the explanation of racism provided by the female African in the same age bracket. The interviewee defined racism as "not being White" this is a loaded statement that can be interpreted in several ways. One interpretation could be that it incorporates notions of superiority and inferiority and that there is a perception that not having White skin indicates that a person is somehow imperfect and is therefore inferior, again indicating that the basis for racist attitudes is not

only the belief that you are superior and another person is inferior but that they are inferior due to their skin colour.

The notions of superiority and inferiority were incorporated into Ruth Benedict's definition of racism, as referred to in the literature review. Benedict defined racism as 'the dogma that one group is condemned by nature to congenital inferiority and another group is destined to congenital superiority' (Solomos & Back 1996:4). Indeed, the notion that one 'race' is superior to another was a common and recurring theme throughout the literature review. According to Isaac, it was evident in ancient civilizations. Isaac claims that the Greeks invented 'a systematic hierarchy of 'superior' and 'inferior' human beings'. It was also evident throughout the colonial period when superiority and religion were given as reasons for colonising other countries rather than mere financial gain (Shaw 2006:2). The notions of superiority and inferiority were also evident in the development of theories such as craniology and phrenology and it was central to Nazi ideology. Furthermore the notions of superiority and inferiority form part of Loyal and Mulcahy's 2001 definition of racism in a contemporary Irish context as set out in the literature review. The fact that it also forms part of the definition of racism provided by participants in this research demonstrates that it is truly a recurring theme, recurring throughout history and in different societies including contemporary Irish society. Furthermore, this recurring theme may be interpreted as not only how participants define or explain racism but what participants understand to be a ground for racism. Moreover, the findings of this research show that the categorisation and treatment of humans as superior or inferior is how participants define or explain racism. However, the evidence shows that it is the categorisation based on skin colour which is the true ground for racism.

### **Defining racism in terms of xenophobia**

The other dominant theme which emerged from the primary data in answer to this question, was that the definitions provided by participants more accurately defined xenophobia than racism. This was noted in particular in the answers provided by

the group of participants categorised as ‘Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society’. That is, the definitions provided by the interviewees referred to an undue fear of ‘foreign’ people or otherness.

The concepts of inequality and social exclusion were again raised but this time they were appropriately related to the notion of otherness. The theme of, ‘inequality’ was raised by the male interviewee in the 31-40 years age bracket. He defined racism as “treating people of different races unequally”. The female interviewee in the age bracket of 41-55 years living in an urban setting also incorporates the theme of inequality into her definition of racism, stating that it occurs when a person is ‘not being granted equal status like everybody else in society’.

The theme of ‘social exclusion’ was raised by the female interviewee in the highest age category, in terms of, “people not being accepted”. She rationalised that this was due to the fact that the people were “from a different minority” and stated that it was “regardless” of where they came from. This indicates that the participant understands there to be an attitude of general contempt of otherness among the ‘Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society’. This may be related back to the idea of superiority and inferiority but it also demonstrates the existence of xenophobic attitudes, which may be interpreted as what participants understand as a ground for racism in addition to ‘phenotypical interpretations’ and in particular, skin colour (Banton 1998:13).

No interviewee specifically used the term xenophobia. However explanations which included that a person was from a different country or of a different nationality and that contempt was based on that fact were interpreted as xenophobia within this research. This understanding is based on Fredrickson’s definition of xenophobia as set out in the literature review, which describes ‘a reflexive feeling of hostility to the stranger or other’ (2002:6). As previously stated there are two essential elements with regard to how xenophobia is understood within this research. The first element is that xenophobia is based on a difference of

nationality. The second element is that the prejudice or discrimination experienced is based on that difference of nationality.

The male interviewee in the age bracket of 18-30 identified as being in full-time employment, defined racism as “discrimination”. He incorporated xenophobia into his definition by stating that the discrimination could be based on the fact that the person is “from a different country”. The female interviewee in the age range 31-40 years, defined racism as “someone’s from a different country and you don’t like them”. The female interviewee in the age bracket of 41-55 years identified as a rural dweller defined racism as “prejudice against somebody who is not in the narrow sense from your country”. This again displays xenophobia as it incorporates the two elements, being of a different nationality and prejudice based on that. The interviewee then broadened her definition to include prejudice due to “different religion or gender or sexual disposition”. This is similar to the definition of racism provided by the politician, as it incorporates the idea of discrimination based on innate characteristics. It is also similar to the politician’s answer as again the interviewee displays confusion regarding which types of discrimination actually constitute racism as the interviewee lists several forms of discrimination under the heading of racism.

The female participant in the age bracket of 41-55 years identified as an urban dweller, incorporates the two grounds for racism identified in this research. She explains that racism is “discrimination against, on account of their colour” employing the ‘racial’ classification tool of skin colour. The interviewee continues by incorporating the notion of xenophobia into her definition of racism by stating that racism is usually perpetrated against people “coming from different cultures.”

The finding which emerged from an analysis of the data provided by participants in the categories entitled ‘Individuals Working within Particular Organisations’ and ‘Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society’ convey that participants understand racism to be the categorisation and treatment of humans as superior or

inferior and xenophobia. Furthermore analysis of participants' definitions and explanations of racism convey that participants understand racism to be based on skin colour.

A further examination of the notion of xenophobia, which was also a dominant theme to emerge from the definitions and explanations of racism provided by participants from 'New Communities' convey that xenophobia is often discussed in terms of nationality. Therefore when participants talk about differences in nationality they are in fact talking about a fear or dislike of increased immigration. Indeed, many of the members of 'New Communities' are first generation immigrants. This is evident in the answer provided by the female Belarusian interviewee in the age bracket of 18-30 years when she uses the words "negative" and "nationality" in her definition of racism. She explained, "You live in Ireland, I come to your country, you don't like it". Furthermore, the male African interviewee in the 31-40 age bracket defines racism as "individuals coming from, maybe different countries" and the Belgian interviewee in the highest age bracket defines racism stating it refers to "people coming from different countries".

It would appear from the findings of this research that there is a consensus among participants regarding the grounds for racism. The dominant findings from answers provided by participants, when asked to define or explain racism, were the notions of humans being categorised and treated as either superior or inferior and xenophobia. These findings point to participants' understandings of the grounds for racism, which are in fact skin colour and immigration. Perhaps like 1970's Britain which according to Garner used the term 'culture' instead of racism to allow racist views to be aired without fear of being branded a racist, contemporary Irish society finds it more comfortable to discuss racism in terms of superiority and inferiority and nationality. It should however be noted that Garner continues his discussion by pointing to the fact that this provided those on the far right with 'extreme nationalistic ideas to become legitimate and popular' (Garner 2004:15). Furthermore, according to Garner the platform afforded to those with racist

tendencies is evident ‘by the upsurge in support for far-Right parties across Europe at the end of the 1990’s and in the early twenty-first century’ (Garner 2004:15).

It would seem that participants are unable or unwilling to have an open and honest debate regarding racism. Indeed within this research only one interviewee openly admitted that she held prejudiced attitudes. The other participants spoke of others in society holding racist attitudes. This may be interpreted in a number of ways, for example it could be that the majority of participants do not hold racist attitudes. It is more likely however that participants felt that it was socially unacceptable to express any prejudicial feelings and therefore spoke of ‘other people’s’ attitudes. This may be interpreted as both a positive and a negative finding. It is positive in that there is an understanding in contemporary Irish society that racism is wrong. It is negative however, in that it may stifle any open and honest debate regarding racism. Indeed this point was made by the female Belgian interviewee in the highest age bracket, “They never talk about racism here really, you will never hear a programme on the radio or on the television”.

### **The extent of racism**

The answers provided by participants regarding the extent of racism as a problem in contemporary Irish society also indirectly provided insight into individuals’ understandings of the grounds for racism. The interviewee from the ‘Dominant Group’ category, in the age bracket of 41-55 years identified as a rural dweller concludes that it is “still a fairly huge problem”. The inclusion of the word ‘still’ indicates that the interviewee does not feel that racism is a new phenomenon in Irish society. However the newness of the issue was commented upon by the male interviewee in the age category of 31-40 years and the female interviewee in the highest age bracket. The male interviewee explains that the ‘newness’ is perhaps a ground for the “lack of understanding” and in turn racist behaviour. The female interviewee also indicates that the problems regarding racism in contemporary Irish society are recent “we never really had to deal with it to the extent that they might have done in England and they might have done in different places”. However the

Belgian interviewee compared the extent of racism as a problem in contemporary Irish society with other European countries including her own and concludes that it is a “bigger problem in Belgium, France and even Germany” nullifying the argument that the racist attitudes held within contemporary Irish society is transitory. In fact it suggests that they are embryonic.

The interviewees in the category entitled ‘Individuals Working within Particular Organisations’ displayed contrasting understandings regarding the extent of racism in contemporary Irish society. The interviewees in the category entitled ‘Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society’ discussed, not the extent but the motive for developing a racist attitude. There was some agreement with the previous finding that a ground for racism was the newness of the immigration phenomenon in Ireland. Other interviewees compared racism in Ireland with racism in other countries and found that the word ‘yet’ could be added to any such statement supporting the notion, once again, that racist attitudes in Ireland are at an embryonic stage.

In summary, it would appear that the dominant understandings of racism are that humans can be categorised as superior or inferior and treated differently due to this classification. Also, the holding of a xenophobic attitude and the relative newness of the issue of racism both feature in participants’ understandings of racism. An analysis of participants’ definitions and explanations of racism could simply be interpreted as the grounds for racism. However, when these findings are contextualised within the entire data, the true grounds for racism which emerge are skin colour and immigration. These are not what the participants understand as the grounds for racism or admit to understanding.

## **2. What do the participants understand as the forms that racism can take?**

Participants again indirectly expressed what they subjectively understand as the forms that racism can take in the answers provided to the two-pronged question regarding participants’ experience as victims or witnesses of racist incidents. The forms of racism expressed by participants can be broadly interpreted as direct or individual racism and institutional racism. However, the dominant finding from the

answers provided by both ‘Individuals Working within Particular Organisations’ and ‘Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society’ was the insidious form of racism in contemporary Irish Society, which is akin to indirect or institutional racism.

**Examples of participants’ understandings of the forms racism can take**

The participant from the NCCRI provides anecdotal evidence of a number of incidents which occurred in her professional and personal life where she saw herself as a witness of racist incidents. The participant explained that in her personal life she has “a good friend from the Nigerian community” whose “car outside her front door was burnt down as a threat to tell her to leave the housing estate”. This may be interpreted as direct or individual racism as the racist action was both blatant and targeted an individual. The examples provided by the participant regarding her professional life include the denial of employment, housing in the rental sector, access to education and the circulation of hate mail. These examples may be interpreted as institutional racism except for the circulation of hate mail, which due to its blatant and personal nature may be categorised as direct racism. Institutional racism is usually more subtle and systematic in nature than direct racism.

The participant from the IRC explained that the racist incidents she had witnessed were “passive” or “casual” in form and occurred in her personal life. The incident she described centred round the reactions of members of the public to foreign workers in a convenience store. As the incident involved the reactions of member of the public and not members of a particular body or institution, it can be interpreted as direct or individual racism.

The incident described by the politician occurred when canvassing with a Black man. This incident can also be described as direct racism. However it would appear that there was also an institutional element in the reaction of the politician’s party colleagues. He stated there was “considerable disquiet among my own party

supporters, for example, who thought it was you know a bad thing”. He continues, “Damaging for me politically to be seen canvassing with a Black man...I think a lot of them were just unhappy that I was that closely associated with a Black man”. Furthermore, this clearly demonstrates a prejudiced attitude held by members of the public and party members and the manifestation of that prejudice in the discriminatory ‘advice’ given to the politician.

There was a similarity in the majority of answers provided by participants who felt that they had witnessed racist incidents. Regardless of whether these incidents were interpreted as direct, indirect, individual or institutional, the racism described was usually subtle in form. Indeed the subtle form of racism in contemporary Irish society was a major finding in this research and can be related back to participants’ understandings as to the grounds for racism.

### **The insidious form in which racism permeates through contemporary Irish society**

It was found that interviewees from the category entitled ‘Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society’ repeatedly described an insidious form of racism, which spread through Irish society by means of racist jokes and stories. This “covert insidious” form of racism is akin to indirect racism (MacPherson 1999: 6.23).

The male interviewee in the age bracket of 31-40 years explained that he had witnessed racist “jokes” but stated that he had not witnessed racism in “an actual more serious situation”. This indicates that the interviewee felt that the insidious form in which attitudes regarding racism spread through contemporary Irish society had little or no implications. The female interviewee in the age bracket of 41-55 years, identified as a rural dweller, also told of witnessing the telling of racist jokes and strongly condemned such behaviour indicating that the interviewee felt that such behaviour was wrong but noted the difficulty and discomfort surrounding

speaking out against such behaviour. The male interviewee in the highest age bracket also made reference to racist jokes. However the interviewee felt that this form of behaviour was “gone out the window”. The Belgian interviewee explains what she believes is the general attitude held in Ireland, “they [Black people] receive prams and food and they are not working and so the Irish people say, we have poor people also’. The Belgian interviewee also refers directly to the insidious form of racism in contemporary Irish society “I think there are a lot of people saying they don’t like it, it’s under the surface”.

This insidious form of racism, as it is termed in this research is not direct racism as the joke or story would not be told in the presence of a person who was the subject of the racist comment. Neither was it institutional, as the situations described were that the jokes were generally told in a casual social settings. There were different opinions on the impact of such racist behaviour, but there was consensus regarding how difficult it was to express dissatisfaction that a racist comment was being made in your presence. The politician explains, “I think it is wrong to be racist, it is wrong to make you know jokes about Black people or whatever or to use terms that, you know, people use when they think they are in like minded company because I think that is part of the disease, you know, that you might to somebody’s face be polite and pleasant and then you are with your cronies in the pub tell jokes about, you know, niggers and that sort of thing and I would always object if that happens in my presence and people maybe think I am a bit of a fusspot or whatever but you know”. The interviewee continues, “I think people have got to stop doing that and say, “Look you can’t say things like that, I am not going to listen to you if you are going to say that”. You will offend people by doing that it can be very difficult to em, to teach to practice that, or preach that, different story when they are your pals that you have to confront and you lose friends very quickly”. This finding is important as it describes a dominant form racism is taking in contemporary Irish society.

In summary, it would appear that participants understand racism to take the form of direct racism against the individual, which is both blatant and personal and indirect or institutional racism, which are more subtle and systematic in nature. Furthermore there was strong evidence throughout this research of an insidious form of racism, which is subtle and covert in nature. Participants convey little understanding of the impact of this form of racism but conveyed discomfort in speaking out against this form of racism. This subtle form of racism may be linked to the previous findings regarding the lack of open and honest debate regarding racism in contemporary Irish society. Despite its covert form, participants conveyed a good understanding and awareness of the forms racism can take in contemporary Irish society. Furthermore the fact that a link can be made between the grounds for racism and the form which racism takes would suggest validity in the understanding put forward by participants.

### **3. Whom do the participants understand to be the perpetrators and victims of racism?**

The female participant in the age bracket of 41-55 years, identified as an urban dweller stated, when explaining how she defines racism, that racism is usually perpetrated against people “coming from different cultures”. An analysis of this statement indicates a fairly broad category of perpetrators and victims of racism. That is, the perpetrators of racism could be anyone belonging to the majority culture in contemporary Irish society and the victims could be anyone who does not belong to the majority culture. However, it became clearer whom participants specifically understand to be the victims of racism in the answers provided to again, a two pronged question in which participants were first asked whether they had ever had an experience as the victim of a racist incident. The second part enquired as to whether interviewees had ever had an experience as a witness of a racist incident.

The answers provided to the first element of this question conveyed the emergence of a pattern in how participants from different categories responded in expressing their understanding of who are the victims of racism. It was therefore necessary to examine the pattern identified, category-by-category to establish where the pattern is followed and where there are exceptions.

The answers provided by interviewees within the category entitled 'Individuals Working within Particular Organisations' conveyed that interviewees felt that they had not been the victims of racism. The only participant within this category who felt that they had perhaps been the victim of racism was the participant of the NCCRI who explained "I am a White settled woman living in Ireland, so in terms of the context of Ireland I would very rarely have experienced racism". The use of the word "settled" indicates a belief that Travellers can indeed be victims of racism perhaps by virtue of belonging to a separate ethnic group. A belief not shared by the Irish government as discussed in the literature review. Also the inclusion of the words "very rarely" indicates hesitation and perhaps an element of confusion as the interviewee states that she "experienced some verbal abuse" while abroad, namely the UK and Germany.

The patterns which emerged from the answers, provided by interviewees in the category entitled 'Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society' generally mirrored those provided by the 'Individuals Working within Particular Organisations'. The majority of interviewees indicated through anecdotal evidence that they had not experienced racism as a victim. The female interviewee identified as an urban dweller and the female interviewee in the highest age bracket both answered "No" to this question, indicating that they had not been the victims of a racist incident. The only interviewee who claimed to have been the victim of racism was the female interviewee in the age bracket of 31-40 years, who claimed that she had been a victim of racism in her workplace.

The participants in the category entitled 'New Communities' did not follow the emerging pattern established in the previous two categories, in the answers they provided. The Eastern European, Belarusian and Belgian participants generally answered "No" when asked if they had been the victims of racism in contemporary Irish society. The African and Middle Eastern participants generally answered, "Yes" to the question. The participants who answered, "Yes" to being a victim of a

racist incident provided anecdotal evidence of their experiences. The male African interviewee in the age bracket of 31-40 years was told to, “go back to Africa” and the female African interviewee in the same age bracket was asked in an aggressive manner by a stranger “Can’t you go back to your own country?” The Middle-Eastern participant told of an incident where he felt that he had been the victim of racism while being treated by a doctor and later by a specialist.

An analysis of the answers provided by participants from the ‘New Communities’ category demonstrates that all three who answered, “Yes” were physically distinguishable from the general Irish population. Furthermore, the interviewees from the ‘New Communities’ category, who stated that they had not been the victims of racism, were not easily identified as non-Irish. Furthermore this supports the finding that racism is based on social interpretations of physical difference such as skin colour. This is an important finding as it narrows down participants’ understanding of potential victims from ‘anyone who does not belong to the majority culture’ to people who are physically different from the majority of the population.

Indeed it was specifically recognised by some Eastern European interviewees that racism is more of a problem for those who can be easily visually distinguished from the majority of the population. A female Eastern European interviewee in the age bracket of 41-55 years explained, “It’s not with me, it’s with some people in the church”. When asked if it is happening mainly to Black people the interviewee replies, “Yes” and then describes racist incidents, which they have suffered. However another element was added to this finding in the explanation provided by another female Eastern European participant who explained, “I hear about this...that Irish people not everybody but some people don’t like Black people because they think that they arrive here don’t work and take money from the Government, they don’t want to work”. This understanding was also displayed as an indirect answer to the question regarding the extent of racism in Ireland by members of the ‘Dominant Group’. The male interviewee in the age bracket of 31-

40 years explained that there is a perception that “refugees or whatever are getting more from the Government than our own citizens”. It was also referred to by the female interviewee in the same age bracket, who stated “From my point of view, and most people I know, they get too much and the Irish people are just putting up with it, they won’t speak up for themselves”. The interviewee also explains who is getting too much “the asylum seekers more so” and what it is that they are getting “their digs paid for and getting cars”.

It would seem that the terms asylum seeker and refugee are associated in contemporary Ireland with Black people. While asylum seekers and refugees comprise approximately 10% of all immigrants and only 10% of that are African and Asian the association being made was evident in the interchangeable use of the terms by members of the category entitled ‘Members of the Dominant Group in Society’. Furthermore, the interviewees in that category who made a conscious effort to use the terms asylum seekers and refugees, reverted to using the word ‘Black’ when they were more relaxed. The interviewees in the category entitled ‘New Communities’ were more restricted in their language skills and used the term ‘Black people’ when explaining the same perception held by Irish society.

It became apparent that a negative attitude towards members of New Communities was subtly recurring in the data pointing to a belief that people who are more physically distinguishable from the majority are more likely to be the victims of racism but a belief that refugees and asylum seekers are taking advantage of Irish law and policy. It could therefore be concluded that in Irish society asylum seekers are viewed as parasitic in nature and further that asylum seekers and refugees are generally thought of as Black people.

However, it should be stated that this was not a perception held by all participants in the category entitled ‘Members of the Dominant Groups in Society’. The female interviewee in the highest age bracket reports good integration in her locality and

reasons that members of the ethnic minority are “fitting in well” and that this is due to the fact “that they have the same opportunities as members of the ethnic majority”. Furthermore the interviewee expresses concern for members of the ethnic minority in their early twenties and suggests, “that they need that bit of extra...help”.

In summary, two broad categories of perpetrators and victims were identified. The category of people understood to be the victims of racism was narrowed down by the findings, which emerged in answer to the specific question regarding victims of racism. The pattern which emerged in the answers provided by interviewees in the category entitled ‘Individuals Working within Particular Organisations’, was that interviewees generally felt that they had not been the victims of racism. They were however able to provide anecdotal evidence of racist incidents that they had witnessed. This pattern was mirrored in the category entitled ‘Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society’. The interviewees in the category entitled ‘New Communities’ also generally followed this pattern with the exception of interviewees who are physically distinguishable from the general population. Those who were physically distinguishable by features such as skin colour stated that they had been the victims of racism. It was also found that two Eastern European participants understand that Irish people perceive asylum seekers and refugees to be parasitic in nature and Furthermore they associate asylum seeking and refugee status with being Black. Indeed, evidence emerged which proved Irish people do indeed hold this perception of asylum seekers and refugees as parasitic.

It would appear from the answers furnished that participants have a well developed understanding of who are the victims of racism in contemporary Irish society and that there is a link between being a victim of racism and ‘phenotypical interpretations’ (Banton 1996: 13). Furthermore, the fact that physical differences such as skin colour were found to be a ground for racism gives validity to the later finding. Moreover, although there was little data regarding who are the perpetrators of racism in contemporary Irish society beyond those who belong to the majority of the population, a number of participants in the categories ‘Individuals Working within Particular Organisations’ and ‘Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society’ made it clear that they did find the question as to whether they had been the victim of racism ridiculous. It should be stated the participants in these categories were part of the majority culture and not physically distinguishable. This reinforces the findings that racism is based on physical differences and that the victims are those who are physically different. This however paints a very black and white picture of racism and it does not account for inter-ethnic racism between perhaps members of ‘New Communities’, which is illuminated in the ‘race’-relations cycle (Harvey and MacDonald, 1993:18). As previously stated in the literature review the important events in this cycle are competition, conflict, accommodation and assimilation. This theory sets out potential reasons for poor

relations between members of 'New Communities' and members of the host society. However the theory may equally be applied to inter-ethnic relations in 'New Communities' relations. This did not form part of the findings in this research.

#### **4. In the participants' understanding, whose concern is racism?**

The sixth question on the question schedule asked have any individuals or groups taken leadership on this issue of racism. This question was posed to establish whether there was a particular person or group within contemporary Irish society who could be identified as showing concern or interest in the issue of racism. Those understood by participants to be concerned with the issue of racism included a number of individual politicians, political parties and grassroots groups. Some were named only once and other names recurred. However there was not a consensus among participants regarding which particular person or group were concerned with the issue of racism.

##### **An Taoiseach, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Justice**

The politician praised the Taoiseach, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Justice for their concern, regarding the issue of racism. He also spoke of a "high profile campaign" which "the Taoiseach fronted". This does not however correlate with the findings, which, indicate that there is a general lack of awareness of government efforts to combat racism, which forms part of a later finding. Indeed, the only campaign identified by either a 'Members of the Dominant Group' or the 'New Communities' was an advertising campaign of which no participant could provide details and for this reason it may be concluded that it was not very effective. Indeed, the National Action Plan Against Racism did run radio and billboard campaigns promoting anti-racism in March and April 2002 and this may be what interviewees were referring to (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform 2005).

The interviewees in the category entitled the ‘Dominant Group in Irish Society’, generally didn’t offer the names of individuals or political parties in the same way that the ‘Representative of Particular Bodies and Institutions’ did. In general interviewees stated that they didn’t know any person who had shown concern. Minister McDowell did however receive praise from the female interviewee in the age bracket of 41-55 years, living in a rural setting and the male African interviewee in the 31-40 year age bracket for “trying to be more inclusive”.

The Minister also received criticism from the female interviewee identified as an urban dweller. The interviewee acknowledged that the Minister had shown concern but then accused him of being racist. The Minister was further criticised by the male African interviewee in the 41-55 year age bracket, who stated that the Minister was hated by Irish people and that he therefore had no sympathy for him or his party.

### **Sinn Fein**

Sinn Fein received praise from both NGO participants for the party’s anti-racism policy and for accessing anti racism training. Sinn Fein TD Aengus O’Snodaigh in particular receives praise from the IRC participant for showing concern by raising question forwarded to him by the IRC with Minister McDowell, “Nearly every question that we send in to him he would get around to asking” There is an irony here as Sinn Fein’s main ethos is that all of Ireland belongs to the Republic of Ireland. This ethos could be interpreted as being reflective of Baker’s theory of ‘New Racism’ as set out in the literature review. Garner described Baker’s theory as the belief that ‘national territories are the monopoly of nationals’ and suggests that such a belief has racist overtones. It is therefore ironic that a party, which received much praise for its anti-racism efforts, has an ethos which could be interpreted as containing racist elements.

### **Labour Party**

The Labour Party and in particular an unnamed TD also received praise from the male interviewee in the highest age bracket in the category entitled 'Dominant Group in Irish Society' who had identified himself as a member of the Labour party. The praise for the TD in question was however in relation to his work in two particular areas, which the interviewee felt related to racism. First he explained that that TD helped members of the new communities to become part of the electoral register \_ something the NCCRI participant described as important in order to propel the government into activity regarding the issue of racism, as it would empower ethnic minorities. The interviewee also spoke of the TD's work with Irish migrants living in England.

The male African interviewee in the age bracket 41-55 years, did offer cautious praise to the Labour Party but noted that they were not at present in power, implying that if the party came to power they may be less concerned with the issue of racism.

### **Grassroots**

The final group to receive praise for their concern on the issue of racism was the grassroots support shown to deportees. This praise came from the female interviewee in the highest age bracket, in the category entitled 'Members of the Dominant Group in Society' indicating that the participant equates deportation with racism. This is in line with the earlier finding that participants understand immigration to be a ground for racism. However it is often spoken about in terms of nationality.

Another example of participants' understanding of grassroots concern was provided in the female Asian participant's answer. She explained that she is continually asked by her Irish friends whether she has experienced racism. It would seem that this question was asked by 'Members of the Dominant Group in Irish Society' in an

effort to protect their ethnic minority friend, demonstrating true grassroots support.

In summary, the anecdotal evidence provided by the politician, of those whom he understands to have shown concern regarding the issue of racism, does not correlate with the findings in this research and could be interpreted as favouritism. Indeed, the Fianna Fail politician named mainly Fianna Fail members as having shown an interest. Minister McDowell, receive praise from the members of the 'Dominant' category for his efforts to promote inclusion but the criticism levelled at him outweighed the praise he received. Sinn Fein received praise from both NGO participants due to the actual dealings they had had with Sinn Fein and what they felt were tangible efforts regarding the issue of racism in contemporary Irish society.

The male interviewee in the highest age bracket in the 'Dominant Group in Irish Society' category identified himself as a member of the Labour party. He also displayed favouritism in only offering praise to the Labour party and a particular Labour party TD. Labour also received cautious praise from the male African interviewee in the age bracket of 41-55 years. The grassroots support shown to deportees by ordinary individuals was also mentioned conveying a link between deportation and racism in the participant's subjective understanding of the racism.

Much of the analysis focuses on the people and groups that did receive praise for their concern regarding the issue of racism and perhaps the motives behind that praise. However an indirect theme, which emerged from the answers provided by participants to this question was that many interviewees were not aware of any person or group who had leadership on the issue of racism in contemporary Irish society. No individual or group emerged as having a strong concern for addressing the issue of racism, except perhaps, at a grassroots level.

However the question must be asked whether the people participants understand to be concerned with the issue of racism are the people whose concern it is to address racism. Previous findings provide insight as to who participants understand are most likely to suffer as victims of racism i.e., those who are physically distinguishable (due to skin colour) from the majority of the dominant group in Irish society. Therefore it would be in these people's best interest to address the issue of racism in contemporary Irish society. However this would lead to the situation whereby people who are physically different from the majority of society would have to initiate an anti-racism campaign with the aim of convincing the majority that it is wrong to be racist towards them, as it is in their interest to address and diminish racism in contemporary Irish society.

This raised the question as to who should bear the burden of encouraging integration. Indeed, this idea was explored in the literature review and in the finding by reference to McVeigh's examination of the development of the anti racism movement in Ireland (2002). As previously stated McVeigh examined the cyclical

nature of organisations which promote anti racism, of initial success and ultimate failure. He found that there was an onus placed on ethnic minorities to convince the majority that it was wrong to be racist against them rather than sharing the responsibility with the majority of the population who have the policy and decision making power. This leads to the next question, which asked, in the participants' understanding whose responsibility is it to address racism?

##### **5. In the participants' understanding, whose responsibility is it to address racism?**

The participants expressed who they subjectively understand to be responsible for addressing racism in contemporary Irish society in their answers to a number of different questions, namely the fifth and seventh questions on the question schedule.

##### **What do you think of the Irish Government's efforts to combat racism?**

The fifth question posed was, what do you think of the Irish Government's efforts to combat racism. The wording of this question implies that the Irish government have responsibility for addressing the issue of racism. However, in answering this question some participants dispute this notion or suggest that it is not the government's sole responsibility but something that must be addressed by various facets of society. This is illustrated in the participant from the NCCRI's response in which she stressed the complexity of the issue stating that combating racism was not the sole responsibility of the government and that a combined effort is required. She explained, "There are many key actors involved in challenging racism. The government, civil society, the public sector, the trade unions, everyone has a part to play in challenging racism". However the participant does address the issue of government responsibility by explaining her understanding of the government's efforts so far, to combat racism. The interviewee lists the actions taken in recent years, which included the ratification of "the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination". However, it must be made clear that the Irish Government became a signatory to the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) in 1968. This obliged states which

were party to the convention to ensure all people, regardless of their 'race', colour, descent, nationality or ethnic origin, have the right to equality before the law and protection from harm. However, the convention was not ratified in Ireland until the 29<sup>th</sup> December 2000. The slowness with which the Irish legislature ratified this convention in order to give it legal effect gives an indication that the issue of racism was not prioritised by the Irish government.

When finished listing the Government's efforts regarding the issue of racism the participant stated that there is "still an awful lot more to do" and stressed the problem of institutional racism. It would seem that even though the participant had pointed out, that tackling racism in contemporary Irish society is not the sole responsibility of the Government it would also seem that the participant found the government's efforts so far to be underwhelming. The participant also points to three key issues which she believes the government must focus future efforts on, namely institutional racism, hate crimes and "the perception of refugees and asylum seekers, or how migrant workers or how Travellers are perceived". This would indicate, once again that the participant does not view the government as being absolved of responsibility.

The participant from the IRC and the member of An Garda Síochána also expressed general disappointment with the government's efforts in addressing the issue of racism, with the IRC participant describing their efforts as "tokenistic". This indicates again, an understanding that it is the government's responsibility to address the issue of racism and that the government have not discharged that responsibility.

The Garda continued by explaining his subjective understanding of An Garda Síochána's responsibility regarding the issue of racism. The garda spoke of initiatives which have been put in place regarding racism, such as the development of the 'Racial and Intercultural Unit' and the creation of the role of the "Ethnic Liaison Officer". However the NCCRI participant pointed to the shortfalls

regarding these initiatives, “the Racial and Intercultural Unit in the Gardaí, it’s made up of two people” and continues by stating “now I mean that needs to be further resourced”. Of the Ethnic Liaison Officer initiative she commented “Ethnic Liaison Officers have been placed in each station around the country, except their role isn’t clearly defined or there isn’t a strong commitment from many stations to promote the role of Ethnic Liaison Officer and very often it is included under the remit of looking after immigration issues which are two very different things because the person who is responsible for immigration issues has a different relationship with migrant and asylum and refugee communities than would an Ethnic Liaison Officer”. Indeed the Garda describes the role of the Ethnic Liaison Officer as “an add-on role” to the guards’ other duties. It also transpired that the issue of racism is barely touched on as part of a Garda’s training which seems woefully inadequate in light of the Lawrence Inquiry Report recommendations which suggest, ‘What is required in the police service...is an occupational culture that is sensitive not just to the experience of the majority but to minority experience also. In short, an enhanced standard of police professionalism to meet the requirements of a multi-ethnic society’ (MacPherson, 1999: 6.32).

It would appear that participants believe An Garda Síochána have some responsibility regarding the issue of racism and that at present, they are failing to meet that responsibility. However another finding, which emerged from this research indicates that participants are optimistic regarding the future of policing in multi-cultural Ireland. The basis for this optimism was not identified. Finally, it should be considered that An Garda Síochána are essentially an arm of the government; therefore An Garda Síochána’s failure to meet their responsibilities in addressing racism in contemporary Irish society could be interpreted as the government’s failure.

The participants categorised as ‘Dominant Members of Irish Society’ agreed that the government have a responsibility to address the issue of racism in contemporary Irish society. The female participant in the age bracket of 41-55 years identified as

a rural dweller expressed her understanding that addressing the issue of racism is the government's responsibility. The participant indicated that she is supportive of the government, stating, "Ireland has come a long way at an institutional level". The participant appears to have associated decreased institutional racism with some action taken by the government. This was about the strongest praise that the Government received in this research. However the participant continued in her answer by making an association between the questions regarding the government's efforts to combat racism with government member Conor Lenihan's racist remark about Turkish people.

Furthermore, the other female interviewee in the same age category identified as an urban dweller complained that government policy allowed asylum seekers to become "institutionalised", contradicting the previous participant's understanding. The male interviewee in the highest age bracket and in the category entitled 'Dominant Group in Irish Society' commented on the need for government to take responsibility regarding housing to avoid ghettoisation.

The responses provided by participants from the 'New Communities' category convey a lack of awareness of any efforts by the government to take responsibility for the issue of racism in contemporary Irish society.

#### **Are you aware of any efforts by local government regarding racism?**

Participants expressed further, their subjective understanding of whose responsibility it is to address the issue of racism in answering the seventh question on the question schedule - are you aware of any efforts by local government regarding racism.

This question was asked in an effort to establish if any particular individuals or groups were perceived to have taken responsibility for the issue of racism at a local level. The findings again reflect an understanding that the government are not

taking responsibility for addressing the issue of racism. Those who did speak of efforts at local government level spoke of grassroots individuals and groups.

**Lack of awareness of efforts by local government regarding the issue of racism**

The interviewees in the category entitled ‘Individuals Working within Particular Organisations’ each answered this question differently, which allowed different themes to emerge. For example, the politician emphasised the need for “Government with a small ‘g’” and the institutional structures it represents to give leadership in order to prevent racist attitudes developing. The data does not tell us whether he is aware of any efforts by local government regarding the issue of racism. It could be inferred that his failure to answer the question posed demonstrates that he is not aware of any particular anti-racism initiatives at local level or that anti-racism is not a prioritised issue within local government. The politician does however suggest that it is an issue which local government should give leadership on. That said, for local government to give leadership, it is necessary that central government empower and enable them to do so.

The female interviewee in the age bracket of 41-55 years identified as a rural dweller stated that the issue of ‘race’ was not a priority for local politicians, indicating her belief that local government is not taking responsibility for the issue of racism. However, the female interviewee in the 41-55 year age category, identified as an urban dweller praised the efforts of the Mayor for his attendance at various events to promote integration. This is indeed an example of a member of local government taking responsibility for addressing racism by promoting integration.

The interviewees from the ‘New Communities’ generally had very little to say about their understanding of whose responsibility it is to address racism in their answers to the question. Some chose not to comment. Others stated that they didn’t know anything about local politics or simply were not interested. The male African

interviewee in the age bracket of 31-40 years is an asylum seeker in Ireland and explained that he is not ready to think about politics in Ireland but maybe in the future. It is sometimes easy to forget that each interviewee in the 'New Communities' category come from very different backgrounds. Indeed they were selected because of their diversity. However, the issue of politics is a sensitive one. Furthermore, political problems are the reason many people feel they need to leave one country for another. Whether the political problems relate to a poorly run economy, which provides little opportunities to its citizens, or whether the government in charge is an oppressive regime which threaten those who do not conform, politics may be the reason individuals leave their countries. It could therefore be interpreted that a mistrust of politics is the reason why so few interviewees in this category answered rather than a mere lack of interest.

### **Grassroots level**

Some participants demonstrated an awareness of efforts by grassroots individuals and groups regarding the issue of racism. The participant from the NCCRI spoke of people working tirelessly on the issue at 'grassroots level'. This raises the theme of grassroots individuals and organisation taking responsibility in addressing the issue of racism. The participant from the IRC was of the opinion that people are more inclined to take an anti racism stance in urban areas than rural, indicating an understanding that racism is everyone's responsibility but that those living in rural areas are less likely to execute that responsibility.

In summary, the answers provided by participants conveyed a broad understanding of whose responsibility it is to address racism. The government featured most prominently, in its various forms including central government, An Garda Siochana, the housing authority and local government's institutional structures and the Mayor. The voluntary sector also featured with mention of trade unions and grassroots organisations and individuals taking responsibility for addressing racism. There was also recognition of the fact that every individual in civil society has a role to play in addressing racism in contemporary Irish society.

The participants are clear in their understanding that the government has a

responsibility to address the issue of racism. However, participants also understand that it is not the government's sole responsibility but that consensus is required across all sectors of society to address the issue of racism in contemporary Irish society. It is however interesting to note that while participants recognise the government as bearing the main burden of responsibility, participants do not believe that the government is fulfilling that responsibility.

This raises the question, who is fulfilling that responsibility, if indeed anyone is. An analysis of the data set out above points to responsibility being taken at grassroots level. Further analysis of the data provided by participants in answering the question regarding the role of NGOs supports the notion that grassroots individuals and groups such as charities and religious organisations are responsible for addressing the issue of racism through anti racism and integration initiatives. The participant from the NCCRI explains that this is something that these organisations "should not have to do, end up providing services or supports to groups in the absence of the government doing it themselves which should not happen but that is what has happened as a result of the government not providing particular supports and resources to certain groups. The NGO sector ends up having to do that".

It would seem that participants understand that NGOs and to a greater extent grassroots groups and individuals are taking responsibility for the issue of racism in contemporary Irish society. Furthermore this understanding is reflective of McVeigh's description of Ireland's anti racism infrastructure as set out in the literature review. McVeigh suggests that Ireland's anti racism infrastructure developed as a result of grassroots efforts. It would seem that such grassroots efforts still form the backbone of Ireland's anti racism and integration initiatives.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter discusses the findings, as set out in chapter four. This discussion chapter was necessary to achieve the principle aim of this research which was to study individual subjective understandings of racism. The discussion consisted of raising and answering specific questions regarding participant's understandings of various aspects of racism. Specifically the questions related to participants understanding of the grounds for racism and the forms that it takes. They also enquired as to whom the participants understood to be the perpetrators and victims of racism and finally there were questions as to whose concern or responsibility it is to address racism.

Each question was answered using the primary data gathered from participants in the individual interviews which was set out in the findings chapter. The emerging themes identified in the findings chapter were related back to the material examined in the literature review in order to establish whether the participant's understandings of various aspects of racism were well developed and in tune with the literature or misunderstood.

The first question enquired as to what participants understand as the grounds for racism. It was found that participants understand there to be two dominant grounds for racism. The first was the notion that humans can be categorised as either superior or inferior to each other and be treated differently due to this categorisation. The second ground which emerged was that participants defined and explained racism in terms of xenophobia. However, when the two grounds identified were considered in the context of the entire body of primary data gathered, it became clear that the understandings expressed by participants were in fact pseudonyms for what participants understand to be the 'true' grounds for racism which are predominantly physical differences and immigration. Indeed, this finding was validated by subsequent findings which demonstrate an association between immigration, physical differences and racism. However, it would appear that participants do not feel able to express their understanding of racism in those terms. Therefore it concluded that participants misunderstand the grounds for racism in that their understandings are not in tune with the literature. However it would appear that there is a consensus among participants regarding what they understand the grounds for racism to be but participants do not freely or clearly express this understanding.

The second question posed in the discussion chapter enquires as to what participants understand as the forms that racism can take in contemporary Irish society. Participants provided explanations and anecdotal evidence of direct and indirect racism. However, it was an insidious form of racism which recurred

predominantly in the data. It would appear that participants are not aware of the impact of this insidious form of racism and express discomfort in speaking against it, but nevertheless display a clear understanding that it exists. Indeed this form of racism was referred to in the findings of the Lawrence Enquiry which stated that, 'History shows that "covert" insidious racism is more difficult to detect' and suggests that perhaps it is the covert form which allows racism to permeate through the police force (MacPherson 1999:6.23). This suggestion may be applied to racism in contemporary Irish society, as it would appear that participants have a well-developed understanding of the forms that racism can take and particularly the insidious form of racism but are uncomfortable with addressing the issue, allowing racism to continue to spread.

The third question enquired as to whom the participants understand to be the perpetrators and victims of racism. It was clear that participants understood those who are physically distinguishable from the 'dominant group' in Irish society are more likely to be victims of racism. This is supported by the previous finding that 'phenotypical interpretations' based on, for example skin colour are understood to be a ground for racism (Banton 1996:13). The fact that the participants expressed similarities in their understanding of the grounds for racism and potential victims of racism demonstrates a consensus in participants understanding. However, the question remains as to how well developed participants understandings of racism are? To answer this question it is necessary to examine the other findings which arose in answer to this question. For example it was found that participants associate the terms 'asylum seeker' and 'refugee', and a 'parasitic nature' with being Black. This demonstrates a distorted misunderstanding of these terms and indeed these people and it would seem that this distorted understanding is prevalent. Therefore it may be concluded that participants convey some understanding of this aspect of racism but they also convey dangerous misunderstandings.

The fourth question enquires; in the participants' understanding whose concern is

racism? To answer this question it was first necessary to examine the examples put forward by participants, of people and groups who have taken action which demonstrates concern regarding the issue of racism. A number of political individuals and groups were named by participants as having demonstrated concern regarding racism. Grassroots support for deportees also featured as an example of concern being shown regarding the issue of racism, conveying a link between participants understanding of deportation and racism. Furthermore, many participants were not aware of any person or group showing concern regarding the issue of racism.

These examples demonstrate whom the participants understand as having shown concern regarding the issue of racism, and it would appear that grassroots level concern is the most dominant. This it would seem is a well developed understanding as it is reflective of what is termed in the literature review as ‘the anti-racism infrastructure’ (McVeigh 2002).

The fifth question enquires as to the participants understanding of whose responsibility it is to address racism. It was found that participant’s understood that the government, in its various forms, are responsible for the issue of racism. Furthermore participants expressed a belief that the government are not fulfilling that responsibility. However, it was also understood by participants that the issue of racism is not the sole responsibility of the government as the voluntary sector including grassroots groups were understood to have responsibility in addressing the issue of racism. However, participants understood the voluntary sector to be fulfilling their responsibility. Another understanding put forward was that every individual in society has a responsibility to address racism.

It would appear that participants have a well developed understanding of who is responsible for racism in that their answers express the need for a holistic effort to be taken by various sectors of society. Participants also expressed a well developed understanding of who is and is not fulfilling their perceived responsibility.

It may therefore be concluded that with regard to certain aspects of racism participants have a well developed understanding. The misunderstandings which emerged relate to participant's understandings of the grounds for racism which impacts on participants understandings of potential victims of racism. It would appear that this misunderstanding has manifested in the mistaken belief that the terms 'asylum seeker' and 'refugee' are interchangeable and can be associated with a parasitic nature and being Black which convey a well developed and dangerous misunderstanding of these particular aspects of racism.

## **Conclusion**

This piece of research is essentially an attitudinal study of racism in contemporary Irish society. This is reflected in the specific aim of this research, which is to study individual's subjective understandings of racism in contemporary Irish society. This aim was achieved by combining a close examination of the available literature with qualitative fieldwork and analysing the data which emerged. The literature review, as set out in chapter one attempts to gain an understanding of the 'race'-related terminology, which is crucial to any study of racism. The terms, which were considered, included racism itself as well as 'race', discrimination, prejudice, ethnicity, ethnocentrism, ethnic minority and xenophobia. Furthermore, the literature review as set out in chapter two, examined the origins and development of racism, covering a broad time period from ancient societies' understanding of the concept of racism to contemporary interpretations of the term. This review was also geographically broad, in that it included international and domestic understandings of the concept of racism. The information gathered in the literature review helped develop an understanding of various 'race'-related terminology and the concept of racism in general. It also helped solidify the aim of this research and provided a foundation on which to study individual's subjective understandings of racism in contemporary Irish society. Furthermore the literature reviews acted as a body of knowledge against which the legitimacy of the findings, which emerged from the research could be tested. Therefore, the literature provided an indicator of whether participant's understandings were well developed or misunderstood.

Chapter three sets out the research methodology employed in this study, by relating the principle aim of this research to the theoretical perspective adopted. The fieldwork was conducted in two phases. The first phase consisted of conducting focus group interviews with participants of -as far as possible- a nationally reflective sample in order to ascertain which issues regarding racism were of

paramount importance. The issues raised by participants in the focus group interviews were used to form the question schedule, which was then used in the second phase of fieldwork. The second phase consisted of conducting individual interviews again with -as far as possible- a nationally reflective sample in order to study individual's subjective understandings of racism. The data gathered in the second phase of fieldwork, forms the primary data in this research.

The data analysis process is also set out in chapter three. Clear discussion of and description of the analytical process applied in this research helps to ensure legitimacy regarding the findings. This also demonstrates how the theoretical perspectives adopted within this research have influenced the data analysis process. In practical terms, the data gathered from the focus group interviews was used to formulate the question schedule. The question schedule was then employed in the individual interviews to probe interviewees, in order to identify individual subjective understandings of racism in contemporary Irish society. The data gathered in the individual interviews was analysed and the findings, which emerged, were discussed in chapter six.

The findings demonstrate that the participant's individual subjective understandings of racism are numerous and diverse. These findings were then discussed by addressing questions regarding participants understanding of the grounds for racism, the form that it takes and by considering whom the participants understood to be the perpetrators and victims of racism. The questions also focused on whose concern and responsibility it was to address racism in contemporary Irish society. The findings which emerged in answer to these questions were related to the literature review in order to establish whether participant's understandings were well developed or misunderstood. It was found that participants have a well developed understanding of certain aspects of racism however there were exceptions to this, namely participant's understandings of the grounds for racism and of the potential victims of racism. This suggests a need to promote an accurate understanding of racism throughout society.

It would seem that the anti racism movement in Ireland focuses on the injustice of racism and appeals to members of society's sympathies to prevent racism. The findings of this study have highlighted some of the misunderstanding that circulate regarding individual understandings of racism. If addressing these misunderstandings formed part of the focus of public and voluntary sector organisations anti racism work, then it may help to disband some of the myths, rumours and inaccuracies which surround individual subjective understandings of racism. Furthermore, it may bring about a situation where open and honest debate regarding the changes in our population demographics and its effects can take place without fear of being branded a racist and without inaccurate misunderstandings being used to further the cause of those with racist motives.

Finally, the findings of this research indicate that racism is comparable to an idiopathic disease of the body. That is, one whose origin is undecipherable. There is no dispute as to the fact that the disease exists, after all the infected person displays symptoms of their illness. Racism is similar in that it is an ill of society whose genesis is unclear. While there is much research and theorisation regarding its birth, there is no definitive or exact beginning or cause. Also like a diagnosed disease of the body, there is no doubt as to the existence of racism, although the symptoms displayed vary from one society to another. Furthermore, it is not always necessary to understand the origins or cause of a disease to administer a cure. Sometimes an understanding of the symptoms suffered will suffice. Similarly an understanding of racism in a contemporary Irish context provides an opportunity to eradicate this ill or at least ease the pain that it causes. Alas, when the insidious nature of racism is taken into consideration, this becomes an onerous task. As the political representative interviewee explained "I think that is part of the disease, you know, that you might to somebody's face be polite and pleasant and then you are with your cronies in the pub, tell jokes about, you know, niggers and that sort of thing".

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**Appendix: One**

**CONSENT FORM**

Dear Participant,

My name is Claire Kealy. I am carrying out research in Waterford Institute of Technology into racism in contemporary Irish society. I am now at a particularly crucial stage in the project where I must conduct interviews and small group meetings with voluntary participants. However before carrying out interviews or meetings it is necessary I gain participants informed consent. For this reason, I have here compiled a summary of my research aims and matters relating to confidentiality, to inform participants prior to them giving their consent.

It is my aim to research the attitudes regarding racism in contemporary Ireland by talking to a nationally reflective sample. It will be a relaxed discussion where people feel free to express their feelings regarding the topic, safe in the knowledge that all views will be held in the strictest confidence. All interviews will be recorded. The reason for this is that it is difficult to write down everything that is discussed. This tape will be stored securely until it is transcribed and then destroyed. The transcription of the tape will be coded to protect the identity of all participants.

All participants must be eighteen years of age or over and may withdraw from the research at any time.

Please sign below if you have read and fully understand the information contained on this page and wish to become a participant in this research.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your time.

Claire Kealy.

