
“The Monster that is too big to tackle”: Experiences of Microaggression by Black Professionals in the Social Work Field in Portugal

Sania Bilwani

Erasmus Mundus Master's Programme in Social Work with Families and Children

Supervisor:

Cristina Roldão (PhD), Integrated Researcher,
CIES_Iscte-University Institute of Lisbon

October, 2021

Department of Political Science and Public Policies

“The Monster that is too big to tackle”: Experiences of Microaggression by Black Professionals in the Social Work Field in Portugal

Sania Bilwani

Erasmus Mundus Master’s Programme in Social Work with Families and Children

Supervisor:

Cristina Roldão (PhD), Integrated Researcher,
CIES_Iscte-University Institute of Lisbon

October, 2021

Abstract

Title: “The Monster that is too big to tackle”: Experiences of Microaggression by Black Professionals in the Social Work Field in Portugal

Author: Sania Bilwani

Keywords: microaggressions, everyday racism, social workers, workplace, lusotropicalism

The study sought to explore the experiences of racial microaggression by professionals in the social work field. The study purposively sampled seven participants who work in different sectors of the social work arena. The qualitative research design was used to explore the perspectives of professionals in the field. Due to the pandemic context, in depth interviews were conducted via Zoom. The conceptual and theoretical frameworks of microaggression and everyday racism, as outlined by Derald Sue and Philomena Essed respectively, were used to analyse the results and explore the micro and meso effects of microaggression. The results show the nature of microaggression (micro-insult, micro-invalidation, micro-assault and gendered microaggression), the experiences and consequences of microaggression. The experiences of microaggression in the workplace indicate stereotypes of the Black professionals and perceptions of them as the racial “other”, the triad of microaggression from the supervisor, subordinates and co-workers, white fragility, pressure to assimilate, ethno-racial matching, and the organisational culture that reproduces microaggression. The results indicate how lusotropical narratives of Portuguese national identity as a “good” colonizer led to the denial of racism which perpetuates microaggression. The research also shows the consequences of microaggression, particularly the psychological effects such as low self-esteem and feelings of powerlessness. Participants noted internal and external coping mechanisms which include avoidance strategies, working twice as hard to counter the burden of proof, seeking external support or stepping out of the organisation altogether. This study recommends that cultural competency and anti-racist campaigns, hiring strategies that aim ethno-racial diversity, mentorship programs for Black professionals and workplace committees to implement and foresee racially sensitive strategies and protocols are established.

Título: “O Monstro grande demais para enfrentar”: Experiências de Microagressão de Profissionais Negros na Área do Serviço Social em Portugal

Autor: Sania Bilwani

Palavras-chave: microagressões, racismo cotidiano, assistentes sociais, local de trabalho, lusotropicalismo

O estudo buscou explorar as experiências de microagressão racial por profissionais da área de serviço social. O estudo amostrou propositalmente sete participantes que trabalham em diferentes setores da arena do serviço social. O desenho de pesquisa qualitativa foi usado para explorar as perspectivas dos profissionais da área. Devido ao contexto de pandemia, entrevistas em profundidade foram conduzidas via Zoom. As estruturas conceituais e teóricas de microagressão e racismo cotidiano, conforme descrito por Derald Sue e Philomena Essed, respectivamente, foram usadas para analisar os resultados e explorar os efeitos micro e meso da microagressão. Os resultados mostram a natureza da microagressão (micro-insulto, micro-invalidação, micro-agressão e microagressão de gênero), as experiências e consequências da microagressão. As experiências de microagressão no ambiente de trabalho indicam estereótipos dos profissionais negros e percepções deles como o “outro” racial, a tríade da microagressão do supervisor, subordinados e colegas de trabalho, fragilidade branca, pressão para assimilar, compatibilização étnico-racial, e a cultura organizacional que reproduz a microagressão. Os resultados indicam como as narrativas lusotropicalistas da identidade nacional portuguesa como um “bom” colonizador levaram à negação do racismo que perpetua a microagressão. A pesquisa também mostra as consequências da microagressão, principalmente os efeitos psicológicos, como baixa autoestima e sentimentos de impotência. Os participantes observaram mecanismos de enfrentamento internos e externos que incluem estratégias de prevenção, trabalhando duas vezes mais para conter o ônus da prova, buscando apoio externo ou abandonando completamente a organização. Este estudo recomenda que sejam estabelecidas campanhas de competência cultural e anti-racista, estratégias de contratação que visem a diversidade étnico-racial, programas de mentoria para profissionais negros e comitês de trabalho para implementar e prever estratégias e protocolos racialmente sensíveis.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	1
Introduction	2
Chapter One: Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks.....	6
1.1 Defining Microaggression.....	6
1.2 Racial States and Everyday Racism.....	10
1.3 Manifestations of Racism.....	14
1.3.1 The Politics of Space, Hair and Skin.	14
1.3.2 White Fragility	14
1.3.3 Tokenism.....	15
1.4 Microaggressions in the Workplace.....	16
1.5 Microaggressions in the Social Work field.....	19
Chapter Two: Historical Framework	21
2.1 The Colonial History of Portugal: a Brief Overview.....	21
2.2 Portuguese anti-racial ideology & Luso-tropicalism	24
Chapter Three: Methodology.....	25
3.1 Literature Search Technique	25
3.2 The epistemological and ontological approach	26
3.3 Research design.....	26
3.4 Study Population	27
3.6 Selection and Sampling Technique.....	28
3.7 Data collection methods and tools	29
3.8 Data Analysis and Presentation	30
3.9 Ethical Considerations	31
3.9.1 Informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality	31
3.9.2 Protection from harm and deception.....	31
3.10 Self Reflection: Insider vs Outsider Continuum.....	32
Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion	35

4.1 Nature of Microaggression.....	36
4.1.1 Micro assaults	36
4.1.2 Micro insults	37
4.1.3 Microinvalidations	38
4.1.4 Gendered Racial Microaggressions	40
4.2 Everyday Experiences of Microaggression in the Workplace.....	41
4.2.1 Stereotyping Black People: The Racial Other	42
4.2.2 The Triad of Microaggression: Supervisors, Co-workers and Subordinates.....	44
4.2.3 White Fragility as Microaggression.....	46
4.2.4 Pressure to Assimilate.....	47
4.2.5 Ethno-Racial Matching	49
4.2.6 From Micro to Meso: Organisational Culture	50
4.3 Consequences of Microaggression	51
4.3.1 Psychological Impacts	52
4.3.2 Coping Mechanisms.....	54
Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusion	58
5.1 Recommendations for policy and practice.....	61
5.2 Implications for social work – MFamily	62
5.3 Limitations and future research	62
References	63
Appendix 1: Interview Script.....	69
Appendix 2: Invitation Letter	70
Appendix 3: Consent Form	71

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my supervisor, Cristina Roldão, for her excellent insights and support throughout this research project. I am incredibly grateful and in awe of your attention to detail and vast repertoire of knowledge. Thank you for letting me learn from you!

My sincerest gratitude also to Joana Azevedo for coordinating the dissertation seminars during this term, for your kindness and support during the latter half of this dissertation writing process and for helping me navigate the Portuguese health care system.

Thanks to the participants of this study without whom this project would not have existed. Thank you for taking out your valuable time for this project, for being so open and generous in sharing your experiences, for swiftly responding to my emails with follow up questions and for helping me connect to other professionals in the field. I hope I did you and your stories justice!

Thanks also to Rute Gonçalves and Prof. Helena Belchior Rocha for connecting me to some of the other participants in this study.

My utmost gratitude also to the European Union and the board of European Master's in Social Work for funding my education and for this once in a lifetime opportunity.

Thanks also to my professors in University of Stavanger and University of Gothenburg, particularly Elisabeth Enoksen and Evelyn Choo for their support during the pandemic. A special mention also to Lena Sawyer who provided me with excellent feedback on my thesis proposal.

I want to thank my incredible friends in Lisbon - Nutthomon, Eshcol and Gabriela – for helping me survive the lockdown when I first started writing the thesis. I will forever be grateful to you girls for listening to me talk endlessly about my frustrations and setbacks in this last semester – and of course, for the food and the companionship.

And finally, thank you to my MFamily colleagues and budding social workers who shared their own experiences of microaggression with me, thus inspiring me to write this thesis in the first place.

Introduction

...I think that this mechanism of not assigning things to racism is a dual thing in a way, it kind of protects you so you don't get depressed, because you're dealing with a monster that is too big for you to tackle. – (Antonio, Study Participant)

This quote from a participant in the study captures the experience and consequence of microaggression by professionals working in the field, which is the focus of my research. By calling it a “monster too big to tackle,” the participant recognises the enormity and pervasiveness of racism for people of colour.

This research study consists of four chapters. The chapter following the introductory chapter presents both a critical analysis of the existing literature on this topic and the theoretical and conceptual framework underpinning this research. The chapter will explore the conceptual frameworks of everyday racism and its manifestations, along with racial states and microaggression as outlined by Philomena Essed, Grada Kilomba, Derald Sue and David Theo Goldberg to help frame discrimination experiences by social work practitioners.

The second chapter provides a brief overview of the Portuguese colonial national history and its connections to contemporary racism in Portugal. This chapter will also show how microaggression is a relatively new and under-researched topic in Portugal.

The third chapter discusses the methodological tools and procedures used for this study and provides an overview of the study context, including sampling procedures, data collection and analysis and ethical considerations. Since, racism is a taboo topic of study in a lusotropical society like Portugal and largely underdeveloped in Portuguese academia, an exploratory qualitative strategy of research characterized by in-depth interviews was undertaken. This chapter will also explore some ethical considerations such as my positionality as a person of color who doesn't speak Portuguese and the possibility of retraumatizing the participants when discussing a sensitive and taboo topic of racism.

Next, the results and discussion chapter present the findings of the study using a thematic analysis. Finally, the last chapter presents an overall summary of the results, the limitations of this dissertation, policy recommendations and concluding remarks.

This study was born out of a desire to explore the experiences of marginalized groups of individuals in Portugal. As an international student in Lisbon, Portugal, an aspiring social worker and a woman of color, my own lived experiences of subtle racism inform the primary study motivations for this research.

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, racial discrimination as a result of colonization impinges on the rights and freedom of individuals and nations in the Global North. However, while countries and governments in the Global North push for a narrative that portrays their respective countries as tolerant and equal, racism is embedded within the fabric of these society. Moreover, the hegemony of Western knowledge and standards for

cultural development means that indigenous ways of knowing and practices are sidelined. Racism, thus, represents a social and ideological process which discriminates others based on their association with different racial and ethnic groups (Essed, 2008; Goldberg, 2008).

According to the global definition of social work, social work is a practise-based profession that espouses the principles of social justice, human rights and respect for diversities (“Global Definition of Social Work – International Federation of Social Workers,” n.d.). Social workers are therefore required to deal with issues of discrimination, racism and marginalization especially when working with different segments of the population such as people of colour, immigrants and refugees.

Contemporary social work research also explores the challenges faced by marginalised individuals or “those on the edges of society” (Parker & Crabtree, 2017, p. 5). Since social workers are often tasked with handling the case of those who have been disenfranchised in communities, schools and workplaces, social work research aims to explore the issues of discrimination and exclusion faced by service users. Social work research also seeks to understand what marginalisation means and the specific challenges that result from this phenomenon.

In the same vein, there has also been a rise in anti-racist social work and race-based methodologies in social work research in North America and Australia primarily. This has reinforced the need to confront white privilege and examine the treatment of people of colour (Jeffery, 2005; Pillow, 2003). Additionally, social work education and curriculum in the aforementioned countries are now trying to integrate historical and sociological knowledge of race and racism (Varghese, 2016). Similarly, Black activists and social work practitioners in these regions have become more critical of social work interventions that reinforce discrimination and disadvantage based on race, nationality and class (Graham, 2000).

Thus, in Northern America and Australia, an emerging body of anti-racist social work research sheds light on power relations that produce and perpetuate racial and gendered oppression. Some researchers argue that these sources of oppression permeate both social work institutions and practices and the social work knowledge itself (Graham, 2000). The failure to recognise the historically different placement of BIPOC¹ and white people further marginalises the worldview and cultural values of diverse groups of people.

Yet while numerous research explore the challenges faced by marginalised groups of individuals at the intersection of race, gender and ethnicity, very little research has been done on the marginalisation faced by BIPOC social work practitioners themselves in the context of Europe.

Interestingly, the European context provides a crucial arena of study vis-à-vis racism. In Portugal, for instance, while social workers are tasked with implementing integration and immigration policies, notions of colour blindness still permeates the society (Araújo, 2013). This means that anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work are not part of the Portuguese social work education and practise (ibid).

¹ Black, Indigenous and People of Color

In fact, as many Portuguese scholars argue, the Portuguese nation is continually constructed as a non-racist country (Araújo, 2013; Maeso, 2019). A recurring theme in the Portuguese political sphere is construction of a narrative that denies the existence of racism and intolerance. This rhetoric known as lusotropicalism cements what Maeso (2019) calls the “institutionalisation of the denial of racism” in Portugal, especially in conjunction with academic and state institutions. In this way racism is silenced to favour narratives that dilute race issues to be simply a matter of poverty and socioeconomic conditions. In this context, the study of racism in a country with a heavy colonial history and which continually denies racism becomes a crucial endeavour.

Against this backdrop, the main research questions for this study are: what are the experiences of racism and microaggression that Black professionals in the social field encounter? how do the experiences of microaggression change for people with intersecting identities of race and gender? and what are the consequences of that experience on the work that professionals do as proponents of social justice and human right?

Numerous researches have explored the experiences and consequences of microaggression on individuals with racial and ethnic minority backgrounds. Research has shown, for instance, that while microaggression may appear trivial with no serious consequences or threats to the wellbeing of the target person, the cumulative and long-term effect of continued microaggressions may be traumatic (Hunn, Harley, Elliott, & Canfield, 2015; Sue, 2010a; Wong, Derthick, David, Saw, & Okazaki, 2014). The seemingly innocuous and small acts of microaggression may lead to feelings of stress, anger, hostility, and invisibility in the recipient (S. Kim & Kim, 2010). Apart from these personal feelings of stress, microaggressions also create inequalities in the workplace, educational settings and even healthcare (Gomez, Khurshid, Freitag, & Lachuk, 2011; Piccinelli, Vauclair, & Martinho, 2020; Weng & Gray, 2018).

Additionally, research has also shown that social workers and professionals in the field of social work can be targets of microaggression. For instance, research by Weinberg & Fine (2020) on social workers in Canada show that the kinds of racism experienced by social work practitioners range from institutional to cultural and epistemological. Similarly, research by Gosine & Pon (2011) on racialized child welfare workers shows that racism is systematically interwoven into the workplace which is increasingly characterised by a White, middle-class normative structure.

While important studies in their own right, no such research exists in the context of Portugal. This is of particular concern whilst considering the socio-political context of Portugal where lusotropicalist narratives of denial shape the national identity of Portuguese citizens. Additionally, the every-day lived experience of Afro-Portuguese social work practitioners in a workplace setting remains to be studied. The concept of everyday racism, borrowed from the work of Philomena Essed (1991), offers valuable theoretical insight into the experiences of microaggression. According to Essed (1991), everyday racism is a helpful tool to understand racism as a process that involves a continuous and unconscious exercise of power that privileges whiteness. Moreover, everyday racism captures both the mundane and the systematic instances of racism – the chronic effect of which can be

adverse and distressful (ibid). Present also in this understanding of everyday racism are the “taken for granted, attitudes and behaviours” that sustain racial injustice (Essed, 2008, p. 204). Finally, this concept also recognises that targets of racism are not only the powerless and vulnerable, but also those who hold positions of authority such as social workers and other professionals.

This research therefore aims to fill the gap that exists in literature and explore experiences of microaggression in the social work field through an in-depth qualitative inquiry. As Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama (2018) argue, the topic of Black subjectivities and racial discrimination remains an often neglected but crucial focus of study. The value of this thesis lies in the fact that it explores both the experiences and the consequences of microaggression in the everyday lives of Black professionals in the social work field and the mediating strategies they use to combat them. More importantly, evidence of microaggression from this research can contribute to the education of policy makers, academics and society at large (Ross-Sheriff, 2012). Consequently, results of this research can also aid in efforts to advocate for those suffering aggression and marginalisation on the basis of race.

The study also hopes to explore the consequences of these experiences on the work that professionals do as proponents of social justice and inclusion in society. Previous research has already explored some of the determinantal effects of microaggressions on recipients’ mental health and well being (Ong, Burrow, Fuller-Rowell, Ja, & Sue, 2013; Sue et al., 2007). What remains to be studied however are the sociological connections of microaggression with the socio-political context in which Black social work practitioners reside. This is important so as to understand the systematic and institutional manifestation of microaggression in a workplace that is tasked with helping the vulnerable and the marginalised.

The aim of this research, therefore, is to add to the existing literature on microaggression and contribute to anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practices and education. Additionally, the research also stresses the need to include a more intersectional and anti-racist framework to the social work MFAMILY syllabus. The two-year MFAMILY program is designed to provide education in social work to a group of international cohorts from diverse backgrounds. One of the major strengths of this program is the cultural diversity of the students who come together to share knowledge and engage in meaningful dialogue. As aspiring social workers of color, the students of the MFAMILY cohort can benefit greatly from the findings of this study. Indeed, by understanding the lived realities of social work practitioners in the field, future professionals in the social work field can better equip themselves for the practical world. Ultimately, the goal is for social work professionals to be able to propose and advocate for anti-racist policies and practices.

Chapter One: Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks

This chapter provides an overview of past literature on microaggression and racism. Definitions of microaggression are discussed, followed by the taxonomy of microaggression and the major themes and consequences. For this end, the work of Derald Sue (2007, 2010) is crucial in operationalizing microaggression as a conceptual tool that allows us to explore racialized people's experiences as opposed to white peoples' intentions and attitudes. The chapter then explains Essed (1991)'s theory of everyday racism as a useful tool to analyze microaggression and discusses major themes and manifestations of everyday racism through the works of Grada Kilomba, Theo Goldberg and Lena Dominelli. The chapter concludes with an overview of literature on racism in professional work settings and the racism specific to the social work field.

1.1 Defining Microaggression

The term Microaggression was first coined by Chester Pierce, an African American scholar and professor of psychiatry from Harvard University. He defined microaggressions as:

“subtle, innocuous, preconscious, or unconscious degradations, and putdowns, often kinetic but capable of being verbal and/or kinetic. In and of itself a microaggression may seem harmless, but the cumulative burden of a lifetime of microaggressions can theoretically contribute to diminished mortality, augmented morbidity, and flattened confidence” (as cited in Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009, p. 660.)

The concept of microaggression, compared with other conceptual tools that have been used to study racism at the psychological level, puts the focus on the experience of the racialized subject and not on the attitudes and stereotypes of the perpetrators of racism. This is important because the term lets us recognise racialized people's experiences – we recognise, therefore, that what racialized people feel is real and true. What is “real/true” is not just dependent on the intention/subjectivity of the racist person.

Soon, the definition of microaggressions was widened to include a more intersectional approach. Thus, the concept of gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation was included to encompass the experiences of other marginalised communities in society (Embrick, Domínguez, & Karsak, 2017). In this regard, the work of Sue et al. (2007) in the book, “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical practise” defined microaggressions in this way:

“brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (p. 183)

Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder (2008) conducted a focus group with a group of 13 African Americans graduate students and faculty members in New York City. Later research by Sue, Lin, & Rivera (2009) replicated the findings with 10 Black counselling psychology students in north eastern United States through semi-structured interviews. According to this research, most of the oppression experienced by these communities is at a micro level and not immediately visible. Thus, the psychological toll it takes on the victims is difficult to address and requires more attention. These “everyday” manifestations of microaggressions, as outlined in the book mentioned above, thus explain the processes and impact of this phenomenon.

To further elaborate on the concept of microaggression, Sue et al. (2007) also distinguished between environmental, verbal and non-verbal microaggressions in everyday life. Environmental microaggressions refer to degrading cues that are communicated to marginalised groups in the environment at social, educational, political and economical spheres of life. These may be communicated visually or through a philosophy that communities adopt such as “colour-blindness” and may not be interpersonal in nature (Sue, 2010, p. 25).

Usually, environmental microaggressions manifest at a macrolevel such as through laws and policies (Wong et al., 2014). These policies then shape the way institutions are structured which exclude Black or people of colour are. An example provided by Sue (2010), was when he was invited to conduct diversity training in a seminar for deans and administrators of several colleges and where not a single person of colour for present. This absence of people of colour and exclusion of marginalised groups in leadership or administrative roles is an example of environmental microaggression – similar also to the concept of institutional racism as outlined by Essed (1991).

Second, according to these researchers, three forms of racial microaggression are possible:

- (i) Microassaults are “explicit racial derogation characterized primarily by verbal, nonverbal or environmental attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions” (ibid, p. 29),
- (ii) Microinsults involves communication that is characterised by rudeness and insensitivity and stereotypes. Microinsults can negatively target a person’s race, identity, sexual orientation and cultural background. They can manifest both interpersonally and indirectly through environmental cues. They are often subtle and unconscious on the part of the perpetrator but convey a damaging message to the recipient. An example of microinsult is when somebody tells an Asian American student that all Asians are good at maths. While, at first glance, this seems like a compliment, it is actually a microinsult because it generalises all the Asian Americans and ignores their unique identities and characteristics (Nadal, Wong, Griffin, Davidoff, & Sriken, 2014).

- (iii) Microinvalidation includes communication or behaviour that negates or invalidates a person's thoughts, feelings, or experiences. An example includes a scenario where a student rolls her eyes when a Latino student criticizes the university's curriculum for not providing more Latino study courses. According to Nadal, Wong, Griffin, Davidoff, & Sriken (2014) this is microinvalidation because it communicates to the Latino student that they are complaining too much and that her concerns are not worth consideration.

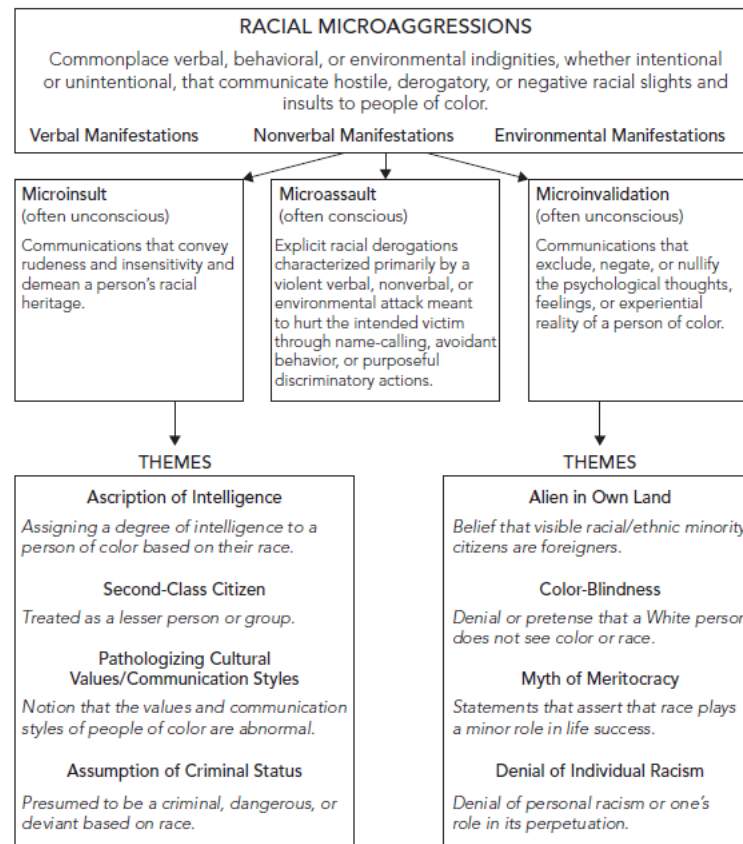


Figure 1.1: Categories of Microaggressions (Sue et al, 2007)

Sue et al (2010) also went on to explain the five step microaggression process which includes first experiencing the incident, identifying the perpetrator's intent, grappling with the emotional, cognitive and behavioural impact of the incident, processing the incident and the feelings associated with it and finally, dealing with the consequences of it and coming up with coping strategies. The process thus highlights the psychological and insidious effects of microaggressions. Recipients of microaggression must navigate cognitive, affective, spiritual, and behavioural consequences. Previous research has shown for instance that recipients of microaggression must deal with feelings of fear and guilt (affective) and even inhibited social interaction (behavioural).

As outlined in the figure above, Sue et al (2007) also highlighted key themes of racial microaggressions which include the following:

- 1- Alien in one's own land: which is the insinuation that a person of colour does not belong, is not worthy or important enough to receive fair treatment. For example, a Black person in Portugal maybe constantly asked, "but where are you really from?" – thus insinuating that the person is not really Portuguese.
- 2- Ascription of intelligence: this is microinsults related to intelligence and a racialized person's capabilities (Sue et al, 2007, 2010). For example, African Americans students are often believed to be less intelligent than their white counterparts (Sue, Nadal, et al., 2008). Moreover, comments like how did you get so good at maths? may also be microaggression as teacher's assume that certain racialized person are not as intelligent. In some cases, teachers or supervisors may also express surprise when Black students or employees perform well in class or in the workplace, "you are Black, but very intelligent".
- 3- Colour blindness: this constitutes a denial of people's racial and ethnic background and includes comments like, "I don't see colour" (Sue, 2010, p. 32). Statements like this dictate that a white person does not want to recognise the racial imbalance and their position of privilege that frames their interactions.
- 4- Assumption of criminality: this is when a Black person or person of colour is assumed to be a criminal or engaging in deviant behaviour solely based on their race. An example of such an incident is when a person clutches their belongings closer when they see a Black person walking by.
- 5- Denial of racism: statements where individuals do not acknowledge their own biases such as "I am not racist; I have Black friends" indicates microaggression.
- 6- Assumptions regarding the myth of meritocracy: this is when people believe that race or gender plays no part in how far people can get in life. It includes the believe that effort alone is enough for success – ignoring the discrimination and disadvantages that people of colour experience and which hinders success and opportunities. Many times, they use exceptional cases to say "if Beyoncé made it, it means that other Black people can do it if they want to and work for it"
- 7- Pathologizing cultural practises: this is when individuals place white cultural norms and practises on a pedestal and use those values to judge other ethnic and racial cultural practices. For instance, students of colour may be dismissed when they bring up race or culture in classroom discussions. The implicit message behind this dismissal maybe that one should leave their cultural baggage behind (Sue et al, 2010, p. 32)
- 8- Second class citizen: this is when certain groups of people receive different treatment from the dominant white group. For instance, when people of colour are mistaken to be service workers instead of managers. The underlying assumption behind this microaggression is that people cannot possibly be in leadership positions and can only do menial jobs.

According to Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder (2008), microaggressions may appear trivial with no serious consequences or threats to the wellbeing of the target person. However, the cumulative and long-term effect of continued microaggressions may be traumatic. The small acts of microaggression may lead to feelings of stress, anger, hostility, and invisibility in the recipient (ibid).

Apart from these personal feelings of stress, microaggressions also create inequalities in the workplace, educational settings and even healthcare (Gomez et al., 2011; Piccinelli et al., 2020; Weng & Gray, 2018). For instance, healthcare microaggressions where health care providers do not acknowledge cultural issues or express certain stereotypes about certain groups may hinder the patient from pursuing healthcare in the future (Cruz, Rodriguez, & Mastropaolo, 2019). Similarly, there is evidence to suggest that Black Americans do not access mental health care or social services because of past experiences of microaggressions by white therapists or mental health professionals, along with economic reasons, and are more likely to terminate sessions (Sue, Nadal, et al., 2008).

1.2 Racial States and Everyday Racism

Against this backdrop, it is important to consider race relations and racism as constituted by the state marked by a history of colonisation. This section will outline the concept of “racial states” as coined by David Goldberg and its connections to everyday racism as conceptualised by Philomena Essed and Grada Kilomba.

According to Goldberg (2008), the modern nation states as we know today are racially conceived and based on racist commitments. Not only is race central to the production and development of the nation states, but the state actively works to perpetuate racial expressions, exclusions and violence. It follows that race defines every interaction and expression in the modern nation state – leading to “social silences” and the invisible or subtle expressions of everyday encounters and experiences (Goldberg, 2008, p. 235).

It is fruitful also to consider the connection of racial states with capitalist states. According to Goldberg (2008), racial states have served capitalist and gendered motives by regulating labor polices, policing access to resources and defining the role of families. In this way, racial states maintain social order for the economic wellbeing of the bourgeois with deep racial implications by regulating three arenas: migration, social and sexual interaction and crime especially with regards to property.

Indeed, states are considered racial by Goldberg (2008; 2006) because of the structural power they possess in producing and maintaining “racially shaped spaces and places, groups and events, life worlds and possibilities, accesses and restrictions, inclusions and exclusions, conceptions and modes of representation” (Goldberg, 2008, p 239). As such, states are racist in the way they exclude, marginalise and give due importance to certain racial groups thus maintaining the “racist world order” (ibid).

Yet, modern racism stems from the denial of racism in most European countries. The violent colonial practises are projected as if they existed in the past and in the rural plantations with those enslaved to protect Europe’s self image (Goldberg, 2006). However, as Goldberg (2006) argues, race is a way of being, living and representation which cannot be erased simply because of “wishful” thinking (p.334).

Goldberg (2006) also notes how the Holocaust has been made the referent point for race while Europe’s colonial history has disappeared from consciousness as the latter is believed to have transpired on foreign soil, away from European land. Colonialism is said to have had no effect in the construction of Europe and the current nation states. However, this

presumption fails to acknowledge the notions of racial discrimination that marks both colonisation and the Holocaust thereby proving that the Holocaust itself was a product of the colonial legacy.

Thus, “Racial Europeanization” coined by Goldberg stems from the desire of many European nations to refuse to reckon with their colonial past including Portugal. Present in this Racial Europeanization is also the notion of modern slavery which includes outsourcing jobs and designating production of goods and extracting resources from the Global South, or outside of Europe, thus hiding the inhumane conditions under which all this is done.

Following this, it is important to consider how racism manifests itself at a microlevel in this racial state. For this end, the work of Philomena Essed and Grada Kilomba in the context of Netherlands and Germany respectively is helpful.

Grada Kilomba (2008) explains the three features of racism in her seminal work, “Plantation Memories”. First, according to Kilomba (2008, p.42), racism leads to a construction of difference where all those who are not white are constructed as different and defined through the white norm – whereas, others as constructed as racial “Others”. Second, embedded within this difference is a hierarchy, as not only is the racial Other different, but also inferior, dishonorable and stigmatized. Finally, the two processes go hand in hand with power at a historical, political, social and economic level and racism is thus defined as white supremacy (ibid). Kilomba describes this process in the following way:

“We were asked to read about the “Portuguese Discovery Epoch,” even though we do not remember being discovered. We were asked to write about the great legacy of colonization, even though we could only remember robbery and humiliation. And we were asked not to inquire about our African heroes, for they were terrorists and rebels. What a better way to colonize than to teach the colonized to speak and write from the perspective of the colonizer” (p.35)

Kilomba (2008) also explores the difference between structural (social and political), institutional (schools, university and justice system) and everyday racism. According to her, everyday racism is not a single event but a “constellation of life experiences” and a “continuing pattern of abuse” that people of color experience throughout their life as a result of white supremacy (p. 45). This is similar to the concept of microaggression which are unconscious and prevalent instances of racism and discrimination towards BIPOC.

Similarly, in “Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory”, Essed (1991) outlines the phenomenological experience of racism by African American women in California, USA and Black Surinamese women in the Netherlands. Through the concept of “everyday racism”, she bridges the gap between the macro and micro sociological dimensions of racism.

More importantly, through her comparison of the Netherlands and the US, she is able to explore the different modes and sources of knowledge that Black women have in the US and Netherlands. For while in the US, socialization at home and formal modes of knowledge at school allowed Black women to understand the reality of racism, women in the Netherlands struggled to push back against the Dutch rhetoric of tolerance and cultural

tolerance. According to Essed (1991), this is because of the differences in racism in the two countries and the history of Dutch colonization. Indeed, the “paternalistic remnant of colonialism” and the ideology of “cultural pluralism” that dictates Dutch society means that racism is denied even though it is systematically rooted into the fabric of society (Essed, 1991, p. 17-18). This is similar to the Portuguese construction of an anti-racist ideology or luso-tropicalism that perpetuates colour-blindness and the myth of Portuguese “soft” and “tolerant” colonialism (Maeso, 2019).

Thus, while Black women in the United States receive knowledge about racism from older generations of Blacks in the United States, Black women in the Netherlands only acquired this knowledge after their immigration and arrival to Netherlands (Essed, 1991). This is because of the history of Dutch colonization and lack of information about racism and its connection to Dutch neocolonialism in the contemporary world. In other words, Black women in the Netherlands acquired knowledge of racism through indirect means which includes their own personal experience in educational institutes, workplace, or everyday life. In contrast, Black women in the United States acquired this knowledge through direct means which includes family, community members, significant others, and the media. Thus, Black women in the United States were more likely to use the historical context of slavery in the United States as a frame of reference to conceptualize their current experiences of racism and discrimination (Essed, 1991).

Another difference between Black women in Netherlands and in the United States is the way they think about the intentions of the perpetrators of racism. Black women in the Netherlands often think that White people are simply ignorant and incapable of understanding what the problem is. This ties in with the pluralistic framework of Dutch racism as conceptualized by Essed (1991). On the other hand, Black women in the United States believe that White people have had enough time to know what racism is but have simply become indifferent to issues of race, thus maintaining their privilege of not having to think about the issue.

Overall, according to Essed (2008), there is a tendency in Europe to associate racism with World War two or the Holocaust but not with the colonial history of Europe in Africa. Moreover, there is little to no efforts to educate children and adults about the information needed to identify racism and explore how it is experienced and thus countered. The concept of “Everyday Racism” is thus a useful way to identify racism as a process which involves the continuous use of power and privileging of whiteness.

Everyday racism is manifested in everyday, mundane practices and experiences of daily life (Essed, 2008). This recurring, consistent manifestation of it is what makes it debilitating and there has been evidence to support the connection between everyday racism and high blood pressure for instance (Sue, 2010b). Moreover, because of its recurrent characteristic, everyday racism is normalized, and becomes part of the familiar and taken for granted behaviors and attitudes thus perpetuating racial and social injustice. On a psychological level, everyday racism also leads to feelings of alienation and powerlessness (Rachel Speer, Atteberry-Ash, Kattari, & Gupta, 2020; Robinson-Perez, Marzell, & Han, 2019).

Essed (1991) also highlights what she calls “gendered racism” which includes the intersection of gender and racism. As such she compares the difference between everyday discrimination against women which includes harassment and unwarranted touching, and

discrimination against Black people which includes avoidance. Women of color, however, are lost in this analogy and gendered racism postulates their struggles as rooted in racism and gender discrimination. This is similar to the theory of intersectionality by Kimberlé Crenshaw who explored how different social locations such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, age, disability/ability, migration status, religion and geography intersect and explain the experiences of marginalisation that non-white social workers may face (Hankivsky, 2014).

Both “gendered racism” and the intersectionality approach helps reconfigure the way we look at power dynamics in the workplace or other institutions. Indeed, from an intersectional perspective, power is relational, in that a person can both experience power and oppression in different contexts and time spaces and can both exert power over others and with others (Hankivsky, 2014, p. 9).

Perhaps more significant, is Essed’s explanation of everyday racism as a process. Some scholars have fixated on the intent of the perpetrator of racism instead of focusing on the outcome or the effect of discrimination on the lives of those marginalized on the basis of race or gendered racism. Here, it is important to recognize institutional racism which includes cultural values which dictate the mechanisms of multiple state apparatus such as education, health care, law, housing, and media. This is not to say that everyday racism is only confined to institutional settings. Instead, everyday racism as a process means that unequal power relations are sustained and manifested over negotiations on resources within these institutions and everyday experiences of people of color. Everyday racism is therefore a “multidimensional experience” that includes triggering memories of other such incidents, beliefs about the incident and subsequently behavioral and cognitive coping responses (Essed, 2008, p. 207).

In her book, Essed (1991) also outlines three kinds of everyday racism which are dependent on each other. They include marginalization of racial and ethnic minority individuals; the problematization of non-white cultures and identities and the repression of traumatic experiences through a process of humiliation and alienation. These three processes together lead to everyday occurrences of racism which manifest in the workplace, classrooms, housing, public transportation and in the media. An example of this process includes the marginalization of students in the classroom where white students are upheld as model students and non-white are problematized as lazy or less intellectual (Essed, 2008). Indeed, research in white institutes shows how non-white students are marginalized by both white students and teachers who do not believed them to be intellectually equal or as competent in their studies (Yosso et al., 2009).

In summary, everyday manifestations of racism differ according to the historical and situational context. Not only does this historical context influence the way Black people experience racism but also the way they conceptualize and receive knowledge about this racism. Moreover, even though contemporary Europe is a racial state, the Racial Europeanization means that the state refuses to reckon with its racist and colonial past which affects the way Black people experience racism in Europe, including Portugal. The next section will explore some of these experiences of racism.

1.3 Manifestations of Racism

Present in Essed and Kilomba's analysis is the ways in which racism manifests in everyday life as persistent, deleterious and traumatic. Kilomba in particular explores racism through personal anecdotes and accounts of two African Diasporic women in Germany. She identifies several themes which are outlined below:

1.3.1 The Politics of Space, Hair and Skin.

Space politics, according to Kilomba is tied with new forms of racism, or racism of the 21st century. While racism of the past, in colonial times, was concerned with biological inferiority or superiority of Black and white people respectively, this new racism is territorial in its manifestation. An example of this space politics is explained by Kilomba when she recounts how the street she grew up in Lisbon, Portugal was renamed from rua Dr. João de Barros to rua dos Macaco or "the Monkey Street" as it was primarily inhabited by Black people who had arrived from former African colonies.

Similarly, from a historical and colonial point of view, Black people's hair has been stigmatized and used to justify their subordination. Black hair has historically been associated with primitiveness, disorderliness and uncivilization. The women that Kilomba interviews talk about how white people associate Black hair with dirtiness and unruliness. In present times, this could also be a way to ensure assimilation of Black people in Portuguese and other European society and exemplifies the white desire and attempts to police and control Black bodies according to Kilomba

Finally, skin politics explains the color-blind narratives that white people often employ. For instance, in one of the accounts that Kilomba highlights, a Black woman recounts an experience she had with her white friend who said she doesn't see her as Black. This erasure of the race and skin color is what Kilomba calls the "mechanism of negation" (p.86). The function of this mechanism is that it allows white people to project their feelings of aggression and disdain for black people away from the person. By not acknowledging their race, white people can more readily reconcile and befriend black people.

1.3.2 White Fragility

Present also in Kilomba's account of everyday racism is the white fear of listening to what Black people have to say. Through out her book, Kilomba stresses on the act of silencing and erasure that Black people and Black women in particular must go through. She ties these violence to the white fear and the colonial past where Whiteness had been constructed as superior, the master and the civilized. Kilomba states that this process through which unpleasant ideas "are rendered unconscious, out of awareness" due to the "extreme anxiety, guilt or shame" they incite in the white psyche.

This phenomena of white people denying to engage or confront their own racist beliefs is what Robin DiAngelo (2018) calls "white fragility". More specifically, white fragility as conceptualized by DiAngelo are the defensive responses of white people when confronted about issues of race. These defensive responses include emotions such as anger, fear and guilt and behaviors such silence, arguments, or withdrawal from situations. This is because white people consider it a threat to their identities and beliefs about themselves as good,

moral people to talk about their compliance or even perpetuation of racist comments or behavior.

Whiteness, though not biological, but culturally and socially constructed is still a powerful construct and the modern colonial state is built on its foundations according to DiAngelo and shape every aspect of life for both white and non-white people (2018, p. 16). Thus acknowledging it is crucial as race dictates every aspect of people's lives such where people are born, what schools they go to, who their friends and partners are, what kind of careers they have and how much they earn. DiAngelo thus identifies white fragility as an aspect of whiteness that holds racism in place (p.26).

Philomena Essed also elucidates this concept of whiteness and white fragility in her book. The women she interviewed in Netherlands reported, for instance, that white people often withdraw than speak about racism if they encounter any racist event. Many Black women in Netherlands called white people "hypocrites" for they constantly ignored these racist events but still preached about Dutch tolerance in society. Essed (1991) attributed this to the Dutch taboo against racism, which discourages people from taking responsibility for racist events. Indeed, people considered it more offensive to accuse someone of racism than actually confront racism in the first place. This was also why many Black women in the Netherlands feared victimization if they challenged racism.

What's important to note here is that white fragility itself may contribute to racism, for white people's denial to confront racism may be considered racist and lead to psychological harm for victims of racism. This is particularly troublesome in the workplace where white people actively manage their emotions through certain "strategies" to deny and ignore the presence of racism (Dominelli, 1989, p. 393). In the social work profession, for instance, the strategies include the following:

- 1- Denial strategies where social workers deny the presence of cultural and institutional racism but may accept personal prejudices.
- 2- Colour-blind strategies where social workers content that all individuals have the same needs and problems without taking into consideration racial or ethnic issues
- 3- Patronising approaches where social workers may superficially believe that Black and white people have similar lifestyles but subtly judge white people to be superior.
- 4- Dumping strategies is when social worker's place the duty of eradicating racism on Black people instead of addressing it themselves.
- 5- Omission strategies is when social workers completely ignore racism in interactions within the organisation
- 6- Decontextualization strategies is when social workers acknowledge racism in general terms but do not evaluate racist manifestations in daily interactions
- 7- Avoidance strategies is when social workers acknowledge that racism exists but avoids taking responsibility for it or actively commit to anti-racist social work.

1.3.3 Tokenism

Another manifestation of racism is tokenism. Tokenism was first coined by Rosabeth Kanter (1977) in her book, *Men and Women of the Corporation*. In her research, she

identified two groups of people in the workplace, the majority or dominant group or tokens – those who are rare in number and account for 15 percent or less of the workforce. Even though Kanter identified men as dominant in number and women as tokens, the current research has evolved to include people from different ethnicities and race as tokens who are employed in predominately white dominated workplaces (Niemann, 2016).

For instance, in a study of token Black teachers in a predominately white school, teachers reported experiencing performance pressures and psychological troubles due to high visibility, an exaggeration of differences between themselves and their white counterparts in management and teaching styles and role entrapment as the Black expert where they played a limited role in the school and treated in stereotypical ways such as relegating them to roles considered fit for their gender or race (Kelly, 2007). In this way Black teachers are disadvantaged in the schools because of their tokenized position.

Other research has extended this analysis of tokenism as a function of gender and race within different racial and ethnic subgroups. For instance, research by Strohine & Brandl (2011) on tokenism in the police force indicated that Latino officers reported greater feelings of polarization and reduced opportunity than their white male counterparts. Interestingly, the results also revealed that some gender and racial subgroups fare much worse than Latinos. For instance, Black males and females experienced greater levels of tokenism. This intersection of race and gender as it manifests in microaggression in the workplace is further elaborated in the section below.

1.4 Microaggressions in the Workplace

Most adults spend a majority of their time at work and have to interact with a variety of people such as colleagues, supervisors and subordinates. When microaggressions occur in everyday life such as when in the bus or out for dinner, people can choose to walk away to preserve their own mental health. However, microaggressions are harder to deal with in the workplace as the option of simply walking away or confronting the perpetrator is more difficult or simply not possible. Moreover, since overt acts of racism are illegal in the workplace, subtle forms of racism or microaggression may still take place and create hurdles for Black people or people of color (J. Y.-J. Kim, Nguyen, & Block, 2018).

More specifically, meta-analysis on past research by Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray (2016) reveals that subtle forms of discrimination at work are more detrimental than overt discriminatory practices. Indeed, the higher frequency and persistent nature of subtle discrimination can lead to poor performance, low motivation, and an increase in employee turnover over time. More importantly, the meta-analysis revealed that the ambiguous nature of subtle discrimination leads recipients to internalise feelings of blame, leading to a decrease in psychological well-being and even internalised racism (ibid).

Kim et al (2018) further elaborated on the different kinds of microaggressions that occur at different stages of the employment cycle from the pre-employment stage to the actual employment phase and involves different groups of people: colleagues, supervisors, and subordinates. This “360 degree” experience of microaggression reinforces the insidious and constant nature of microaggression in an individual’s life (ibid, p. 159).

According to Bertrand & Mullainathan (2004) resumes with racial and ethnic sounding names are less likely to be called in for an interview, hindering people of colour, especially women from entering the workforce in the first place (as cited in Kim et al, 2018). Once individuals enter the organisation, however, their experiences of microaggression differ according to the kind of group they belong to. For instance, Asians are more likely to be treated as employees who are only good at maths and statistics while Black women are stereotyped to be aggressive employees whose credentials are constantly challenged.

In the same vein, research on microaggressions has identified the power dynamics at play in the interactions between dominant members of the group and the marginalised (McTernan, 2018). As such, some scholars argue that microaggressions when performed by members of the same group, do not constitute as aggressions and that the main function of microaggression is to reinforce unequal relations in organisations (ibid).

Thus, while phenomenological research by Rachel Speer, Atteberry-Ash, Kattari, & Gupta (2020) on 10 racial/ethnic minority people (including Asian Americans, Black or African Americans and Mixed Race individuals) identified microaggression as a manifestation of power and occurring between marginalised people and an authority figure (supervisor, police officers, teacher and bosses etc), Kim et al (2018) contest that workplace microaggressions can also occur from below. For instance, Black faculty members may get mistaken as an administrative staff member and students may refuse to or systematically “forget” to refer to Black academic faculty members as “doctor” (Constantine, Smith, Redington, & Owens, 2008). Thus while power dynamics do indeed threaten the livelihood and safety of the recipients of microaggression, experiences from subordinates in the workplace may also lead to feelings of powerlessness and anger in the recipient (Kim et al, 2018; Rachel Speer et al., 2020)

Similarly, microaggressions can manifest in interactions between colleagues as well. For this end, Constantine et al's (2008) study on Black faculty member in the counseling psychology department across universities in the US is crucial. Semi structured interviews were conducted with 12 participants (7 women, 5 men) whose ages ranged from 32 to 56 years. The researchers identified several themes of microaggressions for Black faculty members in the educational sphere: alternating feelings of hypervisibility and marginalisation; inadequate mentoring; having their credentials challenged; self consciousness regarding appearance and expectations to perform low level service-oriented roles. Indeed, Black faculty members reported simultaneous feelings of being ignored and betrayed by their colleagues which led to growing feelings of distrust and devaluation in the workspace.

Other research has explored more intersectional experiences of racial microaggression the workplace. For instance, research by Holder, Jackson, & Ponterotto (2015) examined experiences of racial microaggressions and coping strategies by Black women managers in corporate positions in the United States. This qualitative study that conducted in-depth interviews with 10 Black women reported that Black women experienced environmental microaggressions (lack of representation of Black women and women of colour in corporate roles and tokenisation of the few women who do make it to these positions whereby Black women are held up as racialized props in an organisation where they have

very little institutional power), stereotypes (aggressive or care-takers) and invisibility where they were often ignored or dismissed in meetings or excluded from social gatherings and other work events which affected their chances of getting promoted and lowered morale.

The study also identified the consequences of these microaggressions where Black women reported feelings of guilt, loss of self confidence and embarrassment. Some women also reported internalising and suppressing their feelings to avoid showing emotions. The study also indicated some coping mechanisms adopted by Black women in corporate positions such as turning towards a support network of other Black women, tapping into an internal sense of validation and self worth and tuning into their spiritual side by observing prayer, meditation and forgiveness. All in all, the study highlighted how race and gender can intersect and lead to a specific set of microaggression challenges for certain sections of the population.

Following up on this study, Pitcan, Park-Taylor, & Hayslett (2018) qualitatively examined the experiences of 12 Black men, all under the age of 40 and with less than 10 years of professional experience in predominantly White organisations (PWOs) in the United States. The study explored both the experiences and Black professional's coping strategies in the workplace. The aim was to explore the intersection of race and masculinity in the workplace and its manifestations in the microaggression experiences of professionals in PWOs. The findings revealed that professionals had difficulty relating to their white coworkers due to differences in culture and institutional rules. Professionals then attempted to assimilate into the culture at work and felt that their white colleagues and bosses believed them to be intellectually inferior.

Participants in the study also described their experiences in cognitive and affective terms. For instance, participants constantly questioned their experiences of microaggression and had to determine if they were racially motivated or not. They often had to make cognitive judgements to confront preparators of microaggression or preserve their mental well being. On the affective domain, participants reported feelings of anger, resigned acceptance, and dehumanisation. Like the previous study, the costs were similar as Black professionals felt socially isolated and their psychological wellbeing worsened.

The two studies on Black professional men and women together show the importance of race and gender. As the study by Pitcan et al. (2018) concluded Black women experienced invisibility in the workplace, but Black men felt that they received more attention for their actions and were constantly scrutinised for their actions. Moreover, while Black women reported being reduced to gendered stereotypes, Black men felt that their racial identity was more salient than their gender identity. These two studies therefore open an arena of research in different contexts outside the United States which this study hopes to explore.

What's also important to consider is the area of social work where professionals should be trained to be culturally competent and efficient when tasked with fighting issues of social injustice (Hunn et al., 2015). Yet, previous research has shown that social workers from different racial and gendered backgrounds may also experience microaggressions which this next section explores.

1.5 Microaggressions in the Social Work field

Arguably, all service users have trouble accessing resources and support from social workers and social services which are often understaffed, under-resourced and overworked. According to Dominelli (1989), however, Black people's position is structurally different from their white counterparts as they are denied services for organisational reasons and because of their race. Dominelli argues that racism impacts social service delivery, employment opportunities and trainings

Moreover, in her book, "Anti-Racist Social Work", Dominelli (2017) contents that racism permeates institutions, legislation and every day life making it a part of our personal and professional lives (p. 9). She uses multiple case studies from her own social work practice to build a theoretical foundation and also differentiates between racism in three different dimensions of our lives, namely: individual or personal racism, institutional racism and cultural racism as depicted in Figure 2 below:

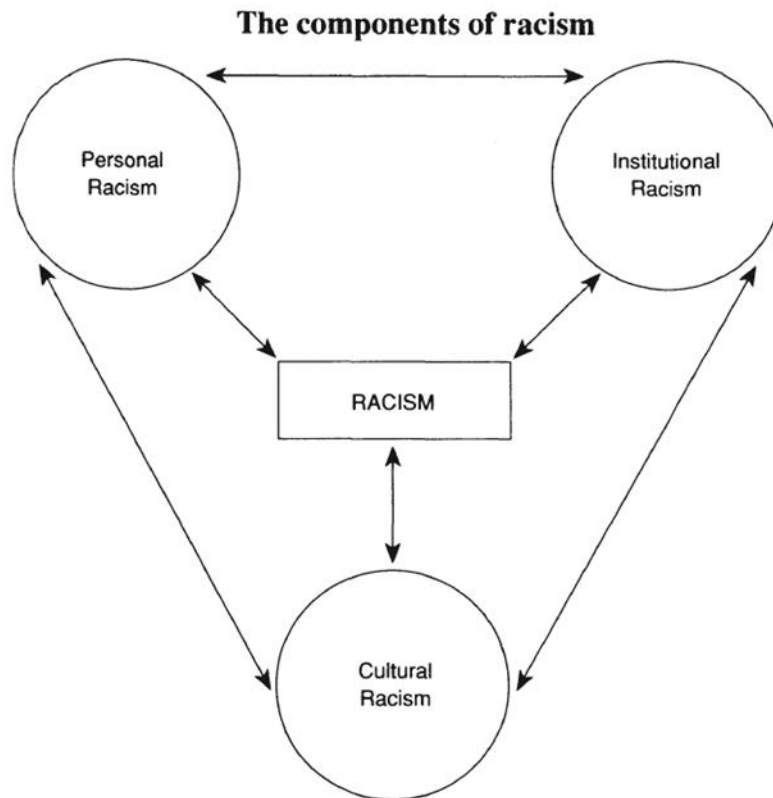


Figure 1.2: Dominelli (2017, p. 8)

Individual racism consists of behaviours and attitudes which individuals use to judge and discriminate racial groups. However, institutional racism is more powerful and is legitimised through legislations which can exclude certain groups of people by defining them as racially inferior and thus deprive them of resources and power in society. Finally, cultural racism includes values, beliefs and ideas or an ideology which promotes

the idea of white supremacy and superiority over other races (Dominelli, 1989, 2017). What's important to note here is the interconnection of these three dimensions of racism as depicted in the figure above, and which makes white people hard to identify racism in their own behaviour and practises and leads to subtle presence of racism in every day life (Dominelli, 2017, p. 9)

Dominelli (1989) further argues that racism in social work is exhibited in the client and service user interaction through two different channels: the exclusive and the inclusive channel. Indeed, on the one hand, racialized people may be excluded and denied services by social services (for instance, Black elderly people are more likely to not receive home help or denied a place at shelters and Black women are more likely to struggle to find refugee homes). Moreover, Black people are less likely to be employed in social work departments or tend to be placed in low labour hierarchy positions (Dominelli, 1989).

On the inclusive side however, Black people are more likely to be penalised and put in social service institutions where they can be surveilled and controlled such as foster homes or juvenile delinquent care and other penal institutions (ibid).

According to Dominelli (1989), Black employees in social services, are often employed by social services to combat these aforementioned problems of racism. However, these individuals then have to deal with two issues which include "Opening the Door Model" and "Black Specialist Model". In the first model, Black employees are hired simply to encourage Black service users to approach social services for service provisions. Black social workers are then viewed as individuals who are to work exclusively with Black service users. Meanwhile white social workers are freer to work with white service users and tend to show less or no interest in working with or learning how to work with Black service users in an effective way.

In the second model, Black workers are hired to be "specialist workers" in special units tasked with dealing exclusively with Black service users. This is problematic as it excludes Black people from working in other departments and also overburdens Black workers. Thus, both these methods have been criticized for being inappropriate in dealing with the problem of racism in social work practise.

Chapter Two: Historical Framework

This chapter provides a historical framework for the study. The chapter starts with a brief overview of the Portuguese colonial history and its' repercussions today in the form of lusotropical narratives tied to the Portuguese national identity. This is important in order to understand the political and socio-cultural context of Portuguese society in which this research on microaggression is carried out.

2.1 The Colonial History of Portugal: a Brief Overview

The Portuguese history of colonization can be divided into three timeframes across three different geographical locations of Asia, Brazil and Africa in the 15th, 17th and 19th century (Almeida, 2016).

In the late 15th century, the Portuguese expanded their control over the sea route to India in search for trade and spices. At the same time trading posts were established along the coast of Africa though Goa in India was established as a territorial base in the 16th century. The Portuguese colonialism was a state sponsored act aimed at “Christianization” and “civilization” though the main purpose was economic trade and participation in a globalized economy (Almeida, 2016, p 110).

The “First Portuguese Empire” was situated mainly in India until the 1600's. The society began to be defined and divided along racial lines such white Portuguese born in India, *castico* to denote half Indian and half Portuguese, and “pure” Indians.

Brazil was also conquered in 1500 and the second half of the 16th century saw a rise in African people enslaved for labor in the sugar plantations, which became important as the spice trade in India declined in the late 16th to early 17th century. This was the “Second Portuguese Empire”. Hereafter, Brazil became the first real Portuguese colony after the discovery of gold in 1700. Meanwhile, enslaved people were bought from different African countries such as Cape Verde and Angola to Brazil. It should be remembered that the Portuguese were deeply involved in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Millions of Africans were enslaved and taken to the Americas and Europe. This was also the time when the distinctions based on color or race became more paramount – for instance, mixed race people were referred to as *mulatos* and *ladinos* (which means smart) was used to refer to people who could speak some Portuguese and was a way to distinguish Black people born in Portugal (*ladinos*) from the ones that were brought from Africa (*boçais*).

After the Brazilian independence in 1822 due to the pressure of the merchants and the enslave-owing class and the abolition of slavery in the 1800's, the “third Portuguese Empire” saw a focused attention to Africa (Almeida, 2016; *Portuguese Africa and the rule of law*, 1962). After the Berlin conference in 1884, which distributed African territories to different European states, England demanded Portugal's claim over certain African territories to be backed by actual settlement. The years that followed were therefore marked by Portugal's attempt to lay claim over its African colonies. The Portuguese colonial empire in Africa would last until 1974, after thirteen years of colonial war (1961-1974) in several territories (Angola, Guiné-Bissau and Mozambique).

In the 1930s, with the end of the Republican Government and beginning of Estado Novo dictatorship, the *Colonial Act* and the *Statute of the Indigenat* and other legislation were issued, stressing the need to bring Africans into civilization. Here by, assimilation was the main objective and several rules about rights to citizenship, property, crops and forced labour were established degrading the material and social conditions of African people in Portuguese colonies (Meneses, 2010).

Through these laws the population was divided into three classes based on race: White people were considered, by nature, the “civilized”; Africans were categorized as “indigenous” persons (indígenas) and some of them, if they had abandoned their native culture, would be considered “assimilated”. This racial stratification and its assimilation approach are important to understand how racism operates in contemporary Portugal.

The end of the *Statute of the Indigenat* in the 1960s was a consequence of the independence struggles in Angola, Guiné-Bissau and Mozambique and the criticism faced by Portugal at that time by the international community, namely by the United Nations in a context where several former colonies of other colonial empires were gaining their independence (Maeso & Araújo, 2010).

What’s important to note is that people of African descent were not granted political rights and the constitution at that time promulgated the conditions under which African people can receive citizenship. The conditions were as follows:

- “a) Is over eighteen years of age.*
- b) Speaks the Portuguese language correctly.*
- c) Is engaged in an occupation, trade or craft from which he derives sufficient income to support himself and the dependent members of his family, or else possesses adequate resources for that purpose’;*
- d) Is of good conduct and has attained the level of education and acquired the habits which are a condition for the unrestricted application of the public and private law pertaining to Portuguese citizens;*
- e) Is not on record as having refused to perform military service or as having deserted” (Portuguese Africa and the rule of law, 1962, p. 23)*

The condition which required African people to attain the status-category of “assimilated” required the ability to read and write in Portuguese. Additionally, even though African people descent could acquire citizenship by meeting the conditions, the status of citizenship was not always guaranteed for life and could be revoked at the discretion of the administrative authority (*Portuguese Africa and the rule of law, 1962*).

The 1960 Portuguese census also divided the population into “civilised” and “non-civilised” as shown in the figure below:

POPULATION OF GUINEA, ANGOLA AND MOZAMBIQUE			
Division into Categories			
	Guinea	Angola	Mozambique
Total Population	510,777	4,145,266	5,764,362
<u>"Civilized"</u> <u>Population</u>			
Whites	2,263	78,826	65,798
Mulattos	4,568	26,335	29,873
Indians	11		15,325
Other Asians		105	1,945
Negros	1,478	30,039	4,554
Total "civilized" Population	8,320	135,355	117,405
<u>"Non-civilized"</u> <u>Population</u>	502,457	4,009,911	5,646,957

Figure 2.1: Portuguese Africa and the rule of law (1962, p. 33)

Notably, a very small proportion of the black population is classified as “civilised”. Through this process, the Portuguese authority created a category of civilised non-Europeans called “assimilados” which is charged with racial undertones (*Portuguese Africa and the rule of law*, 1962). Thus, in this way the concept of assimilation was created which naturalised racism in the name of civilisation and stressed the need for non-European individuals in the Portuguese colonies and in the Portuguese empire to adopt Portuguese practices and language if they wanted to be legally considered citizens

After the independences of African territories and the beginning of the democratic regime in Portugal (1974), the African immigration to Portugal increased. The racial/colonial divide continued, especially since 1981, where the Portuguese state cemented the racial division by constructing the notion of *jus sanguinis* (nationality based on blood ties) instead of *jus solis* (nationality based on land ties) (Curington, 2020). This Portuguese nationality law made it difficult for children of immigrants to receive Portuguese nationality. Legislatives of 2006 and 2018 further reinforce this division and makes it difficult for African families with ties to former African colonies to receive Portuguese citizenship (ibid). Thus, racist anti-Black notions permeate Portuguese legislatives and dictates the ideas of “citizen” and “non-citizen” along racial lines. In 2020, after the pressure of antiracist social movements – “Campanha por Outra Lei da Nacionalidade” (Campaign for Other Nationality Law) – the legal limitations decreased but the *jus sanguinis* approach is still not completely abolished

2.2 Portuguese anti-racial ideology & Luso-tropicalism

Another important aspect of the Portuguese colonial history is the construction of the luso-tropicalist ideology that perpetuates colour-blindness and the myth of Portuguese “soft” and “tolerant” colonialism (Curington, 2020; Maeso & Araújo, 2010). The lusotropicalist narrative is still very important to understand contemporary racism and forms of microaggression experienced by Black communities in Portugal.

Influenced by the work of Brazilian scholar Gilberto Freyre, the then fascist dictator, António de Oliveira Salazar, sought to rebrand Portuguese colonialism as non racist and marked by “reciprocal cultural impacts, interactions, contacts and exchanges” (Maeso & Araújo, 2010, p. 9). This cultural narrative of “lusotropicalism” emerged because of immense international criticism of former Portuguese colonies and the anti-colonialist political perspectives that gained some power after the Second World War. Moreover, the global African national liberation movement that also gained traction after the Second World War fueled the need to extol the Portuguese colonialism as benevolent and tolerant (Anderson, Roque, & Santos, 2019; Curington, 2020). Additionally, the history of miscegenation in Brazil, Asia and Africa was increasingly used to provide evidence for this lusotropical narrative (Maeso & Araújo, 2010).

Indeed, lusotropicalist narratives were used as a political tool by the dictatorship to hide injustice and racial discrimination such as enforced labour and difficulties in acquiring citizenships that Africans continued to face. Ideas of miscegenation that were used in conjunction with lusotropical narratives also ignored the history of sexual violence faced by Black women during the Portuguese colonial time. Moreover, slavery like conditions in the labor contract continued until the 20th century in many African colonies (Curington, 2020).

Despite this, beliefs about multicultural harmony in Portuguese society are still present in today’s society even as the political narratives about migration and citizenship pretend otherwise (Valentim & Heleno, 2018). In fact, taken for granted notions of Portuguese people as open and mild-mannered people continues to shape Portuguese national identity (ibid). Thus, Maeso & Araújo (2010) argue that racist configurations of the Portuguese nation are debunked to perpetuate the image of Portugal as a multicultural country devoid of xenophobia, racism and prejudice. Moreover, the lusotropical narrative reinforces the idea of cultural and racial homogeneity in Portuguese society whilst denying Portuguese’s violent colonial past – it is the root of the “colour blind” political approach and the political inaction in the field of antiracist measures. Ultimately, the lusotropical narrative ignores the continued discrimination and inequality faced by African migrants or those of African descents in Portugal.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter discusses the research process and techniques, the research design, and the rationale for these choices in exploring the experiences of microaggression by Black social work practitioners in Lisbon, Portugal. Put simply, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of seven (7) participants to allow them to provide an in-depth account of their experiences of microaggression and their coping strategies. The interviews were done using Zoom due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The chapter starts off by explaining the literature review method, sampling techniques and the methodological choices including the epistemological and ontological reasons for those choices. Next, this chapter elaborates on the data analysis methods and ethical considerations. The chapter concludes with final self-reflections.

3.1 Literature Search Technique

This research started with the literature review process by carrying out a preliminary search on google scholar on the present research topic. According to McGinn, Taylor, McColgan, & McQuilkan (2016), a range of search engines and databases should be used to get a comprehensive search result. Hence, the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), ProQuest Sociology Collection, PsycINFO, Google Scholar and Scopus in the University of Gothenburg and University of Stavanger online libraries were used to explore literature on the topic. These databases were used because they offer an opportunity to search for academic literature from a single platform. According to Bryman (2012), searches from these databases provide access to peer-reviewed papers, theses, books, and articles from academic journals, societies, universities and other scholarly organisations (p. 116).

After the selection of these databases, the next task was to construct a general search structure through the creation of concept groups related to the research question (McGinn et al., 2016). As the study aims to investigate the experiences of microaggressions by social workers in the workplace, the five concept groups or keywords include: experiences, Black people, microaggression, social workers and workplace. To ensure that all available articles were included, synonyms were employed for each keyword using a thesaurus (for a breakdown of the keywords, see table 4.1). These keywords were used in varying combinations in combination with the Boolean algebra (AND, OR, NOT) to reach more literature. Finally, bibliographies of relevant articles were also looked at to find other literature (Bryman, 2012).

Table 3.1: Keywords for Literature Review

Experiences	Microaggression	Black	Social Workers	Workplace
Everyday experience	Racism	Racialised	Practitioners	Institutions
Perception	Discrimination	People of colour	Care workers	Organisations
Accounts	Marginalisation	Afro-Portuguese	Professionals	Field

3.2 The epistemological and ontological approach

An epistemological issue is concerned with the question of “what is and should be regarded as acceptable knowledge” (Bryman, 2012). An epistemological approach, therefore, determines the themes, paradigms and methods of the research (Kilomba, 2008). The epistemological position for this research was interpretivism as the focus of this research was to understand and explain human behavior, namely Black people’s experiences, through a qualitative inquiry.

Since interpretivism emphasizes the need to understand the social world by examining the meanings people give to that world, I used this approach to explore the meanings and explanations that Black social work practitioners give to their experiences of microaggression. Also explored in this study was the practitioners’ explanation of their coping mechanism and the effects of this marginalization on their mental health and sense of self. This is an important consideration because, as Kilomba (2008, p.29) notes, Black people experience a reality that is different from white people, because Black people question, interpret and evaluate reality differently due to racism. An interpretative approach allowed to research how Black social work practitioners interpret and evaluate their experiences of microaggression.

In the same vein, the ontological position for this research was constructionist. As such, there was an exploration of the participants’ own interpretation of the microaggressions they experienced. Moreover, an open-ended interview script was used, allowing participants to narrate incidences and make meaning of those own incidences during that narration. The constructionist approach was useful because it allowed me to make connections between the participants’ experiences with the wider socio-political context of Portugal. Indeed, constructivist research focus on the specific contexts in which people work so as to better understand the historical and cultural settings of participants (Creswell, 2017).

In sum, the constructionist ontology approach provided the tools to evaluate how racialized social workers’ experience and interpret microaggressions. Meanwhile, the interpretivist epistemology guided the examination and interpretation of the data collected while also locating it in a specific context of post-colonial Portugal. As Kilomba (2008) notes, “we all speak from a specific time and place, from a specific history and reality - there are no neutral discourses” (p.31).

3.3 Research design

This study was conducted qualitatively, as qualitative studies offer a unique opportunity to access people’s opinions, experiences and understanding of specific circumstances (Bryman, 2012). A qualitative study was best for this research because the main objective of this research was to explore and narrate the lived experiences of social work practitioners. A qualitative inquiry also allowed a re-telling of detailed accounts of the everyday experiences of microaggression in the workplace (Essed, 1991).

This qualitative research design was also exploratory as little is known about the experiences of Portuguese racialized social workers. The exploratory nature is also why the

research questions were open ended and interviews were conducted to achieve an in-depth exploration of social workers' experiences of microaggression (Bryman, 2012; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

3.4 Study Population

The study was conducted via Zoom in Lisbon, Portugal with a total of seven (7) participants residing in Portugal. Of these participants, 6 were residing and working in Lisbon and 1 participant was residing and working in Amadora. The participants were evenly divided with 3 male participants and 4 female participants because intersectionality and “racialized gender” were issues we’ve proposed to explore. More details of the participants and their professional details are provided in the table below.

Table 3.2: Characteristics of Study Population

	Name	Place of Origin	Place of Birth	Age	Sex	Position in Organization	Years of Experience
1	Aamara ²	Guinea Bissau	Portugal	26	Female	Cultural Mediator	5
2	Antonio	Angola	Portugal	47	Male	Psychologist	20
3	Francisco	Cape Verde	Cape Verde	33	Male	Lawyer and Coordinator	7
4	Pedro	Cape Verde	Portugal	42	Male	Program Manager	24
5	Anika	Cape Verde	Portugal	35	Female	Social Worker	5
6	Maria	Angola	Portugal	36	Female	Social Worker and Coordinator	13
7	Edna	Cape Verde	Portugal	38	Female	Psychologist and Coordinator	15

All of the participants were professionals working in the social field (as social workers, program coordinators, lawyers and psychologists) and identified as Black. Black here means people who share black phenotypical features and remote African ancestry (Kwansah-Aidoo & Mappedzahama, 2018). This assumed remote ancestry could be recent or tracing back to the time of slavery in colonial Portugal. Indeed, the Portuguese former colonies of Angola, Guinea, Cape Verde Islands, Mozambique, and São Tomé, along with Brazilians living in Portugal, make up the foundation of Black population in Portugal. In contemporary times, the largest black community is of Capeverdian origin, at around 40,000 (Ka, 2012). Moreover, according to African American Registry (2011)³, Black people in

² Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of all the participants

³ Retrieved from http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/black-history-Europe.

Portugal represent 8%-10% of the total population, particularly in Lisbon (as cited in Ka, 2012). More importantly, since Afro-Portuguese continue to be underrepresented in professional positions, overrepresented in unskilled labor positions and more likely to be victims of structural poverty (Ka, 2012; Kilomba, 2008), they make for an important study population in this research.

It is important to recognise that not all Black people in Portugal are homogeneous, nor do they necessarily share common characteristics and histories (Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018). However, according to Alabi (2005), Black people do relate to one another in terms of their experience in racialized societies and share a common understanding of how Black people operate in the world relative to other groups (as cited in Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018). This collective experience allows Black people to share feelings and experiences of marginalisation which is what this research also explored.

3.6 Selection and Sampling Technique

Purposive, convenient and snowball sampling techniques were used in this study to select participants. These techniques were suitable because the study sought to investigate the experiences of a specific population – Black social work practitioners. According to Bryman (2012), purposive sampling helps researchers recruit sample participants strategically so that participants who demonstrate the characteristics in the research's area of interest can be selected.

For this end, the eligibility criteria for participants were twofold: (1) individuals had to be professionals with considerable expertise and history of work experience in the field of social work; and (2) individuals had to self-identify as Black.

Considering the precariousness of both the social work field and Black people's lives, a broader conception of social work as a profession was needed. The research was therefore tweaked to include any professional working in the social work field, thus including individuals who were working as lawyers, psychologists, and coordinators. As long as individuals were working in the social work field with projects targeting vulnerable populations, they were eligible to participate in the study. Thus, all the participants were involved in projects that targeted marginalized communities such as the homeless, people in low income and impoverished neighborhoods, migrants, and refugees etc. This is in line with the global definition of social work⁴ as a “practice-based profession that promotes social change, development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people”.

The recruitment process started by reaching out to the contacts of the researcher in the social field, through their professional emails and text messages. These people then made it possible to connect to other professionals in their network. People were also reached

⁴ <https://www.ifsw.org/what-is-social-work/global-definition-of-social-work/>

through the researcher's social work professors and research supervisor who had contacts with professionals in the field.

The sample size is small with only seven (7) participants but since the goal of the study is to investigate in-depth experiences of microaggression, the data collected was sufficiently rich and detailed. The sample size was also small because of the small number of Black professionals working in the field. As the result section highlights, these seven individuals were all working in predominately white institutions. While this hampers the statistical generalizability of the study, the fact that the study incorporates perspectives and the subjectivities of seven individuals in an in-depth approach makes it possible to comprehend racial microaggression and establish connections with concepts through a qualitative kind of generalization. Moreover, according to Creswell (2017), studies that explore the lived experience of individuals about a phenomenon usually involves a sample of 3-10 people. In any case, the Covid-19 pandemic and the language barrier (some participants were not comfortable in being interviewed in English) made it difficult to recruit a bigger sample.

3.7 Data collection methods and tools

The interviews were semi-structured as it offers participants an opportunity to tell their stories freely and focus on the aspects that are the most important to them. A variety of probing, interpreting, and specifying questions were used depending on participants' responses, though my primary task was to listen and affirm stories of microaggression and simply respond to points that are worthy of being followed up (Bryman, 2012). Moreover, since oral communication and narrative traditions have long been the primary method of transmitting culture in marginalized communities, which is where my sample was generated from, a semi-structured interview format allowed social worker practitioners to take ownership of the stories and focus on the elements they consider important (Labaree, 2002). This is also in line with race-based methodologies that shifts the locus of power in the research process by treating the subject as a knower (Pillow, 2003, p. 186).

An interview guide was designed for the research. This guide contained open ended questions that were generated from the research questions and the information from the literature review. Each interview lasted from between fifty minutes to one hour and fifteen minutes. Each participant was asked the same questions in line with the interview guide, however, the structure and content of the interview differed for each participant. This is because the follow up questions differed according to the unique information that each person provided. Appendix 1 includes this interview guide.

Before conducting the interview, an introductory letter/invitation letter in Portuguese was drafted and backed up by the host university – ISCTE-IUL and under the supervision of the research advisor. The letter of invitation contained the title and brief description of the project. The letter also explained that the participants had the right to leave at any time and were provided assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. Appendix 2 includes this letter. Each participant was emailed this letter of invitation and the consent form before the interview.

Finally, the interview was conducted via Zoom – a videoconferencing platform - in English as face-to-face interviews were impossible due to the Covid-19 pandemic. All interviews were audio and video recorded as participants provided consent verbally prior to the interviews. This was especially important as some participants were unable to sign the digital version of the consent form due to lack of information about digital signatures. Research has shown that participants generally rate Zoom higher than other interviewing mediums such as face-to-face, telephone and other video conferencing software (Archibald, Ambagtsheer, Casey, & Lawless, 2019). In fact, the cost-effectiveness, data management features and security options make Zoom a viable research tool (ibid).

3.8 Data Analysis and Presentation

The data analysis process began with the transcription of the interview verbatim. The audio recordings were uploaded on a paid online transcription service.⁵ The audio-recordings were then manually verified, whilst also taking note of idiosyncratic elements of speech (eg, nonverbal cues, stutters and pauses) and verbal and non-verbal signals such as overlapping speech, laughter, stutters and response tokens (eg, Yeah, Uh huh, Hmm, Um etc) (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005). However, after revisiting the transcripts multiple times, it was decided to use the denaturalisation transcription method where the focus is instead on understanding the participants' perceptions rather than being derailed by the idiosyncratic elements. Moreover, as none of the participants' native language was English, the transcription was rife with nonverbal signals such as pauses and repetition. Finally, borrowing from a denaturalised transcription format, there was no focus on geo-ethnic accents in the study to avoid prejudice related to class and race (Oliver et al., 2005).

Thematic data analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data as it is a flexible methodology that allows key themes, constructs, and patterns to be identified and interpreted (Bryman, 2012). NVIVO, a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) was used to code and analyse the data (Bryman, 2012).

The thematic analysis process involved some key steps. The first step included identifying recurrent themes and patterns in the transcripts. The next step involved assigning specific codes to all the themes in the data set and gathering data relevant to each code. These codes were further sorted and grouped to create a category of some main/overarching themes. Finally, the themes were reviewed to check if the themes work in relation to each other and tell an overall story, while also generating a “thematic map” and refining clear definitions and names for each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis was not a linear process but a more recursive process with movements of back and forth (ibid).

While presenting the results, vivid and compelling extracts were chosen to represent specific themes and subthemes. As Patton (1990) suggests, sufficient description and direct quotations allow the reader to conceptualise the experiences and understand the thoughts of the participants. For this reason, the sample quotes, though lengthy, illustrate the core experiences and consequences of microaggression.

⁵ <https://otter.ai/home>

The data analysis was inductive in that the themes emerged from the data in a bottom-up approach without fitting them into a pre-existing coding frame. This is not to say that the themes emerged in an “epistemological vacuum” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84), rather the themes were connected to the literature review and theoretical frameworks discussed in the previous chapters after the thematic analysis.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The study sought to bring attention to the treatment of Black professionals in the field of social. Social work is guided by a professional code of ethics, responsible primarily for upholding the principles of social justice, human rights and respect for diversity (“Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles,” 2018).

It is no wonder then that ethical issues within social work research have become incredibly important for ethical committees. Attempts were therefore made to protect the participants from harm, get informed consent and protect their confidentiality.

3.9.1 Informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality

Participants were recruited by sending them an introductory letter detailing the main goal of the research. Thus, all participants were aware of the objective of the research for transparency purposes. Moreover, before each interview, the participants were sent a consent form which explained that their names will be omitted from the research and their confidentiality maintained. The names and details of the organizations they worked at was also removed so that no one could trace it back to the participants. This is especially important because of the content of the interviews – many participants talked openly about experiences of microaggression and discrimination which could lead to more discrimination if traced back to them.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, it was not possible to conduct face to face interviews. This also meant that signatures on consent forms was not always possible. Out of the 7 participants, only 1 sent a signed consent form back via email. The other 6 participants provided oral consent where the interviewer read and explained the purpose of the reading and obtained a verbal consent. The right to consent was upheld during the entire interview process as participants were given the right to withdraw at any time.

3.9.2 Protection from harm and deception

Another key ethical protocol during research is harm to participant and deception. Participants were informed that this information will only be used for research purposes and the goals of the research were outlined to them in the introductory letter to avoid deception.

Participation in this research was completely voluntary and participants could withdraw any time. However, this “open methods” is not without its ethical dilemmas. According to Homan (1992), researchers cannot always share with their participants the final consequences, conclusions and objective that originate after some time in the research process. Nevertheless, the final thesis will be shared with all the participants so that they can see the final conclusions drawn.

Due to the sensitive nature of the research – experiences of microaggression – there were some concerns of retraumatizing (Pittaway, Bartolomei, & Hugman, 2010). This makes informed consent a particularly important aspect of this research as participants need to be treated as storytellers rather than objects of study (Labaree, 2002). However, even if the participant is fully informed about the object of the study, it is still important to consider the ethics of rapport building and using friendliness and tact to probe into the private life experiences of the participant.

Indeed, as Homan (1990) argues, even if the respondent has the right to resist answering some questions that invade his or her privacy, the resistance may break down as the rapport and trust develops between the researcher and the participant (p. 326). In this case, a more democratic relationship with participant can be developed where they are allowed to look at interview transcripts, detect any “mistakes”, propose corrections and withdraw statements that they do not feel comfortable with (Homan, 1992; Oliver et al., 2005). It is for this reason, that all participants were asked if they wanted a copy of the transcript so that they could cross check the data. Out of the 7 participants, only one person volunteered to review the transcript but did not propose any corrections after they were sent the transcript. This is likely because of the busy schedule of all the participants in the study.

To address the issue of retraumatization, participants were asked to provide feedback at the end of every interview. All the interviewees noted that they were happy to be part of the research and they considered this to be an “important research” for Black professionals in Portugal. Indeed, as many participants noted, the issue of denial of racism in Portuguese society is what contributes to microaggression and invalidation of their experience. With this research, they hoped that the myth of Portuguese society as tolerant and accepting could be addressed and debunked.

3.10 Self Reflection: Insider vs Outsider Continuum

It is important to consider the researcher’s reasons for conducting a specific research and since this theme was chosen by the personal meaning it has for the researcher, this sub-chapter will be written in a personal writing style. I locate myself in the insider-outsider continuum of the research process (Labaree, 2002). Since intersectionality and identity politics is an important aspect of this research, it is important also, to position my own self in the research. As an aspiring social worker of South Asian descent, woman of colour and of immigrant background, I share some similar life experiences and incidences of microaggressions with the participants of this study. Indeed, one of the primary motivations for this study are my own personal experiences of microaggression. Thus, my position located between the insider and outsider boundaries is tied to some possible ethical considerations in this study (Kanuha, 2000; Labaree, 2002).

First, it is important for me to consider the value of shared experiences and deeper understanding and clarity on the topic as an insider (Labaree, 2002). As a “minority scholar” I had the capacity to grasp certain racial phenomena that are not easily accessible to other members of the community (ibid, p.103). However, this does not automatically

mean that I can achieve an understanding of the marginalised experience as a whole. Moreover, certain aspects of my identity may constitute an outsider status and may be an impediment in accessing information such as not knowing the local language (Portuguese), conducting the interview in English, being an international student with a shorter immigrant status than the participants of the study and not knowing what it is like to be a Black social worker in Portugal and all that it entails from a historical point of view as the results of this study indicate.

Similarly, while my position as an insider allowed me to consider the “emotive and sensory dimensions” of the microaggression experiences, it also opened up a possibility of me experiencing these difficult emotions (Labaree, 2002, p. 105). Indeed, research has shown that insiders must negotiate objectivity and accuracy and recognise the sense of familiar feelings and emotions that come with it (ibid). It was important also to not downplay the ordinary and taken for granted elements and shared experiences of microaggressions or discrimination. I did this by asking probing questions and allowed the participants to expand on those experiences and incidences themselves without me interfering. Thus, I tried to be conscious of these methodological and ethical dilemmas throughout the process of data collection and analysis.

I also kept a research journal to note down my own thoughts and feelings after each session so as to check in with myself. I recognised, for instance, that I often related to the participant’s experiences of microaggression and sometimes inserted myself in the scenario and asked leading questions. Consider the excerpt from one of the interview transcripts below:

Interviewer: But for me - and I've had these discussions with people around me, like Black people, people of color, my colleagues about stuff like this... sometimes it becomes so hard to figure out, like you said, if it's because of race, or if it's because of other reasons, right? Because they're so subtle, and they're just feelings you know [...] But do you think about it often? Or is there like a strategy to just kind of not think about it?

In another instance, I expressed my own frustrations with “white fragility” after a participant talked about having to calm down a white woman who cried after being confronted as a racist. Hence, I was, by no means an “objective” researcher throughout the interview process. I would argue that by empathizing and relating with the participants I was able to talk about an otherwise taboo subject of racism in Portugal. It allowed participants to feel more comfortable whilst talking to me and encouraged them to open up about incidences they would not otherwise share with an outsider. But I would also had: Is there real “objectivity” in social sciences? Would a white man, distant from the experience of racial microaggression but “close” to the racial and gender privileges he benefits from, be more “objective” than me? Isn’t the only way to attain “objectivity” in social sciences the exposure to the peers of our social position in relation to the object of study?

I also consulted my research supervisor who is a Black Portuguese professor at ISCTE from time to time to help me familiarise myself with the socio-historical context of Portugal. Ultimately, my overarching aim in this research is to explore and then recommend anti-

racist policies and practices for workplace and educational institutes in Portugal, which can help all individuals including Black and other people of colour.

Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the findings from the seven interviews that were conducted and the analysis from those interviews. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis and the NVIVO software. The results are divided into three (3) main themes which include: nature of the microaggressions, experiences of microaggressions and consequences of microaggressions. Each of the themes are then divided into subthemes which are outlined below.

The findings answer the research question posed by the study: how do Black professionals in the social work field experience racism and microaggression in the field, how do the experiences of microaggression change for people with intersecting identities of race and gender, what are the consequences of this microaggression and how do respondents cope with the consequences. The analysis of the findings reflects the nature of microaggression, the different ways in which it manifests, the experiences of microaggression in the workplace, the structural issues underneath and finally the consequences of microaggression (see table 1). Sue (2007) and Essed's (1991) theory of microaggression and everyday racism respectively is used to conceptualize the accounts of the participants. Moreover, as Essed (2008) argues, everyday racism is rooted in the history of particular societies and so attempts will be made to link the accounts to Portuguese history of colonization. The transcripts used in the analysis are therefore elaborate and detailed because they capture a detailed account of the participants' perspectives.

Table 5.1: Themes and Subthemes

Nature of Microaggression	Experiences of Microaggression	Consequences of Microaggression
Micro Assault	Everyday Experiences In The Workplace	Psychological Impacts
Micro Insults	➤ Stereotyping: The Racial Other	➤ Dehumanization
Micro Invalidation	➤ Triad of Microaggression	➤ Powerlessness
Gendered Microaggression	-Supervisor	➤ Low Self Esteem
	-Co-workers	➤ Intrusive Cognitions
	-Subordinates	Coping Mechanism
	➤ Pressure to Assimilate	➤ Internal
	➤ White Fragility	➤ External
	➤ Ethno-Racial Matching	
	From Micro to Meso: Organizational Culture	

4.1 Nature of Microaggression

Before elaborating on specific experiences of microaggressions that participants experienced in the workplace as well as in their everyday life, it is important to understand the nature of microaggressions. Previous research has outlined different types of microaggressions, which include micro assault, microinsults and microinvalidations (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby Jr, 2016). All of which will be included in the analysis below. Another type of microaggression that this section will elucidate is gendered microaggression. In this research, the different ways in which Black men and women experience microaggression will also be explored to include an intersectional perspective of discrimination and racism.

4.1.1 Micro assaults

Micro assaults are explicit verbal or nonverbal attacks that are racially charged and intended to hurt or offend a person of color. Micro assaults can include hate speech and symbols that are explicitly and overtly racist. In the Portuguese context, the word “Preto” is a micro assault as it is a racist and derogatory word for Black people (Curington, 2020). Some social work practitioners reported incidents like these in their daily lives:

The first thing white people on the street are gonna tell you is “Preto, go back to your country” Okay. Oh, and sometimes they use, you know, “preto mierda”. Do you know what it's mean? “meirda,” you know? It's like “shit, go to your country,” in Portuguese... things like that. So they start to swear, but the first thing they're gonna tell you, “Preto.” So in the daily life, that's what you face, like me. - (Francisco)

In the past, I was shocked when she [co-worker] used this word “preto,” and it is normal because in Angola, they, the white people call this to the native people, and I was saying that no, here, I don't like this word. When someone said [this word] to me when I was a kid or in the street, it wasn't for good – (Maria)

Both Francisco and Maria reported incidents of blatant racism and micro assault in the workplace and outside. This elucidates how micro assaults can be by strangers and workplace colleagues alike, creating a hostile environment for Black people. Aamara also recounted an experience with her partner where she was approached by a white man who glorified colonisation, thus supporting racism:

I was with my girlfriend, and we went to buy some new glasses, and a white man was there and he was, like, glorifying and romanticizing, how do you say that? colonization, colonialism? And I was like, no, you are a racist pig. And he was like, Yes, but we are Portuguese, we teach these kind of things to other cultures. And do you know that black people were the ones that had more slaves, and they were the ones responsible for the slave trade, blah blah blah, and I was like, yes, that's what every racist person says. So you are no different than everybody else. But yeah, that that was the most recent episode that I remember. – (Aamara)

4.1.2 Micro insults

According to previous research on microaggressions, micro insults are used to indirectly insult a person's identity or race through the use of a negative compliment (Kim & Kim, 2010; Sue, 2010; Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, & Rivera, 2009). This includes comments like complimenting a Black man for speaking well or being articulate. Though meant as a compliment, the underlying assumption is that Black men are incapable of being well-spoken and articulate. These micro insults thus discriminate against certain groups of people as they are rooted in beliefs of white superiority (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby Jr, 2016)

Similarly, in this research, participants noted some back handed compliments that they identified as an insult to their culture and race as Black people in Portugal.

One time I was working here. I went to do some training with the school. So I was really happy because the training was very good, everybody listened to what I had to say. In the end, the teacher of the student came to me and said [...] "for a black guy, you are beautiful." For a black guy, beautiful. Okay, so that's the mentality they have, look. She wants to tell me that I'm beautiful. Okay, I don't think I'm that beautiful but for her I am beautiful, but she couldn't just say that you are beautiful. She had to say for a black guy, you are beautiful. So it's this kind of mentality. She gave me a compliment. It's not a compliment, because in her mind she thinks that black people are ugly, or less intelligent – (Francisco)

This incident is an example of "misplaced nicety" (Nair, Good, & Murrell, 2019, p. 876) which refers to a form of microaggression that might be posed as a compliment or an act of kindness but is steeped in microaggression as Francisco is quick to identify. Moreover, as Kilomba (2018) highlights, Black people are "violently separated, from whatever identity" they have through this microaggression (p.20). She quotes Fanon (1967, p.112) who wrote, "when people like me, they tell me it is in spite of my color, when they dislike me, they point out that it is not because of my color. Either way, I am locked." In this way, Black people are forced to develop a relationship to their own selves through the presence and gaze of the white other as further illustrated below:

Like, in the university, but mostly from the colleagues... they were like, well, you know, really surprised like how come? I was like how come what? how can you be so well structured and so intelligent coming from the place and the background you come from? (Laughs) It doesn't work that way. And what I realized is, people just tell me that because they feel comfortable telling me that and they think what they're saying is nice. Like, because they're promoting me- you are different from the others, the others [who] didn't succeed because they didn't want to, but you succeed. So I'm like, okay, that's not really nice, because you are shifting the balance and putting the blame in the wrong place, people are not succeeding, because everything is against their side, you know... But it's really hard for, especially for people who have some kind of privilege to understand. – (Pedro)

Sometimes you have... sometimes people speak to you and they say oh, you speak good Portuguese.... like, yes, I do, what you waiting for? - (Aamara)

4.1.3 Microinvalidations

Microinvalidations are comments and behaviors that belittle and negate the experiences of people of color (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby Jr, 2016, p. 394). More specifically, microinvalidations are “actions that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiences of people of color” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 29). Microinvalidations exemplify a colour-blind attitude and include instances where people of colour are considered “too sensitive” to racial-ethnic comments (Torino, Rivera, Capodilupo, Nadal, & Sue, 2018, p. 68). In this research, several participants talked about the denial of racism and discrimination by their white counter parts in everyday encounters such as:

I think racism in Portugal, the Portuguese situation of racism, I think the country's, like living in a denial, there's like, there's no public or official recognition of the existence of racism. And there's also in my view, there's not a clear or accurate recognition, also, in the history related with the Portuguese presence in Africa. And then also the relationship between Portugal and the African countries. – (Pedro)

Here Pedro seems to be alluding to an anti-racist ideology or luso-tropicalism that perpetuates the myth of a tolerant Portuguese colonialism which projects Portuguese people as open and non-racist to this day (Valentim & Heleno, 2018). This “collective political imagination” and “historicist” understanding of race present day Portugal and other European nations as anti-racial and free from the impacts of colonialism (Curington, 2020, p.2; Goldberg, 2008) This historical amnesia that Pedro talks about leads to denial which further contributes to microinvalidation. Francisco expands on this further like this:

But the way, I may see discrimination in Portugal... racial discrimination... ...You know, in Portugal, that they have this thing, that they, they deny it, they don't see. They think that sadly, it doesn't exist. For them, because they don't see it... they don't see it in the regular day, they think it is not real, is not really a problem. In my opinion, sometimes they don't see it they stay in their bubble, you know, [a bubble of] their life. And they see nothing. Everybody's perfect [in that bubble]. Only people like me, or only people of color or the Roma people, only they can tell you about the reality because if you talk with most of the Portuguese people like white Portuguese people, if you ask them, they will tell you: It's perfect. It's okay. And I think that's a problem that we get here from the... because of the education the way they teach us about our past, our Portuguese past and the African countries used to be Portuguese colony, so the way they teach the history the way they tell us how things go. So that make people think that Portuguese are like, they were very good. And today there is no racism in Portugal. – (Francisco)

Antonio provides a more specific example of this denial by narrating his encounter with his white colleagues in the office. This is where he started talking about being accosted by the police when walking down the streets of Lisbon and was met with disbelief when his colleagues refused to believe his experience:

And when discussing things that happen, and what I think is that it is sometimes very difficult for them to... even to me, it's difficult. So, to them, it's even more difficult to understand the issues of racism. For example, if I say that, oh, I was stopped by police again. They were like, "oh, what were you doing?" Like, I don't have to be doing nothing to be stopped by the police.

What do you mean, you don't have to be doing nothing? The police will not stop people just because they want to!

Yes, they will!

What do you mean, yes they will?

Yes, they will. It happened to me a lot of times...

and I tell the things. And they say like, oh, maybe they were chasing someone that looked like you? What? another black person, is that it? And then I tell another story [and they say], oh, but maybe that cop was not a very good one. And I tell another story. And then all of the stories start to accumulate. And then they were like, oh well uh,,, so it's difficult for them to perceive that... what I live is not the same. I don't express - I don't occupy the same space. I don't live the same things that they do – (Antonio)

Interestingly, because of this denial of racism, many participants talked about experiencing microaggression in a more subtle way. The participants differentiated between overt and subtle ways of microaggression which are more difficult to dispute and call people out for:

But the thing is, if we're talking about subtle racism, it's because some people are aware of it and they know how to deal with it, you know, but then when you go with certain population that they are more like, you know, they say what they feel. And then it's not subtle, and they say what they think, then, it's not subtle anymore. You know, so I have kids just looking at you and calling you, you know, nasty names regarding your color. And for them, it's okay. You know, and I think the more educated people in bigger cities, they are more like, you know, more into the subtle, or they don't show, or they don't tell them, you know, we have an expression in Portugal - there's like, some people, they have the heart close to the mouth. So they really say what they feel, and sometimes, you know, sometimes it's better to know what people are thinking. – (Pedro)

This quote by Pedro captures the insidiousness of subtle forms of microaggression like microinvalidation (Ong et al., 2013). He explains that it is “better to know what people are thinking” through overt displays of aggression. Embrick, Domínguez, & Karsak (2017) argue that minorities who experience racial discrimination also experience mental and physical health problems and these problems are worsened when perpetrators deny these racial acts. Moreover, microinvalidation and other forms of unconscious microaggression are extremely difficult to address when the perpetrator refuses to acknowledge and address it.

Therefore, some participants talked about how even the people who deny that they are racist display behaviour that is discriminatory through the “little things” that they do:

I have a lot of experience about how the people say for instance, in front of you, “well, I'm not racist. I don't have any kind of problems.” But in little things, the

people show to you that it's not like that. So I think Portugal says a lot that don't have racism issues. They receive well [the immigrants and people of color], everyone, but I do not believe that – (Edna)

So it's like, and you feel like, okay, you have been placed in the social ranking. And clearly from the way they talk to you, they look at you, they're putting you really down in the social hierarchy. Yeah. So I had to deal with it. – (Pedro)

Indeed, many participants talked about “feelings” as evidence of microaggressions. As such, the fundamental nature of microinvalidation is that it is psychological and difficult to address because it is unconsciously instigated by the perpetrator:

But nobody will say to me, it is because I'm Black.... is feelings that, you know, some, some things that people ask to me or, or how they act, that they won't do that if it was some other person. It is not direct – (Maria)

Before, when I made this choice [of joining the social work profession], I didn't know a lot about it, it was something that I experienced through feelings. But when I enter these communities, yes, I start to see a lot of people living in places with less conditions, with less opportunities and with the worst schools with a different approach from the police. I started to see the many things that in my life, I didn't experience... (Anika)

A specific incident of this microinvalidation where a white professor in university constantly ignored the presence of his Black student is narrated by another participant:

In university, I remember I had a professor. He - you know these people who go to Africa, like voluntary program. And he had this kind of experience. But I don't know with me he never listened when I tried to participate in the class. He always, I dunno, he and my colleagues, they were white, they start to notice - "she wants to talk." Oh, they had to make him notice me. Okay, he never said it is because you are black. He had a lot of experience in Africa helping people. But I don't know why but yes, I felt it. – (Maria)

4.1.4 Gendered Racial Microaggressions

One of the constructs in the intersectionality theory is gendered racism, which sheds light on Black women's specific experience of discrimination based on the intersection of racism and sexism (Essed, 1991). While a lot of research has focused on overt displays of racism, Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, & Browne Hunt (2016), have generated the term, gendered racial microaggression to refer to subtle everyday behaviors, comments and environmental indignities that oppress individuals at the intersection of race and gender. As such, this research on gendered racial microaggression experienced by Black women in a predominantly white institution led to the creation of three themes which include projected stereotypes, assumptions about style and beauty and silenced and marginalized. Similarly, the participants in this study identified the stereotypes that exist for Black men and women and the differences between them:

I think black men who in Portugal are more, normally they are more - how to say this in English? - They're more vulnerable to physical attacks. You know, I think

that it's more possible that the black man is beaten by the police or killed by the police. And so I think it's a more physical type of racism with black men. But the same time I feel like black woman are not... we have less chances of being beaten up by the police. But at the same time, I think black woman are also the ones you have the sexual thing right because they see us as a very exotic thing that will give you really good sex and but at the same time, you cannot present her to your friends and family because she's not classy enough. Um, and the other the other thing that you have is that the jobs that are more physical, physically challenging are the ones that are attributed to black woman. And I think it happens the same to the black men. Here, they're also the ones, for example, constructions, it's the job almost mandatory for black men and black woman. Normally we are working as cleaning ladies, domestic workers working with old people. I don't know if what is the extent here in Portugal, I don't have access to that. And also, because we don't collect the data as in the UK – (Aamara)

In our society, we still think that the man's is in power. And it also, it's like the black people, they do not have the abilities to be in a power, in a leadership position. So I still think that it's really hard to be woman and be black in our society, because it's and it makes me mad because women are the strengths of the communities, we are the humans that raise kids, are the humans that organize the houses.... Well, it's not just like that in every house, but it remains the base of the community (and) of the society so how can we still act like this? – (Edna)

And here in my workplace, you have a lot of black women, but they do you know, the work, the least recognised work. Yes, but it's the most important work because you have a lot of old people that live alone, and these women go to their house, you know, to clean, to give the food, to take care. And it's a difficult work because they have to, you know, to give bath, all this kind of stuff. Then you have all the other functions. It's like the base, and they're very important but it is not recognised as important by the other workers. And this function is, we call assistentes familiares, something like this.... And I went to the hospital once. And I just arrived, I was sitting, and the doctor asked me where I work, and I tell him that I work at (name of the organisation) – and he said, “so you are assistentes familiares?” – he put me already in that function. I said “no, no I am director of one service.” “Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.” But you know, it... just, you don't need to think, you are black so of course you are... the less, even if it's very important, but it's the work that other people don't want to do – (Maria)

4.2 Everyday Experiences of Microaggression in the Workplace

While the previous section explored the nature of microaggression as it manifests in people's lives, this section will look at the everyday experiences of microaggressions in the workplace. The term every day is borrowed from Essed (2008) who defines everyday racism as a multidimensional experience of multiple events and instances and a systematic process that marginalizes people of color. Some of the instances that Essed points out include talking down, being patronizing, hiring token Blacks, and favoring white men

among other such incidences in the workplace all of which will be discussed in the subsequent section.

4.2.1 Stereotyping Black People: The Racial Other

Yes, so the last job, the previous job that I had, I worked closely with the migrants as I said, and sometimes we received Portuguese people and most of the times when they spoke to me they always make sure to express that they don't think that I'm Portuguese as they are and always trying to reinforce the fact that I'm black and they are white and so for that, for that fact, they are superior to me – (Aamara)

The above quote reflects the three features of racism as defined by Kilomba (2008): first, racism leads to a construction of difference between the white subject, who represent the power to define itself as the norm, and the Black subject or the “racial Other” (p.42). Embedded within this difference is a hierarchy which leads to discrimination and stigmatisation of the racial Other. As bell hooks (1997) notes, racist thinking perpetuates the fantasy of the Other as subhuman and incapable of understanding and comprehending. The two processes of construction of differences and hierarchy are then linked with power dynamics – historical, social, political and economic power. As Aamara explains, the white service user questions her expertise as a social worker due to this construction of difference, hierarchy, and reasserts the power of white superiority by conceptualising her as a racial Other.

Thus, in extension of this argument, one of the major themes that arose in regard to Black people’s treatment in the workplace includes stereotyping Black people. Black people, as the racial Other, are constantly stereotyped as incompetent and inferior – relegated to marginal positions of domestic workers and other low paying jobs. Take, for example the following quote from Edna who works in a low-income neighbourhood and has to often distinguish herself from the Black service users in that community:

I work in the field a lot of years. And sometimes, I still have the need to say that I'm not a person from the neighborhood, I am a psychologist that doesn't live in that neighborhood and lives in a house, just like everyone else. So, people still look at you, at your color. The first thing that people look at is your color, after that they start looking for your competencies or what is your knowledge. - (Edna)

The frustration expressed here by Edna is also echoed by another participant:

They [colleagues at work] mix a person like me, that's okay, I'm black but I was born here. And all my life was here... they mix me with a person that just arrived from Africa. And no matter where in Africa... it was like, very strange. – (Maria)

These findings are consistent with the themes of racial microaggression presented by Sue et al (2007), particularly “alien in one’s own land” and “ascription of intelligence”. As Maria explains, she is made to feel like an outsider even though she was born in Portugal. Similarly, Edna stresses on how she must distinguish herself from the service users because people at her workplace constantly assume that she is less capable than them. According to

Kilomba (2008), under racism, Black bodies are constructed as “out of place” – bodies that do not belong (p.30). White bodies, on the other hand, are bodies that belong everywhere, in Europe and elsewhere. Black people are forced, therefore, to prove their right to belong and participate even as they are pushed to the margins.

Similarly, another form of marginalisation is where Black people are often ignored in work meetings, trainings, and field work. This is especially true for first encounters where white people often express surprise and even discomfort when they meet a Black professional. As Gatwiri, (2021) argues, racial microaggression is normalised in the workplace as a reminder that Black bodies are out of place in white organisations and thus, deserving of white insubordination and disrespect from co-workers (p.15). Consider, for example, the following encounters:

Of course, when people didn't know me, they would easily assume that I was not a psychologist, because that is almost like, what? Every time when I go to a meeting or stuff, they will always kind of think that I was someone else like... in Portuguese, we call it monitors.... they would always assume that I was a monitor, and they will never say, oh, here's the psychologist, and sometimes they will even, it happened to me, they would mistake me for the courier and stuff like that. I think sometimes we get so used to that, you know, because I'm black, I've got dreadlocks. – (Antonio)

Oh, sometimes when I go to represent Portugal, they think I'm from an NGO or something like that. They don't think I'm representing Portuguese entities. [people say], “oh, you are coming from NGO?” They think I'm coming from NGO, not a state organization. You know, they don't, they don't think I am Portuguese – (Francisco)

And I was together with two experts that- they were white, and they were male. And we were waiting to attend the same meeting. And it was an expert's meeting. And then when the lady came to, to receive us, and then to guide us to the room, she just received the two white gentlemen. And greeted them, and one of them said, okay, but we also have here, you know, like the other expert, and the lady was like, okay, okay. so I think it's like, it's, like biased, you are being informed by those – (Pedro)

well, in my organization, I am also a trainer. And I had an experience a few years ago... we work with another association that wanted to have one of our trainees. And I talked a lot with a person beforehand who was responsible for this action on the phone. And when I went to the first session, one of my colleagues came with me, she's white. And in the morning, we made the presentations for who I am, where I come from, and the person that I had been talking on the phone with before, she was not there in the morning, she just came after lunch. And when she came, my colleague and I, we were talking and preparing for the training. And she went directly to my colleague and it was like, it was very clear that she was not expecting that I was the trainer... And it was very, very, very clear that she was uncomfortable with it because she made an assumption. That was, I think one of the most difficult experience that I had because I thought how is this person working in a social field? How is this person telling others that everyone has opportunities when she was the

first person that made this type of assumption? It doesn't make sense. – (Edna)

The assumptions and stereotype are also gendered as Black men are assumed to be monitors and courier and Black women are expected to be cleaning ladies or in assistentes familiars as a female participant noted above.

4.2.2 The Triad of Microaggression: Supervisors, Co-workers and Subordinates

It is important to note also, that these stereotypes are held not only by strangers and in new encounters but also by co-workers, supervisors and subordinates. For example, some participants talked about how they experienced distrust from their co-workers:

It was hard to enter the team in some aspects, because usually black people are the targets of your work - black people, Roma people and poor people. So they are used to dealing with black people as the target population. And then I'm here in the same level, we are colleagues. - (Maria)

I had a lot of ...how should I say... mistrust, I felt there was a lot of mistrust, not because of the coordinator- he was impeccable. But there were other workers around there, that I would say were perhaps not qualified workers, and I felt sometimes that they were, you know, not really trusting. And I had to do a lot, a lot to be trusted – (Antonio)

I really felt sabotaged, and attacked. And it just kind of, it's kind of hard. And I... by one year I was feeling this kind of bullying in the workshop where I would try to do my best, but they would always shoot whatever suggestion I would make. There would be people saying, "Oh, no, I don't like that, or I don't want that, don't do that etc" And so it was hard. It was hard for me – (Antonio)

This distrust by co-workers as pointed out by the participants above magnified when Black people were in positions of authority. Note for instance, the incident narrated by Maria who was initially hired as a temporary replacement for the position of the director and faced distrust from the subordinates and other co-workers. As such, the co-workers were reluctant to accept her authority and reaffirmed her position as a “substituto” to outsiders:

And then it was like the problems started because my colleagues at that point, they... it was very strange. They knew me for a long time, but they didn't know how to deal with me, how to call me how to just (laughs) strange periods.... And from the beginning, everybody used my nickname but then I was the director. And for them they had this kind of (laugh)... I say okay, I'm the same person, you can call me what you used to call me. But they had this kind of strange attitude -- Okay, now I heard them speaking on the telephone once, it wasn't with me, but when I did this replacement, they had a lot of difficulty to say to people outside that I was the director or when they had to present me to someone- they would say it's the replacement in Portuguese, a substituto. Substituto, the person who is replacing like, it's not her, is just the replacement. – (Maria)

According to Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama (2018), Black people carry with them the weight of history which explains why participants feel judged on the basis of events that happened in the past. More specifically, in Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama's (2018) study, participants also reported feeling like white people have difficulty conceptualising Black people in positions of authority. Borrowing from the work of Fanon (1952/2008), the authors note that Black people must constantly grapple with the history of colonisation and their representation as "ethnic characteristics... tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual, deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave ships" (p. 99, as quoted in Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama's, 2018). Some participants also noted overt displays of microaggression in the workplace where white co-workers would make racist comments:

I have a colleague, she's born in Angola, and she's white. So I was born in Lisbon. So we can say that she's African, and I am not. Okay, I'm black, but I don't have the experience of being born and living in Africa. She had in Angola. And she, for instance, she is the one that used the word "Preto". It is for us an offensive word, for us is a bad word. But she's okay. She's born in Africa. She always did call people like that. And she had a lot of friends that also used this word. So she said to me, "who are you to say to me that I'm wrong using the word "Negro." Something like that. And okay, I say, I cannot change her way but with me, I prefer or I asked that she didn't use that word with me. She'll refer to me like that, or when we are talking about work and she would say, oh, that "nigger?" It was back in the first few days when we met – "preto, preto, preto" and I was like sorry, not with me"- (Maria)

In my later workplace, I had a colleague, she was very blatantly racist. She made comments about the immigrants, the way they smell, the way they talk. And I remember one time we were in the cafeteria and she was like, yes, because people from Guinea Bissau, they smell bad. And my mother and father, they're from Guinea Bissau. And we had the -- we had another black colleague that was there, and she was very mad at this colleague and she was like, you are being a fucking racist. And she was like, no, I'm not being racist blah blah blah and we don't even have Guinean people here in this room and I was like, I'm here and I do not like your comments. And then she started crying being like, I'm not racist. I have black friends blah blah blah, yes, the usual - (Aamara)

In another case, a participant reports an incidence of microaggression by a superior, indicating the truly pervasive nature of microaggression:

I'm very good at writing reports. And I had a colleague, this was a woman, that wasn't as good as me and... I'm not talking about like how good I am, because I had experience in there and she was not that experienced. But the director, he sent the report about three times. So I would send the report and he would send some corrections, sounds normal, then I would do the corrections, I would do everything he would say, [yet he would say] "no, no, no, no no" he would ask for even more corrections. And what I felt at that time, this was clearly. I'm sorry to say this, like, kind of a male pissing thing, like, he wanted to make sure that I understood that he

has the power because when he came into the organization, I was already there. And I think I had a very good part within that organization. Because I had lots of connections with the other workers, right. And I think he went like, "Okay, I'm going to tell you, that I am the boss here." So I really felt that and all through my work there, there was this huge criticism on whatever I did, that I could feel was heavier on me than other things.... and to me it was it was really this thing of him wanting to make sure that I knew that he was on top – (Antonio)

From an intersectionality perspective, social categories of race, class, gender, disability and sexual orientation etc. interact with and co-constitute with one another to create varying social effects (Hankivsky, 2014). Moreover, the intersectionality approach helps reconfigure the way we look at power dynamics in the workplace or other institutions. Indeed, from an intersectional perspective, power is relational, in that a person can both experience power and oppression in different contexts and time spaces and can also exert power over others and with others (Hankivsky, 2014, p. 9).

This approach is useful in this study as it hopes to look at the shifting power dynamics between supervisors in the social work field and subordinates. According to Healy (1998), it is important to recognise the “multiple relations of power that may exist within the practise context” (p. 907). In this research, for instance, by exploring the instances of microaggressions experienced by supervisors by their subordinates and other co-workers, an intersectional approach to power may be elucidated. Thus, social workers may both possess and exert power in their interactions as supervisors and coordinators and may still experience discrimination and prejudice.

4.2.3 White Fragility as Microaggression

According to DiAngelo (2018), white people often display emotions such as anger, fear and guilt and behaviours such as argumentation, silence and avoidance when confronted with issues of race. The participants in this study also observed this fragility in the workplace, especially when they would confront their white colleagues for racism:

And you can't even tell them they are denying because they are going to be upset. But the first reaction is "I'm not denying I'm not racist. I'm not racist." You know, no one wants to be racist, I think is much easier if they accept, you know, I am racist - that will be much easier for me or for anybody to change the reality. – (Francisco)

As Francisco notes, the first instinct for perpetrators of racial microaggression is to deny the incident and get upset. This defensive behaviour, according to DiAngelo (2018) is a result of a “reduced psycho-social stamina” (p.56). Since white people live their lives in insulated white spaces and taught to see their perspectives as objective and universal any racial discomfort triggers a range of emotions and defensive behaviours. Maria’s account of two different scenarios at her workplace exemplifies this white fragility. In the first instance, one colleague challenges her perception of racism and tries to get into an argument with her after being called out for using the word “preto” at work. In the second incident, another colleague bursts into tears when demanded she take accountability for her

racist remark and tries to bring attention to the intent of her action as opposed to the consequence of it:

My colleague, the one from Angola, two days ago, she was showing to me a musician that she discovered from Angola and okay, she's a woman and she plays an instrument that is not usual for women to play. And she (the musician) even when she talked about racism, she would minimize it... so she (my colleague) was saying to me, oh, she's a wonderful artist. So, she valorizes that someone, you know, who doesn't recognize racism in the same way.... But you know, she had this need to say this to me, because she thinks that the way I talk about racism, it's not the better way

We had one situation that kids, Roma kids were doing, you know, kids things in the street. And my colleague came to ask my Roma coworker to go there and fix it. And she said like, "oh because they only respect the owner." Something like, they were dogs because people don't have owners, no. And then then I talked with her. And you know, she was crying she was -- she was very, all like noo because she didn't say for bad (with bad intentions) and blah blah blah blah blah but I say we cannot act like this, here in the context of work. No, in the life each one lives I don't have much control but here at work we cannot have different ways of treating people... we cannot say these kinds of things about the kids, they are kids – (Maria, information in brackets added)

4.2.4 Pressure to Assimilate

Another prominent subtheme of microaggression in the workplace reported by the participants in this study included the pressure to assimilate – a practice whereby Black people are pressured to “fit in”, shed their identities and make themselves palatable to the white gaze in predominantly white institutions:

When I'm working with a family, and we have to go to a service, for instance, a municipality or something, I know that my brain tells me that I need to dress in a different way. [so that] when I go there, the people do not think that I'm just one more person that does not know my rights or how to talk. So my brain, it's trained to do this and what I want, it's that my daughter can go everywhere, and does not have that kind of thoughts. So that's my struggle – (Edna)

and I think everywhere I go I feel the pressure to present myself in a more put together way, then other people do. But yeah, regarding my hair since I have a short afro, probably is a problem, but I don't, I don't care. It's my hair. And there's nothing I can do. It's the way it grows out of my follicles (...) regarding clothes and being aware of the way I talk, it's always an important factor. – (Aamara)

According to Kilomba (2008), Black hair has historically been associated with primitiveness, disorderliness and uncivilization, which is also exemplified here. Many participants, therefore, reported feeling the pressure to tie their hair and present themselves in an “acceptable way”. The pressure to assimilate can also be explained by looking at the *Statute of the Indigenat*, the Portuguese law which created a category of civilised non-

Europeans or “assmilados”. In effect, the law stressed the need for African migrants or those of African descent in Portugal to adopt Portuguese practices and customs (Maeso & Araújo, 2010). This also explains when a participant noted his “ease of mingling” and “reproduce an act around Portuguese”:

I have this also this easiness of mingling, like kind of undercover because I speak with no accent. And I can like reproduce an act around Portuguese because I have socio cultural background which is Portuguese. And even though there are some things in my life, which are more specific to my African ship, like religion, or some types of clothing, I would always try to kind of describe myself. So I use a certain type, certain type of clothing, I would tie my hair. So that all these things wouldn't be so evident.- (Antonio)

Other participants also noted how they are differentiated from other Black people as a “special Black guy” if they “successfully” assimilate since the assumption is that Black people in general do not truly belong in a white space:

if, like me, I have a degree, I am getting my master's degree. So for them I'm a special black guy. So I do not look black anymore. And you listen to people tell you this over and over again: dress special, you are different than them. Okay, that's how I can explain you the mentality of the people. – (Fransisco)

I'm continuing to build my profile as a professional, because I know, I'm different from the role model of the successful guy, successful Portuguese, because that's also something that, you know, you even though you were born here, you got your education here and those kinds of things, people tend to exclude you just by looking at you like, that's facing exclusions. So I think somehow, I've built some protection mechanisms. And also, to use that in my favor, instead of the other way around – (Pedro)

According to Dominelli (2017, pp. 2-3) assimilation ideologies require Black people to adopt white norms and practices and is based on the assumption that only white cultures and practices have something to offer Black people and not the other way around. This ideology makes invisible Black people's daily experiences of racism.

It is clear therefore that the participants must go above and beyond in building their professional profile in the workplace and are forced to assimilate by shedding what Antonio notes is their “african-ship” in order to become the “assmilados”. Similar research by Constantine, Smith, Redington, & Owens (2008) also reports how Black faculty members feel self conscious about their choice of clothing, manner of speech and hairstyle. They also reported feeling the pressure to not be “too Black” (p.353). As Kilomba (2018) argues this, erasure of the race is a “mechanism of negation” (p.86). The function of this mechanism is that it allows white people to project their feelings of aggression and disdain for Black people away from the person and more readily accept them.

4.2.5 Ethno-Racial Matching

Not surprisingly, participants noted a dearth of Black professionals in the social field. They noted that they were often the only Black people in the team in a predominately white space:

I was thinking that we are really few colored people in the team - it's perfectly white. In my experience, it's perfectly white. – (Anika)

Unfortunately, I think the places I've been working, most of the times if I'm not--- at this moment where I'm working, we are just two black women. At the previous job we had more black woman and black men also, but I see that most of the places, most of institutions from the state, when you go to the institutions, you don't see that much of black people, black and brown people. So I would say that it's rare to see black people in this in these positions. And unfortunately, I am one of the few that is able to do that. – (Aamara)

But we need the data to show the problem. And right now, you cannot really show the problem. You cannot tell, you know you cannot tell there is no black person in the position of hierarchy. Okay, you know, there are no Black people there, everybody knows, but you cannot tell because they're gonna deny it. They're going to tell you, I know someone, I know Francisco is a coordinator or something, you know, they're going to say something like that. So that's why you need data. You need data to show that we have a problem – (Francisco)

Thus, it seems that there is a lack of diversity in the social work field. Moreover, when Black people do get hired, they are assigned to do only specific roles in a practice known as ethno-racial matching. Ethno-racial matching is when workers are assigned to work with families who share their ethno-cultural and racial background with the belief that these workers can better understand and relate to the needs of the families and youths with the same ethno-racial and cultural identity (Gosine & Pon, 2011). While it is true that some Black service users respond and identify well to Black workers, it also pigeonholes and limits the practice and career opportunities of Black workers (ibid). Moreover, it seems that the Black people who break the glass ceiling and enter the profession are only hired to do a specific job – to work with other Black people as “specialist workers” which excludes Black people from working in other departments (Dominelli, 2017) as illustrated by the quotes below:

And what I felt in that other job was that my abilities were always very, shall I say, specific, as long as I was working with the Black kids, it was okay, so I really had to fight a lot to be able to do other kinds of jobs, like teacher training, and things like that. And I would always feel when I said, “well, I would also like to do that,” for example, we were in a project – we were going to do teacher training. And the people that were chosen were like nonblack. Now I would say, “well, I would like to do that”. (and the response would be), “oh, but you're so good when you work with teenagers.” No, no, no, I really had to push it so that I could do this. So, I think that

was in the first years. I had to push a lot to make my way after that. After that, perhaps not so much – (Antonio)

And I entered this place because I'm Black, because they were looking for, we call mediator, community mediator. And I don't know, they have this stupid idea that because you are Black, you can deal with any Black. I never was here in this community; I had no links with nobody. But for me this was the opportunity to enter this team – (Maria)

Another problem with ethno-racial matching is that workers may find themselves stuck between the rules and expectations of the organisation and the expectations of the service users who may look at them as allies and expect them to bend the rules for them (Gosine & Pon, 2011). This provides a challenging and ethical dilemma to the worker as illustrated by Edna here:

Also, with Black people, it's like, some people get me. [They say], “well, if you are Black, why you are doing this? why you're coming to my house and saying to me that I need to change this or that?” It's difficult on each side. Sometimes when we are working with Black people, they think, “oh, now it's okay. she will say everything's okay, that we are doing everything right”... for instance, sometimes they say, “you understand this, you understand this, and you know how this is.” And sometimes, I need to say that I do not understand because I do not live your life... and here we are in a different position. It's not like we are brothers or that we are doing the same thing. So I'm here to make them work. It's different – (Edna)

Important to note here from the accounts of Edna and other participants working in the social work field is the lack of institutional support. Indeed, according to Essed (1991), everyday day racism is systematic and embodied in the way we conduct ourselves in everyday life. As such, the next section explores this link between everyday instances to larger, institutional repercussions of racism and microaggression.

4.2.6 From Micro to Meso: Organisational Culture

Institutional racism embodies structural mechanisms, policies and processes that marginalise and exclude non-dominant groups (Yosso et al., 2009). As such, social institutions such as the workplace practice systematic racism to maintain the status quo through policies and processes both in overt and covert ways (Embrick et al., 2017). This research has provided examples of everyday racism through accounts of Black individuals in the social work field. However, what is worth considering is the organisational culture that perpetuates these everyday instances of racism in the workplace. The following quotes illustrates this further:

But it's more and more difficult to them to understand that there's a whole system, they believe more that it's a glitch in the system - not that this is common for everyone- (Antonio)

Then it becomes part of the organizational culture. So it affects the way that you look at what you are doing, you know, you don't reflect that much on it, especially when you're working in social areas, then you don't reflect that much about, you know, the systemics impacts on and also then, sometimes the lack of confidence within certain communities and so on. And then you say, okay, if the Portuguese were nice colonizers, if there are no barriers to the social integration, if there's no racism, you know, then basically you are saying that people are not making it because they don't want to. So somehow, the reflections of these situations at a higher level, they're definitely necessary. Because then you are not just taking things like they look like they are, you're trying to dig in a bit more and trying to understand how not only things from the present, but also things from the past are still playing a role in the way that people are perceived and also how they perceive themselves. – (Pedro)

As Pedro illustrates, the Portuguese's national imagination as a "good colonizer" means that systematic policies of exclusion and marginalisation are dismissed and denied. The legacy of lusotropicalism runs deep in the fabric of Portuguese society, manifesting clearly in the workplace and other social institutions. In fact, it is this very denial that maintains and legitimises structures of racial exclusion (Kilomba, 2008, p. 18). In the wider context of Portugal, the concept of "Racial Europeanization" coined by Goldberg stems from the desire of many European nations to refuse to reckon with their colonial past.

Anti-Blackness is thus deeply interwoven in the fabric of many social organisations and regulates the hierarchical positions of white Portuguese in relation to African descendants (Curington, 2020). As Francisco notes below, positions of authority are held firmly by white Portuguese maintaining the status quo:

Okay, we have the head of the department and we have someone the co-head (who works under the head), and then you have the different departments, okay. So in the top you have the head and the co-head is Black. So he is from a migrant background. Then in the different - you have three departments, no migrant people (or people of colour), then you have coordinators, okay. No Black people. Official coordinators, me, I'm a coordinator, but I'm not official coordinator. So I don't get paid as a coordinator. So you have those kind of things. But you can never tell this, you can never identify these discriminations. – (Francisco)

4.3 Consequences of Microaggression

Finally, the experiences of microaggression as described above led to several consequences and impacted participant's mental and physical wellbeing which will be described in this section. Broadly, this section is divided into two major themes which include "psychological impacts" and the subsequent "coping strategies" which victims of microaggressions employ. Indeed, previous research has identified how experiencing microaggression results in psychological and physiological stress (Williams, 2020). Moreover, microaggressions at work directly spark a myriad of emotional and cognitive responses such as anger, confusion, fear, anxiety, rationalizations and pressure to work

twice as hear (Nadal et al., 2014; Pitcan et al., 2018; Rachel Speer et al., 2020). The findings of this study revealed similar themes and subthemes which are outlined below.

4.3.1 Psychological Impacts

Many participants talked about having to regulate their emotions in the face of microaggression. For instance, Francisco talks about trying to “calm down” and not showing emotion even as he faced distrust from his colleagues:

And you know, the first days working in this office was really hard for me, because I noticed, you know, I couldn't, I couldn't really express what is in my mind so I had to be really cautious and calm down - I couldn't show too much emotion. –
(Francisco)

Similarly, another participant talked about the prevalent nature of microaggression. She shared how she contemplates the nature of every interaction and must judge whether it was racially motivated or not:

I think about it every day. Every interaction that I have with people, I'm like, is this racially motivated? Or she's just a shy person or whatever. But yeah, it's the thing that is always in my mind, and I think that most of the times, it's racially motivated. They are... they think they are superior to you. And when they are being racist, they think they are very individual in the way they are being racist, but they're not.... every racist dude does exactly the same thing. So when you're interacting with somebody, and they are being racist towards you, even if it's in a very subtle way, you know, and it's very rare with white people that they are not being racist or patronizing you. – (Aamara)

The above finding is similar to what Sue (2010) identifies as “intrusive cognitions” (p. 215), which are constant and negative continuing thoughts that are replayed constantly in a person’s mind. As such, the negative psychological impact of racial microaggressions on individual’s well being is precisely because of the pervasiveness of these thoughts (Ong et al., 2013; Torres, Driscoll, & Burrow, 2010). It also no wonder, therefore, that previous research has found that the cumulative effect of many seemingly innocuous acts of microaggression is what generates feelings of stress, invisibility and marginalisation in Black people (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2008; Wang, Leu, & Shoda, 2011). Indeed, the current research also found this accompanying feeling of anger, tiredness, and powerlessness in some participants after multiple and repeated instances of micro aggressive interactions:

There was a time I was really like pissed off because it happened, you know, like, a few times in a row in a short time you know, and yeah, and sometimes you feel like, powerless like what can you do? Yeah... I feel tired. And, and I feel powerless. Yes – (Pedro)

But it's like, (sigh) let me just go through the motions and go home because I'm really tired. Of course, now, I've got a white beard – (Antonio)

According to Sue (2010), people feel powerless because they feel like they are unable to stop the microaggressions in their life. Confronting the person is not always possible and may result in negative consequences such as backlash especially from those in positions of power such as bosses and other colleagues at work. Quitting one's job is also not always an option because of economic reasons and thus, victims of microaggression feel trapped. As a further result, victims may also start experiencing feels of worthlessness and low self esteem as reported by some participants:

But for me, I say what I have to say. But I saw moments in the beginning that I was more insecure... (Maria)

On the other side, one of the problems that arose and that I'm now facing is that my self esteem was not that good, because I thought that these hurdles were because of well, I'm not, I'm not yet good enough. That's why that person will not promote me because I'm not that good enough, I'm gonna work harder etc, even though I would see other people having opportunities that I didn't have – (Antonio)

As Antonio highlights, one unfortunate consequence of microaggression are feelings of low self worth. This is similar to findings of research by Wong-Padoongpatt, Zane, Okazaki, & Saw (2017) on racial microaggressions experienced by Asian American participants. The study concluded that social marginalisation impacts psychological states of belonging, control, and self esteem. Antonio further expands on this by talking about how his ideas were constantly shot down in the workplace and affected his motivation and sense of worth in the beginning of his career:

What usually puts me more down, is when people, like block me from doing other things, and I kind of find out that when I do them, I am successful at them. And for some time, at least in my first years, this really held me down. Because they would say no, no, it's not good. And many times, I said, okay etc. But nowadays, I don't, I don't buy that so much.... So, I think this is like, when you ask me first, what would be the most subtle racism consequence, I think it will be the one that makes me believe that technically, I'm not as good – (Antonio)

On the extreme end, one participant also talked about the dehumanisation he felt as a result of the microaggression he faces in his daily life:

I think it's like the woman is more accepted and less discriminated then the men and because there's probably a kind of, you know, abundance of stereotypes and ideas about Black men, like being insensitive and those kind of things. I think they are perceived as being like tough and rigid. And, and sometimes to be honest, most of all, for me is like really, yes, strange. Because if you feel like someone is insensitive, it's because you're not looking at it as the human you know? Because it's just, you're seeing, you're not seeing a person – (Pedro)

All in all, to counter the negative effects of microaggressions, many participants reported developing coping mechanisms. These coping mechanism work to protect the participants from the psychological harm described above. The next section explores the coping

strategies in more detail.

4.3.2 Coping Mechanisms

Research on workplace microaggression has shown that participants often conjure up coping strategies to deal with their experiences. The current research adds onto that literature by exploring some of these coping strategies that participants in this study identified. Two major coping strategies are identified and elaborated upon, which include: internal coping strategies and external coping strategies. Internal coping strategies include cognitive and affective structuring, i.e., strategies that participants employed and practised internally such as making jokes and working twice as hard to counter negative stereotypes. Meanwhile, external coping strategies include seeking support and confronting preparators of microaggression. Both of these strategies are described in more detail below:

4.3.2.1 Internal Coping Mechanism

Previous research on Black women in corporate positions by Holder, Jackson, & Ponterotto, (2015) showed how participants must shoulder immense burden and pressure to be perfect, work twice as hard and not make mistakes in the workplace. This is because participants feel that they must try to dispel negative stereotypes and perceptions of Black people and also, simultaneously, prove themselves:

In my perspective, I think it's repeated too many times, like, you have to work two times or three times more to get, you know, to get some recognition....it means like, I'm already expecting that I'm going to, you know, work a few times more, and I'm not going to get any reward, you know, and I think it's sad, it's sad. - (Pedro)

So you're dealing with self development. So okay, so I'm going to be better, you're going to read more, you're going to study more, I'm going to work hard. So you keep on, you keep on pushing. But at the same time. As I said before, it makes you believe that you're not as good. Because you can't, you have to work harder to get the same thing, right. -(Antonio)

Since I'm used to being the only black person in this spaces, so normally, the thing that you do is, or at least I tried to do is always to do a good job, you know, so, and it has the other side of the coin, which is like you never allow yourself to make mistakes.... But yeah, this is the way that I tried to navigate this is to do a good job and always be very competent and fast, but doing good at the work that I have to do. - (Aamara)

These findings are similar to research by Gatwiri (2021) who argues that Black people are more likely to be subjected to surveillance because of the stereotypes associated with them such as being incompetent and lazy. This puts pressure on Black people to work twice as hard to disprove these narratives and prove their expertise every step of the way. As the participants note above, Black people in the workplace carry with them a “a burden of proof” where they must prove that they are worthy of respect and acceptance from their white colleagues, bosses, and clients (Gatwiri, 2021; Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama,

2018). As such, there also exists a racialized double standard, where white colleagues are not held to the same high standards as their Black counterparts and do not have to work twice as hard (Gosine & Pon, 2011). Yet, despite these “racialized suspicions” (Gatwiri, 2021, p. 12) where Black people are treated as objects of surveillance, there is also an invisibility that exists in Black people’s lives where they are often overlooked for promotions, support and mentorship – such is the paradox of the white gaze (Gatwiri, 2021; Holder et al., 2015; Pitcan et al., 2018).

Not surprisingly, to avoid dealing with the stress of the constant surveillance, some participants reported ignoring incidences of microaggression for their own peace of mind as reported here:

Sometimes I laugh it off. Other times if the person is like, speaking to me, sometimes I respond. Other times I just try to brush it off. But it doesn't brush off. It depends on the situation. And if I'm alone, if I'm with somebody of my trust, of course. Yes, it depends on the situation. – (Aamara)

And when people say things like that, I just ignore, just like, oh, and I don't think because I think that we must value things that are good for us. And those things we, it's a kind of, aggression, not physical, but it is an aggression (...) I just ignore it, just [try] to not pay attention. It's [a] valuable process in in my mind, – (Anika)

And so most of the times, I try not to take it personally and sometimes ignore it and not try to feel the pressure related with that situation. But, sometimes those kinds of things can ruin your experience in certain places. – (Pedro)

Indeed, as Pedro notes here, sometimes, it becomes difficult to ignore the incidences. As such, other defense mechanisms are employed as noted by Antonio to protect him from the adverse effects of microaggression:

And I think that's the main I should say that the main thing about this issue is that you build up a kind of, not care, it's not caring, is about a defense mechanism, where you kind of over oversee it, because if you keep watching everything, then you kind of end up feeling in a very dangerous zone, you become hyper alert. – (Antonio)

These defense mechanisms are similar to the coping strategies described by Holder et al (2015) and Pitcan et al (2018) whereby participant’s in corporate organisations talked about avoiding racially sensitive topics that may trigger microaggression or shifting and changing the topic for their own self preservation. Also, important to note here is the correlation between avoidance coping strategies and low self esteem (Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight, 2008). As such avoiding and/or ignoring instances of microaggression may minimise the painful emotions of anger and resentment associated with it and may provide a buffer from the intensity of the racism and microaggression in the short term (Spates, Evans, Watts, Abubakar, & James, 2020). In the long term, however, the feelings of resentment and trauma are accumulated in what Antonio calls the “anger triggering box”

which further deteriorate mental health:

And now I'm thinking as I'm talking is that how much I, you know, have this coping mechanism of not taking things into this box called races. It's like, I don't want to feed that because it's an anger triggering box. So, if I put too many things in that box, I will kind of feel hurt, depressed, and will feel that I have no alternatives (....) I think that this mechanism of not assigning things to racism is this dual thing in a way, it kind of protects you because you don't get depressed. Because you're dealing with a monster that is too big for you to tackle – (Antonio)

4.3.2.2 External Coping Mechanism

Many participants also mentioned employing other coping methods to counter incidences of microaggression. This includes tapping into the support networks they have in the workplace or elsewhere or directly confronting the perpetrators of microaggression.:

I think to me, it's too to have an outside, first not concentrate my whole life at work and being able to have a good coping network, where I can rely on and I can trust in. I can feel I can feel safe, as I told you.- (Antonio)

Notably, however, sometimes the only alternative left is to step out of the organisation and find an outlet outside that could help cope with the incidences of microaggression. Antonio, for example, observes how he decided to set up his own private practice when his work was not being recognised in the current workplace:

and it's when you go out of that environment... and that you suddenly start to do a kind of a work on your own, where the importance really is what you do instead of who is doing it. And then you'd like, blow up, it's like, whoa, what's going on? and suddenly, everybody loves the job that I'm doing. And it's incredible, it's great, etc. And as soon as I started to step out of these, these organizations that I've been working in, it's like people are inviting me to write chapters about racism, about intercultural awareness, about doing courses etc about African psychology. And I go like, oh, where is this all coming from? I'll just suddenly like, everybody remembers me, you know?

Other participants decided that speaking up was important, even in the face of pushback and narrated incidents where they decided to confront the person who was discriminatory towards them. For example, Aamara narrates an incident where her colleague made a racist comment:

And she came to me and she was like, “do you really think I'm racist?” And I said, “yes, that comment is racist.” And she was like, “no, but this is what normal people normally say and do. And I think it's normal”. And I said, “yes, the common sense is racist, and you're just doing what the common sense tells you to do.” But yeah, she was crying. And I was like, I don't care. And I said, what I had to say, and I went away. – (Aamara)

Similarly, Edna talked about the importance of articulating your concerns with your colleague and engaging in dialogue:

I think that one thing that we cannot stop doing, it's telling everyone [that we know what they are] feeling so it's like, the way that I am feeling it does not need to be the same way that you are feeling. So they need to hear us, they need to understand that this is the way that we want to do. This is our path. So I think that we should start talking, even if no one is out on our side, but it's our voice. It's how we contribute to a better world, to a fair world. – (Edna)

These findings are similar to research by Spates et al. (2020) who qualitatively explored Black women's coping strategies to dealing with gendered racism. They also found that Black women deal with these experiences through overt and covert forms of resistance and by finding safe spaces to talk about their lived experiences and process their emotions. Overt forms of resistance are what this research also explored in the accounts of the women in this study. Apart from Aamara, another participant, Maria, also talked about calling out a person who used the pejorative word "Preto" to address her and other Black people. Other research has shown however, that confronting discrimination as a coping strategy can have adverse effects on Black people's physical and mental health (Spates et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2008). Maria, for instance, talked about how confronting the perpetrators led to more microaggression in the form of jokes:

It was difficult. I think, of course, they think about that, but they also start to joke about it. And in the end, it was something that turns against me... then it was some kind of joke. But I don't have a lot of humor in this situation, but also it cost me, and I had to listen a lot of jokes about this, because, for instance, we say when something's bad, we say oh it's a dark situation.... it was a joke for me, but it is you know... now they recognize, and they try to make a joke about it or replace: okay, no it is not dark, it is white...- (Maria)

As Sue et al. (2007) argue, perpetrators of microaggression when confronted are likely to develop alternative explanation for the microaggression. They may also accuse the victim to be overreacting or being overly sensitive and petty (ibid). This is also evident above, as Maria's co-workers continued to make light of the current situation and invalidated her experiences of microaggression leading to a vicious cycle of microaggression.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusion

This qualitative study explored how Black professionals in the social work field experience microaggressions and what the consequences of those experiences are in Portugal. What are the experiences of microaggression by Black professionals in the field? How does that experience change for people according to their intersecting identities (race and gender)? What are the consequences of those experiences in their lives and what are their coping strategies? In answering these research questions through in-depth semi-structured interviews with seven professionals in the social field, the study makes four main conclusions which will be outlined below. It is important to note that these findings cannot be generalized to all professionals in the field in Portugal or abroad. However, the results indicate the existence and pervasiveness of racial microaggressions in the social work field, which ironically, advocates for racial and social justice.

First, the results indicate the different ways in which microaggression manifests both in the everyday life of individuals and in the social work field. While the main goal of this research was to investigate the experiences of microaggression in the workplace, all the participants also shared their everyday lived encounters with racism and microaggression. Everyday racism, a theoretical framework, as developed by Philomena Essed (1991), was used to analyze the ways in which microaggression manifests. The results showed for instance, how microaggression was pervasive and embedded in the daily day to day life experiences of Black professionals. It was not possible, therefore, to divorce those experiences from the workplace.

Moreover, using Sue et al (2007)'s classification of microaggression, this study identified three different kinds of microaggression as reported by the participants. This includes micro assault, microinsult and microinvalidation. Guided by Essed (1991)'s concept of "gendered racism" and the intersectionality theory, I also added another classification: gendered microaggression. All four kinds of microaggression were prevalent in the life of these participants. Micro assaults indicated overt forms of racism, whereby participants reported being called derogatory terms like "preto" or being treated like second class citizens and told to go back to their countries. Microinsults and microinvalidation, on the other hand, are more subtle forms of aggression. Participants reported receiving insults disguised as compliments such as being told they are intelligent or good looking "for a Black person" – the underlying assumption being that Black people are not normally those things. Participants also reported having to question and navigate "feelings" of microaggression because of its' subtle nature. They recognized that the denial of racism and white privilege is what further invalidated their everyday experience in the workplace or outside. Some participants also noted the denial as being rooted in the lusotropicalist ideological history of Portugal. Indeed, the myth of Portuguese people as being tolerant and accepting of differences and diversity is what further led to microaggression.

Finally, gendered racial microaggression included a more intersectional lens to the nature of microaggression. Participants noted the different perceptions that people had about Black

men and women. They observed that Black men are more likely to be ascribed to criminality, whereas women are more likely to be hypersexualized and connected to low skilled jobs. This is reflected in the work of Grada Kilomba (2008, p. 54) as well who identified racist constructions based on gender roles and vice versa such as the myth of the disposable Black woman or the aggressive Black man. In this research, for instance, Black female professionals were more likely to be mistaken for cleaners and support workers (jobs traditionally undertaken by women) instead of professionals with technical knowledge and leadership roles. Meanwhile, men were mistaken for being monitors and other low skilled workers.

The second conclusion drawn from this research is about the different kinds of experiences that Black professionals noted in their daily encounters at work. These professionals reported being pushed to the margins whilst constantly being undermined and doubted for their expertise. Not only are Black professionals constructed as different from the dominant white group, but they are also placed in a lower hierarchical position. Through this process, they are stereotyped as inferior and incompetent. Not surprisingly, participants reported feelings of invisibility in the workplace. They reported being ignored or dismissed in work meetings, field visits and workshops. White people constantly expressed discomfort, thinly veiled as surprise, when confronted with a Black professional. Often, the assumption is that only their white counterpart can assume positions of authority. Moreover, since the participants work in the social field and thus work with Afro-Portuguese and Black service users who are historically more likely to be in impoverished neighborhoods, they constantly felt the need to distinguish themselves from the target population. In effect, they were made to feel like outsiders, even if they were born in Portugal thus affecting their sense of belonging and identity.

Another theme in workplace microaggression was the manifestation of aggression from all fronts. Participants reported incidences of microaggression by co-workers, supervisors and even service subordinates. There were both differences and similarities in these manifestations because of the different power dynamics that exist in the workplace. With co-workers, participants reported feeling sabotaged and threatened. Co-workers were also likely to be covertly racist in their encounters and felt threatened if Black professionals were promoted or assigned in positions of authority. Supervisors on the other hand may re-exert their position of power. This showed that power is relational, in that a person can both experience power and oppression in different contexts and can also exert power over others.

Microaggression in the workplace also displayed three other themes. First, participants reported having to confront white fragility in the workplace. Hereby, white co-workers, in particular, were more susceptible to this kind of microaggression. White fragility was operationalised here using DiAngelo's (2018) definition, who described how white people, living in insulated white spaces, taught to see their view as universal, often display emotions such as anger, fear and guilt and behaviours such as argumentation, silence and avoidance when confronted with issues of race. Thus, if participants tried to confront or educate their co-workers about issues of race, they would be met with defensiveness and tears, making it difficult to bring up the issue in the first place. Second, participants

reported being the only Black people working in predominantly white spaces. Often, they were hired as “specialist” workers in a practise known as ethno-racial matching or racial profiling in the social work field. Here, participants reported they were often pigeonholed into specific roles that allowed them to only work with other Black people and people of color. This limited their opportunities to progress in the workplace. Moreover, because of a lack of institutional support, some participants reported having to navigate the expectations of the service user and the institution. Finally, participants noted feeling the pressure to assimilate – they had to shed aspects of their Black identity, for fear of appearing “too Black” in order to be recognised at work.

Therefore, the third conclusion drawn from this study focuses on the psychological consequences of microaggression and the coping mechanisms that the participants employed. As already mentioned above, participants were constantly being questioned about their expertise as professionals. As a result, they felt a “burden of proof” where they must work twice as hard as their white counterpart to receive the same credit and recognition. This had deleterious effects as participants reported feeling like there is no room for mistakes. Moreover, despite working twice as hard, participants still reported feeling dismissed and ignored at work. In a way, there was a paradoxical aspect at play – participants felt both invisible and surveilled at work. In some ways, while their contributions were dismissed, any mistake they made was immediately critiqued and magnified as proof of their incompetence. It is no wonder then, that some participants felt that aggressions at work or elsewhere affected their self-esteem and self-worth. In some cases, they also felt powerless and defeated in the face of microaggression.

These consequences led participants to strategize and devise some coping mechanisms. Overall, there were two kinds of coping mechanisms – internal and external. In internal coping mechanisms, participants reported having to regulate their emotions using defense mechanisms such as avoidance, shifting and changing racially sensitive topics for their own self-preservation. While these internal coping mechanisms of ignoring instances of microaggression helped minimise the painful emotions of anger and resentment associated with it and provided a buffer from the intensity of the aggression in the short term, these methods were not always full proof. Instead, this coping mechanism was also a “mechanism of negation” (Kilomba, 2018, p. 86), could erase their Black identity and lead to internalized racism. Hence, external coping mechanisms were also used. This included directly confronting the perpetrators of microaggression or seeking outside support through other Black peers. Interestingly, one coping mechanism was “stepping out” of the organisation.

Indeed, the fourth and last conclusion drawn from this study was the organisational cultures that perpetuated these microaggressions. As one participant reported, it is not one or two incidences of microaggression but a whole glitch in the system. This research showed therefore how institutional elements were at play where the pervasiveness of microaggression was proof of structures that are not supportive of racial and ethnic diversity. As one participant noted, Black people are rarely in positions of authority and power is usually usurped by white individuals. Moreover, the denial of racism manifested

by individuals at the micro level are mirrored also at a structural level. As such, there are no policies and practices that can protect Black professionals in the workplace from racist encounters. For example, when asked if participants reported incidences of microaggression, all of them said no. The feelings of powerlessness and lack of support work together to perpetuate microaggression in the social work field.

5.1 Recommendations for policy and practice

This study highlights the need to include policies and practices in the social work field to combat issues of racism and microaggression.

First, there is a dire need to include cultural and antiracist competencies training programs to educate professionals in the social field about working with different racial and cultural groups. These training programs should also provide professionals the tools to investigate their own biases towards people of colour and the structural and institutional levels of racism. It is important for the professional development and training program to encourage dialogue about subtle and institutional forms of racism so that fragility around racial issues can be addressed. Organisations should openly encourage discussions around white privilege so that oppressive patterns of racism can be disrupted. Indeed, as DiAngelo (2018) argues, many white people have never been given direct information about racism before and cannot explicitly feel or understand it. While people of colour are more aware of it on a personal level, they often do not have a macro-level understanding of it due to society's mystification narratives, in the case of Portugal, lusotropicalism. Thus, programs that are designed to help professionals recognise and confront racial microaggressions should be implemented. The goal should be to help them reflect on their cultural and institutional conditionings and increase awareness.

Second, professionals should be encouraged to take steps toward educating themselves and seeking support or consultations when they feel they are at the receiving end of microaggressions or if they have perpetuated racial microaggressions. For this reason, equality committees should be set up where professionals can air their grievances and receive support in case of racial prejudice. Racially and culturally sensitive strategies and protocols should be devised to deal with these complaints and issues.

Finally, more social work institutions should be encouraged to employ Black people. This diversity campaign should be taken up in earnest instead of resorting to tokenism and hiring only a few people of colour. Instead, mentoring programs should be set up so that people of colour can be encouraged to build a community of like minded professionals. Meanwhile, promotional opportunities and other initiatives should be encouraged at an institutional level for a fairer work environment.

5.2 Implications for social work – MFamily

This research adds onto the literature surrounding social work and microaggression. As a profession committed to social justice and equity, social work should take on a more anti-racist perspective. This perspective while important in the workplace can also benefit when employed in schools and educational facilities.

The MFAMILY program is composed of a diverse group of individuals from all over the world and prides itself on bringing international perspectives to the forefront. The educational program can therefore benefit from adopting a more anti-racist perspective. The findings of this study reveal that students can benefit from learning about cultural diversity, racism and discrimination and white privilege. Moreover, hands on training that incorporates these elements of anti-discrimination should be made part of the MFamily curriculum where discussions about race and microaggression are integrated in field visits and other projects. Students should be encouraged to think about how issues of race affect psychological safety at work so that they are equipped to deal with issues of social justice when they join the social work field. Finally, educational and awareness campaigns that dispel colour blind and lusotropical narratives should be incorporated both in the MFAMILY program and other social work programs in the university.

5.3 Limitations and future research

This study is not without its limitations. First, the small size of the sample makes it difficult to generalise the findings to all Black people's experiences in Portugal. Moreover, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, only Zoom interviews were conducted with the participant which made it difficult to connect with a larger group of professionals. Additionally, since this study was conducted in English, only a specific group of people were interviewed. However, it can be argued that the main goal of the research was not to make claims about a single universal Black experience – but to provide a perspective and glimpse into the subjective experience of racial discrimination by some Black professionals in the field. This study therefore contributes to a growing body of research that has sparked discussions and recognition of the issue of race in social work.

Future research should incorporate a bigger sample of people and conduct interviews in Portuguese so that more diverse perspectives can be included. Similarly, a nationwide research can be conducted to see if there is a difference in experiences of racism between professionals living in different cities in Portugal. Studies designed to study macro-level policies and structures can also be conducted to see how institutional racism manifests in the workplace. Finally, due to the sample of this study, it was not possible to make significant claims about gendered racial microaggressions. Future research with more gender inclusive samples can also look at the intersection of race, sex and sexual orientation to see how racism, sexism and homophobia collide.

References

- Almeida, M. V. de. (2016). From Miscegenation to Creole Identity: Portuguese Colonialism, Brazil, Cape Verde. In C. Stewart (Ed.), *Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory* (p. 276). Routledge.
- Anderson, W., Roque, R., & Santos, R. V. (2019). *Luso-tropicalism and its discontents: the making and unmaking of racial exceptionalism*. Berghahn Books.
- Araújo, M. (2013). Challenging Narratives on Diversity and Immigration in Portugal: the (de) politicization of colonialism and racism. *Migrant Marginality: A Transnational Perspective*, 27–46.
- Archibald, M. M., Ambagtsheer, R. C., Casey, M. G., & Lawless, M. (2019). Using zoom videoconferencing for qualitative data collection: perceptions and experiences of researchers and participants. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 18, 1609406919874596.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press New York.
- Constantine, M. G., Smith, L., Redington, R. M., & Owens, D. (2008). Racial microaggressions against Black counseling and counseling psychology faculty: A central challenge in the multicultural counseling movement. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 86(3), 348–355.
- Creswell, J. W. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*.
- Cruz, D., Rodriguez, Y., & Mastropaolo, C. (2019). Perceived microaggressions in health care: A measurement study. *PloS One*, 14(2), e0211620.
- Curington, C. V. (2020). “WE SPEAK BACK!”: Challenging Belonging and Anti-Blackness in Portugal. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, 1–26.
- DeCuir-Gunby, J. T., & Gunby Jr, N. W. (2016). Racial microaggressions in the workplace: A critical race analysis of the experiences of African American educators. *Urban Education*, 51(4), 390–414.
- DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White fragility: Why it’s so hard for white people to talk about racism*. Beacon Press.
- Dominelli, L. (1989). An uncaring profession? An examination of racism in social work. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 15(3), 391–403.
- Dominelli, L. (2017). *Anti-racist social work*. Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Embrick, D. G., Domínguez, S., & Karsak, B. (2017). More than just insults: Rethinking sociology’s contribution to scholarship on racial microaggressions. *Sociological*

- Inquiry*, 87(2), 193–206.
- Essed, P. (1991). *Understanding everyday racism: An interdisciplinary theory* (Vol. 2). Sage.
- Essed, P. (2008). Everyday racism. *A Companion to Racial and Ethnic Studies*, 202–216.
- Gatwiri, K. (2021). Racial Microaggressions at Work: Reflections from Black African Professionals in Australia. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 51(2), 655–672.
- Global Definition of Social Work – International Federation of Social Workers. (n.d.). Retrieved December 30, 2020, from <https://www.ifsw.org/what-is-social-work/global-definition-of-social-work/>
- Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles. (2018). Retrieved from – International Federation of Social Workers website: <https://www.ifsw.org/global-social-work-statement-of-ethical-principles/>
- Goldberg, D. T. (2006). Racial europeanization. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 29(2), 331–364.
- Goldberg, D. T. (2008). Racial states. *A Companion to Racial and Ethnic Studies*, 233–258.
- Gomez, M. L., Khurshid, A., Freitag, M. B., & Lachuk, A. J. (2011). Microaggressions in graduate students' lives: How they are encountered and their consequences. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(8), 1189–1199. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.TATE.2011.06.003>
- Gosine, K., & Pon, G. (2011). On the front lines: The voices and experiences of racialized child welfare workers in Toronto, Canada. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, 22(2), 135–159.
- Graham, M. (2000). Honouring social work principles-exploring the connections between anti-racist social work and African-centred worldviews. *Social Work Education*, 19(5), 423–436.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. Retrieved from <https://books.google.se/books?id=omvsngEACAAJ>
- Hankivsky, O. (2014). Intersectionality 101. *The Institute for Intersectionality Research & Policy, SFU*, 1–34.
- Healy, K. (1998). Participation and child protection: The importance of context. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 28(6), 897–914.
- Holder, A., Jackson, M. A., & Ponterotto, J. G. (2015). Racial microaggression experiences and coping strategies of Black women in corporate leadership. *Qualitative Psychology*, 2(2), 164.
- Homan, R. (1992). The ethics of open methods. *British Journal of Sociology*, 321–332.
- Hooks, B. (1997). *Representing whiteness in the black imagination*. Duke University Press.
- Hunn, V., Harley, D., Elliott, W., & Canfield, J. P. (2015). Microaggression and the mitigation of psychological harm: Four social workers' exposition for care of clients,

- students, and faculty who suffer “a thousand little cuts.” *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 7(9), 41–55.
- Jeffery, D. (2005). ‘What good is anti-racist social work if you can’t master it’?: exploring a paradox in anti-racist social work education. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(4), 409–425.
- Jones, K. P., Peddie, C. I., Gilrane, V. L., King, E. B., & Gray, A. L. (2016). Not so subtle: A meta-analytic investigation of the correlates of subtle and overt discrimination. *Journal of Management*, 42(6), 1588–1613.
- Ka, F. (2012). Education and Black People in Portugal: Fernando Ka. In *Education in the Black Diaspora* (pp. 83–89). Routledge.
- Kanuha, V. K. (2000). “Being” native versus “going native”: Conducting social work research as an insider. *Social Work*, 45(5), 439–447.
- Kelly, H. (2007). Racial tokenism in the school workplace: An exploratory study of black teachers in overwhelmingly white schools. *Educational Studies*, 41(3), 230–254.
- Kilomba, G. (2008). *Plantation memories: episodes of everyday racism*. Unrast Münster.
- Kim, J. Y.-J., Nguyen, D., & Block, C. (2018). The □□□-Degree Experience of Workplace Microaggressions: Who Commits Them? How Do Individuals Respond? What Are the Consequences? *Microaggression Theory: Influence and Implications*, 89.
- Kim, S., & Kim, R. H. (2010). Microaggressions experienced by international students attending U.S. institutions of higher education. In *Microaggressions and marginality: Manifestation, dynamics, and impact*. (pp. 171–191). Hoboken, NJ, US: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Kwansah-Aidoo, K., & Mapedzahama, V. (2018). “ There is really discrimination everywhere”: Experiences and consequences of everyday racism among the new black African diaspora in Australia. *Australasian Review of African Studies*, The, 39(1), 81–109.
- Labaree, R. V. (2002). The risk of ‘going observationalist’: negotiating the hidden dilemmas of being an insider participant observer. *Qualitative Research*, 2(1), 97–122.
- Lewis, J. A., Mendenhall, R., Harwood, S. A., & Browne Hunt, M. (2016). “Ain’t I a woman?” Perceived gendered racial microaggressions experienced by Black women. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 44(5), 758–780.
- Maeso, S. R. (2019). The State of Denial and the present future of anti-racism: official discourses about racism, ‘multiraciality’ and poverty in Portugal (1985-2016). *Revista Direito e Práxis*, 10(3), 2033–2067.
- Maeso, S. R., & Araújo, M. (2010). Portuguese (post-) colonial situations, national identity and the understanding of racism: the politics of academic narratives. *CES: TOLERACE Project, Working Paper*, 1, 38.
- McGinn, T., Taylor, B., McColgan, M., & McQuilkan, J. (2016). Social work literature searching: Current issues with databases and online search engines. *Research on*

Social Work Practice, 26(3), 266–277.

- McTernan, E. (2018). Microaggressions, equality, and social practices. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 26(3), 261–281.
- Nadal, K., Wong, Y., Griffin, K., Davidoff, K., & Sriken, J. (2014). The Adverse Impact of Racial Microaggressions on College Students' Self-Esteem. *Journal of College Student Development*, 55, 461–474. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2014.0051>
- Nair, N., Good, D. C., & Murrell, A. J. (2019). Microaggression experiences of different marginalized identities. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*.
- Niemann, Y. F. (2016). Tokenism. *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies*, 1–2.
- Oliver, D. G., Serovich, J. M., & Mason, T. L. (2005). Constraints and opportunities with interview transcription: Towards reflection in qualitative research. *Social Forces*, 84(2), 1273–1289.
- Ong, A. D., Burrow, A. L., Fuller-Rowell, T. E., Ja, N. M., & Sue, D. W. (2013). Racial microaggressions and daily well-being among Asian Americans. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, Vol. 60, pp. 188–199. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031736>
- Parker, J., & Crabtree, S. A. (2017). *Social work with disadvantaged and marginalised people*. Learning Matters.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. SAGE Publications, inc.
- Piccinelli, E., Vauclair, C.-M., & Martinho, S. (2020). What kinds of microaggressions do women experience in the health care setting? *La Camera Blu. Rivista Di Studi Di Genere*, (22).
- Pillow, W. (2003). Race-based methodologies: Multicultural methods or epistemological shifts? *Counterpoints*, 195, 181–202.
- Pitcan, M., Park-Taylor, J., & Hayslett, J. (2018). Black men and racial microaggressions at work. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 66(4), 300–314.
- Pittaway, E., Bartolomei, L., & Hugman, R. (2010). 'Stop stealing our stories': The ethics of research with vulnerable groups. *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 2(2), 229–251.
- Portuguese Africa and the rule of law*. (1962). Retrieved from <https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Lusophone-Africa-rule-of-law-political-and-socio-econ-situation-study-1962-eng.pdf>
- Rachel Speer, S., Atteberry-Ash, B., Kattari, S. K., & Gupta, R. (2020). "What I ended up doing with the feelings was just bottling them up:" Qualitatively examining the impact of microaggressions on racial/ethnic minorities. *Perspectives on Social Work*, 15(2), 16–31.
- Robinson-Perez, A., Marzell, M., & Han, W. (2019). Racial Microaggressions and Psychological Distress Among Undergraduate College Students of Color: Implications

- for Social Work Practice. *Clinical Social Work Journal*.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-019-00711-5>
- Ross-Sheriff, F. (2012). Microaggression, Women, and Social Work. *Affilia*, 27, 233–236.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109912454366>
- Spates, K., Evans, N. M., Watts, B. C., Abubakar, N., & James, T. (2020). Keeping ourselves sane: A qualitative exploration of Black women's coping strategies for gendered racism. *Sex Roles*, 82(9), 513–524.
- Stroshine, M. S., & Brandl, S. G. (2011). Race, gender, and tokenism in policing: An empirical elaboration. *Police Quarterly*, 14(4), 344–365.
- Sue, D. W. (2010a). Microaggressions and marginality: Manifestation, dynamics, and impact. In *Microaggressions and marginality: Manifestation, dynamics, and impact*. Hoboken, NJ, US: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Sue, D. W. (2010b). *Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender, and sexual orientation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., & Holder, A. (2008). Racial microaggressions in the life experience of Black Americans. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 39(3), 329.
- Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, Vol. 62, pp. 271–286.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.271>
- Sue, D. W., Lin, A. I., & Rivera, D. P. (2009). *Racial microaggressions in the workplace: Manifestation and impact*.
- Sue, D. W., Lin, A. I., Torino, G. C., Capodilupo, C. M., & Rivera, D. P. (2009). Racial microaggressions and difficult dialogues on race in the classroom. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, Vol. 15, pp. 183–190.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014191>
- Sue, D. W., Nadal, K. L., Capodilupo, C. M., Lin, A. I., Torino, G. C., & Rivera, D. P. (2008). Racial microaggressions against Black Americans: Implications for counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 86(3), 330–338.
- Thomas, A. J., Witherspoon, K. M., & Speight, S. L. (2008). Gendered racism, psychological distress, and coping styles of African American women. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 14(4), 307.
- Torino, G. C., Rivera, D. P., Capodilupo, C. M., Nadal, K. L., & Sue, D. W. (2018). *Microaggression theory: Influence and implications*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Torres, L., Driscoll, M. W., & Burrow, A. L. (2010). Racial microaggressions and psychological functioning among highly achieving African-Americans: A mixed-methods approach. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 29(10), 1074–1099.
- Valentim, J. P., & Heleno, A. M. (2018). Luso-tropicalism as a social representation in

- Portuguese society: Variations and anchoring. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 62, 34–42.
- Varghese, R. (2016). Teaching to transform? Addressing race and racism in the teaching of clinical social work practice. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 52(sup1), S134–S147.
- Wang, J., Leu, J., & Shoda, Y. (2011). When the Seemingly Innocuous “Stings”: Racial Microaggressions and Their Emotional Consequences. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37(12), 1666–1678. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167211416130>
- Weinberg, M., & Fine, M. (2020). Racisms and microaggressions in social work: the experience of racialized practitioners in Canada. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 1–12.
- Weng, S. S., & Gray, L. (2018). Racial microaggressions within social work: perceptions of providers. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 0(0), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650533.2018.1553871>
- Williams, M. T. (2020). Microaggressions: Clarification, evidence, and impact. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 15(1), 3–26.
- Wong-Padoongpatt, G., Zane, N., Okazaki, S., & Saw, A. (2017). Decreases in implicit self-esteem explain the racial impact of microaggressions among Asian Americans. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 64(5), 574.
- Wong, G., Derthick, A. O., David, E. J. R., Saw, A., & Okazaki, S. (2014). The what, the why, and the how: A review of racial microaggressions research in psychology. *Race and Social Problems*, 6(2), 181–200.
- Yosso, T., Smith, W., Ceja, M., & Solórzano, D. (2009). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate for Latina/o undergraduates. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(4), 659–691.

Appendix 1: Interview Script

- 1) How did you start working in the social work field?
- 2) Can you please briefly describe the work that you do in the organization?
- 3) Do you think your background had influence in choosing to work in this field?
- 4) How do you think racism usually operates in Portugal? Does it affect the job and educational opportunities you receive in Portugal? If so, how?
- 5) Could you share an incident that happened to you or that you have witnessed with other people?
- 6) How do you think racism operates in the work that you do? Are there any racial markers such as hair, clothes, accent etc that make you the target of discriminatory comments? Has this happened to you in the workplace? Have you or anyone you know felt pressured to act a certain way or present yourself in a certain way to be accepted in the workplace?
- 7) From your personal experience or from situations you have witnessed with other people, please tell me how race influences workplace interaction with
 - a. colleagues
 - b. subordinates
 - c. bosses and supervisors
 - d. clients
- 8) Think about the different ways racism presents itself in everyday life - subtle or blatant racism, intentional or unconscious - could you share a specific incident from your personal experience or from situations you have witnessed with other people in your workplace? Take your time.
- 9) How have you responded to such moments? What are the strategies, if any, do you use to tackle these moments?
- 10) How have these experiences affected your work and motivation in the organisation?
- 11) Do you think gender - being a black woman or a black man - changes the way racism operates in Portugal and in your workplace?
- 12) In your opinion, are there differences in the way white men and women manifest discriminatory comments or actions?
- 13) What support, if any, do members of your team provide when you encounter racism in your work?
- 14) Usually is it possible to have discussions about racism with people around you in the workplace? How do people react when you bring up these issues of race?

Appendix 2: Invitation Letter

16 April 2021

Caro convidado,

Esta carta é um convite para considerar a participação num estudo que estou a realizar no âmbito do meu mestrado em Serviço Social com Famílias e Crianças no programa Erasmus Mundus (MFamily). Estou sob a orientação do ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, no âmbito de um consórcio de universidades, juntamente com a Universidade de Gotemburgo, a Universidade de Stavanger e a Makerere University. Gostaria de lhe fornecer mais informações sobre este projeto e o que implicaria seu envolvimento se você decidir participar.

Título do estudo: Experiências de microagressão de assistentes sociais em Lisboa, Portugal.

Orientadora da Faculdade: Cristina Maria Pinto Roldão, doutora, professora convidada da ESE-IPS e investigadora do CIES-IUL - Centro de Investigação e Estudos em Sociologia (Cristina.Roldao@iscte-iul.pt).

Investigador estudante: Sania Bilwani (sbiaa3@iscte-iul.pt; saniabilwani@gmail.com); Tel: +351 919271510

Informações sobre o estudo

O objetivo deste estudo é descobrir como assistentes sociais oriundos de minorias raciais vivenciam a discriminação racial e de gênero no local de trabalho e na interação com usuários de serviços no contexto de Lisboa, Portugal.

Você está convidado a participar do estudo. O estudo envolve entrevistar assistentes sociais de minorias raciais e outros profissionais da área de serviço social em Lisboa, Portugal.

A entrevista será organizada online por meio de zoom ou outros aplicativos convenientes. A duração da entrevista é de cerca de 1-1,5 horas, **e a comunicação será em inglês**. O cronograma das entrevistas vai de abril a meados de maio de 2021.

Para participar do estudo, você deverá (1) informar a data e hora disponíveis para uma entrevista, (2) indicar seu canal conveniente para a entrevista online (Zoom, WhatsApp, skype, etc.), e (3) assinar um consentimento informado antes da realização da entrevista.

Para todas as outras perguntas, mais informações adicionais e questões éticas para ajudá-lo a decidir sobre a participação, entre em contato comigo. Pode também contactar Cristina Roldão, a minha orientadora na Escola de Sociologia e Políticas Públicas do ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa.

Estou ansioso para falar com você e agradeço antecipadamente por sua ajuda neste projeto.

Com os melhores cumprimentos,
Sania Bilwani
Investigador Aluno

Appendix 3: Consent Form

By providing your consent, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Sania Bilwani, student of Social Work with Families and Children in the Erasmus Mundus program (MFamily), under the supervision of ISCTE - Institute University of Lisbon. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.
- I have got the information about the purpose of the study and how the data will be used.
- I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.
- I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the thesis to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.
- I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

In case you have questions, please contact Sania Bilwani (student) at +351 919271510 or by email at sbiaa3@iscte-iul.pt or saniabilwani@gmail.com.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

☐YES ☐NO

I agree to have my interview audio recorded.

☐YES ☐NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

☐YES ☐NO

Participant Name: _____

Signature: _____

Place and Date: _____