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Whiteness and Racism: Examining the Racial Order in Ireland

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses labour market differentials among migrants looking at the intersections of race and nationality, as well as migrants' perception of the racial hierarchy in Ireland. Drawing on three sources of evidence including 32 semi-structured interviews with Spanish, Polish and Nigerian migrants, the Irish 2011 census, and the database of an employability programme for migrants accessing employment and training supports from 2009 - 2011 (N= 639), it unveils the racial order in Ireland and how this disadvantages Nigerian (and by extension Black African) migrants. The three sources of data are examined within a critical race theory and racial stratification framework. The article provides a comprehensive landscape of the racial dichotomy – that is, White-over-Black ascendancy – in Ireland. The centring of race in the study illuminates the Irish organisation of racial inequality; it bypasses traditional ways of presenting data on labour market differentials as these often obfuscate the experiences of workers at the bottom of the social strata. It reveals the implications of racial hierarchies for workers along the labour supply chain and the whiteness of the top tiers of the Irish labour market.

KEYWORDS

Whiteness, racial stratification, migrants, labour market, race, racism

INTRODUCTION

To claim that, “whiteness is invisible” is to “repeat the gestures of hegemony”.

(Frankenberg, 2001: 73)

The Irish labour market is rife with incidents of discrimination in both recruitment processes and workplace practices. Despite anti-discrimination policies in the country, secondary data show that immigrants consistently fare worse than members of the host community. Among other things, skin colour appears to influence these discrepancies. For example, apart from white EU new member state (NMS) individuals, all other white groups are considerably more likely than non-whites to be employed in managerial and professional occupations (Kingston et.al, 2012: 27). Though other important factors like educational attainment and age can also cause inequalities in labour market opportunities/outcomes, in a country like America, owing to its unique historical relationship with Black slavery and the persistence of White prejudice (Mills, 1997), such disparities are often theorised around the axis of the Black-White colour line (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012; Zuberi and Bashi, 1997). Where the former explains and attributes this collective experience of discrimination to individual performance, the latter suggests a hierarchal positioning of groups on the labour supply chain through a colour-coded penalty and highlights responses to racial difference as a causative factor. Theorising racial inequality in the U.S from a racial stratification framework gives considerable attention to the racial order and its implication for groups, not only in the labour market, but also in education, the law, policing and access to services (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Mills 1997, 2009). Song (2004) in a special issue which examined racial inequality in the USA and Britain addressed the question of whether a racial hierarchy framework helps in explaining racial inequalities and group differential experiences in those two Western multi-ethnic societies. Several scholars (Lentin and McVeigh, 2002; Fanning, 2002; 2009), suggest that Ireland has increasingly become hostile and intolerant to its migrant population, with more recent reports documenting both anti-Black and anti-Islam sentiments (Michaels, 2016). Although stories of racism in Ireland proliferate, they are often presented in ways which do not give a comprehensive picture of the Irish racial landscape. Neither is there much mention of a top-down hierarchy regarding institutional racism. Rather, many cases are often presented as individual racist acts. The 2012 ESRI report which made the headlines in Ireland at the time concerning the high levels of disparities in labour market outcomes showed that at 36 per cent, Black African immigrants have much higher rates of unemployment, compared with 9.5

per cent for White EU-13 individuals, and 12.3 per cent for Asians. This finding would not have been very shocking to many migrants of Black African descent in Ireland who were living that experience, as they are likely to be aware that all migrants are not treated equally in the labour market. Although measuring and representing discrimination is of utmost importance to all societies, the main challenge is what we measure and how the generated data is presented. For example, while focusing on language deficit, educational attainment or even age might explain some parts of the colour-coded migrant penalty experienced by different groups in many OECD countries (OCED report 2014), couching racism in these terms obfuscates its structural nature.

To properly contextualise race and introduce new ways of thinking about racism in Irish and European sociology that address the lived experience of marginalised people, this article employs a racial stratification framework in examining the racial order in Ireland. Unlike the American context where skin colour and the colour line feature prominently in the discourse on race, crucial questions arise here on whether a person's physiognomy is a key factor in the understanding of race and how it influences outcomes in an Irish context (Garner, 2009). To address this issue, I draw on 32 semi-structured interviews of Spanish, Polish and Nigerian migrants in Ireland, the Irish 2011 census and a significant database of an employability programme of migrants accessing employment and training supports between 2009 and 2011 (N=639). I consider labour market differentials between Black and White workers based on race and nationality and explore migrants' understanding of the racial order in Ireland. While the migrant's perspectives alone may seem subjective, the secondary data examined in the study, together with a critical race theory and racial stratification framework, provides a comprehensive picture of the racial dichotomy in the Irish labour market.

THE CONTENTIOUS NATURE OF RACE

The concept of race is not static, but has been employed in various ways, making it open to contestation. Its use, particularly in human categorisation at individual and group levels, raises significant questions about race relations and race dynamics. While statisticians may employ race in the collection of data and in providing services to the public, it becomes problematic when we consider who categorises people, the power dynamics involved, the meaning associated with the categories in terms of where, how and with whom individuals are categorised. All of these have implications, for example, if a person is categorised as EU

or non-EU; from the Third World, developing or developed world. Other pertinent concerns include the arrangement of the categories, if flat – signalling racial equality, or top-down – signifying a hierarchical ranking; the status, privileges or negative judgments attached to each category and the challenges they present to the categorised person when exercising their agency, all of which make the concept of race an on-going concern. In social identity theory, mobility within and between groups plays a vital role in group conflict, and attempts to answer such questions have been the basis of different schools of thought. Race has also been problematic in relation to whether it should be acknowledged or not. Some scholars argue that researching and referring to race reifies it. Those who ignore the concept have been accused of being colour-blind.

The complexity of race is evident from the myriad ways in which it has been conceptualised, though the various positions seem plausible. A major line of contestation, however, has been on how races are formed. Some claim race is an illusion; some see it as an ideology; others take an essentialist view and see it as biological; and yet more see it as socially constructed. The concept of race emerged in the European languages in the fifteenth century, where it was used to emphasise nobility and superiority of some groups, while at the same time depicting the inferiority of the other (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998; Omi and Winant, 1994). Race has been applied as a category imposed by others who use it as a foundation for oppression and discrimination, including the promotion of slavery in America and apartheid in South Africa. Across Europe today, race is one of the main determinants of socio-economic outcomes and the mobility of people across geographical borders particularly as we consider the 2016 Syrian refugee crisis. Race has also been conceptualised and applied by craniologists like Samuel Morton who claimed to be able to determine the inferiority of others by their skull size; and eugenics who believe in good genes and sustain discriminatory acts like racial segregation, forced sterilisations and genocides. A little over 20 years ago, authors of the controversial book, *The Bell Curve*, claimed that genes and the environment accounted for racial differences in intelligence in the human population (Herrnstein and Murray, 1994). However, it has since been argued (King, 1981 cited in Zuberi and Bashi, 1997) that the biological existence of race is an ideologically loaded concept with dubious scientific merit. One of the most contentious uses of the concept of race is that it often assumes the ordering of racial groups, whereby Africans are inserted at the bottom and Europeans at the top (Zuberi and Bashi, 1997). The incongruence in such hierarchical systems that insists on categorising the human race on the basis of difference is made obvious by Todorov (2000), who cautions that such a belief in the superiority of one group over another may imply the

possession of unique and integrated value structures, or serve as an evaluative framework for making generic judgements. Todorov's concerns are worthy of note, as to reasonably compare and decide if one race is better or superior to the other, there is a need for racial groups to exhibit a certain level of sameness to be comparable. Extant evidence also suggests that race has been commonly applied to distinguish, classify, tag and pigeonhole groups through the application of a scale of values that is markedly ethnocentric, with the racist's own race usually positioned at the top of the hierarchy (Todorov, 2000). Individuals take various perspectives on race, and scholars have attempted to categorise such positions. Moschel (2011), for example, uses the label 'racial scepticists' to describe those who maintain that races do not exist at all. Such people or organisations will simply eliminate race from political and normal everyday usage and life. For Crenshaw (2000), the appellation 'racial constructionists' can be used to describe those who believe that races do not naturally exist, but are in some ways socially defined. While some of these believe that talking about race should be eliminated, others see race as part of the real world whose use should be continued as an effective strategy to combat racism. Todorov (2000: 66) noted a third category, the 'racialists', which describes individuals who, while not satisfied that races differ, recognise racial superiority. Racists exhibit ambivalence, and simultaneously believe that people are different while judging them based on a set of rules that indicate sameness.

Traditionally, race is a comparatively simple idea that is applied to certain outward signs of "social visibility" such as physiognomy (Myrdal, 2000: 96). The literature suggests that race also derives from racial systems, or ways of classifying people, usually by judging how closely their phenotype fits with the somatic norm imagery of what the different races "look" like (Zuberi and Bashi, 1997: 669). This ability to categorise the other implies a power dynamic where "Whites categorise Negroes" (Myrdal, 2000: 96). Fanon illuminates this point, contending that, "as long as the Black man is among his own, he will have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts to experience his being through others" (2000: 257). He thus insists that in the discourse of race, being black is usually viewed in relation to being white, and because of the racial positioning of Black people in the global hierarchy they become the racial "Other". Goldberg (2000: 156) makes a similar claim that hegemony wielded through race does not take effect in isolation, but through contact with others. Consequently, he adds, people adjudged as the racial "Other" are sacrificed at the altar of an idealised and superior category, stripped of personhood, and disregarded in matters of social

benefits and political (self-) representation. The Negro, in essence, is given two frames of reference within which to place himself (Fanon, 2000: 257-258)

Undeniably, race is a social fact that shapes the concept of identity and "collective representation" organising social experience (Winant, 2004). It is for this reason that race is widely employed to socially define and categorise individuals based on their physical characteristics that are not predetermined by biological facts (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998: 24). But, the concept of race has morphed and become even more pejorative in its use to separate people into groups, such as 'Europeans and others' (Spickard, 1992). The taxonomy of race operates in a way whereby the dominant groups exercise the power to stipulate the status and place of the less powerful, thus maintaining their own power, status, and authority (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 28). Such classifications usually involve a power relation with racial designations that imply some kind of inferiority. The positioning of white Europeans at the top of the pinnacle, where they were seen as naturally superior to all other "races" in virtually every aspect, was vital for the imperialist expansion in all parts of the world, including the inception and practice of slavery. Without it, Song (2007: 3768) argues, "it would not have been possible to subordinate and dehumanise conquered peoples". Therefore, how race is employed for the inferiorisation and superiorisation of groups makes it continuously problematic and contentious.

While there is consensus among race theorists today that race is a socially constructed category, its influence on people's lives does not seem to have lessened. One's race is thus an objective reality, a sort of agent that dictates the position of the individual on the hierarchy; determines and influences the individual's life chances and outcomes, and even affects the individual's relationships with others. It is for this reason that Winant (2000: 185) insists that in the contemporary United States, the practice of race is an objective fact where "one simply is one's race."

Omi and Winant (1994) affirm that race is a very real social classification that has cultural ramifications as well as enforcing a definite social order. In this sense, race operates as a matter of both social structure and cultural representation that indicates difference and constructs inequality (pp. 54-55). The negative implications of race still prevail by its ability to disadvantage some groups while privileging others. What is evident from this trend is the continuous devising of new justifications to institute racial difference to promote the superiority of one group over the other. It would indeed appear, as Zuberi (2011) argues, that the move from eugenic to cultural arguments on race seems to only be a move from one type of essentialist perspective to another – the biological evolutionary to the cultural perspective

of European superiority which came to replace the biological justifications of race. Thus, despite anti-discrimination laws and equal opportunity policies, racial inequality in the labour market persists.

The post-racial discourse, particularly after the election of the first Black president of the United States of America, is that researching and centering race is discouraged by some who claim it reifies it. Contrary to Crouch's (1996) predictions in his essay, "Race is over", there is a continued preoccupation with physical characteristics as the central indicator of race which societies have used to create racial stratification – an ascribed ranking in society which can affect a person's opportunities, status and access to resources. Empirical data shows that race still matters in modern states, particularly in view of the festering dissatisfaction with migrants within the EU. In a 2007 survey¹ of 47 nations, nearly half (46 per cent) of the UK respondents named race relations and immigration among the most important issues facing Britain, ranking it ahead of education and placing it almost at par with crime (Transatlantic Trends 2010). A similar poll² in Ireland 2012 found that 72 per cent of people wanted to see a reduction in the number of non-Irish immigrants living in Ireland (O'Brien, 2009). Race, as has been argued, is always an issue (Dyer, 2004). Through immigration debates, race has been central in all political spheres in the Western world, from the 2016 election of President Donald Trump, to the 2016 Brexit vote in the UK, or the near election of Marie Le Pen in France. Indeed, race still matters. It is insidious, highly contentious and is often used pejoratively to lower down the racial strata a person is assigned.

THE CURRENCY OF IRISH WHITENESS

The black–white binary is a paradigm that suggests that Blacks "constitute the prototypical minority group" (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012: 75). Despite the undeniably contentious and even divisive nature of such thinking, in the lived experience of Black and White workers, race is often used in pernicious ways where the effect of racial inequality is real (Winant, 2000). In the case of the Irish in their diaspora settings, there is evidence of how, despite being enslaved on both sides of the Atlantic, invoked and benefitted from their possession of white bodies (Ignatiev, 1995). An historical look at the Irish case presents a typical example of how race influenced a group's positioning, considering that they arrived in the U.S. at the bottom of the economic ladder as the enslaved Black population. Both groups were targets of racist stereotypes that usually drew on a debased Darwinism in which both Blacks and Irish were somehow perceived as nearer to apes than people of Anglo-Saxon origin (Curtis, 1997).

However, the Irish were able to transition and change their de facto positioning at the bottom of the hierarchy. A similar argument obtains in Britain where the Irish were reported to have fared as badly as 'coloured immigrants', particularly regarding housing (Corbally, 2015), whereby signs, such as 'Room for rent. No Irish. No Coloureds, no dogs.' were hung on windows to deter prospective renters. But, with the passage of time the Irish diasporans became accepted as White, such that today they are not considered outsiders to the white privilege enjoyed by white Europeans, particularly when it comes to status and employment. Regarding borders and movement, we also observe the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962, a piece of legislation that substantially limited immigration for people of colour, but allowed the Irish freedom to move back and forth into the UK, a country that previously colonised them. While this special system is still in place today, none of the former Black African colonies of Britain is granted this access or free movement of persons or trade across its borders. Historical evidence also suggests that the Irish were able to invoke whiteness and avoid the automatic positioning of inferior groups at the bottom of the racial and economic ladder both in the U.S and Britain (Fanning, 2002). Their latter representation and acceptance as White thus exempted them from the restrictive immigration legislation that defined certain groups as ethnic. O'Keeffe-Vigneron (2003: 35), however, argues that this contributed to the subsequent 'invisibility' of the Irish in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s. Also, Corbally (2015: 106) claims that though the Irish had maintained a similar colonial relationship as commonwealth migrants in Britain, resided in the same parts of the major cities, lived in similar conditions, laboured in similar jobs and met comparably derisory attitudes in their new country, they were insufficiently immigrant. Without downplaying the differential and, oftentimes, harsh treatment of the Irish in the Diaspora, a black-white dichotomy was somewhat operational. In reality, the Irish were located some notches away from the bottom of the racial ladder, above Black Africans and non-English speaking whites, a point that is usually omitted in the discourse (Joseph, 2015). Thus, on the one hand, it would appear that whiteness when it came to the Irish, failed them initially, as it did not protect them from slavery at home or abroad, neither did it provide them with a privileged status, making Irish whiteness and experience with racism open to contestation. However, concerning how the Irish were able to join up with white America, Ignatiev, (1995) notes that the Irish demonstrated that they had well understood that they could achieve upward mobility on the US racial ladder not as Irishmen but as whites. In other words, they moved from being racialised Irish men to becoming white men with rights to vote, own Black slaves and appropriate land belonging to them.

The incongruence between Ireland, “the land of a thousand welcomes” which is ranked the world’s fourth most welcoming country in 2014 by more than 14,000 ex-pats in a poll assessing their experiences of living in their adopted countries (Expat Insider, 2015), and the Ireland that between 2002 and 2010, the Irish census statistics showed exchanged its stock of foreign workers from non-EU migrants to EU migrants after the 2004 accession, signalling a transition to the more ‘acceptable’ migrants (Fanning, 2009; Joseph, 2015; Lentin 2007), raises crucial questions as to whether a person’s physiognomy is a key factor in understanding race and how it influences labour market outcomes.

However, Ireland appears not only to have a colour-coded migrant penalty but also an intolerance to difference as is evident in the racialisation of Irish Travellers, who are white (Hayes, 2006). This fact forms the basis and reinforces the argument that Irish racism is not simply colour-coded (Garner, 2009). Unlike the U.S. where non-Black minorities must compare their treatment to African Americans to redress their grievances, it would seem that in Ireland, Irish Travellers constitute the prototypical minority group. Nonetheless, it is important to note that part of the colonial tactics mobilised against the Irish and Irish travellers involved similar cultural and symbolic representations of ‘Blacks’ as ‘dirty’, ‘poor’, ‘violent’, and ‘disruptive’ (Tsri, 2016). On this premise, I argue that the use of perceived difference in language, accent, religion and nationality as a pretext to exploit and racialise the Irish conforms to the colour line, symbolically ‘darkening’ even white subjects with comparable consequences (Joseph, 2015). Although skin colour is not the only possible explanation for the change in the positioning of the Irish in their Diaspora settings, the mobilisation of phenotypic whiteness by the Irish is indisputable.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employed Critical Race Theory (CRT) as its principal theoretical and methodological framework, given the centrality of race to CRT, and its focus not just on the effects of race, but on social, economic and political systems and how they influence the relationship and outcomes between majority and minority groups. It provided the theoretical lenses to explore the research question, which was to examine the racial order in Ireland. The key theoretical assumptions this study makes based on a CRT framework is that racial stratification has an inherently hierarchical arrangement that can limit and benefit human agency and mobility depending on their racial category (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Delgado and Stefancic, 2012; Zuberi and Bashir, 1997; Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva, 2008). Also, CRT views whiteness from the perspective of white supremacy and understands its power dynamics as

sites of domination and subjugation (Mills, 1997), rather than white privilege as sites of dominance without subjugation (Frankenberg, 1993: 2000). While contemporary social sciences offer more widely accepted theoretical frameworks, Mills (2009) insists that race should not be piggybacked on other ‘well established’ theories. Indeed, having reviewed the growing body of literature on race, I observed that many of the traditional approaches did not adequately speak to my lived experience of inequality and inequity in the labour market or the outcome of people of colour the world over, particularly when juxtaposed with that of migrants with phenotypic whiteness – a group that always seems to be stratified above Black workers.

CRT started by focusing directly on the effects of race and racism, while at the same time addressing the hegemonic system of white supremacy on the meritocratic system of the United States (Crenshaw, 1995; Delgado and Stefancic, 2012; Matsuda, 1995). Rather than viewing outcomes in isolation, the CRT tradition defines a kind of racial consciousness as a necessary element in fostering and understanding the contested position of those in power vis-à-vis racialised and subjugated minorities. This emphasises the importance of investigating human experience within the broader context of world society, bypassing distractions that can often accompany some theoretical perspectives. In this regard, arguments such as Howard Winant’s (2004: 3), that “the State is a central player in racial matters: the modern state carries out racial classification, surveillance, and punishment of the population; [and] ...distributes resources along racial lines”, presents insightful roadmap for unpacking the complexity in this investigation. In addition, CRT resists colour-blind, race neutral, ahistorical, and apolitical perspectives (Crenshaw, 1995; Delgado and Stefancic, 2012).

The CRT framework also sharpens one’s critical lens as a researcher and enables one to draw from other scholars who have challenged the racialised order in society. For example, CRT challenges narrow ideologies and traditional ways of knowing (Hylton, 2012); it questions the way in which the social sciences interpret³ data (Zuberi, 2011). A CRT framework specifically urges researchers to search for ways to reflect the experiences of Black people without borrowing passively from white social sciences (Collins, 1990). It also brings to the fore the fundamental role the law plays in the maintenance of racial hierarchy (Zuberi, 2011), while its activist dimension “tries to ascertain how society organises itself along racial lines and hierarchies first with the aim of bringing about change for the better” (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012: 7).

However, CRT is not without limitations, and has been targeted for criticisms. Firstly, its critics have expressed reservations about its ability to travel beyond the borders of the United States, where it was inaugurated, to other continents like Europe. Secondly, scholars like Mike Cole (2009) problematise its notion about “white supremacy” being an exact description of everyday experiences of racism, and also its tendency to place “race” over “class” in the discourse of oppression. Cole, thus, argues that CRT’s appropriation of the term “white supremacy” as a political unifier is flawed, as it fails to draw groups together to fight against racism neither does it adequately explain non-colour-coded discriminations in the modern society. It is on this premise that he criticises CRT’s tendency to homogenise all white people as occupying positions of power and privilege, even though reality shows that many poor whites enjoy neither of these. Moreover, critics contend that while critical race theorists strongly pursue the goal of social transformation and the eradication of racism as an important element of the wider goal of dismantling all oppressive structures, their struggle is bereft of a meaningful purpose, a clear sense of what liberation means to them, how they envisage social change, and how they intend to achieve their aspiration of the eradication of all systems of oppression (Cole 2009).

DATA AND METHOD

This study is part of a bigger study that sought to answer the question: How does racial stratification operate, and how is it reflected in the disparity in socio-economic outcomes among migrant groups in the Irish labour market? To assess the racial order in Ireland, I examine three sources of data which provided triangulation for the study. The data sources included 32 semi-structured interviews conducted between October 2014 and February 2015. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and subsequently thematically analysed. The second data source was the EPIC 2009 - 2011 database (N= 639), which was analysed using the SPSS software. The third source was the Irish 2011 census statistics. In this case, the database search engine was employed to generate specific tables, and Excel spreadsheet was utilised to display the data. The rationale for choosing the three migrant populations, Spanish, Polish and Nigerians, is that at 37.9 per cent, they formed the largest groups that accessed the employability programme between 2009 and 2011. Also, from the CRT perspective, “racial stratification is a dichotomous hierarchy”, argue Zuberi and Bashi (1997: 679), whereby some groups are located at the bottom and some at the top. They also insist that a proper study of race demands an examination of the relationships between the socio-economic

outcomes for both the dominant and the minoritised groups.⁴ Thus, a comparison of this nature enriches the extent to which the findings can be applied, particularly in determining if the findings are unique to a specific group or a societal problem, that is, if it is structural or individual. The three groups studied were also representative of the broad group of Black Africans, White Eastern and Western Europeans. The primary selection criteria for the interviewees included: legal residency rights to live and work in Ireland; current employment either in paid or unpaid work; and originating from one of the three selected research populations, Poland, Spain and Nigeria (see Table 1).

To explore migrants' understanding of racial stratification in Ireland, an initial questionnaire was administered to the interviewees. The questions were developed from a CRT standpoint of racial stratification, with particular reference to the scholarship on immigration and racial stratification in the U.S. by Zuber¹ and Bashi (1997: 676), who argue that even though newcomers may be ignorant of their race upon arrival, they become aware of it eventually. Considering that no nation as yet takes its new arrivals aside and openly tells them their place, it suggests that migrants somehow have a way of knowing their place. To test this out in the European labour market, I decided to explore migrants' perception of the racial order in Ireland. To achieve this goal, the interviewees were first asked how they saw Ireland arranged; if equal or flat, meaning whether everyone got the same treatment; if unequal or hierarchal, that is, whether there are people at the top of the hierarchy and some others at the bottom. The second question I asked was based on the theoretical understanding that race is relational (Fanon, 2000; Goldberg, 2000). The interviewees were presented with the four selected nationalities - Spanish, Polish, Nigerian and the host community, Ireland—and were then asked to represent how these groups are positioned in Ireland using numbers, diagrams or both.

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

Interviewees	Nigerian descent	Polish Descent	Spanish Descent
Total	12	10	10
Gender	6 Females, 6 Males	5 Females, 5 Males	5 Females, 5 Males
Nationality at time of interview	Irish through naturalization	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
Employment status	Paid role - 9 Unpaid role - 2 Self employed - 1	Paid role - 9 Unpaid role - 1	Paid role - 10 Unpaid role - 0
Years in Ireland at time of interview (2014)	9 -15 years	2 -10 years	1 - 7 years

FINDINGS

Considering that three sources of data were employed in investigating the same question, the findings are presented sequentially. The data from analysing the employment programme's (hereafter, EP) database are presented first, followed by findings from the semi-structured interviews. Findings from analysing the Irish 2011 census data using a stratification framework thus completed the triangulation. By controlling for nationality, gender and the highest educational attainment, findings from the two sources of secondary data in the study reveal a differential in outcomes among migrants. While all the migrant groups in the study fared worse than members of the host community, all three sources of data showed the occurrence of economic inequality among migrants consistent with a Black-White dichotomy where, depending on their nationality and race, some groups in the Irish labour market were more likely to be at the bottom and others at the top of the economic ladder.

THE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME'S DATABASE

EVIDENCE OF A RACE-BASED STRATIFICATION IN THE IRISH LABOUR MARKET

The idea that migration affects socio-economic outcomes and labour market experiences is widely accepted. What is problematic, however, is the disparity in the way it affects different migrant groups. Concerning the labour market differential among migrants from different nationalities who engaged with EP between 2009 and 2011, after controlling for all measurable variables, race appeared to be the only macro variable that accounted for any

significant difference in outcome in their quest to attain paid employment. Regarding the selected populations, migrants of Nigerian descent recorded the highest progression rate proportional to their population (at 89 per cent), compared to Poland (84 per cent) and Spain (85 per cent) (see Figure 1). However, when progression was categorised into paid⁵ and unpaid⁶ employment, a differential became visible with the Nigerian group recording the lowest progression rate into paid employment (at 40 per cent), as against Poland (60 per cent) and Spain (69 per cent). One finding that is not so immediately striking in the data is the over-representation of migrants of Nigerian descent in unpaid employment at 49 per cent, representing over half (55 per cent) of the total labour market activity recorded for this group. Migrants from Poland and Spain recorded much lower figures in unpaid labour, at 25 per cent and 16 per cent, respectively, representing less than a quarter of their labour market activities. This significant finding suggests that the labour market participation of a high proportion of migrants in Ireland is without financial remuneration, with a much higher proportion of Nigerian migrants (more than one in two) caught in this group. The data in this study presents a prime example of some remarkable inconsistencies in outcomes between different groups.

Figure1: Labour market outcome of the EP participants by country of origin

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Concerning the influence of education on the mobility of migrants in the Irish labour market, the most remarkable difference became apparent when comparing the overall outcomes across groups based on their highest education level and progression to paid employment, in other words, comparing ‘like’ with ‘like’, based on highest recorded educational attainment. Eighty per cent of the programme participants from Spain whose highest education was university level or higher progressed to paid employment, while the equivalent figure for Polish migrants was 70 per cent and Nigerian migrants, 52 per cent (see Figure 2). Among those with further education,⁷ 83 per cent of those from Spain progressed to paid employment, while everyone from Poland with further education gained paid employment. Though Nigerian migrants recorded the highest number with further education, they recorded the lowest progression into paid employment at 43 per cent. A similar situation occurred for the unskilled whose highest level of education was second level or lower, where Nigerians fared the worst of all the groups. In all three educational levels, Nigerian migrants appeared to fare worse than all the other groups.

Figure 2: Percentage of programme participants in paid employment by Country and highest education attained

The levels of education recorded for the groups may be said to account for the difference in outcome among them. This can lead to erroneous conclusions, such as those drawn by the writers of *The Bell Curve*, who asserted that people of African descent have lower academic capacity and that this might account for the differential socio-economic outcomes between them and others (Herrnstein and Murray, 1994). However, there were some interesting observations that call for further investigation. The first difference observed is within groups, whereby Polish and Spanish females recorded largely higher levels of education than their male counterparts. However, Spanish males are shown to have the best employment outcomes by far (see Figure 3). A similar observation can be made when outcomes across the groups are revealed and where educational attainment did not produce corresponding results in terms of progression to paid employment. For example, Polish males, despite being less qualified in educational terms compared to their Nigerian male counterparts, recorded overall more positive employment outcome (at 68 per cent) than the Nigerian males (at 48 per cent). When further education is considered, the Polish females and Nigerian males are almost at par in their educational attainment, yet there is a marked difference in outcome with the Polish females and males outperforming the Nigerian migrants. Similarly, the Spanish males, recorded almost double the performance of the Nigerian males. The most striking outcome differential occurred with the Polish males who, among those who progressed into paid employment, had the highest representation of those with a second level or lower education (20 per cent or 1 in 5 persons), and still outperformed the Nigerian males and females.

Figure 3: Paid employment outcome by Country, gender and highest level of education attained

The analysis of the employment programmes database resulted in some interesting findings. The first is that education has an impact on the labour market outcomes of migrants. This is evident in Figure 2 where the highest progression onto paid employment by the migrants in the study was from those who had third-level degree or higher (71 per cent), while migrants with further education recorded the next highest (59 per cent) and second level or lower (at 44 per cent). While there are secondary⁸ issues which will have an influence on the differential in outcomes, it does not, however, nullify the fact that there are significant differences in outcomes and some obvious variables that influence this outcome. In this regard, the argument that the levels of educational qualifications are responsible for limited employment chances for migrants is not supported by the data in EP's database. While they are relevant, they do not appear to be the main determinant. Rather, both race and gender in the case of the migrant groups seem to have an impact on economic outcomes.

EVIDENCE OF A COLOUR-CODED HIERARCHY IN THE IRISH LABOUR MARKET

To give more visibility to the experiences of foreign born workers in Ireland, the labour market outcomes from EP discussed above will be presented to highlight its hierarchical nature through the inter/intragroup ordering of the migrants. The first observation from the data is that the European groups had a better outcome than the African group, even when comparing 'like' with 'like' in terms of highest educational level attained. Thus, regarding how they are stratified, this data suggests that Europeans are stratified over Africans in the Irish labour market regarding their economic outcomes. The second observation that suggests an intra-group stratification is that despite Spanish and Polish migrants having white physical appearance, the Spanish migrants had a better outcome than the Polish who in turn had a better outcome than Nigerians. So, while gender affected the intra-group layering of workers as evidenced across all groups where the males outperformed the females (see figure 3), gender did not seem to buffer the impact of differences in race as all the males did not perform better than all the females across all groups. In other words, all the African and European males are not stratified above all the African and European females. Rather, the layering appears to be broadly connected to racial difference, and more specifically nationality difference. My data shows that Spanish females still fared better than Polish and Nigerian males, and Polish females in turn fared better than Nigerian males. This structuring is illustrated in Figure 4 based on the outcome of migrants from Spain, Poland and Nigeria who accessed EP between 2009 and 2011. It shows a stratification in the Irish labour market which seemed linked to race and nationality. Another interesting observation is that all whites

are not also treated the same in the labour market, rather, there appears to be an intra-white gradation, which is not fully discussed in this paper due to space limitation. However, the study shows a clear distinction between the labour market outcomes of Spanish migrants from Western Europe and Polish migrants from Eastern Europe despite both groups being white Europeans.

Figure 4: Diagrammatic illustration of the Labour market outcomes of migrants from the research population based on the Employment programmes 2009-2011 database

DATA FROM THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

MIGRANTS' PERSPECTIVE ON RACIAL HIERARCHY IN IRELAND

While the theory of immigration and racial stratification is based on America's unique immigration system and its colonial history with slavery, the data generated from the semi-structured interviews in this study suggests that migrants are aware of the racial order in Ireland and their positioning within the strata. The interviewees were first asked, "How do you think the society is arranged?" All the respondents stated that Irish society is hierarchal. Next, they were asked to represent diagrammatically how the Spanish, Polish, Nigerian and Irish⁹ are positioned in society. Twenty-eight¹⁰ interviewees drew a stair-like or hierarchal structure. They all, with little hesitation, positioned the Irish at the top and Nigerians at the bottom, except for one interviewee who said he would have put the Nigerians at the bottom, if he had not heard more negative comments about the Polish than the Nigerians. While this

suggests the existence of a hierarchal structuring of social actors in Ireland, it also indicates the order in which human subjects are arranged. The third significant observation is that, although race was centred in this study with nationality as a way in which race is expressed, there appeared to be other factors through which race is nuanced. Considering gender was not specified in the exercise, and three of the nationalities (Irish, Polish and Spanish) share common EU citizenship, with both Spanish and Polish groups being migrants in Ireland, the interviewees were nonetheless able to separate these hypothetical persons into different strata (see figure 5:1 below). Although this suggests an intra-group stratification of members of the ‘White race’, the interviewees attributed this asymmetry to nationality, the countries’ GDPs, exposure, popularity to tourists, and the population who speak or want to learn the dominant languages of the countries (see Joseph, 2015).

Figure 5:1 Percentage response by the interviewees on the racial order in Ireland

Of the three white groups studied, the Irish were easily positioned at the top of the hierarchy by the interviewees as the host country. In the case of the Spanish and Polish, where both groups are of migrant descent, relative to Ireland, 72 per cent of the interviewees placed the Spanish second on the strata from the pinnacle, with the Polish at the third rung; while 19 per cent placed the Polish second and the Spanish third. A very small number (at 3 per cent) placed the Nigerians third above the Polish, and 6 per cent placed both the Spanish and Polish

second on the strata with Nigerians at the bottom (figure 5:1). In terms of the diagrammatic representation, Figure 5:1 shows the four basic structures drawn by the interviewees. However, for ease of explanation and to discuss the impact of a racial hierarchy, the various diagrams have been combined (see Figure 5:2).

Figure 5:2 Representation of the racial order in the Irish labour market

In relation to the research question, which is to examine the racial order in Ireland, these findings suggest that Ireland is racially stratified in a vertical or top-down order, which in turn, signifies a dichotomous hierarchy. This data supports the claim of Zuberi and Bashi (1997: 679) that “racial stratification is a dichotomous hierarchy”. In this case, White is at the top and Black at the bottom, a structure that Delgado and Stefancic (2004: 3) describe as a “white-over-colour ascendancy.” Again, this racial order in Ireland can also be framed as a vertical location of racialised groups within its system of stratification (Gold, 2004). Though the small sample size for the interviews may appear idiosyncratic, the triangulation offered by the Irish 2011 CSO data and the 2009 - 2011 EP database with 639 unique individuals provides validity for the findings.

DATA FROM THE STATE CENSUS

In the Irish 2011 census data, the main criteria used in locating the groups in this study along a racial hierarchy, include migrants’ employment rate, the percentage employed as managers, those seeking their first job and the percentage of those who had lost or given up their job as

at 2011 relative to their population. The census data showed EU migrants as recording an overall employment rate of 52 per cent, 56 per cent among ‘Polish nationals’ and 66 per cent of ‘Spanish nationals’ in paid employment. For Africans, the employment rates decreased, with a 31 per cent employment rate recorded for Africans generally and a 32 per cent rate for ‘Nigerian nationals’ (see Table 2). In terms of those who had become unemployed either from having lost their job or given up their previous employment, the group most affected were Nigerians, at 17 per cent, contrasting with Polish nationals at 14 per cent and 7 per cent among Spanish nationals. Also, though only a very small percentage of migrants were recorded as looking for their first regular job, there was a substantial difference in outcomes between Africans and Europeans within the broad categories and within the research populations. One per cent of EU migrants compared to three per cent of Africans were recorded as looking for their first jobs, while the research populations mirrored the broad groups, with Nigerian migrants recording three per cent as still looking for their first regular job compared to one per cent among Spanish and Polish migrants.

Table 2: Summary of the Labour Force outcome and participation for the research populations at April 2011, [CSO 2011]

	Spanish	Polish	Nigerian
Principal Economic Status	66%	56%	32%
Lost/given up first job	7%	14%	17%
Assigned to Managers	15%	6.5%	4.5%
3rd level education or higher	62.7%	22.3%	39.4%
Looking for their first job	1%	1%	3%
Communicate well in English	Not available	30.6%	82%

When the census data is further explored based on ethnicity, there is an even greater distinction in outcomes between White and Black migrants. The data shows that 344,962 persons were recorded as White who were not ‘White Irish’ or ‘White Traveller’, of which 60 per cent were recorded as being in employment in 2011 (Table 3). Out of the total number of persons categorised as Black or Black Irish-African, a much lower rate of 37 per cent (of all those aged 15 and over) was recorded for those in paid employment. Similar to the disparity in outcome for EU migrants, White Europeans recorded only one per cent of their population

as looking for their first regular job, with 14 per cent in that group becoming unemployed from losing their job or having given up a previous employment. Much higher figures were recorded in the case of Blacks or Black Irish linked to Africa, where 4.5 per cent were recorded as looking for their first regular job and 21 per cent of their total population recorded as unemployed from having lost or given up a previous job.

Table 3: Labour Force outcome by race and ethnicity at April 2011, [CSO 2011]

	White Europeans	Black Africans	Black not African
% in Employment	60%	37%	50%
Lost/given up first job	14%	21%	14%
Looking for first job	1%	4.5	2.3

According to the census figures, the group with the lowest economic outcome in the Irish labour market were those in the Black or Black Irish-African category. While the findings from EP did not explicitly indicate race in the labour market differential, the ethnicity questions introduced into the Irish census from 2006 onward allowed the collection of data on differential outcomes based on race. These differences are significant as they indicate a labour market differential directly linked to race. They also reveal a racial hierarchy in the Irish labour market with Europeans at the top and Black Africans at the bottom of the labour supply chain. The Irish census presents a similar racial landscape to the EP database as well as the interviewees' perspectives on racial hierarchy in Ireland.

THE IMPACT OF RACIAL HIERARCHY ON WORKERS IN IRELAND

What does it matter who is at the bottom or at the top? Also, is such positioning aimed to gain what Song calls 'moral and material capital' (2004: 859), or does it allow the telling of the story of marginalised bodies by "opening a window onto ignored or alternative realities", according to Delgado and Stefancic (2012: 45). The three data sets analysed in this study show that Ireland is racially stratified and has a White over Black ascendancy. This finding thus suggests that Ireland is not only a racial state (Goldberg, 2002) and a racist state (Lentin

and McVeigh, 2006), but is also a heavily racially stratified state. It has been argued that societies stratify along several dimensions, resulting in a layering of groups of people with greater and lesser social power-forming hierarchies. When societies stratify along the lines of race, it is referred to as racial stratification (Verdugo, 2008). While race is not the only possible governing factor, Dyer (2000) argues that race is always a factor and always in play. Being racially stratified is not simply a matter of how people are arranged in society, rather it has implications for their life chances (Zuberi and Bashi, 1997), it signifies difference and structures of inequality (Omi and Winant 1994). This study implicates race in the way Black and White workers in the Irish labour market are separated to the bottom and top of the economic ladder. This in turn has significant implications, and most people who insist that race does not matter are usually those whose racial category is positioned at the pinnacle of the racial hierarchy (Todorov, 2006) or are members of marginalised groups who have experienced a ‘progressive evolution’ in the labour market (Joseph, 2015).

Although racial hierarchy is not linear, Figure 6 shows a representation of the four nationalities in this study and the varied distances they have to negotiate to attain the same result. It thus immediately presents three interesting observations about racial hierarchies. The first obvious implication is, that groups stratified higher up on the racial ladder will have easier access reaching their labour market goals than those lower down. The second is the converse of the first, where the level of difficulty and distance to achieve the same economic goals as those at the top, progressively gets more difficult, more competitive as you move down the ladder. In essence, groups at the very bottom of the ladder have to work harder than groups stratified at the top to achieve the same results. Due to the constraint of space, I am unable to articulate more data from the bigger research upon which this article is based.

Figure 6: The implication of racial stratification in the Irish labour

While belief in a top-down hierarchy can also shape group relations, public policy formation, and political alliances (Song, 2004: 859), it also calls into question our taken-for-granted belief in meritocracy and equal opportunity. Living in a racially stratified society, invariably means: firstly, that if every migrant puts in the same effort, the labour market strata will remain unchanged, unless those stratified at the bottom put in more effort than those stratified directly over them to attain the same result as those stratified above them; secondly, that Black migrants are at a higher risk of being marginalized due to their race; and thirdly, that while inter/intra group mobility on the labour market strata is affected by race and gender, race seems to have a greater impact on labour market outcomes across groups than within groups. While this is an interesting insight, more study needs to be carried out on it.

CONCLUSION

This article shows how race, through the racial order, influences the employment status of people of migrant origin in the Irish labour market. The article has demonstrated the existence of a hierarchical racial order in Ireland with Whites at the top, Blacks at the bottom, and variations in-between. While every group is impacted by race, the effect appeared to be more pronounced along colour lines based on nationality, race and skin colour. The Black Nigerian migrants in the study were, on all counts, overrepresented at the bottom of the labour market, while the White European migrants who, though not at the pinnacle, were also not at the bottom. They fared better than their Black African counterparts in terms of employment opportunities. The point of this conclusion is not just to show how Blacks in the Irish labour market are more marginalised than other migrants, but also to highlight the structural nature of racial inequality. Racial stratification in the labour market is not a personal or individual matter, neither is it an accidental outcome. It is endemic to the structure of the labour market system but largely invisible to those in power as the colour-coded hierarchy of the labour market order is rarely called into question or publicly challenged.

The responses of the interviewees who were asked where they thought various migrant groups occupy on the racial order in Ireland indicate that the theory of immigration and racial stratification of the U.S. is in many ways applicable to the racial order and its operations in Ireland. Though race is, indeed, a theoretical construct, the findings demonstrate how racial groupings are living realities with material consequences (Zuberi and Bashir, 1997). Race strongly influenced the labour market outcomes of the groups studied. However, race also

interacts with other expressions of difference, such as gender, to influence the labour market outcomes of actors and their inter/intra group positioning. Also, considering that educational attainment in the study appears to increase the chances of migrants accessing the labour market, a racial stratification framework shows that the overrepresentation of people of colour at the bottom of the ladder was not mainly due to a deficit in their achievement attributes, but essentially due to their race.

The level of systemic inequality which this article uncovers has implications for Black migrants who are at a higher risk of being marginalized due to their race. It raises pertinent questions as to the limits of meritocracy and equality of opportunity in Ireland, not only for this group, but also groups that exhibit visible difference. Social scientists and researchers who routinely report that Black workers are more likely to become unemployed, without framing this within a critical racial framework are open to flawed conclusions and interpretations; the non-critical stance leads to the conclusion that there must be something wrong with Blacks for being at the bottom of the racial ladder (Zuberi, 2008). The overwhelming evidence from this study however is that whiteness, and its hierarchal positioning, affect the labour market outcomes of migrants in a manner over which they have no personal control; racial hierarchies are endemic to the operation of the labour market system.

While I have examined racial inequality using a racial stratification framework, it is obvious that differentials in labour market outcomes do not tell the whole story of how migrants experience their positioning on the racial ladder. There are many complexities in the operation of racial stratification including intra-group variations in how individuals with shared racial identity negotiate, occupy and make meaning of the racial hierarchy in Ireland. This could be a subject for further study.

NOTES

1. In the same report, nearly three-quarters of Italians said immigrants had a bad impact on their country, 20 per cent expressed negative views of immigration from Eastern European countries and 22 per cent for those from the Middle East and Africa.
2. In the Irish poll, 81 per cent of those aged 18 to 24 would like to see the numbers of immigrants fall, compared to 69 per cent in the 25-44 age group. This contests the rationale of competition for resources being cited as a reason for discrimination in many studies, as the younger age group (18-24) that are not yet in direct economic competition seem to be demonstrating a higher level of hardening in their attitude.
3. White logic refers to a context in which white supremacy has defined the techniques and processes of reasoning about social facts. Zuberi (2008) insists on deracialising social statistics, particularly in the way data is presented.

4. EP's employment officers have routinely mentioned experiencing more difficulty in placement progression for clients of African descent than their counterparts from the EU into paid employment, professional or higher managerial roles.
5. 'Paid' employment is used in this study to represent any employment opportunity with financial remuneration.
6. 'Unpaid' employment is used to represent any career progression opportunity which does not receive financial remuneration. This includes voluntary work, internships, work-placements, education or training.
7. Education received after secondary school that is distinct from university education
8. Some other relevant issues which, due to the nature of the data available on the database, could not be compared would be the nature of the jobs the migrants were competing for; if they were different between the males and females, or between people from different nationalities in terms of language roles; or if the Polish men were seeking construction jobs. The age difference between groups might also influence the stage in their human development they are in, and hence the job types and levels they are seeking (whether entry level, middle or top management roles).
9. The Irish were added to the questionnaire as it has been argued that race is relational. In other words, difference is experienced relative to others. Considering that the native Irish citizens are the members of the host community, it is important to view the positioning of others relative to them.
10. The first four interviewees were presented with two diagrams. This idea was abandoned and the remaining 28 interviewees were then asked to give their personal interpretation.

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