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Discrimination against Credentials in Black Bodies: *Counterstories of the Characteristic Labour Market Experiences of Migrants in Ireland*

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Abstract

Although chance plays a role in everyone's career, Black Africans across Europe who report higher levels of discrimination in employment encounter systemic resistance in their career pursuits. By synthesising migrants' interpretation of their journeys to paid employment, in this article, five characteristic experiences identified from migrants' trajectories in the Irish labour market are presented. Discrimination in the Irish labour market is creatively challenged by centring race, and juxtaposing the experiences of migrants of Black African descent against their White counterparts based on information from 32 semi-structured interviews of first generation migrants from Nigeria, Poland, and Spain. While individuals progressed from all groups, the typologies in the interviewees' trajectories shifts attention from individual to collective outcomes, revealing whiteness as a hidden resource that advantages Whites. Also, there is an illustration of the prevalence of an ascription of deficiency to Black workers and their credentials in ways in which Black African descent is a predictor of more pernicious labour market experience as compared against white European descent. Following Critical race theory's counter-storytelling, these findings are presented through composite characters which give readers a sense of the participants and their lives.

Keywords: Migration, Cross-Cultural Issues, Inequalities, Labour market, Discrimination

INTRODUCTION

> *John:* Do you think Black African workers are disadvantaged in Ireland? …I met a Nigerian woman with a Master's degree obtained in Nigeria who said a Career Advisor encouraged her to look for care or retail jobs because she won't get the kind of roles she is seeking.
>
> *Phil:* What is wrong with that? They are paying jobs.
>
> *John:* Exactly what I told her at first. We have to appreciate having jobs in today's economy. She however reminded me that those roles require Level 5 qualifications while her university degree is a Level 9. That means working four academic levels below her highest academic attainment. She says it's common among her community and it's happening because she is Black. As someone who is White, if this happened to you, would you think it is because of your race or gender?

[Operations Manager, John O'Connor, discussing with Phil, the Human Resource Manager.]

Studies across Europe that measure the experience of discrimination indicate that the highest levels of discrimination based on ethnic or immigrant background is in the area of employment, and is higher towards non-white minorities (Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey EU-MIDIS 11, 2016; McGinnity, Grotti Kenny & Russell, 2017; Zschirnt and Ruedin, 2016). These studies show the experience of discrimination is recurring and skin colour, foreign sounding first or second names, accent and nationality of origin were the main reasons cited by respondents for their experience. These innumerable encounters are not simply experiences, rather they have implications on labour market performance, career choice and pursuits (Joseph, 2018). In light of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8–which is to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all by 2030, and the UN General Assembly proclamation of 2015-2024 as the international decade for people of African descent (UN Resolution 68/237), there is an urgent need for studies which examine the labour market patterns of people at the bottom of the economic ladder and also pays attention to the significance of race.

Studies on labour market structure, mobility, behaviours, attributes, performance and discrimination of groups have been carried out by social scientists (e.g. Doeringer & Piore, 1971; Keeley, 2007; Knight, 2014). Although these theories provide insight about various groups and how labour markets operate, they often rely on researchers' interpretations. Critical race theory (CRT), however, advocates giving voice to marginalised groups and their

views through counter-storytelling which exposes, and critiques normalised dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes (Decuir & Dixson, 2004). In other words, two sides of the same story are plausible. Whereas a few studies have documented the trajectories of migrants in the labour market (Anderson, Ruhs, Rogaly & Spencer, 2006; Chiswick, Lee & Miller, 2005; Coakley & Mac Einri, 2007; Knight, 2014), scholarship in Europe which pays attention to racial stratification, and to migrants' naming, interpreting and setting out the theory of their experiences is rare. Thus, the notion of counter-storytelling– a tenet of CRT- raises questions about how the social sciences normalise racial stereotypes and inequalities through its labour market theories (Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008).

Considering that counterstories allows marginalised people to intervene in the research process (Matinez, 2014), in this article, I synthesise migrants' interpretation of their labour market experiences to present five characteristic experiences identified from their trajectories in the Irish labour market. The data I use is part of a bigger study (see Joseph, 2018) where I discussed the racial order in Ireland using three sources which provided triangulation for the study. These included 32 semi-structured interviews which were thematically analysed; an Employment Programme's 2009–2011 database (N=639), which was analysed using the SPSS software; and the Irish 2011 Census statistics where the Census database search engine was employed to generate specific tables. In this article which reflects the qualitative data generated from the larger study, I have made an attempt to complement the existing body of knowledge by centring race, and juxtaposing the experiences of migrants of Black African descent against their white counterparts through composite characters based on information from semi-structured interviews of first generation migrants from Nigeria, Poland, and Spain.

UNDERSTANDING THE LABOUR MARKET EXPERIENCES OF MIGRANTS

The labour market experiences of marginalised groups have historically been explained through deficiency theories which attribute differentials in outcome to some form of deficit among such groups. The human capital theory by economists argues that some workers are more productive than others (Becker, 1957; Keeley, 2007), while African Americans have been argued to live in ways that devalue work (Auletta, 1982). The migrant deficit approach which perpetuates racial stereotypes presupposes that labour markets are meritocratic socioeconomic environments, contrary to evidence which show they continue to be arenas loaded with structural barriers in which groups encounter and contest their marginalisation (Joseph, 2018). The understanding of European labour markets has been informed by dual

labour market theory which suggests that USA is divided into primary and secondary sectors, where the former is characterised by better working conditions as against secondary labour markets (Doeringer & Piore, 1971). Some recent studies have been based on mobility between these segments. In the case of both first and second generation migrants in Europe, nationality of descent has been argued to influence labour market outcomes (Fleischmann & Dronkers, 2010), just as much as being high or low skilled (Galgóczi &Leschke, 2016). Across the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), studies where highly-skilled workers are reported to be stuck in low-skilled roles in the secondary segments are common (International Migration Outlook, 2014, 2018).

Groups have also been centred in examining labour market experiences. In the last decade, Polish descent migrants and refugees have been the most researched. Knight (2014) in the UK presents the careerist and linguist trajectories in relation to Polish migrants' ability to make a career out of low-end employment, while the linguists capitalise on their language prowess for economic gain. In Canada, Krahn, Derwing, Mulder, and Wilkinson (2000) examined the educational and occupational histories of refugees and argue that due to a variety of structural and institutional factors, some types of labour market participants including visible minorities are disadvantaged in a systematic way in their search for satisfactory employment. Research in the mid-2000s in Ireland focused on the concentration of Polish migrants in low-paying jobs, while their inward migration was credited to the country's favourable economic conditions and English language (Grabowska, 2003; Roeder, 2011). Concerning African migrants in Ireland, Coakley and Mac Einri (2007) maintained that although the families they interviewed were all motivated to engage in the world of waged work, they consistently referred to problems they encountered particularly during the job search process.

Discrimination which is detrimental to victims and the society is another way labour market outcomes of migrants are explained. Migrants in Ireland make up 14.9% of the workforce with an unemployment rate of 15.4% against the natives at 12.6% (Central Statistics Office [CSO], 2016). These statistics obscure sharp disparities which become evident depending on race and nationality. For example, Western Europeans recorded the lowest unemployment rate (7-9%) followed by Eastern Europeans (13-17%) and Black Africans recorded the highest unemployment rate at over five times that of Western Europeans at 42.3%. A 2014 OECD report showed that highly educated migrants have a higher unemployment rate than their native peers with almost a 50% higher chance of being overqualified for their job when employed. In more recent reports, it has been noted that "foreign-born workers in the OECD area are concentrated in low-skilled occupations, despite their relatively high educational

level," and on average one-in-three tertiary-educated migrant is over-qualified at about 12% greater than is the case for natives (International Migration Outlook, OECD, 2018, p. 84). According to the report, only about one-fifth of the differences in over-qualification rates between foreign- and native-born workers can be explained by observed skill differences. It also showed that in the United Kingdom, within one year of the 2016 referendum, new recruitment of EU migrants in highly-skilled occupations dropped by 38%. In fact, in all countries for which OECD data was available, and with the exception of Switzerland, the report showed that tertiary-educated migrants are more frequently found in low- and medium-skilled occupations than natives. Overall, the average gap between foreign- and native-born in the OECD area is about 12%, and reaches 34% in Italy.

This migrant penalty is often misattributed to the qualifications and work experience from abroad, and non-OECD countries in particular, being widely undervalued. Empirical studies across Europe clearly show that it is race that continues to influence the success rate of foreign workers in their new countries in all aspects from job searches to promotion at work (Kingston et al., 2015). For example, a résumé call-back field experiment carried out in Ireland showed that immigrants in general experience disadvantage in terms of wages and occupational position (McGinnity et al**.,** 2009). They found that candidates with Irish names were over twice as likely to be invited to interview for advertised jobs as compared to candidates with identifiable non-Irish names, even though both submitted equivalent CVs. Whereas the Irish study did not find significant differences in the degree of discrimination faced by candidates with Asian, African or German names, the 2014 OECD report on migration identified the nationalities that experience discrimination in rich countries and found that the résumés of Africans and Blacks had the highest representation for those with a call-back ratio greater than two. A call-back ratio is the average number of résumés someone with a recognisably minority name submits before they get a call-back for a job interview, compared to résumés with the exact same skills but from candidates whose names identify them with the majority population group in that country. A ratio of two means someone would need to make twice as many applications for a job to get a call-back, compared to an applicant with a name associated with the country's majority population. Though this suggests a higher level of difficulty accessing paid employment which is predicated on racial difference as the applicants' names on those CVs suggest, there is an increasing intellectual shift towards individualistic rather than collective explanations of labour market disparities. From my lived experience as a scholar of Black African descent in Europe, there exists an unexplained variance between these empirical data and labour market theories which do not

adequately centre race and its complexities. Individuals in racialised societies do not have equal access to networks, particularly because societies which in some way distribute their resources along racial lines will also have their social networks and capital racialized (Bonilla-Silva & Brioche 2008). To explain differential outcomes without taking into cognisance the social context and the structural inequalities which operate along racial lines, is to 'seriously minimise the impact of racism' (p. 146).

In the last decade, there has been a great body of research which has uncovered the high levels of racial discrimination towards minority groups across the EU. In practical terms, it means people of migrant descent are navigating hostile socioeconomic environments in the process of actualising their career goals. This could be racial putdowns in the workplace which oftentimes can cause victims to experience feelings of isolation, exclusion, and rejection (Joseph, 2015). These can be subtle but their effect overtime is detrimental. Sue et al. (2007) defined these kinds of treatment as microaggressions–the brief and everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicates hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalised group membership. Although discriminatory practices might be difficult to prove, McGinnity et al. (2017, p. iii) described discrimination 'as a situation in which individuals believe they are treated differently due to their membership of specific groups.' A 2016 survey of over 25,500 migrants across the 28 EU countries carried out by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency indicated that respondents with North African, Roma and Sub-Saharan African backgrounds indicated the highest levels of discrimination based on ethnic or immigrant background (at 45%, 41%, and 39%, respectively) (EU-MIDIS 11, 2016). The respondents reported experiencing recurring discrimination on average, 4.6 times a year with the highest five-year rate reported in the area of employment. Almost a third (29%) of all respondents who looked for a job reported experiencing discrimination, with every second respondent mentioning skin colour or physical appearance (53% at the workplace and 50% when looking for work); whereas, 36% believed it was their first or last name and 18% thought it was their accent that led to discrimination.

There is extant evidence of discrimination towards Black Africans in the labour market in Ireland. In a study of almost 15,000 adults in Ireland, Black respondents reported experiencing higher levels of discrimination in the workplace compared to White Irish respondents (McGinnity et al., 2017). Two Irish studies which focused on citizenship and economic recession showed that visibly different ethnic groups, in particular Black African

and non-white European groups, reported very high rates of discrimination when looking for work, and their experience of discrimination did not decrease over time (Kingston, McGinnity & O'Connell, 2015). Moreover in 2014, despite many migrants of African descent in Ireland being naturalised as Irish citizens and thus gaining access to European citizenship, they were reported to be 16% less likely to be employed than native Irish (Kelly et al., 2016). Though this figure is down by 2% from the 2012 record, and the employment deficit for non-naturalised migrants of African descent is said to have disappeared (ibid), the unemployment rate of Black African migrants who make up 1.2% of Ireland's population is at its highest at 42.3% (CSO, 2016). This is an increase of 3.7% from the 2011 Census statistics.

These reports of discriminatory labour market experiences which affect people of Black African descent in their career pursuits raise pertinent questions not only for service providers supporting this cohort, but also for the marginalised persons navigating the labour market. One career theory which offers insight on how to deal with the limited degree of control we have over some experiences in our career journeys is John Krumboltz's (1996) happenstance learning theory (HLT). It explains how and why individuals follow their different paths through life and how counsellors can facilitate that process. HLT maintains that unpredictable social factors, chance events and environmental factors are important influences on lives with countless numbers of learning outcomes including skills, interests, knowledge, beliefs, preferences, sensitivities, emotions, and future actions. According to Krumboltz (2009, p.138), 'career aspirations can be influenced by the perceived success or failure of various actions.' While this theory acknowledges the possibility of encountering unexpected circumstances, like other labour market theories, it also presupposes a meritocratic system, thus making it possible to blame victims for their outcomes. Similarly, the OECD's International Migration Outlook 2018 documents early interventions to set new arrivals on the right path across a number of OECD countries. This includes an EU Skills Profile Tool for third-country nationals (defined by the European Union [EU] as persons who are not EU citizens and thereby do not have EU right to free movement within the EU) launched in 2017 to support the early-stage profiling of the qualifications and skills of refugees and other citizens of non-EU countries staying in the EU. It was developed as part of the New Skills Agenda for Europe. While it aims to build on the skills third-country nationals already possess, there has been a commensurate trend increasing the emphasis placed on the obligations of the migrants themselves, overlooking the discrimination that these groups face when navigating labour markets. Nonetheless, one of the goals of career counselling is to help clients learn to take actions to achieve more satisfying career and personal lives. It is then

vital that career development theories and intervention strategies take cognisance of the structural barriers and discrimination migrants encounter in the labour market. It is for this reason that getting an understanding of the experiences of marginalised groups and the socioeconomic terrain where they are competing is vital in devising interventions for clients.

WHAT COUNTS AS RESOURCES?

The economic success of countries and individuals is increasingly based on human capital which the OECD defined as "the knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being" (Keely, 2007, p. 29). This individualistic approach to understanding labour market mobility suggests that people with higher levels of education would do better economically. This is in fact true as, "on average, across OECD countries, 25-to-64-year-old adults with a tertiary degree earn 54% more than those with only upper secondary education, while those with below upper secondary education earn 22% less" (Education at a Glance, 2018, p. 88). Likewise, educational credentials in Ireland influence employment rates. For example, 25-to-64-year-old adults with tertiary education have an average employment rate of 85%, those with upper secondary or post tertiary 72%, and below upper secondary 51% (Education at a Glance, 2018). For those foreign born, the percentages are somewhat lower at 80%, 71% and 48% respectively. Moreover, educational credentials which are a simple and readily measured proxy for skills and competence have a drawback in that "they do not reflect human capital obtained through informal training or through experience, and different educational credentials (for example from different countries) can be difficult to compare" (The Well-being of Nations, 2001, p. 20).

The Qualifications framework (NFQ) in Ireland which goes from Levels 1-10, describes the qualifications of the Irish education system and how they interlink. Levels 1-5 prepare learners to meet the minimum entry requirements for a range of higher education institutions and for employment. The Advanced certificate (Level 6) is the advanced vocational/occupational skills, which enables certificate holders to work independently or progress to higher education and training. The Ordinary Bachelor Degree (Level 7) is normally awarded after a three-year programme, Honours Bachelor Degree (Level 8) after a four-year programme, and Master's Degree (Level 9) has the Taught and Research Masters which is awarded following a one-to-two-year programme. A Doctoral Degree is awarded Level 10.

Bourdieu's interest in the ways in which society is reproduced and how the dominant classes retain their position, led to the identification of three dimensions of capital the resources of which become socially effective. He contended that their ownership is legitimised through the mediation of symbolic capital, whether economic, cultural or social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Even though similarities in credentials, race, ethnicity and skin colour which suggest potential for a 'solidaristic labour community' (Standing, 2011, p. 12) typically go unreckoned as actual resources, in the Bourdieuan notion of capital, they have currency through the ways in which they increase the ability of actors to advance their interests. Similarly, group membership provides its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit in the various senses of the word (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). Though these forms of capital are said to arise or disappear without anyone willing it into or out of being and is thus even less recognised and taken account of in social action than its already intangible character would warrant (Coleman, 1988), just as access to economic capital brings certain privileges to a group, individual and cultural capital may set a group or individuals apart from their less privileged peers. This can become operational in recruitment through taste-based discrimination−where the employer has racial or ethnic preferences (Becker, 1957). In this way, social/cultural capital supplies resources which allow continued and future access to privilege and are thus ontologically forms of currency, in just the same manner as mercantile or economic capital, and it should be possible to 'establish the laws whereby the different types of capital [...] change into one another' (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243). The major challenge, which Bourdieu correctly delineates, is how the convertibility of such capital to economic capital is recognised. The difficulty lies in the extent to which the economic values of social and cultural capitals are 'disguised' as mere customs and connections (p. 245). In a racialised society however, 'social networks and norms of social behaviour are often mobilised to defend racial exclusion' (Bonilla-Silva and Brioche, 2008, p. 146).

COUNTER-STORYTELLING

CRT is a theoretical and methodological framework which attributes racial inequalities, particularly in USA, to structural as opposed to individualised causes (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012). Its labour market research has mainly employed the analysis of secondary or administrative data, while education research has employed the various tenets of CRT particularly counter-storytelling (Decuir and Dixson, 2004; Delgado, 1995; Martinez, 2014;

Solorzano and Yosso, 2002). Counter-storytelling is ‘a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told’ (p. 26) and ‘a means of exposing and critiquing normalised dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes hence giving voice to marginalised groups’ (Decuir and Dixson, 2004, p. 27). Although it is a form of storytelling, it is ‘different from fictional storytelling’ (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002, p. 36). Counter-storytelling is premised on the idea that the views of the dominant, ‘privileged,’ powerful (those who decide who the other is) and the marginalised or ‘other’ are different; that the storyteller determines the view(s) expressed in each story; that there are hidden or untold stories of the ‘other’ (ibid). While it encourages the marginalised to tell their stories, its strength lies not just in the stories it tells but the depth it uncovers. This epistemological standpoint serves to expose, analyse and even challenge master narratives which ‘essentialises and wipes out the complexities and richness of a group’s cultural life’ while putting human faces to the experiences of often marginalised and silenced groups (Montesinos, 1995, p. 293). It also aids the telling of stories that aim to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012).

CRT’s counterstory is also employed to weave narratives into dialogues between composite characters while deriving material for the counterstory’s discourse, setting, and characters from sources such as “statistical data, existing literatures, social commentary, and authors’ professional/personal experiences concerning the topics addressed” (Martinez, 2014, p. 69). These composite characters are not just narrativised writing styles but a research method which has gained credibility among CRT scholars. Yosso (2006, p. 11) wrote that, ‘composite characters are written into social, historical, and political situations that allow the dialogue to speak to the research findings and creatively challenge racism and other forms of subordination.' It also ‘critically examines theoretical concepts and humanises empirical data (Martinez, 2014, p. 69). As devised by Delgado (1995) in the Rodrigo Chronicles, it is important to note that the various characters ‘are written as composites of many individuals, and are representative of various political ideologies, and they do not have a one-to-one correspondence to any one individual’ (pp. xix).

Despite its ability to present views rarely evidenced in social research, the inherent weaknesses in storytelling arise from the fact that stories are socially constructed. They can represent limited versions of reality for subjugated people and their everyday experiences, especially where oppressive social arrangements remain unchallenged (Hylton, 2012). Nonetheless, the advantages of counter-storytelling far outweighs its weaknesses not just for

CRT theorists but for victims as 'hearing their own stories and the stories of others, listening to how the arguments against them are framed, and learning to make the arguments to defend themselves can be empowering for participants' (Solorzano and Yosso 2002, p. 27). Counterstories also enable victims of racism to find their voice and those injured by racism and other forms of oppression discover they are not alone in their marginality (ibid).

AIM

To present five characteristic experiences identified from migrants' trajectories navigating the Irish labour market. To creatively challenge discrimination in the Irish labour market by centring race in examining the labour market patterns of groups at the bottom of the economic ladder.

METHOD

Background. This paper is part a broader racial stratification study (see Joseph 2018) which focused on the following question: what accounts for the differential in outcomes among migrants in the labour market in Ireland? It compared the labour market outcomes of migrants of Nigerian, Polish and Spanish descent living and working in Ireland. Two CRT features incorporated in the data generation include the centrality of race in examining the racial order in Ireland and giving voice to the silenced (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The study showed that Ireland is a racially stratified society with a white over Black ascendency. What this means is that white Europeans are stratified at the top of the economic ladder and Blacks at the bottom. They outperform people of Black African descent even when controlling for education and right to work. After controlling for all measurable variables, race appeared to be the only macro variable that accounted for any significant difference in outcome in the participants' quest to attain paid employment.

Participants. Thirty-two participants were purposefully selected. Inclusion criteria included: having a legal residency right to live and work in Ireland; employment either in paid or unpaid work; and being from one of the three selected research populations-Spain, Poland and Nigeria (see Table 1). From a CRT perspective, a study of race demands an examination of the outcomes for the dominant and minoritised groups, those at the top and bottom of the economic ladder (Zuberi and Bashi, 1997). In Ireland, the 2011 Census showed Western Europeans outperformed the Eastern Europeans who in turn outperformed the Black Africans

in the labour market. Thus, first generation migrants of Nigerian, Polish and Spanish descent were chosen to represent these three broad groups (see Joseph, 2018).

As seen in Table, 1, there were three different types of employment status of the participants in the study: paid role, self-employed, and unpaid role. Unpaid employment was used in the study to represent any career progression opportunity which does not receive financial remuneration. This includes voluntary work, internships, work-placements, further education or training. This term is deliberately applied to emphasise the change in the labour market where workers are not serving as volunteers in the traditional sense of merely contributing to society or giving of their free time. Rather, fully-qualified workers are engaged in essential work without financial remuneration.

Measurement. Semi-structured interviews conducted between October 2014 and February 2015 in Ireland were examined. All interviews were recorded away from the participants' place of work; they were transcribed and subsequently thematically analysed using a template of analysis. The interview questions were developed from a CRT standpoint with particular reference to the scholarship on immigration and racial stratification in the United States. Zuberi and Bashi (1997, p. 679-680) have contended that from arrival, changes occur where '[…] Immigrants lose their ethnic identifiers[...]' The inferred occurrence(s) which influence this loss of ethnic identifiers in migrants in their new country raised a number of key areas for consideration for the Irish context. First, about the specific experiences of migrants. Second, how these experiences are articulated: if they are individual or group outcomes with identifiable typologies, and how race influences these experiences. Lastly, how migrants explain their labour market trajectory. To achieve this goal, an interview guide consisting of five sections was employed for the semi-structured interviews as part of a bigger mixed method, racial stratification project (see Joseph, 2018 for details). The data in this article is based on Section 2 which comprised two questions: (i) An open invitation to the interviewees to recount their trajectory in the Irish labour market from leaving their previous country of residence until their current roles. Three sub-questions were developed to probe if required. These were relative to (a) changes in their career goals, (b) what influenced the changes, and (c) specific attempts they made to change their jobs. (ii) Their trajectory into the country. This was to examine conflicting status between their previous country of residence and Ireland.

Table 1: Profile of interviewees for the semi-structured interviews, conducted between October 2014 and February 2015

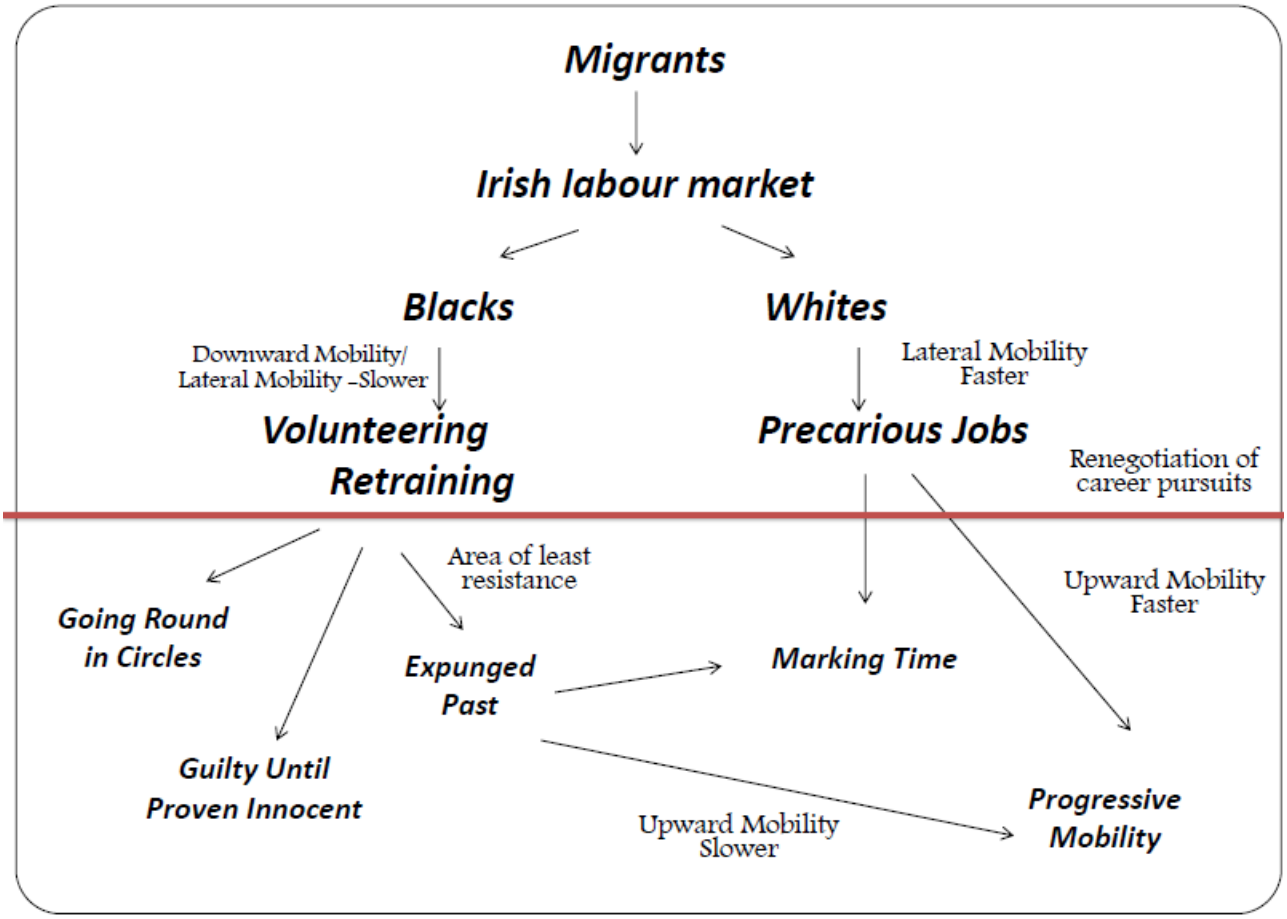
Interviewees	**Nigerian descent**	**Polish descent**	**Spanish descent**
Total	12	10	10
Gender	6 Female, 6 Males	5 Female, 5 Males	5 Female, 5 Males
Nationality at the time of interview	Irish through naturalisation	Polish by birth	Spanish by birth
Marital status	Married 8 Separated 4	Married 4 Single/cohabiting 6	Married 2 Single/cohabiting 8
Age group at time of interview	36-52	26-45	25-34
Mean Age	46	34	28
Employment status	Paid role[i] – 9 Self-employed[ii] - 1 Unpaid[iii] role – 2	Paid role – 9 Self-employed – 0 Unpaid role – 1	Paid role – 10 Self-employed – 0 Unpaid role – 0
Years in Ireland at time of interview (2014-2015)	9-15 years	2-10 years	1-7 years
Mean	12 years	6 years	3.5 years

RESULTS

Despite variations in the demographics of the participants, it was race, nationality of descent, and skin colour that presented marked differences in their labour market experience. The participants' narratives reveal that migrants encounter five different types of pathways when accessing employment in Ireland. This is presented in this study as the five characteristic labour market experiences of migrants which includes: *going round in circles, expunged past, guilty until proven innocent, marking time* and *progressive mobility*. Due to space, these experiences have been described as linear. However, some pathways are interlinked as shown in Figure 1. The storytelling technique of CRT's counterstory is employed to weave the narratives of the participants into dialogues between composite characters based on information from the semi-structured interviews to give readers a sense of the participants' experiences. John and Phil are representative composite characters developed to portray the political ideologies of members of the dominant group in management roles in the labour market, while all the comments from the migrants in the stories are direct quotes from the interviewees. Although these typologies are not new, together, they are a contribution to scholarship on migration. They shed light on the socioeconomic terrain migrants are

navigating, their labour market experiences and how migrants make meaning of their experiences.

Figure 1: The Characteristic Experiences of Migrants in the Irish Labour Market



FIVE CHARACTERISTIC LABOUR MARKET EXPERIENCES OF MIGRANTS

Going Round in Circles

Setting: *John and Phil overhear two women conversing about their labour market experience as migrants.*

Priya: I am Spanish. I completed my Masters in Spain before coming to Ireland as a child-minder, but it was bad, with no opportunity to learn English with my host family. So I left the job. I was very desperate as I was spending [all] my savings to stay here [Ireland] and I wanted to immediately apply for jobs. Because of my English, I decided to go for a factory job and some voluntary work. My manager was very good. She was

my referee. It took two years, but I am working in my specialty now and I'm satisfied. What about you Rita? *[She asked the Black African woman.]*

Rita: …Em, I am a qualified solicitor from Nigeria with eighteen years' practice. My career goal when I got here was to get a job and rise through the ranks. At that time, I was eager and looking at middle level positions. I applied for a public service job and completed all the interviews from the written, oral, ...medical, everything. I was told at the end that I couldn't get it because I hadn't lived here [Ireland] for up to five years, which was not stated in the advertisement at the time. So I realised that my career goal had to be different and I needed to do a rethink. So chatting to someone, I was advised to start small. ...But the small is still not leading me anywhere as I am just going in circles.*[long pause]*

…After completing a master's degree at Level 9, I was told I needed a Level 5 course to get a job. I did it, then applied again for jobs, but I was told I don't have enough experience. Then I spent two years volunteering. I see other volunteers come and become paid staff. ...But two years on, I am still on their books as a volunteer. I left them and completed another Masters …thinking it will increase my chances. Ten years in Ireland and I'm stuck ...worried of not being a good role model for my daughters. There is still no opening for paid work, but I have started another Level 5 course as a Care Assistant. Many of my African friends seem to find employment as Carers.

John: Do you think her experience is because she is Black?' [*John asked as they left the coffee shop*.]

Phil: I would hate to think so.

Rita's experience is what I have framed as *going round in circles*. It is the migrants' experience of becoming stuck transitioning between various forms of unpaid employment, [re]training and education, usually at levels lower than their prior education, with limited success accessing paid work. It is characterised by unemployment, underemployment and unpaid employment which usually culminates in their exclusion and marginalisation. The participants, who reported this impasse repeatedly shared how their credentials (foreign academic qualifications, skills and work experience) were ascribed inferior status and deployed in ways which actively hindered their access to paid employment. As highlighted through Rita's story, first, their work experience is reckoned as insufficient for their desired employment pursuits and, when that criterion is met mainly through years of unpaid work, their educational qualifications are evaluated as inadequate, and vice versa. While this experience confirms that migrants encounter segmented labour markets where 'occupational gatekeepers' control the access and allocation of resources (Vidich and Bensman, 1968), it

also highlights institutional discrimination and the ascription of incompetence on possessors of non-European credentials and European credentials owned by Black Africans. Here, credentials are employed as barriers that are fluid and constantly [re]defined to favour groups with more perceived similarities to the host community, while simultaneously disfavouring and excluding those categorised as different. In this way, the *going round in circles* experience can resemble and produce downward or lateral mobility particularly for the highly skilled and educated migrants. This inferiorisation of foreign credentials means a brain drain for immigrant–sending countries and a brain waste for receiving–countries as foreign trained workers have been reported to become stuck in low-skilled work (Ozden and Schiff, 2006; Sumption 2013).

Becoming a 'professional student' and 'career suicide' was how some described the impact of the experience while a tearful Rita states:

> *Rita:* 'I'm just stuck. ...You remember you are not looked at as okay to be paid for the job. ...I am sorry I am getting emotional right now but I am upset because it just shows me that I have not gone beyond where I was when I first came [to Ireland].'

This *going round in circles* which was the most pernicious experience identified among the participants, was only reported by the migrants of Nigerian descent–the only group in the study with Black skin colour. Although the sample size might suggest these are idiosyncratic experiences, its prevalence among this group implicates nationality, race and skin colour in this migrant penalty. The Nigerian males who reported this experience did not seem to benefit from a gender advantage as they did not fare much better than their female counterparts. This finding raises questions about meritocracy in the in(up)ward mobility of migrants as Irish citizenship and achievement factors did not advantage all groups equally. This is not to say that the native born or Irish 'others' (Irish Travellers) do not experience disadvantage, neither does it mean that recognition of qualifications do not affect other migrants. What I argue based on my study is that the level of disadvantage experienced by the Nigerian migrants and by inference Black workers is particularly acute. It is important to note here that the participants who reported this experience did not only have foreign qualifications, they mentioned retraining to acquire qualifications in Ireland as part of the process of going round in circles.

Expunged Past

The *expunged past* occurs when migrants' prior learning and skills are unrecognised in ways which seem to erase their prior achievements. It is characterised by the inferiorisation, disempowerment, non-recognition and the over-performance of actors whose foreign credentials, particularly those from outside the European Union and the United States, are undervalued in ways which undermine their access to paid employment. The main difference between this and the *going round in circles* experience is that their targeted retraining (into areas of skills shortage) in their new country gives them access to paid employment, albeit at the lower end of the economic ladder. Although the participants who reported this experience arrived in their host country educated to university and postgraduate degree levels, often combined with years of work experience, like many non-EU migrants across the OECD (see OECD, 2018), they also all recalled being unable to access paid work at levels matching their qualifications and skills. In this experience, non-European credentials are automatically assigned inferior status, while those obtained in the EU are ascribed superiority. Such constructed hierarchy of European superiority is problematic for non-Europeans and non-European qualifications as Europe is set up as the measuring standard for people (Zuberi, 2011) and their credentials. This suggests the *expunged past* experience is predicated on Eurocentrism that metes out a migrant penalty which selectively victimises possessors of non-European credentials. While this apparent preference is usually attributed to lack of trust for foreign qualifications (OECD, 2014), the racial bias in the socioeconomic environment in which these credentials compete is undeniable. This composite story from the participants narratives illustrates the *expunged past*.

> **Setting:** John was mulling over the conversation between the women in the café when a call came through from his boisterous Nigerian tenants' Abayomi and his wife Seun. After the pleasantries, John decided to gather more information.
>
> *John:* You and your wife are both working. How was it, finding employment in Ireland?
>
> *Abayomi: [Self-conscious laugh]* Um…, to be quite honest, it was as if all the work I had done in the past was irrelevant because it wasn't from Ireland. That really disturbed me.
>
> *Seun:* I quickly came to the realisation that recognition of what I have is non-existent, never mind accepting that I even have it. ...I don't think that is fair because that is akin to *expunging* a lived life. (Emphasis added)

The experiencing of an *expunged past* though not gendered, as it affected both males and females, was raced as it was also only reported by the migrants of Nigerian descent. Regarding the Polish and Spanish migrants, their access to a European language gave them advantage over their Nigerian counterparts. In contrast, proficiency in English language was deployed as gatekeepers to restrict their labour mobility to racialised, low-skilled, low-paid or language-related jobs. The purported 'hierarchy of English superiority' (Kohli, 2016), seemed dependent on race, because even though 80% of the Nigerian migrants in Ireland according to the Irish 2016 Census were reported to have a higher level of English language compared to Polish migrants (at 39%), and Spanish (at 68%) the level of spoken English of the Nigerian participants in this study did not seem to advantage them in accessing paid employment. Regarding highly skilled roles however, all the groups in this study reported experiencing an *expunged past* as their credentials were deemed inadequate for professional roles, except in sectors such as healthcare where the demand for skilled labour far exceeds the supply. This might account for highly-skilled migrants becoming polarised into low-skilled jobs.

Guilty Until Proven Innocent

Chidi: [Observes Gbemisola's frown] Are you okay?

Gbemisola [*Nigerian, Female, Community development worker*]: Oh I had one of those upsetting experiences today. After facilitating a workshop for primary school students, one of the teachers said to me, "Your English is so good. How long have you lived here [Ireland]?" ...Ten years I answered innocently, ready for a long conversation about Ireland. "No wonder, your English is so good" she replied. Can you imagine that! I am really tired of this low expectation people have of us just because of our skin colour. They expect me to be an asylum seeker whom they teach English. ...They expect me to be incompetent, despite the level of education I have acquired back home and in Ireland. It is so disheartening...

Encounters like Gbemisola's which are riddled with microaggressions, is the *guilty until proven innocent* experience. It highlights the preconceived views held about a person's abilities based on their name, nationality of descent, how they look and sound. In the *guilty until proven innocent* experience, recognition, respect, trust and expectation of competency in the language of the host community and ability have currency as they advantage workers in

gaining paid employment and career advancement. This symbolic and cultural capital in this experience presents as a hidden resource. While it is automatically made available to the White interviewees, the Black workers have to prove themselves against racialised, bipartite prejudgment based on their perceived race to be considered eligible to receive it. The White European participants mainly reported positive prejudgement which advantaged them in progressing onto paid employment, compared to their Black counterparts who encountered mistrust, low expectation of their competency and commitment to work. For example, some Polish participants shared how Polish candidates can benefit from 'being seen as hard working'. Considering the high levels of reported discrimination during job search by migrants, this finding is not surprising. Rather, during recruitment such practices can influence outcomes as depicted in this composite story where the positive stereotype advantaged Slavomir, and the negative one disadvantaged Tunde:

Aisling: The hotel manager considered both candidates with university degrees. Tunde from Nigerian had better spoken English than Slavomir of Polish descent. ...but Nigerians can be loud and rude sometimes she thought... Considering that most of the other staff are very hardworking Eastern Europeans who never give problems..., Aisling selected Slavomir for the role.

Although labour market theories are loaded with reports of migrants' deficit, a disposition towards Black deficiency–that is the belief that Blacks have a deficit that is from their internal characteristics–is common in this experience. The negative prejudgments encountered by the Polish and Spanish migrants primarily relate to their communication in English language as Danilo (Spanish, Process Engineer) recalls; *'My English was not fluent and I think it was the main barrier*.' In this sense, the negative bias did not present structural barriers to their career pursuits. They were still advantaged by whiteness and their nationality against their Black Nigerian counterparts. Although I emphasise the access to resources both in the form of economic and cultural capital through paid employment by the Polish and Spanish migrants in these instances, it is important to note that these progressions were predominantly into precarious jobs–significantly lower than their highest academic qualifications.

Marking Time - Nowhere to Grow

Setting: John was at the back of a taxi with a Black African driver and he immediately picked up his conversation about migrant workers.

John: You don't have to answer, but I am curious about how you chose taxi driving.

African Taxi Driver: Oh it's simple. It was either that or be on social welfare. I am Nigerian. I used to be a Solicitor in Nigeria. When I got here [Ireland], I got a job as a mortgage administrator in 2007 ...before taxi driving happened to me. ...Don't look so shocked. [*He laughs as he catches John's eyes in the rear view mirror while smoothly navigating the Dublin City centre traffic*.] ...That story is not unique to me. Many of my male, African friends are in exactly the same boat or worse ...or worse. [He repeats while emphatically nodding his head] '...In 2008, when the recession hit, I was made redundant. I kept applying for other jobs and after a series of unsuccessful interviews, I decided to try self-employment as a taxi driver.'

John: Really?

African Taxi Driver: Yes. ...I mean, the whole idea was that maybe I can upgrade and become a solicitor here, but I saw it involved two years retraining without earnings and a financial requirement which I did not have…

John: ...You were able to get a job in 2007 though.

African Taxi Driver: It wasn't all good in the job too. Everyone knew my law background, it wasn't hidden. Once, they were looking for an assistant to the in-house solicitor. They didn't ask me. They gave the role to a girl who only did it for two weeks and asked to be transferred back to her previous department. They then gave it to another man. ...But I felt that ordinarily, my background was well known and that offer was not extended to me.

John: [feeling an unusual defensiveness rising as if the driver was criticising him] Did you ask?

African Taxi Driver: Oh I did indicate an interest. There wasn't an open application process, they only selected people.

John: ...And you think your race influenced your work opportunities?

African Taxi Driver: Don't you think so?

John: …How?'

African Taxi Driver: In the financial sector, new staff will come in, I will train them and after a while, I will find they've been given a portfolio. ...Like being given some brokers to manage while I'm still there doing general administration. ...Six ...seven years later, I have regressed. Here I am driving taxi.. It is not great ...it is not the best, it is not fulfilling because you know that is not what you are trained for. You are just doing it because you don't want to be sitting at home doing nothing or be stuck receiving social welfare. You don't get any satisfaction, you are just there ***marking time*** hoping for change but if that will happen, it remains to be seen.'

This *marking time* experience uncovered by the African taxi driver's narrative was common among participants who encounter prolonged delays and difficulty accessing paid employment. They respond to the numerous unexpected occurrences first by renegotiating their career objectives to settle for small increments, typically in roles below their highest academic attainment. The intense opposition and the effort expended in attaining these roles combined with disillusionment about meritocracy curtail further career pursuits. Similar to the linguist trajectories (Knight, 2014), the highly qualified participants in these cases attain career advancement, particularly from precarious jobs, to opportunities with better conditions. Those with basic levels of education also progress more than they envisaged before migrating. While the participants were all not fully satisfied with their progress, these roles appeared to be the ceiling of their employment progress as evidenced by Priya's reports.

> I went from a bad childminding job to factory work, now a marketing assistant. To be honest, I felt when I got this Marketing job, it was the best job I could get in Ireland. [...] They opened some internal positions and my manager asked me to apply but I didn't because in the end, I am going to leave the country. [...]Some of my colleagues complain because you are given more responsibilities but not much financial return and there is not much level to grow. For me it is enough as I can live on it [income] and save a little. I am not looking for any other job now. *[Priya, Spanish, Female, Masters in Marketing]*

The absence of significant difference when controlling for gender, race, nationality and educational qualification among participants who reported this experience suggests a general ceiling with stricter restrictions into primary sectors. This implies a much broader migrant penalty, and that barriers to upward mobility are operational against all migrant groups in Ireland.

Progressive Mobility

Despite the limiting experiences uncovered by this study, migrants are seen to occupy professional and management roles in Ireland, albeit in low proportions (Joseph, 2018). This composite story from the participants' narratives illustrates the *progressive mobility* experience.

***Setting**: John is meeting with four middle level managers of migrant descent in Ireland.*

John: Thanks for meeting me.

Efe: [A very determined looking banker of Nigerian descent] …I'll kick this off by saying that my working in a multinational was not accidental.

Lucja: [Polish female programme officer in the not-for-profit sector] It took me a few years to get to my present role. ...My education and working hard definitely helped ...but more of luck.

Dayo: [*Male, Nigerian Doctor*] My plan was to sit for an exam with the Royal College of Physicians, after which we had to attend interviews.

Santiago: [Spanish, Male, Transaction Specialist] ...I can say I am satisfied with my evolution in work in this country, because before I came here, I wanted to work in this kind of company in a similar position. [*Throws back his head slightly, lost in thought*]. You know ...I remember how it started. I was singing softly in Spanish as I cleaned the canal in Dublin when I was volunteering. "...It seems you are Spanish." A lady working beside me said and we got talking. I speak three languages and I am looking for a job I told her quickly. "You're in luck. There is a job opening where I work. Send me your CV." She replied. ...That was it really. ...That was my entrance to employment in Ireland. *[G*entle sigh]

Efe: I left the shores of Nigeria to compete on a global scene to be able to improve myself. I hadn't even completed my Masters by the time I applied for the job [...] in the heat of the recession when it was really hitting everybody hard. I knew that to get anything, I will have to give it my best. ... It was difficult but I got the job and after a few years of performing well, I was promoted. They finally listened to me ...I actually created my current role and it is not too different from back home [Nigeria]. My first degree in Economics already made a way in the financial service. It was great that I didn't have to deviate.

Lucja: …Actually, it took a few good years between my first job and the one I have now, but I am satisfied with my ***progress***. ...Making friends here and the networks helped. ...I made a few mistakes along the line and studied a Masters I didn't need. …So I did two Masters here with student loans. *[Grimace]* ...but I am happy.

Dayo: …I started as a House Physician outside Dublin. I also did a Masters in Public Health and I presently work as a Registrar, so I'm good.

Santiago: I got an interview and worked in the company the lady recommended me for. In the meantime, I had attended another interview in a multinational company and got hired. After 14 months, I got my promotion letter just before coming here today. So I can say I am quite satisfied.

The *progressive mobility* experience involves migrants who are able to advance in the labour market. It consists of: (i) those progressing in line with their career goals, who are either achieving levels higher than they had in their home countries or had retrained and were

achieving upward mobility, and (ii) migrants at entry level roles who either had lower levels of education on arrival and advanced in their careers after up-skilling, or the cohort of young graduates and school-leavers at the beginning of their careers. This experience is characterised by upward mobility, social capital, similarity/assimilation by adopting their host's culture and traits.

The white migrants with this experience enjoyed labour market credit from their group membership not just as European citizens as the Nigerians did not enjoy similar credit but as white Europeans. Thus similarities with the host or ability to attain similarity for example in physical appearance, name, language, credentials, culture and behaviours greatly influenced this outcome. The Nigerian workers with this experience targeted areas of skills shortage such as healthcare, social work or roles where it was necessary to have migrant expertise, particularly in community-based roles working with specific migrant groups. This experience was identified predominantly among the white European migrants, who were of a younger age group with similar representation between the males and females. Only three of the twelve Nigerians in the study reported this experience (i.e. one in four).

DISCUSSION: INSIGHTS FROM MIGRANTS NAVIGATING THE IRISH LABOUR MARKET

Although stories told have been the privilege of those historically influential in knowledge generation, the migrants in this article are clearly able to explain their labour market experiences. While they articulate these occurrences differently from academic discourse, it provides powerful windows into the transition points in the career journeys of migrants where service providers including career counsellors can develop appropriate interventions. It also provides insight into the socioeconomic terrain in Ireland which appears pervasive with the discriminatory labour market practices against darker skinned African workers. Five key insights from this study are outlined here:

(i). Although migrants' under(un)employment is often reported relative to not being able to find work or being more likely to report discrimination, migrants, interpret their experience in terms of the opposition(s) they encounter when accessing the labour market. They typically highlight the differential treatment of workers, where labour markets operate different rules for different group. For example, migrants/natives; EU/non-EU or whites/Blacks with race, nationality and skin colour mainly influencing the outcome. The

white Europeans in this study were able to progress from precarious employment to jobs with better working conditions within two to four years, while the Black workers were mainly characterised by downward/lateral mobility where after eight to ten years, many were still in precarious jobs experiencing lateral mobility. In order not to conflate this group with migrants without right to work, it is important to reiterate that at the time of the interviews, the Nigerian migrants in this study had legal residency rights in Ireland of between 10-15 years and Irish citizenship two to five years.

(ii). Migrants accessing the Irish labour market experience different levels of resistance (see Figure 1). In order to counter this opposition, there is evidence from this study that groups renegotiate their career pursuits–mainly downward until they find 'the areas of least resistance in the labour market' (Joseph, 2015). Unsurprisingly, most of them are levels below their highest academic attainment, leading to underemployment. This is very important as studies (Keeley, 2007; OECD, 2018) on human capital shows that those with higher levels of education perform better across the OECD.

(iii) When interpreting labour market experiences, Black workers are more likely to centre race while Whites who 'are taught[…] to see themselves as individuals rather than as part of a racially socialised group' (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 59) will more likely centre any other concept but race, in this case, individualistic attributions. This is to be expected considering that similar to various EU-wide surveys, the Black workers in this study were the group who reported being most negatively affected by race while the White workers enjoyed credit from being White Europeans. This ambivalence about the impact of race on labour market outcomes often silences victims and demonstrates a lack of commitment to addressing its consequences. It is also a way of denying White advantage and the implication of race (DiAngelo, 2011). When race is centred in an inquiry, a societal deficit is implicated, whereas when individualistic attributions are centred, a migrant deficit is implicated. This is significant both to CRT that insists on centring race and labour market theories as they suggest that the central element in a study will influence the investigation in terms of the questions the study will ask which will ultimately influence the result.

(iv) Unequal access to symbolic, cultural and social capital in the labour market exacerbates discriminatory practices and inequality because they are unreckoned resources. This is evident from the ways some groups are given positive regard and ascribed positive attributes. For example, the expectation that the White Europeans would be hardworking, punctual, trustworthy and competent, while the Black Nigerian migrants report experiencing

disregard, disrespect, ascription of incompetency, mistrust, and the expectation to have poor quality education and communication. These attributes automatically ascribed, oftentimes before the actors perform, can influence outcomes by disadvantaging Black workers against their White counterparts through a taste-based discrimination similar to the operation of the Bourdieuan concept of cultural capital. The five characteristic experiences identified in this article rekindle questions on what counts as resources in equal opportunity societies where human capital is expected to be the main determinant of outcomes. Social capital likewise provides important benefits to individuals and societies. Some of these benefits such as higher productivity are directly economic (OECD, 2001). For example, in the report it is clarified that, "even if the human and financial capital advantages of white Americans were cancelled out, their richer connections to mainstream American institutions would confer an advantage on them relative to middle-class members of minority communities" (p. 59). The value of social capital cannot be underestimated in the labour market. It has in fact been argued that "more than the number of social connections available to an individual, successful job search hinges on the range of persons with whom the individual is connected with and can rely on" (OECD, 2001, p. 59). That was Bourdieu's (1986) argument, that group membership provides members with the backing of their collectively-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit. However, similarities in credentials, race, ethnicity and skin colour which suggest potential for a 'solidaristic labour community' (Standing 2011, p. 12) as we have between the White Europeans and the native Irish population typically go unreckoned as actual resources. In the Bourdieuan notion of capital, they have currency in ways which increase the ability of actors to advance their interests. While it is more difficult to show how social capital and economic growth are connected unlike in the case of human capital such as education, an OECD (2001) report on the well-being of nations provides ample evidence that connects social capital to solidarity, trust, successful job searches and productivity. It is therefore worth investing in supporting marginalised groups to develop this vital but unreckoned resource called social capital.

(v) Migrants, particularly the Black Africans in Ireland, on encountering discriminatory socioeconomic terrains mainly respond by renegotiating their career pursuits. Krumboltz's (1996) planned happenstance theory provides insight on helping clients approach negative events and turning them into opportunities. While I caution against a migrant deficit approach, the outcomes of the *progressive mobility* in this study suggests personal interventions through the strategic development of human capital is possible. The key insight from this groups' success includes their retraining in an area of skills shortage immediately on

arrival. Rather than down-skilling like many of the participants who experienced the going round in circles, this group up-skilled themselves. Considering that across the OECD, those with higher levels of education perform better in the labour market, that is unsurprising. In addition, they obtained relevant work experience while still studying/retraining in their new country rather than afterwards. They all imbibed or exhibit the cultural traits of their host community.

In a country like Ireland, however, most policymakers, job activation programme personnel, career counsellors are White. This study raises some issues: (a) How do personnel providing interventions open discussion with clients on the manner in which race can influence career progression? (b) The counsellors' limited knowledge of discrimination or personal views can hinder intervention. (c) Conversely, it might be seen as patronising or even racial profiling should providers be willing to address racial bias in the labour market if the clients have not first introduced the subject. Despite these challenges and caution, this study shows that discrimination changes the course of a persons' career. To provide interventions without taking cognisance of race, is to disadvantage those most in need of interventions while perpetuating the culture of silence.

CONCLUSION

Through CRT's counter-storytelling, the labour market experiences presented in this article reveal racial discrimination and whiteness work in tandem disadvantaging Blacks in their career pursuits in Ireland. Blacks [Africans] are much more aware of racism on a personal level. Similar to the other reports discussed in this article, the Black participants in this study also reported higher rates of discrimination in employment as they experience more systemic resistance during job search and at work compared to their white European counterparts. Research is, however, a site of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of the West, and the interests and ways of resisting of the other (Smith, 2012). Thus, I have read and reported the meaning of the migrants' stories in this study by drawing on my theoretical and cultural sensitivity as a scholar of Black African descent (Bernal, 1998). I have highlighted the experiences of the Black Africans--the group that reported the most pernicious trajectories when accessing paid employment in Ireland. Their marginalised position and the ambivalence about the significance of race in Ireland and across Europe relative to Blacks, mean they have limited or 'no macro-level framework from which to analyse their experience' (DiAngelo,

2011, p. 67). However, migrants and by inference marginalised groups can interpret their experiences, their voices can be included and they can contribute to theory.

The sharp contrast in how migrants of Spanish, Polish and Nigerian descent are treated in employment while centring race, demystify any residual myths that the labour market is a level playing field. The racialisation of credentials--often disguised and legitimised as non-recognition of non-Europeans credentials, disadvantages Blacks vis-a-vis White workers. These taste-based discriminations obscure the prevalence of a disposition of Black (African) deficiency in the Irish labour market. Based on the findings of my study, I argue that: Black workers with [non]European credentials suffer a harsher migrant penalty and selection criteria in the labour market than their white counterparts; that high levels of structural discrimination exists in Ireland which disproportionately denies access to good jobs and cultural capital to Black workers; that a disposition that Black Africans have a deficit is operational in the Irish labour market in ways which highly impedes their opportunities; and lastly, that whiteness is a hidden resource, a form of capital with affirmative properties only available to whites. These micro-level processes reify labour market differential among groups. When achievement factors and individual abilities are not the main determinants of labour market mobility, racial inequality becomes inevitable. Proactive strategies are required to utilise the resources of migrant populations. Otherwise, Black migrants will suffer a double dilemma of being a brain drain for their sending countries and a brain waste in their receiving country. These experiences cannot be left to chance. It masks the ways Black bodies and their credentials are undervalued in the labour market.

Migration, however, is more than the movement of people across borders. It is a way of socioeconomic enhancement. Thus, labour market mobility is fundamental to integration and inclusion. The characteristic experiences presented in this paper can help contribute to career, labour market and migration theories. It can illuminate policy, sociological understanding of labour markets, and forge shared responsibility between migrants and States in improving group performance. The *Progressive Mobility* characteristic experience could be a benchmark for all migrant groups while overrepresentation in the more pernicious experiences should serve as an indicator of societal resistance and the path to marginalisation.

Finally, race, undoubtedly affects labour market experiences. While this analysis has been based on empirical data generated in Ireland, it suggests that Black migrants have more pernicious labour market trajectories than their white counterparts in racialised societies. Labour market theories and interventions devoid of race and the voices of their marginalised

subjects silence less powerful groups by portraying one-sided stories. Areas of further studies might be to explore the identified experiences with a wider population. It will also be vital to investigate if migrants reading about their stories in their own words are empowered according to the counter-storytelling tenet of CRT.

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[i] The Nigerian workers were mainly in healthcare and charity organisations; the Spanish workers –multilingual call centre roles; Polish workers - call centre, hotel and office assistant roles.

[ii] One self-employed person was male in Taxi driving

[iii] Unpaid employment was used in the study to represent any career progression opportunity which does not receive financial remuneration. This includes voluntary work, internships, work-placements, further education or training. This term is deliberately applied to emphasise the change in the labour market where workers are not serving as volunteers in the traditional sense of merely contributing to society or giving of their free time. Rather, fully-qualified workers are engaged in t essential work without financial remunerations.