“A Oes Heddwch?” The Lived Experiences of Black Lives Matter and Anti-Racist Activists in Wales

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Declaration

I confirm that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Abstract

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is a global phenomenon, yet most research focuses on its mobilisation and impact in the United States (US). This thesis examines the lived experiences of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales, offering a unique perspective on how global movements are interpreted and enacted in smaller, underrepresented regions. By addressing the intersection of global and local dynamics, this research highlights the importance of cultural and individual narratives in social movement studies, particularly in contexts often overlooked in broader academic discourse.

The main aim of the study is to investigate how BLM and anti-racist action are understood and expressed in Wales. It uses Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyse twenty-one semi-structured interviews with activists to understand their lived experiences. Grounded in a cultural approach to social movements, it explores the role of identity, digital activism and decentralised leadership in activists' strategies and engagement. The study is also inspired by New Social Movement Theory and Critical Race Theory, which further emphasises the role of identity, as well as narratives and emotions in the construction and shaping of movement meanings.

Findings are categorised into three empirical chapters, which look at the activists' biographical experiences, the network's cultural dynamics in Wales, and the role the nation and its history play in their experiences and actions. Through this analysis, I find that the construction of meanings in social movements is not static or universal but is constructed through activists' personal experiences, cultural contexts, and localised strategies. In Wales, anti-racist activism reflects the interplay between national identity and the global movement's ethos. This study challenges dominant portrayals of social movements as cohesive phenomena,

emphasising their fragmented, adaptive, and culturally embedded nature. It underscores the need for greater attention to regional and individual dimensions in social movement research.

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List of Abbreviations

ALM	All Lives Matter
BLM	Black Lives Matter
BLM GNF	Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundations
BLM PAC	Black Lives Matter Political Action Committee
CB	Collective Behaviour
CRT	Critical Race Theory
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer
M4BL	Movement For Black Lives
NSM	New Social Movement
PPT	Political Process Theory
RAT	Rational Action Theory
RMT	Resource Mobilisation Theory
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
WUNC	Worthiness, Unity, Numbers and Commitment

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Chapter One: Introduction

> Why are you always bringing up racism? Is that all you can see? Are you obsessed? Racism becomes your paranoia. Of course, it's a way of saying that racism doesn't really exist in the way you say it does. It is as if we had to invent racism to explain our own feeling of exclusion, as if racism was our way of not being responsible for the places we do not or cannot go. It is a form of racism to say that racism does not exist. I think we know this (Ahmed, 2012: 155).

On the 26th of February 2012, seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin was walking home from a trip to the convenience store in Florida, United states, when he was fatally shot. Martin's shooter, George Zimmerman, was acquitted of all charges. His acquittal sparked the start of the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter in 2013 on Twitter (now X) by Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi (Hillstrom, 2018). Two years later on the 17th of July 2014, forty-three-year-old African American Eric Garner was killed by police officer Daniel Pantaleo. Pantaleo was not charged, inciting a wave of protests in New York. A video captured Garner's last words. This would be the first time we would hear 'I can't breathe' as a phrase used by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement (Faust et al., 2020). On the 13th of July 2015, twenty-eight-year-old Sandra Bland was pulled over by police. Three days later, she was found dead in police custody. Bland became a key figure in BLM discourse through the hashtag #SayHerName, and her death became synonymous with police brutality towards Black women (Hillstrom, 2018). On the 25th of May 2020, forty-six-year-old African American George Floyd was suffocated to death by police officer Derek Chauvin. He, too, pleaded, 'I can't breathe' (Woodly, 2022: 209). The online documentation and videos of Floyd's death ignited BLM protests in all US states, and mobilisation quickly spread across the world (Woodly, 2022: 213).

These are just a few examples of Black lives taken in the US that have caused outrage among the public and mobilised people to act under the Black Lives Matter name. The BLM movement broadly aims to shed light on injustices against the Black community (Hillstrom,

2018). Yet BLM is multifaceted. Its name is used under networks, committees, organisations, chapters (also known as local activist groups), and variations such as the Movement for Black Lives (Nummi et al., 2019; Gardner et al., 2022; Strickland, 2022; Sádaba, 2022; Woodly, 2022). BLM has been compared to the Civil Rights Movement due to similar goals in recognising Black injustice (Harris, 2015; Clayton, 2018; Strickland, 2022). However, BLM is much more unique in its approach. To begin with, BLM embraces intersectionality. Created by queer women, it approaches racial injustice by addressing injustice for *all* (Garza, 2014). Secondly, BLM originated on social media (Faust et al., 2020: 242). It, therefore, reflects a new and contemporary way to mobilise, reflecting a shift in both action and the scope of social movement research (Nummi et al., 2019). Due to BLM's global support, it is leaderless and decentralised, meaning action is manifested in individual and unique ways (Nulman and Cole, 2023). It has amassed worldwide support and has since been labelled a 'global phenomenon' (Sádaba, 2022: 1).

As a result of its societal impact, BLM is a popular topic amongst social movement scholars (Nummi et al., 2019; Faust et al., 2020; Woodly, 2022). The geographical roots of the movement are firmly placed in the United States (US) (Sádaba, 2022). As a result, research often focuses on analysing the movement from this perspective (Hillstrom, 2018; Bunyasi and Smith, 2019; Woodly, 2022). Some focus has also been placed on larger spaces like the United Kingdom (UK) (Abrams, 2023). However, these case studies mainly analyse BLM action from the perspective of larger English cities (like London and Bristol) where they mobilise the most (for exceptions, see Parker, 2020; Sobande and Hill, 2022). This is interesting, as, despite the movement's global reach, little attempt has been made to examine it from the perspective of smaller regional and local areas. This highlights a clear gap in research on how the movement (or indeed contemporary movements as a whole) operates and mobilises within these spaces.

This thesis examines the lived experience of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales. I argue that individual biographies (such as their experiences with racial identity and trauma) influence the methods and tactics used in the mobilisation of activists in Wales. This highlights the importance of cultural meaning and the impact of emotions, narrative and identity on participant mobilisation, which I argue are key in informing the choice to participate for BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales. In analysing their actions and relationships with others, I also argue that the dynamics and culture of the 'movement' are fractious because of contestations amongst activists. This occurs because activists engage based on their personal biographies and identities, which are represented in individual choices and strategies. Despite the historical narrative of Wales as a tolerant nation toward ethnic minority communities, I argue that Wales is not an anti-racist nation. This highlights the unique relationship that national and racial identities share in the context of Wales. Overall, I find that the meaning of action is influenced by culture, strategies and local/national contexts.

My thesis is original because it focuses on the movement in the context of Wales. Wales is an insightful case study because of its distinct cultural and national identity. Events like the *Eisteddfod*, a Welsh cultural arts festival, showcase Wales' traditions, symbols, and language and reveal sentiments of community and belonging (Hughes, 2017). The nation's cultural heritage rests predominantly on the historical treatment of its language by neighbouring England due to attempts at linguistic suppression and depictions of the Welsh as 'less than' compared to the English (Williams, 2012; Johnes, 2024). This is exemplified in historical practices such as the 'Welsh Not', a plaque given to children in Welsh schools during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to discourage Welsh-speaking, and the Blue Books, a UK government-commissioned report critiquing the Welsh education system and language

(Roberts, 2011). As a result of its cultural history, the Welsh are no strangers to participating in social movements and activism to create political and social change. In 1962, calls were made to save the Welsh language from extinction. This resulted in the creation of *Cymdeithas yr Iaith* (The Welsh Language Society), a group that campaigns for the rights and incorporation of the Welsh language into daily life (Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, n.d). More recently, action has manifested in the popularity of *Yes Cymru*. The movement for independence advocates for self-determination and full sovereignty from the rest of the UK as opposed to the existing framework of devolution (YesCymru, 2021).

Despite Wales' strained relationship with the rest of the UK, the relationship between the Welsh and minority ethnic identities has been neglected (Williams, 2007: 760). The accepted narrative is that Wales is a tolerant and welcoming nation towards ethnic minorities (Williams et al., 2015). However, Williams (2015) has recently challenged this and argued that Wales is not as welcoming as once assumed. Large ethnically diverse communities in the South, such as Tiger Bay (often described as the oldest multiethnic community in Wales) have adopted anti-racist activism within their community culture (Cardiff Bay, n.d). This is seen in iconic figures such as Betty Campbell, who was Wales' first Black head teacher and 'became a template for multicultural education' (BBC Wales, n.d). Furthermore, the rise of BLM protests in Welsh cities, towns and villages in 2020 paints a bigger picture of the experiences of ethnic minorities in Wales (BBC News, 2020a). The title of this thesis plays on this. It relates to a part of a ceremony at the Eisteddfod or Welsh-speaking schools, in which a person lifts a sword and shouts, 'A oes heddwch?' ('Is there peace?') and the audience shouts 'Heddwch!' ('Peace') (Davies, 1997). This ritual is integral to the ceremony and the display of Wales' cultural identity and pride. It is 'commonly viewed as bringing together and somehow

succeeding in uniting the Welsh community' (Davies, 1998: 159). However, whilst racial injustice remains in Wales, is there really peace?

My interest in this topic is both academic and personal. As a mixed-race (White and Asian) Welsh-speaking Welsh woman, my multiple identities have significantly impacted me. These identities do not always feel like they align. I have spent most of my education in Welsh-speaking schools, where Welsh culture, heritage, history, and identity are celebrated. Yet, these celebrations rarely represented Welsh people like me who came from ethnically diverse backgrounds. It was not until I moved to Liverpool for a period of time that I felt I could fully embrace my background. For me, being proud to be Welsh whilst also being mixed-race felt like self-sabotage. These feelings have still not settled and are something I will forever grapple with. The Welsh government have seemingly recognised the sentiments of people like me by implementing the Anti-Racist Action Plan, which focuses heavily on inclusion and diversity within Welsh schools (Welsh Government, 2022). Hitherto, we have yet to see the plan's impact on a culture of anti-racism in Wales.

As Mills (1959: 6) states, 'no social study that does not come back from the problems of biography, of history and of their intersections within a society has completed its intellectual journey'. This is true for this thesis, as my decision to focus particularly on activism is also based on my personal experience as an activist. Although I am very vocal about social injustices, my activist endeavours mainly focus on animal rights and anti-racism. I have attended three anti-racist protests in Wales. This included BLM protests in Denbigh and Rhyl in 2020 and Stand Up to Racism in Cardiff in 2023. These experiences had a profound impact on my activist journey. I remember analysing every aspect of the experience, including the emotions and speeches of other anti-racist activists. At the time of the Rhyl protest and the

spike of BLM in 2020, I was interested in writing a PhD on the subject. With this awareness, I wrote notes on the experience. I have included these notes below:

> Walking down the streets of Rhyl, North Wales, into the open arena, I noticed the unusual atmosphere. The streets that would typically be consumed by holidaymakers making their way over to the arcades felt empty. On the other hand, the arena was occupied by a mass of people. They all came from their daily Saturday routines to join a Black Lives Matter protest. It was not surprising to see familiar faces in the crowd, but it was surprising to see how many people turned up to the protest. At the time, it felt busy, and it was certainly busier than usual. Yet, looking back, the protest was small. Small in comparison to the other protests seen in the nearby cities of Liverpool and Manchester. I estimate about seventy people or so. It seemed unusual to have a protest in support of BLM in a place like Rhyl, a very (emphasis on very) White conservative town of North Wales. Speeches were made, and we had a two-minute silence, which we finished with lying on the ground with our arms behind our backs, just as George Floyd did when Derek Chauvin murdered him in the name of police brutality. One group member shouted, “I can’t breathe!” Floyd's last words as Chauvin placed his weight on his neck. A chorus began at the protest, with the individual repeating the phrase, which formed into a chant.

My experience at my first BLM protest left me questioning the role of protesting in social movements and the purpose of activism in effecting social and cultural changes. Additionally, I wondered whether the lived experiences of others in the crowd impacted their choice to be activists. Did they feel like this was their last hope? Did it make them feel seen or heard? Further, I wondered why non-Black participants decided to become BLM activists. Was this something they deeply cared about, or was it to preserve their own image to others? This led me to want to investigate BLM and anti-racism in Wales further.

Research Questions

My thesis explores the lived experience of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales. At its core, it addresses the larger question: how do personal and cultural experiences impact the motivation to join social movements? More specifically, the main research question is:

How do Black Lives Matter and anti-racist activists understand and express anti-racist action in Wales?

The question focuses on understanding the motivations behind anti-racism, particularly concerning Wales. As a result, it requires an understanding of how the BLM movement operates in Wales, activists' personal experiences, and how these manifest into action. A focus on BLM and activism theoretically positions the research within the scope of social movement studies. Furthermore, this is a study on the landscape of race, racial identity, and anti-racism in Wales. Therefore, understanding Wales's historical, political and cultural backdrop is required. In addressing each aspect of the research question, several sub-questions are outlined:

What are the personal experiences of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales, and how do these experiences shape their engagement?

What are the internal dynamics and culture of anti-racist activists in Wales?

How do cultural narratives in Wales impact the experiences of ethnic minorities in the country?

These sub-questions are individually addressed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. To answer the first sub-question, Chapter 4 examines the biography of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales. To do so, it analyses the activists' chosen methods of action, recruitment tactics, and the role of racial identities and allyship in participation. Chapter 5 addresses the next sub-question. It looks particularly at the network and relationship between anti-racist activists in Wales. As

previously mentioned, BLM manifests in different ways (i.e. movement, network, chapter). This chapter thus begins by defining BLM, particularly in the Welsh context. It follows with an analysis of the relationships between the activists by examining the role of strategy, resources, social media and protesting in their networking experiences. To answer the third sub-question, Chapter 6 draws upon the history and culture of Wales. In doing so, it critically examines the nation's cultural identity and analyses its impact on the experiences of ethnic minorities.

An Introduction to Social Movements

This study locates my research within the interdisciplinary field of social movement studies. Due to the many elements underlying the scope of the study, several theoretical components inspire its conceptual analysis of BLM and anti-racism in Wales. Drawing from scholarship from that area, I outline these below.

Social movement studies has multiple theories within it. These include theories that consider movement action irrational, influenced by resources, politically charged, or class related (Smelser, 1965; Barker and Dale, 1998; Crossley, 2002; Gould, 2004). Whilst these theories can be applied to explain elements of BLM and anti-racist movements (more broadly), the predominant focus on racial and ethnic inequalities needs a theoretical approach which values the role of identity in movement formation and mobilisation. New Social Movement (NSM) theory provides this. According to Melucci (1980), the theory highlights the mostly contemporary shift of movements, focusing on the role of identity within movement mobilisation rather than a more significant focus on class or economic means. This study uses Brubaker and Cooper's (2000: 8) definition of identity, which is:

1. Understood as a ground or basis of social or political action, "identity" is often opposed to "interest" in an effort to highlight and conceptualize non-instrumental modes of social and political action. With a slightly different analytical emphasis, it is used to underscore the manner in which action - individual or collective may be governed by particularistic self-understandings rather than by putatively universal self-interest. [...]
2. Understood as a specifically collective phenomenon, "identity" denotes a fundamental and consequential sameness among members of a group or category. […]
3. Understood as a core aspect of (individual or collective) "selfhood" or as a fundamental condition of social being, "identity" is invoked to point to something allegedly deep, basic, abiding, or foundational. […]
4. Understood as a product of social or political action, "identity" is invoked to highlight the processual, interactive development of the kind of collective self-understanding, solidarity, or "groupness" that can make collective action possible. […]
5. Understood as the evanescent product of multiple and competing discourses, "identity" is invoked to highlight the unstable, multiple, fluctuating, and fragmented nature of the contemporary "self."

As the definition suggests, identity is important both at the individual and collective levels. NSMs, however, focus primarily on the collective process of identity (Melucci, 1995). The theory also values the role of culture, digital activism and decentralised models, all of which can be found in the BLM movement (Habermas, 1984; Larana et al., 1994; Tillery Jr., 2019; Sádaba, 2022). The role of digital activism in BLM is well-researched due to its origins as an 'online' movement (Ince et al., 2017; Mundt et al., 2018). This has led to engendered precipitated research on the use of digital and social media for activism going forward and has offered insight into the shifting ways in which individuals can participate in action (Cammaerts, 2015; Nummi et al., 2019). BLM is also a member-led and decentralised movement due to its online origins (Nummi et al., 2019). Newer movements, like Occupy, also adopt decentralised leadership models, giving power and autonomy to each activist or organisation under its name (Harris, 2015).

While culture is intrinsic to NSM, this study places a larger emphasis on its significance within BLM by adopting a cultural approach. This is because it looks at the role of discourse and symbolic meaning. Culture is defined as:

> A grouping of elements—values, norms, outlooks, beliefs, ideologies, knowledge, and empirical assertions (not always verified), linked with one another to some degree as a meaning-system (Smelser, 2004: 37).

Meanings and definitions of culture are varied, with no universally held definition (Bourdieu, 1984; Swindler, 1995; Roy, 2010; Ullrich et al., 2014; Amenta and Polletta, 2019). Subsequently, cultural influences impact and shape meaning (Steinberg, 2002). These cultural meanings are evident in how identity, discourse and emotions influence the mobilisation of activists (Collins, 2001; Castells, 2009; Jasper and McGarry, 2015).

I have already outlined the role of identity in this study, but I also want to emphasise the importance of emotions and discourse in cultural meanings. The role of emotions within social movements has been debated as irrational and tactical (Le Bon, 1895). A cultural analysis sees emotions as shaping the collective experience of the movement whilst shaping meaning (Collins, 2001). Emotions transform protests and produce reactions such as 'moral shocks', pushing individuals to join movements (Jasper, 2014). They can also be strategic in this way (Jasper, 2006). Anti-racist movements provide an example of how important emotions are in creating mobilisation. We see this in the reaction to cultural and racial trauma and the emotional implications of the brutalisation of Black bodies (i.e. viral online videos of George Floyd's murder) (Stephens, 2018). Discourse and narratives are also crucial in producing cultural meanings. This is evidenced by the virality of the movement's hashtag #BlackLivesMatter (Wasik, 2010). Online platforms have provided the movement space to share stories and allow participants to engage and react to stories of racial abuse (Amenta and Polletta, 2019). These narratives shape meaning and work with emotions to produce action (Blee, 1998). On the other hand, counter-narratives have also surged in popularity, which, as a result, impact and reshape the movement's meaning (Ince et al., 2017). A cultural approach to social movements means examining the topic (race and ethnicity are examples) and analysing

it from the perspective of discourse and symbols (Reed, 2009). This thesis interprets meaning through symbols, including discourse (online and offline), narrative, and identity.

Lastly, this study is impacted by the role of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Although the thesis does not largely discuss CRT, it is undoubtedly integral to understanding race and anti-racism. CRT addresses the racial power imbalances that affect all aspects of life, including cultural and societal practices and institutional, structural, and systemic power (Stefancic and Delgado, 2017). Additionally, CRT centres the voices of ethnic minorities at the forefront, addressing their lived experiences and realities with racism and anti-racism (Zamudio et al., 2010). As a result, the thesis is valuable for those studying CRT.

Academic Contributions of my Thesis

In light of the theoretical underpinnings of the study, this thesis makes four contributions to social movement scholarship. The first contribution concerns the geographical position of the study. As previously mentioned, the BLM movement has been a popular case study since its emergence in 2014 and the surge in mobilisation in 2020. As a result, movement scholars often look at BLM's impact but do so through a US-centric lens. Research has also attempted to look at the implications of BLM from the UK, but mainly from the perspective of BLM's mobilisation in larger countries and cities. This thesis adds to this body of knowledge but fills a considerable gap by looking at how BLM and anti-racism shape and impact sub-national and local culture. It remains unseen how anti-racism exists within these localities, particularly as it relates to rural racial experiences. Hence, this thesis looks at BLM in Wales. It also provides insight into how Wales's unique cultural, historical and racial dynamics impact the experiences of activists in the nation. There has been limited exploration of this in Wales

from a modern perspective. Furthermore, a focus on Wales and race contributes to Williams et al.'s (2015) research on the historical narrative of racial tolerance in the nation. This study adds a contemporary lens and further challenges the narrative of Wales as a tolerant and welcoming nation.

A second contribution relates to the role of social media in BLM. Contemporary activists do not rely on physical action to be involved in a movement, as seen in the online creation of BLM. As a result, there is a growing body of scholarship on the impact of social media on activism (broadly) and BLM (specifically) (Cammaerts, 2015; Ince et al., 2017; Tufekci, 2017; Tillery Jr., 2019). It would be remiss to discuss BLM without examining aspects of social media in mobilising activists. Drawing from the first contribution, however, this study adds a fresher approach by understanding how social media helps shape the experiences and relationships of activists, specifically from regional and rural areas, as seen in those from Wales.

Third, this research contributes to an understanding of culture in social movements and is heavily inspired by Jasper's (1998; 2007; 2010; 2014) work. A brief look at the existing body of knowledge on culture shows how identity, narrative and emotions are analysed to understand how meaning is both produced and impacts mobilisation. Although these cultural meanings have already been investigated, this study breaks ground by looking at how they not only interact individually but also reflect how they are intrinsically linked.

Fourth, this research offers an insightful look into personal choice due to its focus on the lived experience. New social movements, especially those that are categorised as identity-based, are often analysed through a collective (identity) lens. This study does not do this. While

it may engage in shared experiences (e.g., cultural trauma), this study appreciates activists' personal and individual experiences. This contributes to the body of knowledge of activists' strategic choices (see Jasper, 2014; 2021).

Lastly, this thesis makes methodological contributions by using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in the study of social movements and activism. IPA allows researchers to examine the lived experience of the individuals under investigation, yet its use of framework is often reserved for scholarship under the field of psychology (Smith et al., 2009). This study, however, adds to the limited amount of political and social science research that uses IPA (for exceptions see Beail et al., 1997; Burgess et al., 2007; Miron et al., 2022). Furthermore, researchers who use IPA's framework rely on semi-structured interviews as the main source of data collection in the analysis of lived experience (Miller et al., 2018). Whilst this is still the case for this thesis, I also apply online sources (such as Tweets) created by participants to gain further insight into their experiences with activism. This demonstrates how social media can also be incorporated in the analysis of lived experiences, and IPA researchers could benefit from its use.

This study has broader significance beyond academia as it addresses wider societal and institutional problems regarding the treatment of ethnic minority people in the culture of racism. Racism is a pandemic, and conversations surrounding its role in society must continue (American Psychological Association, 2020). Specifically, this study actively challenges and engages with racism in Wales. It addresses how the culture of Wales does not adopt an inclusive mindset. By highlighting the specific experience of anti-racist activists in Wales, it addresses areas that need fundamental improvements. In this regard, it is significant as it provides a framework for policymakers, educators, and businesses in Wales to improve and implement

inclusive practices. As the government's Anti-Racist Action Plan (Welsh Government, 2022) is a topic of conversation in Wales, this adds further insight by highlighting genuine lived experiences with which the plan can be cross-examined for a deeper perspective of racism in Wales.

My study may also be important for BLM and anti-racist activists, who want to understand further how their activism can make a sincere impact. Through theoretical and empirical research, this study emphasises the importance of identities, narratives and emotions in movement participation. It thus offers practical strategies for activists to implement and adopt for participation encouragement and tactical devices to gain wider societal support. Ultimately, this provides further inspiration for future scholars and activists who prioritise anti-racism.

Research Approach and Methods

This research adopts a qualitative research design to explore the lived experiences of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales. A qualitative approach was taken because it provides an in-depth understanding of human experiences and social phenomena through non-numerical data (Merriam, 2016). In line with the research questions under investigation, this study adopts interpretivism as a philosophical framework; working closely with qualitative research, it provides a deeper understanding of human meaning, often from the perspectives of the individuals involved (Fulbrook, 1978; Black, 2006). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was the main methodological approach used in this study because its primary aim is to explore and interpret the specific lived experience of individuals under a phenomenon (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012). Under this approach, IPA studies implement phenomenology,

hermeneutics and idiography: '(Smith and Nizza, 2022: 9). With their influence, IIPA thus allows a deeper understanding and interpretation of the lived experience of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales.

To examine the topic, I conducted online semi-structured interviews with twenty-one BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales. While IPA typically has a smaller sample, no set number of participants is required (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012). Larkin et al. (2019) also suggested that different groups can be used to explore the topic. As a result, I had more than a significant amount of data as I had two groups of activists: ethnic minority activists (fifteen participants) and allies (six participants). Most participants were found using X (known as Twitter at the time). Once I felt they were suitable participants, I would 'direct message' them on the platform and once given consent, I would send them a participatory information sheet through email. I would also ask participants if they could recommend other activists to interview for the thesis. Therefore, an element of 'snowballing' was used (Pickard, 2017: 65). Each activist was interviewed for around sixty minutes, and five main questions were asked (this depended on subsequent answers). Questions were open and exploratory, which allowed participants to be flexible in their answers and open to interpretation (Miller et al., 2018: 244). To keep in line with research questions, however, interviews were semi-structured to provide some guidance for answers but allowed some flexibility (Connolly, 2019). Interviews were conducted online to allow flexibility and easier applicability of recording and transcription. Although interviews were the primary data collection method in the thesis, participants were asked to supply any primary articles related to their activism (i.e. zines and written articles). Given the importance of social media in participants' activism, I also searched their Twitter accounts for any Tweets related to their activism which could be interpreted.

Once I had transcribed the interviews word-for-word, I followed IPA's guidelines. This includes notetaking, experiential (summary) statements, connections and clustering, and grouping/thematising (Smith and Nizza, 2022: 51). I adapted IPA's guidelines for a more digital process, using online coding tools like NVivo to make creating themes easier and using online interview software.

This study deals with the sensitive topics of race and racism. Therefore, ethical considerations are used throughout the process. These include participant consent before and during interviews, interview flexibility, and awareness of my own positions and interpretations. These are thoroughly outlined in Chapter 3. Additionally, as the study uses an interpretive approach, it does not rely on positivist assumptions of validating, reliable, and replicable research. Instead, it ensures thorough research through the sensitivity and transparency of data.

Defining and Explaining Key Terms

As this thesis discusses topics of race and ethnicity, I want to highlight the use of particular terminology in this thesis. The accepted terms for ethnic minorities have been a point of contention in society and have changed over the years through our understanding of ethnic equality and the misuse of categorisations and labelling (Action for Race Equality, 2024). Throughout this chapter, I refer to non-White people in Wales as ethnic minority(ies). This has been agreed to be the best way to categorise people in explaining racial injustice amongst those communities (GOV.UK, 2024). I understand, however, that labelling and grouping non-White people in this way can be problematic as it furthers racial binaries (Race Disparity Unit, 2022). This is also not to erase the specific racial experiences of different cultures and races (i.e. anti-Blackness). In understanding the racial experiences of not only Black people but also other

ethnic minorities, including those from Asian backgrounds, it made sense to use a generalised term. There are points in the thesis that I will use quotes from activists who use the term 'people of colour' or 'BAME' (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic). While this is an appropriate term, I also favour using the term ethnic minorities in this thesis as it provides a more expansive look at cultural challenges rather than focusing predominantly on colour.

Additionally, activism has many different meanings. As recognised in the thesis, some activists themselves reject the labelling or place rigid boundaries on the term. For the purpose of this study, I use the term activist as a broad label and define it as 'action taken challenging those in power to bring about change in society and benefit the greater good' (Brooks, 2023). This definition embraces all types of action in a way that represents the nuanced experiences and engagement reflected in this thesis.

Related to this is the idea of allyship. I use the terms activist and allyship interchangeably to refer to White participants in this study. I use Clark's (2019) definition of allyship, which is 'the processes of affirming and taking informed action on behalf of the subjugated group' (Clark, 2019: 519). As supporters of a movement unrelated to their racial experiences, I find they experience action slightly differently, particularly concerning identity and emotions. Therefore, a distinction between the experiences of allies and ethnic minority activists is noted.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the academic literature in social movement studies. It begins with a brief overview of the main theories (collective

behaviour theory, resource mobilisation theory, political process theory, and rational action theory) developed to explain several aspects of movement analysis. This thesis is largely rooted in the theoretical underpinnings of NSM. Hence, in this chapter, I draw on the scholarship of NSM theory and cultural approaches to social movements and demonstrate their relevance to the study of BLM and anti-racist movements. Specifically, I highlight how BLM can be considered a NSM, illuminating the importance of identity, culture, digital activism and decentralised leadership in the evolution of the movement. This chapter then discusses the concept of 'culture' and places a broader emphasis on a cultural approach to movements and its effect in creating meaning. Inspired by Jasper (1998; 2007; Jasper and McGarry, 2015), I examine how emotions, identity, and narratives intertwine and create cultural meanings.

Chapter 3 details the methodology and research design underpinning this thesis. It begins by highlighting its philosophical underpinnings, including the justification of a qualitative and interpretive research design. The epistemological and ontological positions of the study are also discussed. Following this is a discussion of IPA, which underlines its importance within this study. I also provide a more in-depth examination of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography, as well as how this framework is appropriate for studying lived experiences and the value of interpretation. Following this, I detail the data collection, methods, and sampling process of the study. I discuss the participant sampling and recruitment techniques employed in this study, the choice and conduct of semi-structured interviews, and details of the interview process. Chapter 3 also outlines a step-by-step interview analysis process aligning with IPA guidelines. I conclude the chapter detailing the ethical considerations of the thesis.

Chapter 4 is the first of the empirical chapters. This chapter examines the biography of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales. It highlights the importance of observing social movements from the individual perspective of activists. A cultural approach underlines this chapter. Hence, it argues that emotions, narrative, and identity are key to impacting the participation of activists in the movement. It begins with an analysis of the chosen methods of activists, highlighting the significance of protesting and social media for anti-racist activists in Wales. Furthermore, I demonstrate the role of tactics in the movement, as seen through crowd reactions, stories, symbols and hashtags. The chapter concludes by examining the role of racial identity and allyship in participation. This outlines how racial trauma and moral shocks mobilise people to act in identity-based movements.

Chapter 5 looks at the internal dynamics of the movement in Wales. It begins with defining BLM in Wales. I take Jasper's (2015; 2021) concept of players and arenas to analyse the activists' strategic and personal choices. Through an analysis of the strategic choices of activists (shown in the concept of players and arenas), I argue that the network of anti-racist activists in Wales is fractious and disjointed. Due to the lack of cohesion between activists, I also argue that anti-racist action in Wales is more likened to a network of individuals rather than a 'movement'. By looking at activists as players, I find their choices and strategies are rooted in their biographical experiences. Adding to this, contention is revealed by how activists agree or disagree with the action, as seen through resources like money and connections to the government. Additionally, an analysis of activists' choice of arena is examined in the network's relationship. This shows how social media as an arena provides activists with the freedom to engage in activism, but this also results in online disagreements and contention. Protests as an arena, on the other hand, seem more cohesive. A closer look at the arena, however, reveals power imbalances and fractions between activists.

Chapter 6 looks at the role of Wales in BLM and anti-racist action. Through analysing the broader national implications, I take inspiration from Williams et al. (2015) and argue that Wales is not a tolerant nation. Beginning with introducing Wales' cultural and national identity, it reveals the importance of language and culture in Welsh pride. It then looks at Wales' own history of oppression through an analysis of the treatment of the Welsh language. However, ethnic minority activists revealed that they believe that the Welsh language and cultural identity is synonymous with Whiteness. As a result, they feel like they are not adequately represented in the Welsh cultural landscape. This leads to feelings of rejection and confusion between their national and racial identities. Following this, I discuss the regional differences towards ethnic minority people in Wales. I demonstrate how Tiger Bay in Cardiff exemplifies inclusivity, in comparison to rural areas of North Wales. I conclude the chapter by reviewing 'successful' new steps Wales is taking to become more anti-racist, including the government's Anti-Racist Action Plan and case studies, including 'reframing Picton', albeit activists contest these successes.

The concluding chapter outlines the thesis' original contributions and summarises its main findings. The chapter concludes by discussing the implications of the findings, highlighting the limitations of the study and identifies opportunities for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

The objective of this study is to understand the lived experiences and the meaning of action for Black Lives Matter (BLM) and anti-racist activists in Wales. Given the focus of activism in the study, this chapter examines scholarly literature on social movement studies, with a particular focus on BLM. It begins by providing an overview of the theoretical tools and perspectives of social movement analysis, highlighting gaps in their value for understanding the BLM movement. To move beyond this, I borrow elements from diverse theories, including Critical Race Theory (Zamudio et al., 2010), Contentious Politics (Tilly and Tarrow, 2015), Political Process Theory (Opp, 2009), New Social Movement Theory (Melucci, 1980), and the work of James Jasper (1997; 2004; 2007; 2011; 2014), to discuss a culture-based approach to understanding BLM. Whilst this chapter places importance on a spectrum of theories, it heavily focuses on New Social Movement (NSM) Theory as the BLM movement incorporates many of the components laid out by the theory, including identity, culture, digital activism and decentralised leadership.

An analysis of existing research provides an insight into the inspiration of movement participation and the meaning behind action, which answers why BLM and anti-racists mobilise in Wales. Throughout this chapter, I identify the gaps missing in research on BLM, social movements, and cultural analysis. I highlight that BLM is often analysed from the perspective of the US primarily, the UK minimally, and smaller nations are entirely absent in this conversation. This introduces the importance of Wales as a nation in this study. I also reflect on how literature within NSM often looks at activists from the view of a 'collective'

(i.e. collective identity). Yet, as other studies make clear (Jasper, 2004; 2006; Mische, 2015), I argue in this thesis that activists work on strategic and personal (identity) choices. Therefore, this thesis focuses on the individual experiences of activists and looks at how this impacts their engagement with the movement and other activists rather than treating them as a unified collective. Moreover, cultural scholarship points to the significance of identity, narrative, and emotions in constructing and interpreting meaning. I find that these three concepts are heavily intertwined and work in conjunction to create meaning. Paying particular attention to the impact of racial, ethnic, and national identities is important in studying BLM and anti-racism, specifically from the context of Wales. This chapter argues for the emphasis of those concepts in the study.

This chapter is structured as follows. First, it begins with a brief examination of different social movement theories and argues for an identity-based approach to BLM. Second, an analysis of NSM is given whilst demonstrating how identity, culture, digital activism and decentralised leadership are essential in movement mobilisation/action. This analysis also underscores the ways in which the BLM movement aligns with those categories. The chapter follows with an examination of the body of knowledge on the importance of culture in analysing movement meanings whilst suggesting the significance of the term cultural meanings. A review of the literature places importance on narrative, emotions, and identity (racial, ethnic, and national) as part of this study. The chapter concludes by addressing the gaps in knowledge in social movement scholarship and the contributions this study makes to the field.

An Overview of Social Movement Theories

Social movement studies is a vibrant interdisciplinary field, with research conducted on all continents. There are two leading journals dedicated to the field, *Mobilization* and *Social Movement Studies*, but with a great deal of research focussing on it in various mainstream journals in disciplines including *Political Science*, *Sociology* and *Cultural Studies*. This vibrancy has given rise to a range of contested - and sometimes inconsistent - definitions around what social movements are and even what they 'do' (Snow et al., 2004; Porta and Diani, 2006a). These differences in view around the fabric of social movements have also given rise to several theoretical perspectives that have been popular across different temporal and spatial contexts in which mobilisations have been researched. These debates have been fully analysed in several places (Eyerman, 1984; Crossley, 2002; Opp, 2009; Edwards, 2014), and my aim here is not to repeat these but to provide a summary of the main trajectories. To start, Collective Behaviour Theory (CB) researchers argues that the irrationality and impulsivity of individuals lead them to participate in social movements (Smelser, 1965). Focusing more on the movement than the individual, Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT) (which grew to challenge the view of irrationality) emphasises 'the continuities between movement and institutionalized actions, the rationality of movement actors, the strategic problems confronted by movements, and the role of movements as agencies for social change' (Jenkins, 1983: 528). Political Process Theory (PPT) also draws attention to external factors of the movement to understand their 'emergence, decline, and outcomes' but does not focus on an individual choice to participate (Gould, 2004: 157). Similarly, Rational Action Theory (RAT) has also departed from the idea of movements as 'irrational'; instead, it posits that participants join movements due to their own self-interest (Edwards, 2014).

The vast theoretical contributions to social movements highlight that theories often adapt to make sense of movements, frequently contradicting each other to do so. However, they

also imply the study of class conflict as they were assumed to be *the* paradigm of social movements (Barker and Dale, 1998). This does not accurately explain the mobilisation and importance of identity-based movements like BLM. This demonstrates the significance of NSM Theory. Melucci (1980), a leading scholar within the NSM field, defines social movements as a type of collective action which forms based on a struggle of social values between at least two actors. Therefore, the theory introduces the importance of different actors and identities instead of mobilisation against the state, and values rather than economic means. This is particularly relevant for Jasper (1997: 7), as he favours the term 'post-industrial movement' to NSM due to the 'complete penetration of industrial society'. In his dismissal of NSMs, Calhoun (1993: 388) argues that identity (specifically identity politics) has always been present in the observation of social movements but was heavily understudied. Melucci (1980: 202) adds that NSMs 'transgress' political and class-related systems. The role NSM plays in contemporary movements is not necessarily 'new', but the urgency to study them is becoming increasingly apparent, and it is through global movements like BLM that we see this (Offe, 1985). Although NSM seems the most appropriate for this study, most social movement literature is hindered by their commitment to one theory.

In his analysis, Tillery Jr. (2019: 300-319) finds that BLM is an organisation that 'engages in traditional resource mobilization' and can be likened to repertoires of contentious politics. Tilly and Tarrow (2015: 7) define contentious politics as interactions among actors who make claims against other actors to coordinate efforts between common interests. Their work focuses predominantly on the political effects of movements and, therefore, has less relevance in movements like BLM due to the more significant focus on identity in the movement, as will be explained further. However, the term 'cycle of contention' can explain the cycle of mobilisation, discourse, and meaning across movements as it illustrates the ebbs

and flows of movement activities (Woodly, 2022: 4). Moreover, Tilly's (2005; Tilly and Wood, 2019: 6) belief in a movement's display of 'worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment' (WUNC) identifies the importance of identity in contentious politics. WUNC, according to Tilly (2005: 184), is highlighted when movements make identity claims ("we"), standing claims (asserting ties) and program claims (support or oppose). As a result, understanding BLM cannot be reduced to one simple theory. This is particularly relevant in cultural analysis, according to Jasper (1997), as he argues that the motivation for participation is not due to irrational behaviour or rational choice but somewhere in between. His argument might be based on the idea that he views participants as strategic players who are influenced by their biographies and emotions (Jasper, 1997; 2011). This argument is developed further in Chapter 5 of this thesis. It thus emphasises Millward's (2023: 262) argument that 'differing theoretical positions complement rather than compete in advancing the understanding of collective action'. An analysis of social movements, including BLM, is best understood in this way. Nevertheless, as the next section details, BLM can be broadly understood as a NSM.

Black Lives Matter as a New Social Movement

New social movements (NSM) are distinct, according to Larana et al. (1994: 8), because they involve understanding the 'personal and intimate aspects of human life' (see also Melucci, 1989). They include movements pertaining to (a lack of representation and equal rights of) identities, cultural influence, new technologies and decentralised leadership (Habermas, 1984; Larana et al., 1994; Sádaba, 2022). As a result, BLM movement is often analysed from the perspective of NSM theory (Tillery Jr., 2019; Strickland, 2022; Sádaba, 2022). The movement, as explained in Chapter 1 began in 2012 when a police officer was acquitted of shooting and killing a Black teenager (Hillstrom, 2018). Following this, in 2013, we saw the start of

#BlackLivesMatter on Twitter (Sádaba, 2022). The Black Lives Matter movement is challenging to define as it has different variations under its name. These include the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundations (BLM GNF), the Black Lives Matter Political Action Committee (BLM PAC), Black Lives Matter (BLM as a grassroots non-profit organisation) and used interchangeably with the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) (Nummi et al., 2019; Strickland, 2022; Woodly, 2022). Although BLM began in the US, the movement has become a 'global phenomenon' with chapters (also known as local activist groups) across the globe (Gardner et al., 2022; Sádaba, 2022: 1). Despite this, little focus has been placed in the literature regarding the impact of BLM on other nations (for exceptions see Parker, 2020; Sobande and Hill, 2022; Abrams, 2023). Abrams (2023) analyses the movement from the perspective of the United Kingdom (UK). Despite suggesting the research looks at the UK as a whole, he refers to it as an 'anglicised expression', which does not accurately represent BLM in other parts of the nation and treats the UK like one homogenous group (Abrams, 2023: 603-4). Hence, little is known about how BLM operates and mobilises in smaller countries and regions outside of the US or the UK. To fully understand the lived experiences of BLM activists and the construction of meaning for BLM as a whole, it is, therefore, essential to study BLM from this perspective. I also take inspiration from Ibrahim (2015: 24), who argues that 'rather than analysing the movement or movements as a whole, focusing on smaller parts reveals significant differences of ideological practice'. This thesis is a step in that direction.

Despite its variations, BLM's core values shed light on the injustices against Black people (Clark, 2019). Therefore, the movement's efforts to eliminate racial and cultural injustices parallel new social movements' emphasis on identity and cultural changes. Despite this, Carty (2015: 27) argues that NSM theories are mainly used to describe 'white, middle-class progressive causes' and dismiss movements surrounding racial issues. This may be

because ethnic-based movements are often likened to movements such as the Civil Rights Movement (Franklin, 2014; Harris, 2015; Clayton, 2018). Clark (2019) particularly refers to BLM as the next wave of the Civil Rights Movement. However, as previously mentioned, and as Carty (2015) states, not all NSMs are necessarily new in that we can conceptualise their efforts alongside similar (but older) cases. Despite parallels between BLM and the Civil Rights Movement, BLM is considered distinctly different due to the importance of social media in its creation (Harris, 2015). As a result, BLM is argued to be more similar to newer movements like Occupy (Harris, 2015; Rickford, 2016). As mentioned, NSM emphasise the importance of identity, culture, new technology and decentralisation in new movements. The following review of the literature will position BLM within these categories.

The importance of identity in BLM

Identity is a key component of NSMs, but identity is a contested term in social research. In this case, I refer to Brubaker and Cooper's (2000) conceptual framework of identity as the following: firstly, different from interests, identity drives actions based on a personal sense of self and expression. Secondly, identity can be assumed as a collective and refers to shared qualities between people (i.e. race and ethnicity). Thirdly, identity allows us to understand 'the self' in its foundations through an individual or group. Fourthly, identity is formed through social and political interactions and can be both the outcome and motivator of action. This component to identity is particularly significant as understanding the role of social and political action 'as a grounds for further action' is best understood for NSMs (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 8). Lastly, identities are not bound but flexible and can change with context. This is reflective of movements, like BLM, highlighting racial injustices, as racial and ethnic identity 'have been used in many settings throughout the ages to oppress—or to inspire', which directly

relates to identity as being an outcome and motivator of action (Jasper and McGarry, 2015: 1). NSMs reflect BLM in this way as it stresses an analysis of identity and lifestyle rather than of 'economic concessions'(Polletta and Jasper, 2001: 286). BLM has been referred to as both an identity and an ethnic movement (Johnston, 1994; Horowitz, 2017).

Collective identity is also vital in NSMs (Melucci, 1996). It is an 'interactive process through which several individuals or groups define the meaning of their action' (Melucci, 1996: 67). This is extended to BLM as the movement aims to build a collective identity around racial justice (Clark et al., 2018). Collective identity is a process of construction. It allows actors to produce 'frameworks' to evaluate the world around them (Opp, 2009: 209). According to Opp (2009: 218), the stronger the collective identity, the more likely individuals will participate in protest. This demonstrates the strong assertions of collective identity on individuals and movements, an effect which Opp (2009: 218) believes to be positive in action but can also lead to contestations among group members (Jasper and McGarry, 2015). The role of collective identity in NSM theory is abundant (Melucci, 1980, 1995, 1996). It is important because it affects how 'actors produce meanings, communicate, negotiate, and make decisions' (Keane, 2020: 331). Melucci's (1995) constructivist approach argues that collective action is socially constructed through collective identity because of tensions and negotiations (see also Bartholomew and Mayer, 1992). Despite the role of collective identity in identity-based movements, 'identity is what people choose to be' (Melucci, 1996: 66). Johnson (1994) similarly sees the importance of the individual search for identity and the role of everyday life experiences in movement action (see also: Melucci and Diani, 1983). Larana et al. (1994), however, believe relations between the individual and collective identity are blurred. While collective identity plays a significant role in NSMs, action and identity should also be examined

from the individual participant's perspective to understand the impact of personal choices on movement mobilisation. This, regarding culture, will be analysed in Chapter 5.

I do not want to suggest that politics and class do not play a role in the Black Lives Matter movement, as systemic related issues like police brutality are a significant motivator for the movement (Faust et al., 2020). Melucci (broadly seen as an NSM theorist) has been criticised for 'political reductionism' in his work (Bartholomew and Mayer, 1992: 141). However, NSM has been argued to be both political and cultural in nature (Buechler, 1995). The founders of BLM recognised the value of politics in individual choice as they emphasised that 'personal is political', especially regarding those from ethnic minority backgrounds due to the effects of systemic and institutional racism (Nummi et al., 2019: 1047). Additionally, Taylor and Whittier (1992) and McAdam (1982) have also used collective identity to explain political opportunity structures in identity-based movements. Politics then does play a part in contemporary movement mobilisation because of its impact on personal motivations, but NSMs primarily emphasise culture in their movement approach (Melucci, 1989). I turn to this next.

An introduction to culture in NSM and BLM

Social movements have shifted their focus from 'class, race, and other more traditional political issues towards the cultural ground' (Melucci, 1996: 8). Melucci (1996) and Jasper and McGarry (2015) favour the term 'ethnicity' over 'race' when discussing cultural movements because, although race is understood to be socially constructed (as well as biological), it is also understood to be structural (Zamudio et al., 2010; Jasper and McGarry, 2015). Structural approaches to race refer broadly to its impact on 'economic, demographic, and historical-legal

factors' (Coles, 2005: 15). However, as Jasper and McGarry (2015: 2) highlight, 'structural positions are never as structural as they seem', suggesting that culture is always present. Similarly, Coles (2005) explains that his structural approach does not ignore cultural influences, which indicates that culture and structure will influence race/ethnic movements. Structural theories, however, are best when looking at why a movement is formed but do not explain how it is formed (Bartholomew and Mayer, 1992). This thesis looks particularly at the latter. Chapter 4, however, will look at both how and why BLM was formed, and Chapter 6 looks at the historical and national influence of Wales on BLM in the nation. Consequentially, this thesis adds to Coles' (2005) research in that the cultural approach of the study does not ignore structural influences, which is why this study will use the terms ethnicity and race interchangeably when referring to BLM.

Culture is defined as:

> A grouping of elements—values, norms, outlooks, beliefs, ideologies, knowledge, and empirical assertions (not always verified), linked with one another to some degree as a meaning-system (Smelser, 2004: 37)

These 'shared mental worlds' are embodied through 'words, artifacts, artworks, rituals, events, individuals, and any other action or creation that carries symbolic meanings' (Jasper, 2007: 60). Similarly, in a collection of cultural essays, Geertz (1973) examines symbols, meaning and interpretation of human behaviours through culture. He argues that culture is not monolithic but a dynamic system of shared symbols and social interactions, but he extends this to the importance of culture in shaping our identities (Geertz, 1973). Both Jasper and Geertz argue for Durkheim's (see Swindler, 1995: 39) assumption that contemporary cultural approaches are likened to who sees culture as constitutive, inherently collective, and embedded in symbols and practices. Black culture is an example of how these elements manifest, as

common historical experiences of racism have produced cultural codes through literature, art (see Black Arts Movement), music, language, and, more poignantly, activism (Dillard, 1975; Fanon, 1986; Neal, 1999; Smethurst, 2005; Woodly, 2022).

BLM activists are seen to want 'cultural change' in a world which adopts a 'culture of racism' (Fanon, 1986: xxiv; Woodly, 2022: 97). Culture is explained to be seen in every aspect of Black culture, community and anti-racist activism. As further developed in Chapter 3, culture is how we interpret experiences and meaning (Geertz, 1973). Identity is one of the ways in which these cultural processes are visible (Jasper and McGarry, 2015: 3). Additionally, movements like BLM, which reflect a group's social grievance and 'issues of identity', will often do so from a cultural approach (Larana et al., 1994: 7). This reflects a clear link between identity and culture. NSM theory is believed to be responsible for the renewed interest in cultural approaches to social movements (McAdam, 1994: 37). It is, however, pointed out that NSM theorist and culturalist Melucci sees culture as being a 'major' challenge to social relations (Buechler, 1995: 452). Touraine (1985) similarly describes culture as playing a significant role in social conflict. Melucci (1996: 158-9) argues that ethnic identity is losing its 'cultural roots' because ethnic self-identification is now grounded in personal choice, posing a challenge to collective identity. Chapter 5 builds upon this and argues that the internal culture and dynamics between BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales are fractious due to personal and strategic choices.

The role of digital activism in contemporary movements

Another component of NSM is the use of new technologies in action and mobilisation (Sádaba, 2022). This, according to Castells (2010a: xviii), creates a division between older

generations of activists and those born after the shift from 'traditional mass media to a system of horizontal communication networks organized around the Internet and wireless communication'. However, new movements increasingly rely on new technologies (Tilly and Wood, 2020). More importantly, social justice campaigns like BLM demonstrate the importance of social media platforms like Twitter (now X) on mobilisation (Castañeda, 2020). In the case of BLM, social media has provided an outlet to construct the meaning (framing) of the movement (Sádaba, 2022). As a result, the importance of social media on movement framing and mobilisation will be discussed further in Chapter 4. Sádaba (2022) and Downing (2001) believe that analysing the significance of new media and technologies on movements is best understood under NSM (see also Clark et al., 2018). This might be because digital technology customises media to the 'tastes of the identities and moods of individuals' (Castells, 2010: 2). Castells (2009a; 2009b; 2010) is an important figure in the role of communication technologies in social movements. His work modernises Habermas' (1984) in that it goes beyond the discussion of communication and reflects the importance of technology and the internet in new movements. The role of social media in BLM is profound. Although BLM has been likened to past social justice movements, it is 'uniquely twenty-first century' as it relies on new technologies for protest (Nummi et al., 2019: 1042). Referred to as a digital protest, social media was essential for creating the BLM movement, and it continues to be more active online than offline (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015; Faust et al., 2020). As a result, the use of social media in the BLM movement is a popular topic in academic analysis (Ince et al., 2017; Tillery Jr., 2019; Bonilla and Tillery, 2020; Petitjean and Talpin, 2022). The term 'Black Twitter' has been coined to describe the 'millions of Black users on Twitter networking, connecting, and engaging with others with similar concerns, experiences, tastes, and cultural practices' (Florini, 2014: 225). The movement is an excellent example of how social media can effectively organise, mobilise and communicate (Kidd and McIntosh, 2016: 72). The role that social media

plays in the creation of BLM has created discourse about whether it should be defined as a hashtag or movement (Hillstrom, 2018; Faust et al., 2020). #BlackLivesMatter continues to be significant online, and global offline mobilisation has also been present (Woodly, 2022: 6). Some organisations have been built under its banner, whilst some activists believe social media continues to be the best way to mobilise (Yamahtta-Keeanga, 2016: 193). As a result, it is argued that social media is changing how we view activism. Glenn (2015) examines this in her study by discussing the use of 'slacktivism', whereby individuals will be involved in an online movement that entails low-level commitment or effort. Social media is, therefore, making it easier for movements to gain support, but it raises questions about whether online activism can create a genuine impact on a movement (Lee and Hsieh, 2013). Foster et al. (2019) argue, however, that #BlackLivesMatter demonstrates the success of social media activism in producing movement visibility (see also Mundt et al., 2018). There are also other positives to online activism because it is cost-effective and allows a movement to reach global awareness (Glenn, 2015). Hence, social media activism is becoming a necessary type of collective action, particularly in the twenty-first century (Foster et al., 2019). The role that digital media plays in the creation and mobilisation of the movement places BLM firmly within the boundaries of an NSM. Social media's role in activists' support for BLM is explored in Chapter 4 and addressed in Chapter 5 due to its effects on relationships within the network in Wales.

BLM as a decentralised and member-led movement

As a result of its roots online, BLM is described as member-led, decentralised and leaderful due to the lack of structure and individual power given to each activist (Nummi et al., 2019). This 'self-organisation' allows grassroots organisations, chapters and individual activists to have autonomy in their actions (Rickford, 2016: 37). NSMs tend to follow this

pattern as they are often decentralised, thus providing local structures and individual activists with power (Larana et al., 1994: 8). This again creates comparisons between BLM and newer movements, such as Occupy (also said to be decentralised), rather than the more structured leadership model of the Civil Rights Movement (Harris, 2015; Yamahtta-Keeanga, 2016). However, because of the decentralised nature of new social movements, movements are increasingly segmented, and opportunities have become narrow due to pre-existing 'tightly knit' relationships (Larana et al., 1994; Yamahtta-Keeanga, 2016: 196). This was also the case in 1964, according to McAdam (1988), as he argues that an attempt to make the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) a more structured organisation led to fragmentation between group members. In the case of BLM, this has resulted in internal tensions and a surge of grassroots groups due to internal grievances (Rickford, 2016: 37-9). Whilst NSMs provide more freedom to individual activists, it suggests that this freedom creates internal divisions and challenges the collectivity of activists. Similar to the term 'slacktivism', this is also revealed by other 'new categories' of activists, such as those categorised as transient (short-term, non-committed) members and 'low-risk/cost' activism (McAdam, 1986; Klandermans, 1994: 169). Chapter 5 explores this within BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales and finds that internal contestations arise because activists work on individual and strategic choices, resulting in activists defining 'activism' differently. Consequentially, the categorisation of BLM as a hashtag, an organisation or a movement makes it difficult to define and examine it in a large context (Nummi et al., 2019). As a result, this study focuses on BLM with a particular focus on its action in Wales, revealing in Chapter 5 that it is likened more to a network than a movement. Nevertheless, as suggested, the movement's lack of leadership and fragmented action is typical of NSMs, reflecting that new movements are becoming more individual and autonomous.

This section unpacked and analysed the literature on NSM theory and discussed the importance of identity, culture, digital activism, and decentralised leadership in newer movements. It also placed BLM within the NSM framework by highlighting how these components can be found in the movement. This discussion has revealed that culture is particularly significant in BLM. As a result, the following sections of this chapter focus on a cultural approach to social movements. They emphasise cultural meanings, which will be epistemologically relevant in this study, as further developed in Chapter 3.

Emphasising Culture

The study of movements today often links social movements and culture in its analysis, which has been brought back into the study (Fine, 1995; Steinberg, 2002). As stated, NSM argues that movements create new cultural codes (Melucci, 1996). This demonstrates the importance of social movements in a broader context and the significance of the study of culture within analysis.

A cultural approach to sociology looks at 'objects of inquiry' (such as race) and analyses it from a cultural perspective, meaning it is examined through discursive and symbolic elements (Reed, 2009: 2). Rather than looking at race or ethnicity as fixed, they are deemed socially constructed and symbolic. Culture allows us to understand what drives action, which is often neglected in studies (Melucci, 1995; Jasper, 2007). To look at how action is taken implies studying a movement from the perspective of its members and through the internal dynamics and culture of the movement, as we shall see in Chapter 5 (see also Jasper, 1997). Thus, movement culture is reflected in both internal (a reflection of its members and their relationships) and external aspects (wider context such as racial politics) of the movement. As

a result, ‘a single theory of cultural change cannot apply to the many potential sites of cultural impact’ (Amenta and Polletta, 2019: 280). Though the external effect of a movement’s culture is important, the biographical aspect of this study relies on looking at the internal factors of its participants. To do so, an examination of how and why culture is created by its members is needed.

Bourdieu (1984) examines how culture is a form of capital, meaning that culture is a resource for gaining social power. Namely, he discusses the role of ‘fields’, which are social spaces whereby individuals compete for power (Bourdieu, 1977). Ibrahim (2015) discusses this in his analysis of anti-capitalist groups. He states, ‘fields are like games and agents within them are like players who make moves to further their political agenda’(Ibrahim, 2015: 63). This echoes Jasper’s (2015) analysis of players and arenas. He argues that players ‘are those who engage in strategic action with some goal in mind’ whilst arenas are ‘a bundle of rules and resources that allow or encourage certain kinds of interactions to proceed, with something at stake’ (Jasper, 2015:10-14). These ideas have influenced how we view the ‘outcomes and legacies of social movements’ (Turner and Ludvigsen, 2024: 94). They have also challenged our ideas of power, transferring power to ‘players’ rather than traditional state power (Jasper, 2015; Petersen-Wagner and Ludvigsen, 2024). Activists make strategic choices based on their own goals, and it is through players and arenas that we can see these choices more clearly (Jasper, 2004; 2006; 2015). Bourdieu (1984), too, recognises that cultural tastes (choices) are influenced by background (lived experience). Yet, arenas differ from fields because they are built by the strategic players themselves, whilst the social scientist creates the fields (Jasper, 2015: 18). Therefore, looking into the internal dynamics of a movement from the view of its players and the arenas they operate in is beneficial to understanding movement success and personal activist choices (Turner and Ludvigsen, 2024). Chapter 5 is inspired by Jasper’s

concept of players and arenas and builds upon its framework by examining the internal dynamics of BLM and anti-racist networks in Wales.

Cherry (2006) uses the vegan movement to explain how a recent trend in cultural approaches exemplifies activism outside of movement organisation and instead through individual action (as discussed under contemporary decentralised movements). This is also emphasised in Billing's (1995) work on the internal culture of social movements. He argues that a cultural approach is important because it allows us to understand the movement through its members. To do so, he analyses the significance of narratives on its members and how this impacts their relationships and bonds (Billing, 1995). The relationship between culture and narrative, or in his parlance 'dialogics', is also explored by Steinberg (2002). He argues that we can see the importance of meaning through culture by looking at conversations between movement members. This allows us to see the direct relationship between culture and meaning, how they coexist within social movements, and the study of its members. As the overall analysis of this thesis makes clear, culture should lie both in the participant's culture and within the movement itself. However, as Blumer (1969: 2) recounts, 'human beings act toward things on the basis of meaning'. He suggests that the creation of meaning is almost instinctual and cannot be removed from sociological study. Steinberg (2002) suggests this is done through narrative (and discourse as an extension). In his analysis of the Civil Rights Movement, McAdam (2004) believes culture allows us to see the meaning and impact of emotions and collective identity. In this thesis, I extend the study of identity by differentiating the focus between a collective identity and individual identity for the study of a biography of movement members (Jasper, 1997). As I will explain later, identity in all forms is pertinent to action. However, through this, we begin to see the importance of culture in movements whilst hinting at how this can be studied (i.e. narrative, identity and emotions).

While McAdam (2004) looks at how culture and meaning influence each other, Jasper (2007; 2010; 2014) sees them as intrinsically linked. This is depicted as not being culture and/or meaning but as cultural meanings. Jasper (2014: 7) argues that it is through cultural processes like marching 'that we give the world meaning, that we understand ourselves and others'. The key here is the discussion of 'ourselves' in action. Little acknowledgement is often made of the individual in action and how movements affect us as individuals. This is again emphasised in his work on the agency of activists. Here, he discusses the importance of choice and how it reflects the cultural meaning of a movement (Jasper, 2004: 12). In simpler terms, our choices as activists demonstrate the underlying significance of what the movement is or signifies. Jasper (2004: 12), nonetheless, focuses much of his analysis on strategic interactions. As BLM does not have a leadership model, it is hard to find a collective strategy within the movement (Harris, 2015: 36). However, each activist carries their own individual strategy for participating in the action, and a look at the biography of an activist can uncover this (Jasper, 2004). Jasper (2004: 42) does emphasise that a study should be willing to look at who creates the meaning, which suggests greater attention should be paid to the perspective of its participants than to a collective, as meaning may differ from one activist to another. Only by highlighting the individual's interpretation of meaning can we get a true reflection of the meaning of the movement. To further add to this, Tilly (2005; Tilly and Tarrow, 2015), in his response to repertoires and contentious politics, notes the significance of movement meanings but does so by 'boiling cultural meanings down to repertories of collective action' (Jasper, 2010: 966). It should be stressed that the study of movements is not just about the actions they take but also about why and how they get to the point of action. An analysis of the literature so far reveals that this can be done through an examination of emotions, identity, and narratives, and this is particularly evident in the case of BLM, as Chapter 4 of this study will discuss (Steinberg, 2002; McAdam, 2004; Jasper, 2014). Jasper (2004; 2014) places particular emphasis on

culture, highlighting the importance of individual and personal choices in shaping activism. This thesis builds upon its significance in subsequent chapters. The following sections of this chapter further develop their importance in studying social movements and recognise how they manifest cultural meanings.

The Role of Identity in Culture and Meaning

As mentioned, identity is key in NSM, but culture also helps shape identities (and vice versa) (Polletta and Jasper, 2001). Identities, therefore, play a significant role in studies of culture. Barassi and Zamponi (2020: 592) believe that identity, particularly when conveyed through narratives, is shaped by 'complex mnemonics', meaning our identities are formed by memories. This is particularly prominent for a movement on racial injustice as memories of cultural/racial trauma may provide an answer to the mobilisation of BLM activists (Alexander, 2004c; Stephens, 2018). However, as Barassi and Zamponi (2020: 592) continue to argue, identities comprise 'multiple collectivities'. Therefore, individuals have many different identities. In simple terms, no two people are the same in the case of identity. Castells (2009b) looks at how our various identities, such as religious, national and cultural, affect how we interpret meaning. He suggests that although we may have different identities, our primary identity affects our meaning of society; the primary frames the rest of our identities (Castells, 2009b: 7). Despite this, an analysis of collective identity remains a popular concept for cultural meaning analysis (Jasper and McGarry, 2015: 4). As discussed previously under NSM, collective identity is a significant topic of discussion. However, as Chapter 5 of this thesis makes clear, BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales are less than collective in their mobilising efforts because of personal strategic choices (Jasper, 2004). As a result, activists do not appear as a collective despite being an identity-based movement. While collective identity has been

revealed to be necessary, particularly for NSM and cultural studies, we should also explore the role of personal identity in action.

The individual search for identity emphasises communal identity and the activist's everyday life experience in the participation (Johnston, 1994: 268). Regarding individual identity, Klatch (2002) notes that we must analyse internal and external factors for movement understanding. For BLM's identity, the movement 'encourages members to build a supportive and nurturing black community and to view themselves as part of a global black family' (Hillstrom, 2018: 39). BLM is an example of where personal identities are important for constructing a collective identity during movement participation. Davis (2002) alludes to this in his work on storytelling in social movements. He states, 'while NSM scholars have emphasised the constructed nature of collective identity, they have not typically shown how activists themselves fashion their identities and interests' (Davis, 2002: 9). Therefore, social movement analysis would be better for understanding the scope of identity from the activists' perspective. This would also explain contestations among activists in extension to their cultural meanings, as they 'do not imply images of bounded groups' (Polletta and Jasper, 2001: 298). We can see how identity affects not only the creation of action but also how identity (in their sense of collectiveness) can form because of the action that they take. A complete view of identity is not collective, in the sense that each carries our own concepts of our identity, but we can see how groups are formed concerning their personal identity. This is perceived in the case of the study on BLM in Wales as two key identities come into play: ethnic and national. It is to this literature we now turn.

Racial and ethnic identities

Race has been a focal point of sociological research since W.E.B Du Bois brought it to attention (Du Bois, 1940). His autobiographical accounts in *Dusk of Dawn* (1940) paved the way for the study of race. Critical Race Theory (CRT) understands that racial inequalities 'permeates every aspect of social life' (Zamudio et al., 2010: 3). Despite this, the complexities of race in relation to collective identities are little understood (Robnett, 2002). In part, this is due to our lack of understanding of 'methodological dimensions' in the study of race (Blumer and Solomos, 2004: 2). To answer questions about the collective identities of race, many continue W.E.B Du Bois' legacy as they look to auto/biographies and ethnographies to understand its complexities (Alexander, 1996, 2004a; Mostern, 2004). This emphasises the importance of first-hand accounts and narratives in researching ethnic identity, as it suggests an analysis is best understood through accounts of those who experience racism and what this tells us from a wider context. Ethnicity is important to the study of social movements because it has been used, as well as race and other 'structural' identities, to oppress and inspire (Jasper and McGarry, 2015). Ethnic identities are important in mobilising people because of the actions they spur and create. The conceptualisation of race as a structural phenomenon is a significant focus point for Jasper and McGarry and is also argued by Alexander (1996: 191). It suggests that the complexity of ethnicity is widely bound by values, beliefs, and systems. It is thus not autonomous to culture but affects political and sociological backgrounds (Bulmer and Solomos, 2004). Bulmer and Solomos (2004: 9) also add the importance of other identity categories, such as gender and sexuality in one's ethnic makeup, an argument made by CRT on the significance of race and intersectionality (Gillborn, 2024: 24). This provides an understanding of personal identities in a way that only research on the lived experiences of those experiencing racism can provide. This prospect is heavily removed from Whiteness studies as the link between racial identity and culture is not considered (Hancock, 2005). This

could be explained by the difference in the way that race is viewed between White and Black identities. As Alexander (1996: 12) explains:

> whites have a choice in the creation of their identity, and that blacks, by virtue of their 'race', do not. Black people are denied any element of choice, and hence of creativity, in the construction of black identity; they cannot and do not make use of the forces of symbolic ethnicity to manipulate their identity; they can only reflect and re-create the dominant ascriptions of what blackness is.

Blackness, as Alexander refers to it, is integral to their racial identity. Less so an adjective, it is a binding label which can only be reconstructed through meaning (Alexander, 1996: 1). This sheds light on the purpose of social movements like BLM, which reflects on the way that Blackness is perceived in society and how this manifests in issues such as racial profiling (Hillstrom, 2018: 15). By some accounts, BLM has been successful in shifting the narrative of racial inequality and the meaning of Blackness as a result (Bunyasi and Smith, 2019). BLM highlights how those affected by racial discrimination can utilise their identity to 'generate internal solidarity and external visibility' (Jasper and McGarry, 2015: 6).

Irrespective of the BLM message itself, the importance of the racial and ethnic identity of its participants may also be explored by the juxtaposition of its counter-narrative, All Lives Matter (ALM). ALM gained traction after BLM's popularity as they argued BLM's narrative was 'inherently racist' (Hillstrom, 2018: xi). Since then, the counter-narrative of ALM has been omnipresent in social media discourse, but the meaning of BLM is not to suggest that all lives should not matter (Ince et al., 2017). Instead, it asks us to focus on creating a culture where the same value is given to people of all backgrounds (Faust et al., 2020: 246). It is a pro-Black movement, not anti-White (Clark, 2019: 527). Paul (2019) examines ALM as a counter-narrative to BLM. He argues ALM cannot be reduced to simply a White racial identity, but it is instead an exemplification of anti-identity identity politics (Paul, 2019). He writes, 'ALM's anti-identity component stems from the ostensible rejection of identity as a category for

conducting politics' (Paul, 2019: 9). However, as we have already seen, identity (connected to culture) and politics are inextricably linked. To suggest racial identity does not play a part in ALM's narrative would be admissible. Instead, it indicates that, as an anti-identity group, they are the very example of collective identity they wish to dispel. However, they continue to mobilise to shift the 'focus away' from BLM's pro-Black message (Hillstrom, 2018: 63).

National identities

Nations are inherently cultural entities. Research on racial identities places questions on what the boundaries should be in its studies, as well as its implications on other 'social phenomena'(Bulmer and Solomos, 2004: 3). Alexander (1996) explores the impact of one's racial identity on one's national identity, mainly what it means to be Black and British. However, the idea of 'Britishness' as a primary identity is declining (Williams et al., 2015: 1). As a result, emerging literature points more to studying race from other forms of national identity, such as Welsh and Scottish (Williams et al., 2015; Sobande and Hill, 2022). For many reasons, firmly placing boundaries on both national identities is difficult. First, borders are 'invisible and tangible, felt and (re)imagine[d]' (Sobande and Hill, 2022: 13). They are constructs and do not accurately bind national identities to one space physically. Again, this is represented by whether someone would identify as British, Welsh or both, for example. Second, the nation itself is 'an imagined community' (Anderson, 1991). Anderson (1991: 3) explains that they are imagined because a kinship is created between those in the nation without physically meeting one another. Although he defines these imagined communities as political, Anderson (1991: 9) also argues that nationalism has 'cultural roots' because of shared symbols and practices, particularly in language. This gives weight to Jasper's previous definition of culture as being interpreted through words (language), individuals, and events and constructed

through meaning. National identities are, hence, very cultural. Jasper and McGarry (2015) also define identity, in any form, as being imagined in and of itself. Therefore, we can include race as a category.

Some individuals see being both Black and British as being an anomaly; that is, to be Black, you cannot be British and vice versa (Alexander, 1996: 2). It raises questions as to whether this is because it disrupts an individual's perception of their imagined community without recognising it is imagined to begin with. Nationality is challenging to define, suggesting no appropriate way to interpret one's national identity (Anderson, 1991: 3). In Wales, the case study of this thesis, the Welsh language was deemed the most important aspect of Welshness as opposed to a 'cultural' identity (Giles et al., 1977). However, the Welsh cultural identity itself is not monolithic. According to Jones (1992: 333), Wales is made up of three distinctions; 'British' Wales, a 'Welsh' Wales and 'Cymru'. Fiona (1993) sees these distinctions as the implication of geography, language and history. This reinforces the complexities of studying a particular national identity and denotes the fragmentation of Wales' cultural identity as not resulting from race. However, they fail to recognise how the idea of Welshness is largely perceived as Whiteness (Williams, 2007: 760). For example, the ethnic minority population of Wales predominantly reside in the South-East and the Welsh language is mainly spoken within rural (countryside) spaces, an area lacking a 'critical mass of ethnic minorities' (Williams, 2007: 761; Williams et al., 2015). Therefore, the representation of language as being the most important element of the Welsh cultural identity suggests that the identity is overall viewed through a White racial identity. Chapter 6 examines this further. According to Schofield (2018), it is unknown whether Wales will remain introverted post-Brexit or whether a new identity will be re-imagined in its wake, perhaps one of more inclusivity. It is, however, apparent that the 'myth of tolerance' within Wales runs deep within the literature, and it is unclear how national and racial communities coincide, conflict, and

harmonise in the Welsh landscape (Williams et al., 2015: 128). As a result, more should be done to understand those complexities and better understand the relationship of race and nation. In focusing on BLM in Wales, this thesis is a step in that direction.

It is clear how identities in all their forms shape cultural meaning and influence movement participation. However, as mentioned previously, emotions and narratives also influence the construction of cultural meanings. Next, I reflect on the role of emotions in culture and meaning, beginning with how emotions intersect with identity in this way.

The Role of Emotions in Culture and Meaning

The imagined communities of race and nation aim to provide a sense of belonging, according to Berezin (2001) and solidarity, according to Jasper (2007: 82). This can be extended to constructing collective identity in movement spaces, which creates 'bonds of trust, loyalty, and affection' (Goodwin et al., 2001: 21). This begins to explain the significance of emotions on identity framing and its importance in movement mobilisation as a whole. Goodwin and Pfaff (2001) find this in their US and East German Civil Rights Movements study. They conclude that identity and cultural frames result from strong emotions in movement members (Goodwin and Pfaff, 2001). For this reason, emotions are important because they allow us to understand why and how individuals mobilise. However, as previously discussed, emotions are often studied from the point of action. Calhoun (2001: 55) even states that 'movements produce emotions; they do not simply reflect emotional orientations brought to them by members'. Movements produce emotions, but to suggest that pre-existing emotions, especially for the context of this study, do not impact movements or a member's choice to participate would be misleading. Calhoun (2001: 47) states that 'emotions are both produced and shaped by social interaction and cultural understanding'. Additionally, Collins (2001: 29)

interprets emotions as being transformed in collective action, making feelings stronger. This is partly due to the implications of pre-existing emotions, which are 're-informed' during collective action (Goodwin et al., 2001: 398). One way in which we can see this is through 'moral shocks' (Jasper, 2014). Jasper (2014: 97) describes a moral shock as:

> A person may experience something that so upsets them-a moral shock- that they deeply want to get involved. They may go online to find help, seek out organizations in their community, or in extreme cases even start their own group.

The role of moral shocks in activist participation demonstrates how people's emotional reactions to events can drive a call to action. This can also be referred to as a crisis of doxa. According to Ibrahim (2015: 129), this is when 'the broader populace starts to question the rules of the field because their subjective expectations have slipped out of alignment with objective reality'. This is also indicative of BLM activists, as discussed in Chapter 4. Woodly (2022: 36) highlights how emotions impact the choice of BLM activists to participate. She describes the emotional reaction to the murder of Black individuals, which sparked activist freedom rides across America to protest the murder. The implications of racial inequalities and the emotions they incite suggest that Calhoun's previous statement fails to consider the role of identity in contemporary movements. We can also look at the impact of cultural trauma to highlight the importance of emotions in the call to action. Both Stephens (2018) and Alexander (2004b) provide a fruitful analysis of this. Alexander (2004b: 1) explains:

> Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.

The theory of cultural trauma is extended to Stephens' (2018) analysis of its impact on the BLM movement. She argues that incidents of 'Black death' and police brutality (cultural structures) produced a collective identity which mobilised individuals to participate in the

movement (Stephens, 2018: 78). Similarly, Klandermans (2014: 20) emphasises the effects of cultural/collective trauma on participation as he argues that 'shared grievances are at the root' of action, though he relates this to political protests. When pairing both analyses of Alexander and Stephens on the emotional implication of cultural trauma on BLM's mobilisation, it demonstrates the undeniable role of emotions in the creation and sustainability of identity-based movements.

The discussion so far underpins the importance of emotions in social movements. Gould (2004) argues that emotions should be reintroduced in the analysis of social movements. Emotions were central in social movement literature in the nineteenth century but were used to explain crowds as 'angry, violent, impressionable, and generally unthinking' (Jasper et al., 2000: 66). This kind of thinking was brought forward by Le Bon (1895: 15), who likened crowds to mobs of irrational thinkers who were impulsive and irritable. However, conceptualising emotions as 'irrational' limits our understanding of their function in social movements. Emotions have since been proven to be connected in every single level of movement and are important to the growth of social movements (Goodwin et al., 2001: 287). In his analysis of emotions in social movement scholarship, Jasper (2011: 285) concludes that emotions are not irrational but interact with each other. Therefore, emotions are not static and bound but are transformed through action, transforming the movement's meaning as a result (Collins, 2001; Keane, 2020). Emotions can be seen through pain, hate, fear, disgust and love, to name a few (Ahmed, 2014). These are often displayed through the process of rituals (Barker, 2001; Collins, 2001). Rituals are evidenced through 'tools' like singing, dancing, and marching (Jasper and McGarry, 2015). The very description of rituals as 'tools' reinforces the claim that emotions are rational and even perhaps tactically employed. Viewing emotions culturally is viable, according to Goodwin et al. (2001), but they believe that cultural framing has not yet

fully allowed us to understand the intent of emotions. This is also reinforced by Collins (2001). To do so, we must study emotions and ask how they are connected to other aspects of our identity, narratives, culture, and meaning. The importance of this is emphasised in Chapter 4. Finally, I turn to the last component of cultural meanings: narrative.

The Role of Narrative and Communications on Culture and Meaning

Emotions are intertwined with narratives and storytelling. As Blee (1998: 1) suggests, emotions are communicative expressions with means to relay 'personal narratives'. Emotions are also revealed through communications, often found in movement rituals (Barker, 2001: 188). Similarly, Castells (2009: 33) suggests that meaning is constructed through 'communicative action'. Barker (2001: 176) also states that without means of action or expression, there is 'no such thing' as emotions, meaning only through communication, such as discourse, can they be measured. However, Kane (2001) frames narratives as being based on emotions. Her analysis suggests that the relationship between emotions and narrative is more inextricably linked than previously thought. The study of narratives on movements is important because it allows insight into the impact of the movement. Atkinson and Cooley (2010) reflect on this importance in their analysis of two activist networks in US Cities: Mystical City (Midwest) and Erie City (Northeast). They argue that the narrative capacity of activists affects how the movement is seen as either positive or negative and how activists communicate the movement's perception (Atkinson and Cooley, 2010: 321). Narrative is pertinent in the BLM movement. For racial terminology as a whole, the language used to describe racial groups is sensitive (Austin, 2021). Austin's (2021) ethnographic study finds that the Nawarijo nation changed its terminology of Black Americans post-BLM to one of more inclusivity. His study argues that 'words take on different meanings' over time, highlighting

the importance of the movement's discourse in framing its meaning (Austin, 2021: 1). According to CRT, narrative and storytelling are important because they allow us to understand people's experiences of racism (Zamudio et al., 2010; Gillborn, 2024). The BLM movement reflects how a movement can shift a national narrative on issues of race and inclusivity (Bunyasi and Smith, 2019).

Narratives are often relayed through stories/storytelling in social movements (Polletta and Gardner, 2014: 535). This has been the subject of much academic debate (Polletta, 1998; Polletta and Gardner, 2014; Polletta and Callahan, 2017). Polletta and Gardner (2014: 394) define stories 'as an account of events in the order in which they occurred to make a point (we use the terms ''story'' and ''narrative'' interchangeably)'. This definition indicates that stories can be a tactical means to relay accounts and provide discursive means of action. This is further analysed in Chapter 4, which discusses the use of online discourse and stories on BLM mobilisation.

One way stories are told and shared in new social movements is through social media (Barassi and Zamponi, 2020). As mentioned previously, Castells (2009: 12, 2010a) writes at length about the power of online media as a means of communication, especially for social movements. Social media, namely Twitter (now X), provides a space for narratives to shape meaning through 'nanostories' (Wasik, 2010), meaning activists can use social media spaces to create discourse supporting a movement through short and convenient messages. Other research (Polletta and Gardner, 2014; Amenta and Polletta, 2019) attests to this and argues that social movements now depend on telling stories on social media to garner support. Particularly for BLM, social media provides a space to document visuals and stories of racialised deaths (Stephens, 2018). Through Tweets and hashtags, social media allows the Black community to relay stories and incidents of racism within the Black community (Stephens, 2018: 77). It sheds

light on issues facing the Black (and other ethnic minority) communities whilst providing a space for their narratives to be heard. In this sense, social media provides 'strategic outlets for contesting and reimagining the materiality of racialized bodies' (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015: 4). The racialised body is seen both through narratives surrounding #BlackLivesMatter and through the visuals of racial abuse that accompanies them. This is mainly reflected in the death of George Floyd, for example (Woodly, 2022: 209). It recognises the power of narrative in shaping and reimagining cultural issues and how it can garner support for identity-based matters. However, online activism poses a challenge as it allows everyone to engage in discussions related to the movement. As a result, its accommodating access allows a 'broad audience to alter and manipulate the movement's construction of meaning' (Ince et al., 2017: 1827). By looking at the meaning attached to the online discourse of the movement, Ince et al. (2017) demonstrate how the movement is infiltrated by counter-discourse. As discussed earlier in this chapter, this is most clearly manifested in the example of 'All Lives Matter'. Not only is this reflected by counter-narratives, but the meaning of the movement can also be deconstructed through 'biased narratives, dissemination of misinformation and trolling', as also seen in the study of the Catalan independence movement (Anderson, 2019: 191). Despite issues with the significant activity of the movement's online discourse, Anderson (2019: 191) argues that social media is still a highly effective tool for movement mobilisation. Its pivotal role in contemporary movements is not lost on Tillery Jr (2019: 318), who emphasises that involvement with Twitter discourse is a must to build a movement. Social media suggests a new culture of action, predominantly online, made through the importance of narrative and easily accessible. Still, as Chapter 4 shows, it can cause difficulties in placing the meaning of a movement.

CRT also places importance on narratives and racial inequalities (Zamudio et al., 2010). Particularly, they argue that 'counter-narratives' are important in challenging the dominant

narrative of racial injustice (Zamudio et al., 2010). Through an analysis of Donald Trump's rhetoric, Polletta and Callahan (2017) suggest that people connect to narratives through the transformation (or a reflection) of identities (see also Polletta and Jasper, 2001). Barassi and Zamponi (2020), however, find that not only do narratives play a role in constructing identity, but the construction of meaning is also as important. Their research emphasises Davis' (2002) conclusion that scholarship should draw more attention to the binary of narrative and meaning-making. This provides a link between the role of narrative, emotions and identity in individual action.

Conclusion

This chapter examined academic scholarship surrounding social movement studies, focusing on NSM Theory, BLM, and cultural approaches. Drawing on diverse theoretical frameworks, it shows several things. To begin with, studies should not be restricted to one theory, and they should find value in borrowing inspiration from various theories. In this chapter, I highlighted how Contentious Politics, Political Process Theory, Critical Race Theory and New Social Movement Theory have elements that can be used to analyse BLM and anti-racist movements more broadly. That being said, I reflect heavily on the role of NSMs in the study of BLM because the movement embodies many elements of the theory, including identity, culture, digital activism and decentralised leadership. As a result, this thesis will demonstrate how these components affect the meaning and lived experiences of activists. This chapter further discussed the impact of culture and a cultural approach on social movements, which this thesis builds on. It recognises the role of identity (national and ethnic examples), narrative, and emotions in constructing meaning.

Throughout the Chapter, I identify gaps in the existing research and establish the foundation for addressing these gaps through the original contributions developed in this thesis. Firstly, BLM studies are mainly reserved for large places. As a result of the movement beginning (online) in the US, BLM is often focused on from this geographical perspective. There are also some analyses of BLM from the UK. Yet, BLM has not been looked at from the standpoint of Wales. As mentioned in this chapter, Wales has a complex history with attitudes towards race and its unique cultural identity. Scholarship also discusses the relationship between ethnic, racial and national identities. Building on this, this thesis looks at BLM and anti-racism in Wales to gain insight into the experiences and meaning of anti-racist action in the nation. Focusing on their experiences will demonstrate how residing in Wales uniquely impacts activists' actions and motivations. Secondly, in building on a cultural approach, this thesis is influenced by the role that identity, narrative and emotions play in mobilisation and how they intertwine and shape meaning. I add to the importance of cultural meanings behind activist mobilisation and examine their significance for interpreting why activists engage in the movement. Thirdly, this study shows an appreciation of strategic and personal choice. In moving beyond a conventional approach of NSM, which emphasises collective identity, I also add value to the understanding of the individual dimensions and nuanced takes of movement action. Focusing on individual experiences allows deeper knowledge of strategic and personal choices. To do so, this thesis builds upon the importance of analysing social movements through players and arenas.

As suggested, new movements are becoming less collective because of social media and decentralised leadership's role in movement action, which has been argued to cause contestations between activists. This reflects even more the importance of looking at action from the individual and lived experiences of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales. These

gaps inspire the study's sub-research questions, which will be addressed in subsequent chapters, as well as answering the main research question: 'How do Black Lives Matter and anti-racist activists understand and express anti-racist action in Wales?'. The next chapter examines the methodological approaches used to understand the lived experience and meaning of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales.

Chapter Three: Methodological Approach and Research Design

Introduction

This chapter examines the research design and methodological approach used in this study. To explore the lived experiences of Black Lives Matter (BLM) and anti-racist activists in Wales, this thesis utilises an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) framework. IPA is chosen because of its emphasis on the participant's subjective lived experience and meaning in interpreting a phenomenon. Focusing on the individual experience and using IPA builds from the research gaps identified in Chapter 2. It allows an in-depth understanding of how cultural (identity, emotions, narrative), societal and personal factors broadly contribute to the knowledge of activists and social movements.

The research is rooted in interpretivism because it focuses on how meaning is created, constructed, and culturally dependent. This complements the ontological belief that different realities can exist and the epistemological perspective that meaning is made through the subject. It also values the role of the researcher in meaning construction. IPA provides further insight into the role of participants' experiences and interpretations because phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography are part of the methodology's underpinnings.

The chapter begins with a philosophical and theoretical explanation. It outlines the importance of human experience in the study and discusses how interpretivism allows us to analyse this, whilst a positivist paradigm does not. It follows with an ontological and epistemological discussion. Next, the chapter discusses the framework for IPA, discussing individually its three tenets and justifying its use in the study. It subsequently examines the

data collection process, including the role of semi-structured interviews, participant recruitment and interview questions. Following this, the chapter details the data analysis process, taking inspiration from IPA to do so. It provides an overview of how data was analysed and interpreted.

Additionally, I discuss the relevance of the study's ethics, rigour, and quality. Given the sensitive discussion of racism and participants' lived experiences, ethics are considered throughout and explained comprehensively in this chapter. Due to the role that individuals' experiences play in this study, this research does not use a measurable or replicated approach. Therefore, I explain the steps taken to ensure the quality and rigour of the study. Lastly, I discuss limiting time constraints and navigating the sensitivity of the research topic.

This chapter demonstrates how the study's methodological choices allowed for a fruitful, unique, and nuanced understanding of the experiences of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales.

Research Philosophy and Theoretical Underpinnings

This study is about understanding human interpretations and lived experiences. As a result, it took a qualitative approach because it values the 'construction and interpretation of meaning', further contributing to the trend of less analytical (quantitative) research designs (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011: 5; Atkinson, 2017: 11). Humans cannot be studied or understood effectively through analytics or 'physical science' because they are made up of 'webs of significance' hung through meaning and interactions (Geertz, 1973: 5; Miles and Huberman, 1994: 8). Therefore, they cannot be quantifiably measured. This is particularly

evident in this study as it aims to understand how BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales understand their actions. Interpretivism allows us to understand the meaning behind an individual's social action and to 'address' the complexities of those meanings (Fulbrook, 1978; Black, 2006: 139). This was demonstrated in an analysis of Jasper's (1997) work on social movements in Chapter 2. To do so, the study relies on my detailed interpretations of data, which Geertz (1973) refers to as 'thick descriptions' in his interpretative analysis of culture (see also Black, 2006). It is thus subjective but also intersubjective because it is the researcher's interpretation of the individual's meaning that brings it to life (Curry, 2020) Therefore, 'you either grasp an interpretation or you do not, see the point of it or you do not, accept it or you do not' (Geertz, 1973: 24). The ontological and epistemological influence of this is important and will be embedded throughout this chapter. As a result, this study follows 'abductive reasoning', meaning it takes words, expressions and observations, and forms assumptions based on this (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011). This chapter will highlight that an interpretive phenomenology analysis (IPA) recognises and embraces this.

As addressed in Chapter 2, cultural meaning is created through identity, narrative and emotions. Black (2006) argues that interpretivism's strength is its capacity to interpret meanings, which is found in the interactions between the individual, themselves, culture, and society. This is particularly helpful in this study as it allows me to look at both individual perceptions of anti-racist action and acknowledge the role that group culture and society place on their decisions. Culture is where 'humans interpret experiences' and make meaning (Geertz, 1973: 145). It is then important to interpret individuals from the context of their social settings and activities for fruitful analysis, or at least, their interpretations of them (Whyte, 1981). As Jasper (1997: 10) states, 'no individual or group has goals or interests objectively given without any cultural interpretation'. The role of culture and society is particularly relevant in the study of race as it allows us to understand the role that racism places on the lived experience of

individuals. Scholars like W.E.B Du Bois (2007) have extensively used this type of interpretative approach in his study on African American communities and Whyte (1981) in his analysis of Italian Slums. Though interpretivism emphasises the importance of looking at the role of culture in human understanding, as Critical Race Theorists (CRT) would argue, race is a social construct, which suggests that this study places importance on a constructivist approach (Crotty, 1998; Zamudio et al., 2010). However, it is argued that constructivism and interpretivism can be used together (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011: 6). Ultimately, it is the interpretation of racism and the lived experience of racism that is emphasised in this study; therefore, interpretivism takes the lead, but a study of culture could not wholly dismiss the constructions within it. Moreover, a positivist approach to testing a theory is too rigid in understanding individual human experiences. Interpretivism is instead inspired by the research outlined in the literature review and uses theoretical considerations to guide data analysis. Still, the data collected ultimately informs the theory (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011: 18).

Ontological and epistemological considerations

The impact of discourse and other symbols on meaning has been discussed at length, as seen in Chapter 2. However, language's effect on meaning is also ontologically and epistemologically important because it shapes how people perceive their realities and demonstrates how we understand knowledge (and make sense of it) (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011: 46).

Ontologically, an interpretive approach would suggest that reality is relative, meaning that there are multiple constructed realities bound by time and context (Pickard, 2017: 12). This indicates that human experience should not be measured through rigid formulas and that each

individual experiences a phenomenon in multiple ways. Research of this kind should focus on 'what happened' rather than the 'truth' (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011: 4). For this reason, making sense of reality requires an interpretation rather than tangible data. The role that human experience and meaning play in reality is reflected in Geertz's (1973) interpretation of culture. He suggests that 'without men' culture would not exist, but more importantly, without culture, men would not exist (Geertz, 1973: 49). It suggests that our interpretations and constructed realities, reflected in culture, are essential to human existence. These ontological underpinnings are important in this study, not only as they allow us to understand the human meaning, which this thesis ultimately explores, but also to reflect the cultural experiences of race and racism. For instance, each individual's experience of their identities affects how they understand meaning, and their experience with racism, protests, and other culturally significant events also shape how they perceive their realities. This, too, is significant in Jasper's (1997) research on the cultural meanings of protests, as discussed in Chapter 2. Thus, research within this study should reflect those different experiences rather than reduce data into one tangible 'truth'.

Positivists believe that data is created during research and has no existence before the study (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011: 79). However, as I will argue, the researcher's own interpretation of data will impact what the study will find in the context of the human experience of cultural events. The data (i.e. what happened and their experiences with it) exists before data collection. The role of the researcher's own interpretations in the study is important for both interpretivism and constructionism as both approaches argue that data is 'co-generated'; therefore, only through interactions and interpretation can we begin to understand human experiences (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011: 4). It is epistemologically subjectivist, emphasising the researcher's experience in interpreting data. Researchers can, however, 'draw on previously acquired cultural knowledge' (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011: 26).

Consequently, it is difficult to know when the study began, as research can start without our knowledge due to our own experiences of a particular phenomenon. Thus, it suggests that interpretivists are also attached to the object of study and may be seen as 'participants' themselves (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011). A reflection of my own racial and national identity and what this means as a researcher will be analysed later in the chapter. However, I should highlight my experience and knowledge of anti-racism and BLM activism in Wales before the study. More concretely, I have participated in anti-racist protests and would refer to myself as an anti-racist activist. I would, therefore, suggest that my prior position and experiences would shape how I would interpret data. In this case, I firmly believe I could also be considered a participant. However, it is through social interactions that these interpretations come to light (Pickard, 2017: 12). Hence, my interpretations of meaning can shift depending on interactions with participants. The role of reflexivity and ethics concerning my own position as co-participant will be explained. However, as IPA will show, our interpretations as researchers are not ethically muddy but something to be embraced. For this reason, epistemology guides the study of IPA (Connolly, 2019: 52). Next, I will provide an overview of IPA and discuss its value in this study.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPA's main principle is investigating how people make and interpret their experiences (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012). Smith (2004) is credited for creating IPA as he aimed to use the approach to investigate psychological topics. Consequently, the approach is popular in psychology, particularly in exploring race (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012; Keum et al., 2023; Benson, 2024; Daniel, 2024). However, IPA has also been adopted by sociologists and political scientists to explore experiences with identity, activism, and social movement action, though

research on the latter is limited (Beail et al., 1997; Burgess et al., 2007; Miron et al., 2022). IPA is, therefore, needed to address many areas of study, mainly if it discusses identity (Smith and Nizza, 2022: 3-4). As discussed in Chapter 2, action is influenced through experiences such as emotions and communication (see moral shocks as a pertinent example). Hence, the actions of activists are, in some ways, influenced by their psychology. I therefore found it useful to adopt an approach often used in psychology to explore culture, because it was beneficial in understanding how these topics impact people's experiences with anti-racist activism. To explore IPA further, I will discuss the three important tenets of IPA: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Miller et al., 2018). These approaches, including IPA, can be used as both a method and methodology. As this study stresses the importance of each individual approach (they all hold a place within it), they will be considered methodologically, as they influence how this research makes sense of its data, how data is collected, and how it is analysed. However, this is done through the guidance of IPA (together) rather than as individual approaches.

Phenomenology

As discussed, interpretivism looks at the role of human meaning-making in research and the construction of meaning through language and interactions. This ties together with the role of phenomenology in study. Phenomenology is generally concerned with individual experiences and interpretations of these experiences through language (Sloan and Bowe, 2014). It can be descriptive and interpretive (hermeneutic) (Sloan and Bowe, 2014). IPA takes inspiration from both branches of phenomenology, 'resulting in a method which is descriptive because it is concerned with how things appear and letting things speak for themselves, and interpretative because it recognizes there is no such thing as an uninterpreted phenomenon'

(Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012: 8). It is, therefore, more helpful than only using an interpretive phenomenology, as it considers how people perceive their experiences and allows more agency in retelling an event, particularly regarding traumatic experiences such as racism. It takes inspiration from Geertz (1973) in that it emphasises the 'rich details of participants' ways of making meaning of particular experiences by 'focusing more intentionally on aspects of lived experience that frequently go unobserved or unexamined in daily life' (Miller et al., 2018: 241).

According to Heidegger (see Capuzzi, 1998: 248), our 'ek-sistence' relies on our ontology of Being rather than our realities. This is particularly beneficial in the study of social movement action and the impact of identity as it allows the study to uncover participants' lived experiences and how this might drive them to participate in social action. In an edited collection of essays, Szanto and Moran (2016) discuss how phenomenological traditions can be used to examine social phenomena relating to shared affection and group formations. Although they do not directly study social movements, the role of group and shared meaning is relevant to movement studies, as seen in Chapter 2. This also extends to Fanon's (1986) use of phenomenology in explaining the meaning and experiences of Black people. Phenomenology is similar to symbolic interactionism in that it also looks at the interpretation of meaning created by humans (Blumer, 1969). However, interactionism does not imply the role of culture in how humans create and experience meaning, which is integral in this study (Crotty, 1998: 71). As Crotty (1998) highlights, culture makes us human and implies meaning as it liberates and limits human experience. Phenomenologists are often criticised for placing importance on individual meaning-making. Still, as we can see with culture, phenomenology also relates to larger aspects of society, such as governments, organisations, and communities, when applied to social science studies (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011: 43). IPA also combats this, as rather than looking at the experience of a group and reducing it to one singular experience, it looks at and

analyses each individual account before connecting this with general group ideas (Miller et al., 2018: 243). It, therefore, provides a better and richer account of people's experiences and can give better insight into how each participant perceives societal topics.

Hermeneutics

Both interpretivism and phenomenology discuss the importance of language in meaning-making. Referring back to Heidegger and the importance of Being, he argues that it is through language that we understand our ontology (Ho et al., 2017: 1759). Humans use language to make sense of the world and our culture (Crotty, 1998: 87). Hermeneutics concerns the rules required for interpreting our culture's written documents (Ricoeur, 1971: 197). Still, scholars have adopted its use to analyse language and art, which is particularly useful in this study in understanding the lived experiences of activists through their own verbal accounts (Grondin, 2003: 71). As a result of its similarities with phenomenology, scholars often merge the two to make hermeneutic phenomenology (also known as Heidegger phenomenology) (Sloan and Bowe, 2014; Ho et al., 2017). Hermeneutics adds another layer to phenomenology as, on its own, phenomenology takes participants' experiences as truth. In contrast, hermeneutic phenomenology involves including different perspectives in interpreting data and their 'attribution of meaning' (Smith et al., 2009; Sloan and Bowe, 2014: 1294). This allows a detailed and contextualisation of meaning from which social movement studies could benefit (Gillan, 2008). Gillan (2008) critiques social movement studies for focusing on goals and strategies and instead suggests using hermeneutics to understand the beliefs guiding activists' actions. This study aims to do this.

Hermeneutics again stresses the belief that the researcher cannot be removed (Sloan and Bowe, 2014: 1294). This may also be called double hermeneutic as it is, in simple terms, an interpretation of an interpretation (Glynn, 2017: 323). As Smith and Pietkiewicz (2012: 8) write:

> IPA researchers try to understand what an experience (object or event) is like from the participant's perspective. Yet, simultaneously, they try to formulate critical questions referring to the material.

Hermeneutics is important in this study as it demonstrates the importance of interpreting communication and language in terms of the role of meaning. Still, it also provides space to engage with the researcher's own interpretation of the analysis. However, hermeneutics has been criticised for its lack of structure regarding research techniques. For this reason, it is more of an approach than a method (Gillan, 2008: 260). On its own, hermeneutics may not provide enough inspiration and guidance for conducting research. This is why this study uses it under the umbrella of IPA and the guidance of phenomenology and idiography.

Idiography

Idiography is relatively straightforward. However, its role within IPA reflects the number of participants needed for the study. As Smith et al. (2009) relay, idiography refers to the 'particular' by exploring individual accounts before making generalisations or connections. As a result, it recognises the value of each participant and treats each as a case study (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012: 8; Miller et al., 2018: 243). However, selecting participants for an IPA approach should be 'fairly homogenous' rather than attempting to find comparisons, as grounded theory tries to do, which is beneficial when making claims on the experiences of race in Wales (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012: 9). This contrasts it with an ethnomethodological approach, as ethnomethodology uses culture and society to understand the impact of general

daily life on a group and how they make sense of this (Garfinkel, 1967). In contrast, IPA looks at 'aspects of lived experience that frequently go unobserved or unexamined in daily life' such as the effects of racism, the role this plays on emotions, and how this might look regarding mobilisation (Miller et al., 2018: 241). Fanon (1986: 169) discusses the importance of understanding a phenomenon (in his case, race) through a deep and rich understanding of a few cases rather than a larger number. Although culture is significant to this study, it does not seek to understand the general daily experience of people in Wales. Instead, it looks at their lived experience concerning specific topics (activism and identity mainly), as these topics are individually driven and interpreted, as seen in phenomenology. I would, therefore, want to look at individual experiences before making generalised assumptions. For this, an idiography and IPA study requires small sampling, but:

> There is no rule regarding how many participants should be included. It generally depends on 1. the depth of analysis of a single case study, 2. the richness of the individual cases, 3. how the researcher wants to compare or contrast single cases, and 4. the pragmatic restrictions one is working under. The last category includes time constraints or access to participants (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012: 9).

These are all considerations when sampling and gathering data for this study, as explained further in the data collection section of this chapter. I turn to this next.

Data Collection

Before starting the study, I knew I wanted to study anti-racist activism. This was due to the increasing awareness of anti-racism and racism at the time, the rise of BLM protests, and the effects of attending anti-racist protests myself. Upon reflection, I realised that research surrounding the topic focused on larger places like the UK and US, and little acknowledgement

was made of the impact of anti-racism in smaller geographical areas. As a Welsh person residing in Wales at the time of the study (my position and identity will be reflected on further), I was drawn to studying the topic as it relates to the uniqueness and experiences of people in Wales. In understanding that I wanted to look at the meaning of anti-racist activism in Wales and the experience of those activists, I realised that IPA was the best way to do this. The lived experiences that tend to be investigated under IPA often pertain to the key life stages of the participants (Smith and Nizza, 2022: 12). I took the spike of BLM protests in 2020 to be one of those 'life stages' as not only did it inspire activists to take action, but it also brought to the surface racial tensions and allowed people to reflect on their own experiences with their racial identities. After attending BLM protests, I was aware that to investigate anti-racist action further in Wales, I wanted to speak directly to the activists to understand the depths of their experiences. I then formulated research questions and aims that would help me shed light on their experiences. As the objective is to understand the lived experience of anti-racist activists in Wales, I followed IPA's guidance in formulating 'open and exploratory' research questions about how meaning and experience can be explored (Miller et al., 2018: 244; Smith and Nizza: 13, 2022). These are highlighted below:

Study's main question:

- How do Black Lives Matter and anti-racist activists understand and express anti-racist action in Wales?

Study's sub-question:

1) What are the personal experiences of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales, and how do these experiences shape their engagement?
2) What are the internal dynamics and culture of anti-racist activists in Wales?

3) How do cultural narratives in Wales impact the experiences of ethnic minorities in the country?

Open and exploratory research aims and questions ensure that data is not restricted by closed and rigid research questions, which can potentially hinder the interpretation of experiences. Once I had formulated these, the next step was to find suitable participants for the study.

Sampling

Before reaching out to participants, an IPA researcher should first decide whether it should look in-depth at a particular individual's experience or a more general account of a specific group (Smith et al., 2009, 4). This study does both because it begins by capturing participants' individual experiences. Still, this data is compared with others to make a more general statement about anti-racism in Wales. I started the study with the idea that I would treat participants as a 'group' and was concerned about whether this would hinder the role of individuality within IPA. However, it became clear that each participant acted on individual experiences and beliefs rather than as a unit or 'movement', as will be further developed in Chapter 5. Therefore, I could capture the anti-racism landscape in Wales through individual accounts. IPA is expected to have a relatively homogenous group of people, and this study was no exception (Smith and Nizza, 2022). Participants in this study had to (in their own opinion) have taken part in and believed in anti-racist activism and lived in/or spent a long period in Wales. Gender, sexuality, age, and religion were not deciding factors in their participation, although they provided valuable insight into their experiences. I refrain from suggesting they had to be referred to as 'activists' as some participants disagreed with the labelling and defined activism differently (see Chapter 5). Participants also did not need to identify as 'Welsh' to

participate, as this would have placed boundaries on people who migrated to Wales or did not refer to themselves as Welsh due to political and historical implications. Race and ethnicity were important factors in sampling. Again, I did not want to place boundaries on people's racial and ethnic identities as they are very individual experiences. I first intended to have only participants who identified as ethnic minorities to discuss their experiences with racism. That said, I soon understood that it did not provide a complete picture of anti-racist action in Wales, as many protestors identified as White. This was also the case in predominately White areas of Wales. I still wanted to highlight the experience of ethnic minority participants, who make up most of the study. Hence, I was also inspired by Larkin et al.'s (2019) recommendations for bringing multiple perspectives into an IPA study. Taking this into account, I also examined the experiences of White anti-racist allies in Wales to engage and understand how and why they experience action. Table One below outlines the participants involved in the study:

Table 1: Participant description

NO.	Interviewee	Brief description	Date of interviews
1	Elen	• History graduate and art curator. • Created petition to remove statue of H.M Stanley in St. Asaph, North Wales.	19/01/23
2	Ela	• Involved in Yes Cymru (Welsh independence) marches. • Joined BLM protests in Manchester and Liverpool.	31/01/23
3	Yasmin	• Project manager for Butetown Arts and Culture Association on a project with Butetown Carnival. • Used to be active with No Borders Cardiff, No Borders South Wales, Cardiff Anarchist Network and South Wales Anarchists • Awardee of the Olive Morris Memorial Award for campaigning. • Creates articles on Tiger Bay's history. • Vocal on racial injustice in Wales on Twitter.	01/02/23

4	Irram	• Pharmacist for NHS health board. • Created REN race equality network.	20/02/23
5	Mollie	• Involved in BLM protest at Trafalgar Square in 2014. • Organised BLM protests in Llandudno, Colwyn Bay and Rhyl.	07/03/23
6	Andrew	• Came to Wales as an asylum seeker. • Organised BLM Gwent. • Works as an Agent for Change at Arts Council Wales.	09/03/23
7	Kate	• PhD student at Bangor University. • Research on White acknowledgment in North Wales. • Attended BLM protest in Manchester.	29/03/23
8	Nasir	• Community enabler and Black history creator for the National Museum of Wales. • Grew up in Tiger Bay.	24/04/23
9	Nicole	• Works in fashion as a freelancer. • Worked with National Museum of Wales. • Works on projects on diversity, belonging, identity, heritage, community, and family. • Created online infographics and zines as activism. • Attends BLM protests in Cardiff.	05/05/23
10	Vee	• Student studying Sociology. • Involved with the socialist movement in North Wales. • Organised BLM protest in Rhyl, North Wales.	15/05/23
11	Cath	• Worked in International Development. • Worked part-time for Hub Cymru Africa. • Co-executive direction for Dolen Cymru.	22/05/23
12	Gabin	• Actor, activist and poet. • Moved to Wales at eight years old. • Involvement in BLM protest in Cardiff.	22/05/23
13	Mo	• Works in development, producing, documentaries, author, life coaching, interventions for young people and prisoners, and charity work. • Uses television work as activism.	25/05/23

14	O'Mo	• Works in photography and filmmaking. • Creates projects on African diaspora communities. • Worked with Hansh, reframing Picton and Hwb Cymru Africa.	05/06/23
15	Jessica	• Academic. • Involved in the decolonising collection at the National Museum of Wales. • Co-chair of 'Race Equality Steering Group' at Cardiff University. • Does not define herself as an activist.	05/06/23
16	Melanie	• TV presenter and comedian. • Campaigns for representation of people of colour in Welsh entertainment.	03/07/23
17	Charlotte	• Academic and author. • Former lecturer at Bangor University. • Writes on racial experiences and race equality in Wales. • Worked with the Welsh Government on their anti-racist action plan.	21/07/23
18	Robin	• Created projects on multicultural communities. • Photographer focusing on South Asian communities. • Digitally documents protests.	27/07/23
19	Dyfrig	• Senior lecturer in film. • Former Plaid Cymru county councillor. • Involvement in organising counter demonstrations for far-right march in Llangefni 2015.	03/08/23
20	Leena	• Academic and PhD student. • Worked to provide Welsh language services. • Welsh Liberal Democrats town councillor. • Former Welsh Liberal Democrat diversity officer.	03/08/23
21	Rebecca	• Academic researcher. • Research with anti-racism and organising in Britain. • Participated in BLM protest in 2020 in Cardiff.	16/08/23

As discussed, IPA follows an idiographic approach and focuses on the particular individuals studied. The result is a relatively small sample of participants due to the richness of data carried out through an in-depth analysis of each case. The number of cases covered can vary, with Miller et al. (2018) suggesting five to ten and Smith and Nizza (2022) recommending between ten and twelve. However, this depends on the project's context and how rich the data has been (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012). I found that some participants were more forthcoming with their answers than others, and as the study relates to their experiences, I did not want to push intensely for answers due to the sensitivity of some topics (explained further in the chapter). As a result, some participants' data were more in-depth than others. This became less of an issue as I progressed with the data collection. Additionally, by taking inspiration from Larkin et al.'s (2019) study on multiple perspectives, I had perhaps more data than others whose samples were more homogenous. Once I had completed data collection, I had twenty-one participants (fifteen ethnic minority participants and six allies).

In finding participants, I used social media. I had built a good network of people (over two thousand connections) surrounding anti-racist action on X; therefore, I used the platform to search for suitable people to engage with. I did this by seeing what people Tweeted, what accounts they followed and how engaged they seemingly were with anti-racism. This follows IPA's guideline of purposive sampling in eliciting rich data (Smith and Nizza, 2022). To connect with the participant, I would send a direct message on X discussing the project, and if they were interested, I would follow up by sending over an information sheet (once the participant had given me their email address). However, I also used snowball sampling as participants 'need to be more ostensibly similar than they are ostensibly diverse', and snowballing allowed me to find and engage with individuals who may not be as active online or found through search (Smith and Nizza, 2022: 14). Although this was helpful in some cases,

as mentioned, the network of participants were, on the whole, individualistic in their approach to action, which led me to find them myself through social media. As with purposive sampling, if a participant was recommended through snowballing, I would search for them online before deciding to approach them to participate in the study. It is also recommended to speak personally to the participant before data collection to form relationships (Smith and Nizza, 2022: 23). Social media allowed me to engage in this way to build rapport and trust (i.e. through direct messages), ready for data collection.

Methods

The expression and interpretation of meaning are often done so through communication (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011). Unsurprisingly, the most common form of data collection for IPA is the semi-structured interview (Miller et al., 2018). An interview gives the researcher space to ask questions regarding how the participant experienced an event and allows the researcher to make interpretations from both language and emotion (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011: 41). As a result, semi-structured interviews are also popular in studies on identity-based activism, such as BLM, because they focus on the experiences of activists (Valesca, 2016; Mundt et al., 2018; Morrison, 2021). The semi-structured interview is particularly relevant for in-depth research such as this, as a more structured interview could lead to more rigid and less nuanced answers, leaving less room for interpretation and depth in answers (Connolly, 2019). As mentioned, twenty-one interviews were conducted between January 2023 to August 2023. I saw the interviews as 'co-elaborated' (meaning information is gathered between both parties) and saw knowledge as being 'co-constructed' due to my role in choosing interview questions and interpreting the interview data (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Sloan and Bowe, 2014). However, participants' interview answers ultimately guided

interpretations, and the concept of 'bracketing' (explained further) was used to mitigate biases and assumptions in interpretation. This was particularly important in this study as, initially, I had planned to use ethnographic observations of protests as a data collection method. However, I realised this was ineffective in relaying the participants' individual experiences as it is better suited to understanding groups of people, and also meant that the data relied too much on my personal interpretation of events, rather than through the perspective of the individuals (Uldam and McCurdy, 2013; Shah, 2017).

Interviews were conducted in English online using Zoom or Microsoft Teams, allowing interview location flexibility and cost-effectiveness. It also allowed the ability to transcribe word-for-word, which is needed in an IPA study (as discussed later in the chapter). To understand the participants' lived experiences as explained and interpreted organically by them, interview questions were open, as is expected in IPA (Smith et al., 2009: 60). However, follow up questions would follow broader questions to prompt the participant to engage and reflect on their experiences of activism, racism and so forth without manipulating the participant's interpretation. Though I let the participants guide the interview and subsequent questions, I made a rough guide of questions beforehand, as recommended by Smith and Nizza (2022: 20), so as not to ask vastly different questions to each participant and to make finding connections or drawing comparisons between participant answers easier in analysis. The interview guide provided a general idea of the larger, more descriptive questions, followed by sub-questions relating to more reflective interpretations. Below is an example of this:

Main question:

- Can you share your experience of activism?

Sub-questions:

- How did the event make you feel?
- What did it mean to you?

I began the interview by trying to understand the participant's broader experience with activism to understand what questions would be appropriate depending on their particular experiences. This is always a good starting point (Smith and Nizza, 2022, 22). Although sub-questions were used to guide answers, I avoided using language that may be viewed as leading or manipulative, which would impact the participant's interpretation and meaning of the experience. It is recommended that an interview for IPA should provide six to ten questions, and interviews should last forty-five to ninety minutes (Smith et al., 2009: 60). As I asked questions requiring relatively in-depth answers, interviews, on average, lasted sixty minutes, and I asked around five main questions (typically two sub-questions each). Specific topics explored, such as the impact of racism on their lived experience, were sensitive, and I, therefore, did not want to put pressure on the participant to discuss these events for too long.

Due to the role of race in this study, the ethical consideration of this thesis deserves a lengthy analysis and will be explored towards the end of this chapter. Concerning the specific ethics of data collection, however, I should note here that participants were made aware at the beginning of the interview that the interview could be paused or terminated at any time, and participants could refrain from answering questions if they did not want to. Participants were also asked whether they would prefer to be anonymised in transcription/data. The majority of participants clarified that they were happy to be referred to under their real names. Prior to the submission of this thesis, participants received a follow-up email, which again, asked if they consented to their names being used in research. For all participants (including those under

pseudonym), I attached a copy of the information used in Table One to ask if they were happy with the information provided. This was particularly important for those wanting to be anonymous, as I emphasised that the information I provided omitted any details that would make them less likely to be identified. Data would subsequently be stored in a way that protected the participants' identity. Once the interview had finished, participants could withdraw their contribution to the study at any time. Participants also received follow-up emails thanking them for participating and informing them they could contact me if they had any questions about the study.

Although there is no specific amount of interviews for IPA, some scholars recommend conducting multiple interviews with one participant to build rapport (Miller et al., 2018: 245). I did not think this was appropriate for this study as I believe I had already built familial connections through social media interactions with participants. I was also concerned that multiple interviews would impact how participants interpret the questions (i.e. giving them time to think about answers about the study). Additionally, the study's timeframe would not allow additional interviews due to the extensive number of interviews. However, I asked participants to provide additional materials, such as articles and zines. I also included Tweets they had written to incorporate these into their interpretations of protesting if they seemed appropriate and telling for the study. In follow-up emails, I also informed participants of any their Tweets I referred to in the research and asked for their consent to use them. Hence, I would only use Tweets if consent was given to do so. As outlined below, I treated each interview as a single case before creating themes between data. Therefore, once I had held an interview, I would transcribe and analyse it before attempting to do the same with another interview. Although I continued to complete interviews with others during this process, I did

not transcribe the interview until I had finished the process with the one prior. Next, I discuss the data analysis process in depth.

Data Analysis

I transcribed all interviews in full. As interviews were held online (through Microsoft Teams or Zoom), I used the software's audio and video recording feature to review the interview and replay for transcription when necessary. I drew influence from Smith et al.'s (2009) guide to IPA to undertake analysis. The number of data analysis steps differs in Smith's (Smith et al., 2009; Smith and Nizza, 2022) work. In this study, I generalised them into four main steps of analysis. These are outlined below.

Step One: reading and exploratory notetaking

After transcribing an interview, I read the transcript as many times as necessary to be familiar with its content and began writing initial notes. I started by looking at descriptive elements within the transcript. This would include references to specific protests the interviewee had attended or descriptions of their ethnic and racial backgrounds, occupations, and geographical locations. Once I had done this, I would look at the participant's linguistic style. This included noting any repetitions, laughs, pauses, specific words, and, in this study's case, particular Welsh phrases. This was important because, as discussed in Chapter 2, language is important in constructing meaning. Following this, I began conceptualising and interpreting the data. This is when I looked at descriptions and words and reflected on the participant's statements. For example, if a participant discussed a particular protest they

attended and described the event in terms like ‘emotional’, ‘sad’, ‘happy’, and ‘angry’, I would make notes reflecting this, such as ‘Why is the participant emotional? What aspect of the protest produced these emotions?’. If a participant used specific Welsh phrases like ‘Cymru am Byth’ (long live Wales/Wales forever), I would write, ‘Is there a stronger significance in the Welsh language? What is the context behind the phrase?’. This demonstrates the importance of being reflective in note-taking, as it leads to interpretation and understanding of the participant's well-rounded experience (Sloan and Bowe, 2014).

Step Two: experiential statements

Following the note-taking process, the interpretation analysis begins. This is when the researcher advances from description to interpretation to explore the meaning behind the participant’s stories (Miller et al., 2018; Larkin et al., 2019). This is when I would look at the most significant details of the participant’s experience and relate it contextually with political, theoretical, societal or cultural significance. Using the previous example, I began conceptualising the use of ‘Cymru am Byth’ as a sentiment of national identity, pride and cultural autonomy, which would allow me to unpack further the historical significance of Welsh culture as it relates to cultural and linguistic oppression (as will be discussed in Chapter 6). This was when double hermeneutics came into play, and I began interpreting the participants’ interpretations of their experiences. To do so, I would create a Word document for each interview, write notes, and attach comments on the side of the transcript. I would, however, take physical notes on any initial themes that began to emerge.

Step Three: finding personal experiential themes and connections

The third step of the data analysis process takes both notes and statements to create overarching themes for the participant's experience by connecting and clustering statements. This way, I can interpret and gather together ideas participants might not have realised were connected (Smith and Nizza, 2022: 45). Smith and Nizza (2022: 52) recommend cutting out interview notes and statements to find themes and sub-themes before making a graph for each participant. However, I found it beneficial to use the coding software 'NVivo' to find themes instead. This allowed me to create 'cases' for each participant, themes which link directly to the transcript (making it accessible to return to the document), and sub-themes under each theme. This made the process less time-consuming. Examples of themes include:

- Theme:
    - Acknowledgement of activism- Any explanation or description of the action they have taken, including protesting or online action.

- Sub-themes:
    - Rejects defining themselves as 'activists'
    - Understanding what they do might be considered activism
    - Acknowledgement of using social media for anti-racism
    - Experiences of sadness at protest
    - Experiences of anger at protest

Step Four: group experiential themes

Having completed steps 1-3 for each interview, step 4 involved making connections between each participant and the creation of group themes. It was beneficial to begin the analysis with a single case and examine for themes before connecting findings with other cases. This allowed me to understand how each individual interprets and describes their experience. However, connecting individual cases can demonstrate how 'two people can experience a phenomenon similarly but also vastly different' (Miller et al., 2018: 243). This was particularly revealed in how participants described or defined activism, as will be seen in Chapter 5. At this stage, connections between individual cases began to form. According to Miller et al. (2018), there is no right way to conduct data analysis with IPA, but, in practice, it revolves around finding patterns within experiences, understanding how they make meaning, and interpreting this within a larger societal context. At this data analysis stage, IPA research is likened more to a thematic analysis, and this study was no exception (Sloan and Bowe, 2014; Ho et al., 2017). I followed a similar route for every case by coding the transcript and notes onto NVivo to make finding thematical patterns between cases easier. Once this was done, I would look at different participants' primary data, such as zines, blogs, and Tweets, and add them to themes when appropriate. From here, I would revise any themes and sub-themes to build a solid structure ready for the empirical chapters. I was also aware of the initial research questions undergirding the thesis when reflecting on the more prominent emerging themes. At the end of the process, I found three overall themes: biography, network and nation. Below is an example of how group experiential themes were laid out:

- Overall theme:
    - Individual biographies and action- Personal stories or experiences that have impacted their choice to participate in activism.

- Overall sub-theme:
    - The role of protesting and social media activism in the mobilisation of activists

- Theme names:
    - Protesting
    - Social media activism

- Sub-theme name:
    - The role of emotions and collectivity in protesting spaces
    - How social media as a contemporary tool impacts activist mobilisation

The thematic groups have influenced the layout of the empirical chapters of this study and the subsequent headings of each chapter. It was a challenge to structure the chapters this way, as some themes would overlap but were placed in different chapters depending on the overall themes. This made it possible, however, to signpost chapters to each other and connect them to an overall argument. As this was a study of personal and individual experience, I followed an inductive approach, which allowed the data to influence the conclusions and focus of the study rather than having any theoretical constraints in interpreting the data (Smith et al., 2009: 31). At this point, I could see the relevance of themes such as emotions, identity, narrative, and culture to movement meaning, and thus began introducing the significance of New Social Movement Theory and a cultural approach within the analysis, as explained in Chapter 2.

This section outlined the data analysis process and the significance of IPA in examining the participants' lived experiences. However, it is also important to address and reflect on the

ethical considerations and measures taken to ensure the study's rigour, quality, and recognition of limitations. I hence turn to these considerations.

Ethics, Quality and Rigour

Ethics were fundamental in this research because it focused on the personal and lived experiences of individuals who have dealt with sensitive topics such as racial abuse. As a result, ethical consideration was continuous throughout the research process, typical of studies that value and implement interpretivism (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011: 22). In addition to ethics, interpretive research also requires a justification in quality and rigour. This last section focuses into this.

Participant consideration

Given that the study discusses real-life participant experiences with racism and racial abuse, interviews were treated with extreme sensitivity. Before the interviews, I gained ethical approval from the university to collect data. Following this, participants were given participatory information sheets outlining the study's purpose and aim, why they were approached to participate, and the general themes to be explored in interviews. The information sheet also included links to mental health resources and websites. Once participants agreed to be interviewed, they were given consent forms to read and sign. Therefore, they were aware of and agreed to the terms of the interview (i.e. agreeing to be recorded). At the beginning of the interview, I would deliberately ask once again for the participant’s consent to start the interview and agree on audio and video recording for transcription purposes. They were also informed

that they could pause or terminate the interview at any time, skip questions they did not feel comfortable answering or withdraw consent at any time, as recommended in IPA and stipulated in my ethics application/approval (Smith et al., 2009: 18). Power imbalances may also be present within the interview process; therefore, building rapport and trust is vital (Anyan, 2013). Providing participants with the option to terminate the interview or skip questions was employed to mitigate power dynamics between the interviewer and interviewee.

Researcher positionality

Due to the interpretative and hermeneutic nature of the study, my position as a researcher affects the study. As a result, I was aware of the importance of reflexivity in the study. Reflexivity relates to 'being aware of our opinions and feelings in relation to the research to monitor our influence on outcomes' (Smith and Nizza, 2022: 17). Researchers' identities and roles in society unavoidably impact research outcomes (Milner IV, 2007). Researchers should, however, be aware of how their positionality influences the data. One way to assess the positionality of a researcher is to implement 'bracketing'. Bracketing involves the researcher setting aside their beliefs, opinions, or influences so as not to influence the study's data (Lopez and Willis, 2004). This does not mean that they did not influence the study, Sloan and Bowe (2014) actively encouraged this, but that I was aware of my own interpretations. This also invites a discussion around the insider-outsider debate. A researcher situated as an insider refers to the researcher being connected to the participants through shared social groups or characteristics, and an outsider relates to the opposite (Liu and Burnett, 2022). As this study discusses the impact of multiple identities and reveals that each person carries multiple identities, it would be improper to suggest that a researcher is entirely an insider or an outsider but instead shares elements of both. This is particularly relevant to this study and my own

background. As a Welsh (speaking) mixed (White and Asian) woman, my position was both an insider and an outsider, depending on the participant. As a result, it was easier to build rapport with most participants (Smith and Nizza, 2022: 13). At the beginning of the interviews, I would explain my background to the participant, which allowed for effective rapport to be built. As a White presenting woman, however, I am aware that others faced challenges (such as racial abuse) that I had not experienced directly but could empathise with. In this case, I was an outsider. Milner (2007) believes that a researcher does not need to be from the racial or cultural community that they study. In the case of this study, participants differed in their backgrounds. Empathy and sensitivity were, however, always considered.

Rigour and quality

An interpretative study differs from positivism because it does not follow the basic guidelines of validity, reliability, replicability, objectivity and falsifiability (see King et al., 1994) as 'the researcher is assumed to be irrelevant in the research process' (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011: 94). Reliability and replicability have no place in the study as they do not consider the researcher's purpose, which is to interpret a particular phenomenon (Yardley, 2000: 218). Moreover, interpretative research must be flexible by adapting the research to depend on data (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011). Instead, this qualitative study should be concerned with sensitivity and transparency to ensure rigour. Sensitivity can be addressed through the interactional nature of the data and by following 'close engagement' with the research (Smith et al., 2009: 180). Again, it should be noted that this study followed particularly sensitive topics, and sensitivity was vital. Transparency within this study is shown in the detailed step-by-step data collection process, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Additionally,

data has been filed in an order that would explain to an independent audit the 'chain of events' to how findings came about (Smith et al., 2009: 183). This demonstrates the rigour of the study.

Limiting time constraints and navigating sensitivity

With IPA studies, time constraints can become an issue for thorough analysis (Smith and Nizza, 2022: 11). IPA is a rigorous and time-consuming research method that requires considerable time to go through and analyse each interview transcript. However, the switch to digital analysis and data collection made it less time-consuming, as digital copies provided less time to create themes and note-taking (i.e., easily editable). It was also helpful for online video interviews as this did not affect budget limitations, another popular limitation in IPA (Smith and Nizza, 2022). Therefore, time constraints and monetary budget did not affect the quality and rigour of the study. Additionally, I was concerned that the sensitive topics surrounding racism, racial abuse and police brutality would pose challenges, as I was aware that participants might not answer authentically or react distressingly to the subject. As explained, however, participants were made aware that they could avoid any questions should they feel uncomfortable answering them to make sure that participants felt comfortable answering sensitive questions, in turn, providing genuine answers. The questions asked were open, allowing participants to direct the question in how they interpreted. Building rapport with participants before interviews ensured they felt safe in answering sensitive topics.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the methodological choices and research design used in this study on the lived experiences of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales. IPA was most appropriate for this study as it provides a framework for exploring the subject and interpretative experiences of participants, which provides insight into the role of anti-racism in Wales. This approach allows the study to contribute to the gaps in the literature identified in Chapter 2 due to its commitment to an in-depth exploration of personal biographies and societal and cultural influences in shaping the experiences of activists. This chapter outlined the methodological importance of interpretivism and IPA and the role of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. Additionally, it addressed the study and explained the subjective epistemological and relativist ontological positions. It also outlined key steps in the data collection process, mainly the role of semi-structured interviews and the extensive data analysis process inspired by IPA, such as analysing single case studies and experiential notes before creating connecting themes.

Due to the interpretive and hermeneutic importance of data collection and analysis, ethical consideration is embedded throughout the research process, including a commitment to reflexivity in capturing participants' authentic lived experiences. Other ethical considerations include ensuring participant comfort through anonymising names, requiring consent, and allowing interview flexibility. An IPA study differs in that it cannot be replicated or validated. To ensure quality and rigour, transparency and sensitivity were documented throughout the research process, including documentation of how I came to conclusions in the findings. The role of reflexivity is significant as it allowed me to account for my personal abilities and biases whilst interpreting sensitive subjects such as emotions and racism. Given the role of interpretation in the study, reflexivity was used not to erase any researcher influences but to be aware of those influences. One way this was done was through bracketing.

An IPA possesses many strengths and is crucial in understanding participants' lived experiences. However, an in-depth analysis of each individual case poses time constraints, mainly as I used a larger sample size than most IPA studies to reflect the experiences of both ethnic minorities and ally activists. To work against time constraints, I found using technology beneficial. Using online video platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom made transcription easier as it allowed more accessible access to recording for transcription. Also, the role of NVivo in coding and noting interviews saved a considerable amount of time. Additionally, I believed the sensitive topics discussed around racism and racial abuse would pose a challenge for participants discussing their authentic experiences. However, this was addressed through ethical protocols designed to protect participants and make them feel comfortable through the data collection process. These measures provided a balance between understanding the in-depth experiences of participants whilst still ensuring ethical responsibility.

The methodological approach discussed in this chapter provides a rigorous framework for understanding the lived experiences of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales. Understanding the personal experiences of activists revealed larger implications of cultural and societal influences. This allowed for key themes to emerge, such as the role of biography, network and nation in activists' experiences. The subsequent empirical chapters address these findings.

Chapter Four: The Individual Biographies of BLM and Anti-Racist Activists in Wales

Introduction

This chapter examines how meaning is reflected in the biography of Black Lives Matter (BLM) and anti-racist activists in Wales. As discussed in Chapter 2, social movements are often analysed through the perspective and choices of a collective of people or organisations. By examining activists' biographical experiences of action, I argue that an emphasis on analysing a movement from an activist's perspective is important because their individual biographies, such as their experiences with racial identity and trauma, influence the methods used and tactics recognised. BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales are consequently found to be driven by personal and individual reasons. This chapter builds upon the findings presented in Chapter 2 on the importance of cultural meaning and the impact of emotions, narrative and identity on participant mobilisation, which I argue are key in informing the choice to participate for BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales.

This chapter begins by examining the actions of BLM and anti-racist activists. As I suggest, scholars often analyse movement action without understanding why activists choose their methods. The most popular action taken was protesting and social media activism. Protesting was recounted as an emotionally driven experience, with activists feeling compelled to be emotionally involved with the movement due to the collective presence of other activists. As a result, this highlighted the importance of protecting a group's identity and showed how these experiences impacted the activists' continued involvement in the movement. Social media activism is compelling. As BLM started on social media, activists demonstrated how social media changes how we view action. Social media users also experienced emotional

implications in its use because of the lack of censorship when it came to images of, for example, racial abuse. However, it also allowed individuals to engage with the movement in any way they choose, reflecting, more importantly, the role of individual experiences in contemporary movements. Activists relayed how the agency that social media gives individuals negatively impacts the movement due to less commitment and performativity concerning action. In Wales, social media helped allow individuals to engage with one another nationwide, creating a more extensive network of anti-racist activists.

Following an analysis of the activists' chosen action, I explore their recruitment tactics in the movement. Participants were less aware of their specific tactics because this was a discussion with individual experiences as activists. However, looking at crowd interactions and the use of stories, symbols, and hashtags, it was apparent that emotions and narratives provided recruitment tactics, though this was less purposeful. Crowds worked in this way because it reflected the visibility of the movement, particularly the number of ethnic minorities that resided in Wales and demonstrated outwardly a collective movement. Symbolic figures of police brutality envelope the message of BLM. The discourse surrounding the racial deaths of people like George Floyd was suggested to be the spark that ignited the beginning of an activist's journey, reflecting the importance of an individual's emotions in recruitment and participation. Hashtags and slogans raised awareness of the movement, reflecting the significance of powerful narratives and being valuable for involving everyone in a movement's message.

Racial identity was a significant factor in why activists participated in the movement. Ethnic minority activists shared their individual experiences of racism, from generational trauma to school and workplace. The emotional toll of racism and racial practices outlined the

exhaustive efforts of the activists and why they participated from a personal level. Allyship also takes place in the movement in Wales; therefore, understanding why they participate is crucial. I found that moral shocks pushed activists to engage because of stories and visuals seen both online and offline in the treatment of ethnic minorities in Wales. Allies also recognised their privilege as White people, which, in turn, was a principal rationale for their participation in BLM and anti-racist action. It reflects how people join due to their own experience with racial prejudice, whether directly affected or exposed to its issue within society, which drives them to take their emotions further and place them into action.

The importance of the individual's experience is epistemologically at the heart of this thesis, and this chapter reflects this. Additionally, I argue that it is essential to understand how individuals interpret meaning because it can shed light on their motivations, which movements can use to recruit and encourage membership. As discussed in Chapter 2, this aligns with more contemporary approaches to social movements, namely New Social Movements, as it addresses the importance of culture and identity in participation.

The Role of Protesting and Social Media Activism in the Mobilisation of Activists

Social movements display a variety of methods in their action, including sit-ins (Polletta, 1998), online activism (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015; Acconcia et al., 2022), academia (Maxey, 1999), civil disobedience (McAllister and Mughan, 1984) and, most well-documented, protesting (Jasper, 2014; Pommerolle, 2015; Vasquez and Zlobina, 2018). Little is known about the meaning behind how and why individuals choose their methods, as scholars often look to organisations to answer questions on movement mobilisation (Driscoll, 2018). Melucci (1996) believes a cultural approach to actors' motives and beliefs is not enough for

analysis, but Jaster and Young (2019: 500) suggest that our actions define who we are and reflect our 'identities, biographies, and culture'. So, whilst collective action is important in social movement research, we must stress the importance of individual meaning and culture when analysing any movement's actions and tactics (Jaster and Young, 2019: 502). Additionally, it should be emphasised that emotions, narrative and identities are important in an individual's meaning of action. Scholars place importance on these concepts on movement participation and look to them to analyse what drives individuals to action (Jasper, 1998, 2007, 2014; Polletta, 1998; Polletta and Amenta, 2001). The following section explores the individual experience of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales by looking at their methods of action and how they relay the meaning behind their actions.

The role of emotions and collectivity in protesting spaces

The 1960s Civil Rights Movement signified a movement representing the lack of political and civil rights given to Black people in America. However, it did not address their still present 'degradation' in society (Harris, 2015: 34). This places significance on the continued need for anti-racist movements more broadly, but particularly BLM, as it addresses the current issues of police violence and brutalities against communities of colour (Faust et al., 2020). Similarities between the Civil Rights Movement and BLM have been studied (Harris, 2015; Clayton, 2018; Hillstrom, 2018). BLM differs from its predecessor because of its confrontational and divisive strategy and unwillingness - as further discussed in Chapter 5 - to work with political organisations (Clayton, 2018; Tillery Jr., 2019). Although a view of BLM as isolationist gives insight into the broader identity of the movement, it also reflects the attitude of its members. This raises questions about the meaning of the movement for its activists. Meaning can be reflected through the emotions of activists, as seen in the

documentation of pain, disgust, love, queer feelings, and even feminist attachments found on protest sites (Ahmed, 2014). Calhoun (2001) argues that emotions are created through the movement and not by the individual members, but it is through the narration of personal experiences with protests that we see the significance of these emotions. Gabin, a BLM activist in Wales, describes his experience at a protest in Bute Park, Cardiff, in which he states he was overcome with emotions:

> My body gravitated towards the speeches. So, I said a couple of things. Told racists to suck their mums. And then, coming off of that, I was just in tears, bawling and needed to be held. When I went up, I was like, I don't know what I'm doing, I'm just here, and now I'm here, and I'm just saying things that I feel, and I left and then all the emotions that really came out of how it was (Gabin, *personal interview*, 22/05/23).

Inspired by the stories told by others, Gabin was compelled to verbalise his emotions by confronting racists with anger. This resulted in him feeling overwhelmed by emotions. His experience emphasises Gusfield's (1963: 110) argument that movements nurture emotions such as hatred 'towards the enemy'. This further underlines the importance of movements in creating meaning through emotions, as it suggests that pre-existing feelings are further exemplified when joined by others expressing similar feelings. It also reflects the importance of emotions in mobilisation, as groups are strengthened when they share emotions (Jasper, 2011). Gabin's retelling of the event also demonstrated the importance of other's stories in his experience of protesting. Much like Jasper's (2021) perception of people in protests as players in a game, the narrative of others who shared similar goals and sentiments to him drove Gabin to vocalise the same message. This anger was similarly relayed by another BLM activist, Robin, who recounted a lot of shouting during one of the many protests he had attended. He mentions, however, that there was no aggression, only pain and sadness (Robin, *personal interview*, 27/07/23). Their reflections on experiences with emotions in protest differ from anger to sadness. This demonstrates the emotional meanings of their experiences and how

individual protesting accounts can reflect a broader and more varied emphasis on movement emotions. This links back to prior statements made in Chapter 2, which showed BLM as being divisive and contentious, as we can begin to see how the emotional responses of racial injustice can drive participants to display further emotions that may be viewed in this way and can also be used to 'criticise the passion of the crowd' (Groves, 2001: 28). However, those emotions are necessary and integral to the group identity, as well as feelings of life-long oppression, which is indicative of a movement based on racial injustice.

Feelings of societal injustice can lead to negative emotional reactions, particularly feelings of anger (King and Flam, 2005). However, as I discuss later, emotions are beneficial tools that can recruit members and, therefore, do not reflect the historical belief that social movements are made of irrational beings driven by crowd hysteria (Jasper, 2011). Emotions are also seen as gendered, and women who express their emotions are typically seen as hysterical or trivial (Groves, 2001). In this study, this perhaps explains why participants who identified as female were less forthcoming in their negative emotional responses to crowds and were more descriptive in their responses rather than reflective of how they felt. This is particularly true for anti-racist activist Jessica, who says she shies away from protests as she does not want to 'be in the limelight' (Jessica, *personal interview*, 05/06/23). It is also worth mentioning the stereotypes of the 'angry' Black woman (Walley-Jean, 2009). Stereotypes stop participants like Jessica from calling herself an activist altogether (Jessica, *personal interview,* 05/06/23). The impact of stereotypes begins to demonstrate how activists' lived experiences and the meaning they place on those experiences impact their participation in the movement.

Protests do not only conjure negative emotional responses; they can also be fun and social spaces (Millward, 2023). Different emotions work and interact differently (Jasper et al.,

2004). Despite participants' feelings of anger, they also shared feelings of both hope and pride. Though Gabin experienced anger, it seemed he saw his time protesting (more than once) as a positive experience, as he uploaded videos of the event online to further garner support for BLM (Gabin, *personal interview*, 22/05/23). According to Ahmed (2014: 184), hope is crucial for protesting, as it dispels the anger that Gabin alluded to for persisting in the movement. As Jasper (2011) notes, however, feelings of belonging sustain activism. Activists Rebecca and Nicole demonstrated that hope and belonging go hand in hand in their protesting experiences. Both women's experiences draw on the volume of bodies present at their protests in Cardiff. For them, the visibility of the 'number of black people in Wales' (Rebecca, *personal interview,* 16/08/23) incited a feeling of belonging amongst the group as 'when you experience racism you feel so alone' (Ready, 2020). It reflected the number of others sharing similar experiences of injustice and willing to represent the movement, providing 'a sense of hope' (Ready, 2020). It speaks to what Jasper terms 'shared and reciprocal emotions' (Jasper, 2011: 14.10). This is reflected in one scholar's BLM protest experience, in which she writes, 'We all chanted and cheered, clapping, and repeating "I got your back!" I felt a wave of emotion beyond words watching these young men my age put so much on the line to resist. It was both beautiful and devastating (Faust et al., 2020: 249). Protests uphold feelings by reinforcing one another's, which builds a movement's culture (Goodwin et al., 2001: 33). These examples demonstrate how collective identity is constructed through the meaning of shared emotions and how those feelings of community shape the experience of a protest.

The participants' individual experiences show how they were driven to participate in protest, as temporary bonds and community are created through their shared experiences. Their physical presence and the collection of bodies foster the 'intoxicating shared emotions they create through the heady feelings of communality' (Millward, 2023: 68). The role of communal

emotions is important and was retold as being at the 'centre of a lot of the work' that activist Nicole does (*personal interview*, 05/05/23). On the other hand, Vee organised protests to create a sense of community for ethnic minorities in North Wales (*personal interview,*18/05/23). Protests allow communities and individuals to engage with others in 'exercising a plural and performative right to appear' (Butler, 2015: 11). This coming together produces 'symbols, identities, practices and discourses' (Porta and Diani, 2006: 165). It also speaks to the benefits of protesting to create a group's collective identity. However, as will be further explored in Chapter 5, these bonds are often temporary and fixed within the point of action for these activists. It is, therefore, the individual's experience of meaning and emotions that carry the drive of continued action, not necessarily the lasting role of the collective. As explained in Chapter 2, BLM is a member-led and self-organised movement, meaning power and autonomy are distributed to each activist (Rickford, 2016; Nummi et al., 2019). This, as examined in Chapter 5, challenges the role of collectivity in BLM and anti-racism in Wales. BLM's self-organisation is due to its online roots; hence, it reflects the contemporary importance of social media in individual action (Nummi et al., 2019). I turn to this next.

How social media as a contemporary tool impacts activist mobilisation

Despite the importance of a collective presence on a group's identity and for inciting emotions, social media has become an increasingly popular method of action. It suggests that a movement does not necessarily need to be physical but can also be symbolic too. This was referenced by activist O'Mo, who said, 'We live in a digital age where I still haven't actually met the majority of the BLM Wales network that I've been talking to' (O'Mo, *personal interview,* 05/06/23). Therefore, BLM in Wales has been able to build through the digital, which has, as O'Mo suggests, connected individuals to others within their nation, allowing a

wider reach/ message across Wales and beyond. Social media is key in the relationship between BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales, as will be addressed further in Chapter 5 of the thesis.

As discussed in previous chapters, social media (or online) activism has been monumental in creating and continuing the BLM movement. The roots of BLM began in 2012 when 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was fatally shot. The death of the Black teenager sparked a significant debate about the treatment and the rights of the Black community, particularly as his shooter, George Zimmerman, was acquitted (Hillstrom, 2018). This influenced the beginning of #BlackLivesMatter on Twitter in 2013 by the creators Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi, who were reminded of the plight of the Civil Rights movement by the protests that occurred after Martin's death (Hillstrom, 2018: 29; Tillery Jr., 2019: 297). However, as Harris (2015: 35) reveals, activists are quick to refer to BLM as 'not your grandmamma's civil rights movement' due to the role social media plays in the movement. This is not limited to movements on Black rights but to other cultural/identity-based movements like LGBTQ communities and climate change activists (Misch et al., 2021; Acconcia et al., 2022). For BLM, social media allows the movement to convey its intersectional messages of feminism and address LGBTQ issues (Bonilla and Tillery, 2020). As a result, social media provides social movements with a strategic outlet to convey messages and aims (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015) and, as O'Mo believed, to 'build solid communities' (O'Mo, *personal interview,* 05/06/23).

Hashtags, too, can be used as protest sites (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015). Of the 21 interviews I conducted with participants, 20 had used social media for activism in some shape or form. Some, like Robin, used it to document protesting experiences (Robin, *personal interview,* 27/07/23). Activists like Elen started an online petition to eradicate a statue of a slave

owner in St. Asaph, North Wales (Elen, *personal interview,* 29/02/23). Others like Ela used their platform to educate themselves on racism (sharing infographics and other visuals) (Ela, *personal interview,* 31/01/23). However, many, like Yasmin and Jessica for example, use their platform more vocally to narrate and inform on racial injustice, particularly within Wales (Yasmin, *personal interview,* 01/02/23; Jessica, *personal interview,* 05/06/23)**.** Social media benefited them by engaging in discourse, evoking emotional reactions that led to resource material and contestation, which will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

Some of the resources available online have been distressing for some participants. Racial slurs, images of police brutality, and dead bodies have all been viral discourses in recent years (Faust et al., 2020: 242). The most notable were videos and images of the murder of George Floyd. As noted in Chapter 1, Floyd was a Black American who was 'suffocated to death' by White policeman Derrick Chauvin. A video capturing his death went viral and caused a surge of protest activity in 2022 (Woodly, 2022). The emotional reaction to seeing media like this proved too much for some activists. O'Mo shared 'it really took it out of me' (O'Mo, *personal interview,* 05/06/23). For Andrew, however, 'you have to have almost a level of emotional detachment to use social media' (Andrew, *personal interview,* 09/03/23). It suggests that reactions towards online discourse were detrimental to their emotional well-being. Some minority ethnic activists have deeper and closer experiences with this kind of brutalisation. This is particularly important because of the racial and generational trauma they experience in arguing why they participate in the movement, as will be discussed later (Alexander, 2004b). However, it reflects how activists may experience emotional burnout depending on their experiences with discourse and what it means to them.

Social media is popular amongst activists because it provides 'push button everyday engagement', meaning people can be involved with a movement with minimal effort and participation (Petray, 2011). It is also free, meaning there is no real obstacle to its use (Cammaerts, 2015: 10). Therefore, social media activism allows freedom to convey messages of the movement in a way that allows less time to be dedicated but can provide activists regular access to convey the movement's message worldwide. The danger is that social media allows a broad audience to alter and manipulate the movement's construction of meaning (Ince et al., 2017). An insightful case study for this is the viral hashtag #BlackOutTuesday. Accompanied by a black square, users posted this hashtag to show solidarity with the BLM movement (Raspanti, 2022). However, as discussed in Chapter 2, this kind of low-level commitment to activism ('slacktivism') raises a debate on the genuine impact of social media activism (Lee and Hsieh, 2013; Glenn, 2015). For some, this performative action is not enough. When asked in an interview about the viral post, activist Nicole said:

> This is just all like empty promises like people are posting a black square and not even linking to kind of any resources or anything or giving like perspective on anything. And it was like very like, like tokenistic kind of activism (Nicole, *personal interview*, 05/05/23).

Nicole's reaction to #BlackOutTuesday was relayed in her 'Black Square Zine'. In it, she shares an Instagram post in which she writes:

> It is overwhelming to see how many people are standing in solidarity with the Black community today. But I'm also seeing the same people posting black screens and hashtags who I have witnessed both in real life and online be ignorant, discriminatory, have microaggressive tendencies, culturally appropriate, use the n-word, be straight up racist, not call out racism and prior to this would not openly have a conversation about race with me (Ready, 2020).

Her take on #BlackOutTuesday sheds light on the polarising use of social media for activism. Clark (2019) suggests that online platforms support potential White allies of the movement. Yet this case demonstrates how their support can be displaced, performative and hurtful for the Black community and others involved with BLM. As anti-racist activist Melanie relays, this

performativity is ‘jarring’ (Melanie, *personal interview,* 03/07/23). It also reflects how social media users misinterpret the movement's message. Allies, on the one hand, saw people engaging with #BlackOutTuesday as ‘people trying’ to be more sympathetic to the Black community (Ela, *personal interview,* 31/01/23) but that just posting a black square was not enough (Elen, *personal interview,* 19/01/23). They also noticed people posting black squares who they had seen to be ‘openly racist in the past’ (Ela, *personal interview,* 31/01/23) who ‘would put contradictory stuff up on their own page which was against what they were promoting about the black square’ (Elen, *personal interview,* 19/01/23). It mirrors Fenton and Barassi’s (2011) conclusion that social media is self-centred and hinders movement growth. I would argue, however, that this is not always the case. For activists like Andrew, the impact of what he saw and read on social media pushed him to organise BLM protests in Cardiff and the Vale. He reflected on his position as an activist by challenging ‘the extent of his feelings’ (Andrew, *personal interview,* 09/03/23). Whilst there are benefits to online activism for some, as discussed in the utilisation of ‘push-button’ engagement, Andrew sees this type of engagement as a negative thing. He believes there should be more to activism:

> To share my perspective and then just return to like normal life and there was something that felt really almost dystopian about that process that really disturbed me. It really did disturb me. And I didn't really understand kind of what I was going to do with that feeling (Andrew, *personal interview,* 09/03/23).

Beginning as someone who solely used social media for activism, the emotional implications of online content made it impossible for Andrew to continue only engaging with the movement online, as it pushed him to take his activism offline and to mobilise on the streets. Online activism plays a crucial role in today’s action, particularly in the early formation of a movement. Still, protests remain significant, as seen with the anti-government demonstrations of Arab Spring (Tufekci, 2017). It echoes the words of activists like Andrew, who feel like social media activism is ‘not enough’ as movements require some physical organising (Andrew, *personal interview,* 09/03/23). We can also see how social media can be used as a

driving force for movement participation, especially when we discuss a movement like BLM, which has its roots in social media but continues to have protests take place under its name (Hillstrom, 2018).

Analysing social media use in activism has demonstrated benefits and limits to its participants. It illustrates how social media is beneficial for activists to engage with one another without being geographically close. This was revealed by O'Mo, who is part of an online BLM Wales network but has yet to physically meet any network members (O'Mo, *personal interview,* 05/06/23). This further emphasises social media's importance in connecting activists across different regions, particularly in Wales. It also provides the movement with the ability to reach global audiences. However, social media activism has limitations. Notably, it allows anyone to engage with the movement's message, potentially acting through performativity and disingenuousness. It also allows people to engage with the movement through minimal effort through push-button engagement. Thus, it raises questions about how effective social media activism is for anti-racism in Wales. Social media also exposes us to the sensitive discourse surrounding racism, which takes an emotional toll on movement members. Emotions allow us to understand the emergence and decline of social movements (Gould, 2004). This can be seen in how individual activists experience emotions through protest and social media activism. Activists have experienced anger, sadness, hope and exhaustion in their participation journeys. Their reflections on their emotional reactions demonstrate the lasting effects of those experiences and how they drove their anti-racist action in Wales forward. The uniqueness of their experiences with emotions in action reveals the importance of understanding activism through the individual experience.

The Role of Tactics in BLM and Anti-Racism in Wales

BLM activists told a story about the types of action they took and their experiences with this. Their stories also shed light on the use of tactics within the movement to garner and sustain their support in a way that seemed subconscious to them, that is, they were not overtly aware of the tactics being used to gain their support. According to Jasper (2004), social movements employ tactics 'strategically' by analysing activists as players in the movement (see also: Derville, 2005). This is further explained in Chapter 5, as it argues that 'players' choice of strategies causes contestations and fractions amongst activists. Scholars found persuasion, intervention, and even protesting within the animal rights movement to be tactics (Minns and Bramble, 2011). For LGBTQ football fan networks, it is visibility through flags, banners, scarves and artworks (Millward, 2023: 175). Radical activists, however, were found to use communication, identity building and images (Derville, 2005). As a decentralised and leaderless movement, it is difficult to place strategy within BLM (Ince et al., 2017). Scholars even argue that their leaderless model is a tactical choice to avoid the mistakes of the Civil Rights Movement, as it gave 'decision-making' powers to a few individuals, compromising its longevity (Harris, 2015: 36). Speaking with activists from within, there was no defined strategy and tactics were not explicitly discussed during interviews. I want to suggest that tactics resulted from emotional implications, the impact of narrative and online discussions, and the attempt to create a collective identity rather than being used strategically. This is not a surprise given that activists work through their own individual experiences with action and are, therefore, less driven or motivated by tactics in their actions. Still, their action, particularly when pertaining to a crowd, will engender reactions even if they act based on their individual strategies. This section adds to the debate on action by emphasising how tactics can be present in this way.

The influence and importance of crowd interaction

Ahmed (2014) explores how emotions shape individuals and collective bodies and how this can be seen strategically through public displays like crowds. I have already discussed the prevalence of emotions at the individual level. Still, the idea of crowds shows how these emotions can be adopted by a collective, in an almost ritualistic sense, for example, through a collective focus on outrage (Collins, 2001). When discussing the connection between crowds and emotions, it is important not to reduce it to past ideas of people in crowds as irrational mobs, as outlined in Chapter 2, as emotions can be used politically and tactically (Goodwin et al., 2001; Groves, 2001). Reflecting back on his time organising under BLM Newport, Andrew believes you need that aggression and the element of being on the ground, whether protesting or demonstrating, as motivation (Andrew, *personal interview,* 09/03/23). In the interview, Andrew emphasised the importance of group emotions in 'moving people from being avid supporters to genuine allies' (Andrew, *personal interview,* 09/03/23). Collin's (2001: 29) work supports this, as he states, 'this the emotion which makes up solidarity, and which makes the individual feel stronger as a member of the group'. Therefore, Andrew's experience supports the argument that collective groups and the emotions generated are important for igniting action.

Crowds also achieve this solidarity due to the presence of bodies (Porta and Diani, 2006b; Butler, 2015). As stated previously, activists Nicole and Rebecca both noted their surprise at seeing the volume of protestors in Wales. Other activists also spoke on this, like Gabin, who noted, 'I've never seen so many people in my life' (Gabin, *personal interview,* 22/05/23). Community enabler Nasir was taken aback by the number of young people present

(Nasir*, personal interview,* 24/04/23). When we speak about the presence of bodies, especially when we attest to Rebecca's observation of the number of Black people present, it symbolises the importance of visibility in movement tactics. Groups like LGBT+ football fans use materials like banners to highlight their visibility in football spaces (Millward, 2023: 173). Here, the visibility of ethnic minorities in Wales is poignant in collective spaces. It highlights their integral presence within Welsh society and demonstrates how important the topic of Black lives is within the nation, as is further explored in Chapter 6. It reflects their need to be 'seen not silenced', and crowds allow them to do this (Millward, 2023). In this sense, the collectivity of a crowd is helpful in spreading the movement's message.

The impact of stories, symbols and hashtags in recruiting members

Linking back to the power of speeches on a protestor's emotions, those stories, as told by activists, can be used to enlist supporters and build a collective identity (Polletta and Gardner, 2014; Polletta and Callahan, 2017). However, later in the thesis, I argue that those collective identities are not sustained for BLM activists in Wales. In their research on the White Power Movement, Futrell and Simi (2004) argue that creating a sense of 'we' (i.e., community) creates mobilisation. Wodak (2015: 71) further explains this in her work on right-wing discourse and speeches, arguing that inclusionary/exclusionary language, such as 'us' and 'them', helps construct their group identity. Particular wording involving the protestor is important because it invites the individual to see themselves as a part of the group, feeling personally attached to the narrative spoken. This speaks to the importance of the global name and slogan of 'Black Lives Matter'. According to Polletta and Callahan (2017), the slogan is powerful because it demonstrates the dehumanisation of anti-Black racism. It suggests that Black lives have not and do not matter to society, as compared to other racial backgrounds.

The importance of its slogan is demonstrated when narratives of the movement are less visible, and activists try to re-enact support and conversations. Nicole shares how she will go online during these times and writes, 'By the way guys, Black lives *still* matter' (Nicole, *personal interview*, 05/05/23). This reminds the public of the movement's message and reinforces that work still needs to be done for racial equality in Wales.

The slogan of BLM is so profound that, as discussed earlier, a counter movement has been created and adopted the name 'All Lives Matter' (ALM). They aim to work as a rebuttal against the message of BLM (Paul, 2019). Chants of 'all lives matter' can be heard in the crowd of President Donald Trump's speeches as he too supports the counter-narrative (Paul, 2019). Whilst the message and name of BLM have been credible for its success, the issue of its prevalence is accompanied by a counter-narrative, which, too, garners support and hinders the movement's growth. The topic of ALM came up in an interview with Elen:

> All Lives Matter is stupid. They don't realise that Black Lives Matter is pro-Black, not anti-White. Their inability to understand the message behind the name is clear. Unfortunately, I've seen the popularity of their message, and I think it takes the spotlight off BLM. If some of them genuinely understood the message of BLM, I think they would support it. Some wouldn't. Some people are just racist (Elen, *personal interview,* 29/02/23).

Elen believes that the message of BLM is misunderstood by its non-supporters and suggests that their message is filtered out by counter-framing. It, too, indicates that the name and slogan of the moment have been divisive and seen as too radical to achieve the support of some bystanders, emphasising Clayton's (2018) early point of division within BLM framing, mainly due to the perceived belief by some that the movement's emphasis on Black lives is offensive and exclusionary.

BLM's support is also notable when we look at the symbolic figures attached to the BLM name. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, BLM was created due to Trayvon Martin's murder and the larger message of racial injustice. Since then, the deaths of people like Sandra Bland and Michael Brown (both of whom died under police supervision) have been used adjacently with the BLM message (Ince et al., 2017: 1822-25; Woodly, 2022). However, as previously noted, it was the murder of George Floyd that sparked a growth in support for the movement. Just six weeks after his death, a 'Black Lives Matter protest was held in all fifty states and in 40 percent of the counties in the United States' (Woodly, 2022: 213). During interviews, Jessica, Leena, Melanie, O'Mo, Robin, Kate, Mollie, Yasmin and Andrew all spoke about the impact of George Floyd's murder. This is what they said:

> But when George Floyd was murdered, a lot of those marches were in his honour, but they weren't about him (Melanie, *personal interview,* 03/07/23).

> George Floyd happened, and that's when I think everybody over here kind of realised (Mollie, *personal interview,* 07/03/23).

Melanie sees the marches in solidarity with George Floyd as not necessarily being about him. Instead, he represents and is symbolic of a bigger picture of police brutality and racism across the world. White ally Mollie believes Floyd's death shocked people into recognising the extent of the need for movements like BLM, particularly for those who do not experience racism personally. This introduces the role of 'moral shocks' in allyship participation, which will be explained further in the chapter. Activists like Robin even described it as sparking the beginning of his activist journey (Robin, *personal interview,* 27/07/23). George Floyd's murder has become a crucial message for the movement, particularly because his death was recorded and well-documented across social media. These images, videos, and the 'narrative-activated emotions' they generate work to mobilise through creating meaning and connections (Castells, 2012: 107). For Black individuals, these images and visuals are sensitive and perhaps triggering. Andrew sheds light on this:

> I've never watched the video [of George Floyd's murder], and I've just watched clips and obviously read around it. But remember when it was happening, and I was just like, 'Oh, again'. You know, it's an overwhelming feeling you get it's happening again (Andrew, *personal interview,* 09/03/23).

Andrew demonstrates that, as a Black man, incidents like Floyd's death are not new or rare but are expected amongst the Black community. Still, the 'overwhelming' emotion bares significance. Indeed, George Floyd is not the last ethnic minority to have been racially murdered, with many accounts being recorded and documented online. This is evident when searching through the hashtag #JusticeFor, followed by the names of people like Andre Hill (shot and killed by police officer Adam Coy) and Daunte Wright (shot and killed by police officer Kimberly Potter). The role of Twitter in BLM provides greater insight into how new incidents of racially motivated deaths will illicit an increase in support. This is particularly telling when hashtags about BLM began to increase in the aftermath of the killing of Trayvon Martin in 2014 compared to the killing of Michael Brown later that same year (Ince et al., 2017: 1822). Whilst another quickly replaces symbolic figures in the movement, it demonstrates the extent of the issue surrounding race-related deaths. With every death that occurs, support for the movement is resurfaced, evidenced by hashtag usage. The visuals of George Floyd's death pointed to a first-hand account of the racial issue in the US, and being able to access such shocking visuals incited strong reactions which mobilised many.

The examples given of race-related deaths focus predominantly on deaths in America. Andrew believes this is because racism in America is more overt (Andrew, *personal interview*, 09/03/23). It implies that narratives on racism and police practices are framed predominantly through the lens of the US, overshadowing the specificities of racial issues in Wales. As discussed in Chapter 6, Wales has a complex history regarding the perception of race and nation. This is why anti-racist activists in Wales highlighted the importance of shedding light

on race-related deaths happening locally, as without recognising local examples, it suggests that the race problem does not exist in Wales. Activists spoke on the deaths of Mohamud Hassan and Mouayed Bashir on their activist journey. On the 8th of January 2021, Hassan was detained in police custody at Cardiff Bay Police Station and released the next day. He was found unresponsible later that evening (IOPC, 2024). His aunt alleges he had multiple bruises and wounds on his body after encountering the police, leaving many questions surrounding the cause of his death (Mellen, 2022). On the 17th of February 2021, whilst restrained by police in Newport, Bashir suffered Acute Behavioural Disturbance. He died in the hospital hours after the event (Judiciary of England and Wales, 2024). Yasmin criticises Welsh organisations who 'gave statements for people like George Floyd rather than Mohamud Hassan' (Yasmin, *personal interview,* 01/02/23). Whilst social media has been crucial in spreading the message of BLM to Wales, people are less aware of Welsh-focused deaths and more aware of incidents in America. This illuminates a potential limit in social media usage as people are less aware of racial issues pertaining to their area due to the more extensive circulation of others.

Often, online narratives of racial incidences, symbolic figures and police brutality are accompanied by the hashtags #BlackLivesMatter or #BLM. In 2014 alone, Ince et al. (2017) found that #BlackLivesMatter was tweeted over 66,159 times. Hashtags work because they help build a movement through the formation of dialogue (Tillery Jr., 2019). They also raise awareness of the movement and 'spur action' (Tillery Jr., 2019: 301). However, they can also be persuasive in raising awareness of incidents of police brutality and racialisation (Stephens, 2018). It has been argued that social media and hashtags create powerful but fleeting discourse, also known as 'nanostories' (Wasik, 2010). Through these narratives, BLM becomes omnipresent through 'hashtag activism' (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015). Some examples below show times when activists interviewed have used #BlackLives matter online:

> [Where is the support?] We saw one of the largest #BlackLivesMatter demonstrations we've ever seen in #Wales today. #BLM matter everywhere: including #Wales. A lack of discussion and support for these issues by "progressive" Welsh parties and groups betrays a position of bias (Begum, 2020).
>
> I think I need to re-iterate that I believe that #blacklivesmatter that doesn't mean others shouldn't be included or that I don't support those who face discrimination but when I speak about the Black identity, my identity, I do so because #BlackLivesMatter was my call to action (Dunrod, 2020).

Inserts of Tweets using the hashtag demonstrate how it can be beneficial when telling a story. Firstly, we can see how using #BlackLivesMatter and hashtags like #Wales narrows the discussion to a more local position. It can be used to call out others for not spreading the movement's message and to show others within the network what issues they face. Here, they use the hashtag to demonstrate their disapproval of the Welsh government's lack of support for the movement and Black lives. This can be beneficial because hashtags have been proven to get the attention of politicians whilst urging them to support the movement (Tillery Jr., 2019). Activists like Yasmin (Yasmin, *personal interview,* 01/02/23) and Jessica (Jessica, *personal interview,* 05/06/23) were forthcoming in discussing how they use social media to challenge the Welsh government and politicians. The message of Black Lives Matter has since caught the attention of the Welsh government, as evidenced in its discussion in plenaries and the use of #BlackLivesMatter on the government's Twitter page ('Y Cyfarfod Llawn - Plenary 07/06/2022'., 2022; Welsh Government, 2020). Secondly, we see how the hashtag is used for more personal stories related to the movement. Yasmin and Jessica speak on their experiences as people of ethnic minority backgrounds and how they relate to the movement as their 'call to action' and reflect the role that individual stories play in forming a wider narrative. In her research, Stephens (2018) found that a large amount of Twitter users are Black Americans, so much so that a network called 'Black Twitter' has emerged, allowing a movement like BLM to merge with a pre-existing online network. This is beneficial for the movement as it provides

these Tweets (for example) a space to be documented and opinions to be expressed. Still, it also gives a platform for Welsh BLM activists to highlight their local issues to a global network of individuals. Leena referenced this as a reason why she uses social media for activism. She said:

> I tend to get active and be an activist on social media so that I can give the perspective of what it's like here, and equally just the perspective of rural Wales, because I think when it comes to race and equalities, it's not talked about enough. So rural Wales, North Wales, Welsh-speaking Wales, and it's nice to contrast that, and I follow a lot of people who are based in places like Cardiff, like Manchester and contrast that with the sort of things that they're seeing (Leena, *personal interview,* 03/08/23).

Leena discusses the importance of social media for her activist journey in Wales. Interestingly, she mentions the dichotomy between experiences of racism in rural Wales as opposed to bigger cities. As discussed in Chapter 6, rural Wales has its unique experience with race relations, as it is seen as 'de-racialised' and unwelcoming (Williams, 2007). Here, Leena demonstrates social media's role in providing space for individuals living in these rural spaces to document their experiences to a larger, dominant audience. It shifts the narrative of race as being a global issue which impacts people from all areas of Wales, as well as making it more accessible for users to see the extent of racial abuse around the globe. It shows the different experiences with racism depending on their geographical location, highlighting how biography and personal experience impact the way they see and feel racism.

Stories, public symbols and hashtags are integral to the BLM movement. They can also be used as tactical devices through their use of narratives and insight into the emotional implications of racism for the Black (and ethnic minority) community. Flags, banners, songs and chants have also been used to illicit emotion and group visibility in protest (Woodly, 2022: 106; Millward, 2023: 175). However, activists did not mention their relevance in interviews. It suggests that whilst they may be present within the protesting space, their use did not have a tangible impact on the activists who participated in the protest but were instead tools to recruit

new members. Their emotional responses to online and offline stories on topics like police brutality aid in constructing a collective identity through feelings of communality and shared experiences, demonstrating the power of emotions, narrative, and identity on movement mobilisation. Additionally, the collection of bodies, especially for racialised bodies, in group protest and crowd interaction can help in making the movement's collective more receptive. The following section takes the prior analysis of action and addresses *why* BLM activists in Wales mobilise while still emphasising meaning through emotions, narrative, and identity.

The Importance of Identity and Emotions in Ethnic Minority Activists' and Allies' Choices to Participate in Anti-Racism.

Throughout this chapter, I have highlighted the impact of emotions, identity, and narrative on an individual's activism experience. I have also shown how these aspects can sustain and garner support for a movement. As we focus on a movement like BLM, it is crucial to reflect on the importance of racial identities, specifically as a reason for participation. This section talks about race in two ways; firstly, I discuss the emotional impact of racism and microaggressions on ethnic minority activists to highlight how their experiences drive both the importance of the movement in general and the importance of collective identity in mobilisation. Secondly, I discuss allyship, particularly why an individual participates in a movement which does not directly impact their position within society as White people. I suggest that 'moral shocks' associated with the movement are a reason for their participation, as well as how moral shocks drive other emotions such as shame and guilt. Though activists can connect through their shared identities, we must also acknowledge that everybody's identity markers are different, as various identities make up a person (Klandermans, 2014). This means their lived experience with racism differs. As we will see in Chapter 6, there is a

complex relationship between racial and national identities. In this case, Wales' national identity is largely synonymous with a White racial identity. However, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people do share similar experiences in terms of racial abuse and trauma; therefore, I acknowledge this collective experience whilst being vigilant that those experiences may differ.

The impact of racism and racial identity in influencing participation

> My response to racism is anger. I have lived with that anger, ignoring it, feeding it, learning to use it, before it laid my visions to waste, for most of my life. Once I did it in silence, afraid of the weight. My fear of anger taught me nothing … anger expressed and translated into action in the service of our vision and our future is a liberating and strengthening act of clarification… Anger is loaded with information and energy (Lorde, 1984: 127).

This passage by Lorde poignantly explains the result of her experience with racism. It signifies how racial abuse, and the emotions attached to it, may drive someone to take action. Though activists have different stories to tell about their experiences with racism, their responses highlight that racism in Wales is present and persistent. According to Wales Online (Thompson et al., 2022), race hate crimes in England and Wales reached a 'record high' in 2021. Experiences with racism shed light on why some activists take action. It also reveals how a collective experience with trauma (in this case, racial trauma) can lead to collective action. This concept is not new, as collective memories were 'appropriated' for collective action in the Civil Rights Movement (Harris, 2006). According to Alexander (2004: 1):

> Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.

As Alexander suggests, cultural trauma has a lasting impact on those who experience it. This is revealed in cases such as the impact of slavery on the African-American identity (Eyerman, 2004). In interviews, activists often discussed their memories of racism in childhood and schooling through racist name calling, which resulted in PTSD (Yasmin, *personal interview,* 01/02/23) and punishments for 'extreme hairstyles' (Melanie, *personal interview,* 03/07/23). This abuse continues into adulthood and in the workplace, as told by Melanie. She gives insight into her experience in work:

> I recently have walked away from a very big job because the production company, the environment there was incredibly racist. You know, and unfortunately, you know that's a step back in my career (Melanie, *personal interview,* 03/07/23).

Melanie works in the entertainment industry, both in presenting and comedy. This in itself is an achievement as Welsh media platforms mostly give space to 'White, middle class, Welsh speaking people' (The Welsh media in crisis, 2020). Though she is well known in the entertainment industry, her experiences in these White-dominant spaces have meant that Melanie has had to miss out due to the racism within institutions.

We can also see this in the cultural trauma that is produced via social media in documenting police brutality under the case of Black Lives Matter (Stephens, 2018). As Stephens (2018) also reveals, it is cultural trauma that has emphasised the need for the BLM movement. When asked whether their racial identity was important to their choice to participate in activism/BLM, most activists answered that it did. Nasir, for example, says:

> I would say that it's who I am, and it's every part of you know of my existence; it's to do with my identity because I can't forgo that because I've seen my own grandfather, my father lived through racism because of that identity, because of who they were, and that has really has become part and parcel of why I was in terms of my own lived experience (Nasir, *personal interview,* 24/04/23).

Nasir highlights the generational effects of cultural trauma and racism on himself and his family. Seeing the continued impact of racism over multiple generations suggests that Nasir was compelled to take action to lessen the continuation of racial trauma for future members. His experience echoes the generational trauma of slavery for African Americans, which aided the creation of the Civil Rights Movement and Black nationalism (Alexander, 2004c; Eyerman, 2004). For Nasir, it feels impossible to detach his identity from the movement because of the impact of what it means to be Black and endure racial abuse in Wales. Andrew, however, states that 'activism can almost only come from identity', later stating that it is key for action (Andrew, *personal interview,* 09/03/23). His strong belief that activism and identity are mutually tied reflects the importance of both on one another, suggesting that personal identity (in this case, racial identity) cannot be overlooked in their reasoning to join the movement.

Other activists explained that they were not optimistic about the future of racial equality. Irram said, 'I accepted a long time ago I'm going to live with racism until the day I die' (Irram, *personal interview,* 20/02/23). These pertinent and ever-persisting experiences of racism, as I have evidenced, drive action within anti-racist movements through anger (much like Lorde suggests). These feelings have been reflected by activists who see protesting as people being 'so angry they're leaving their computers' (Ela, *personal interview,* 31/01/23). Hope, too, drives action, according to Nasir, because it allows you to believe 'there's light at the end of the tunnel' for the betterment of the future. (Nasir, *personal interview,* 24/04/23). Yet as Irram suggests, she has accepted that she will always experience racism. Despite this, she has created networking groups within the NHS to support ethnic minority members of staff within her branch in South Wales. It demonstrates that community building and collective experiences have something to do with why some activists continue to take action. However, many others did not view it this way (see Chapter 6). As Taylor (1989: 36) finds, identities

help in ‘defining community’. Activists spoke about the community they felt a part of when being a part of BLM. Words like ‘connecting’ (O’Mo, *personal interview,* 05/06/23) and ‘coming together’ (Robin, *personal interview,* 27/07/23) were used when speaking positively about the community the movement has created. It reflects how identity-based movements create space for those affected by specific cultural traumas to come together and form a collective identity based on those shared experiences. As stated, identities vary and are individual experiences. BLM shows that similar experiences with cultural, emotional, and racial trauma allow groups to form connections, but whether they continue and sustain will become clearer.

The impact of ‘moral shocks’ on allyship

Not everybody within BLM and anti-racism in Wales is directly affected by the movement’s goals. Identity-based movements, which aim to achieve social justice, often involve the participation of allies (DeTurk, 2011). For LGBT movements, allyship is crucial for its success through showing that members of the LGBT community and cishet people are ‘similar’ (Jones et al., 2022). In the case of BLM, academic activist Charlotte believes the movement is ‘characterised by allyship’ (Charlotte, *personal interview,* 21/07/23). Her point of view comes from recognising the ‘whole range of people’ at Cardiff protests. Therefore, when I discuss allies under a movement based on Black lives, I talk mainly about White allies of the movement due to their ‘power and privilege conferred by [a] White identity’ (Clark, 2019: 523). Of course, other racial identities also discriminate against each other. Still, those who are Black, Asian or Ethnic Minorities, as explained, are aware of racial prejudice and police brutality, which supports a collective experience, and their activism does not work through ‘moral shocks’ because issues of racism are not shocking to them, but daily

experiences. White people are, for the most part, never perceived as the racial minority (Hancock, 2005).

Allyship can be explained through the creation of moral shocks. Moral shocks occur when information and incidences happen, which raises outrage or 'shock' within an individual (Goodwin et al., 2001). Movements can also use moral shocks tactically to recruit others (Jasper, 2014). The viral video of the murder of George Floyd and its coverage is an example of how moral shocks are evidenced in the BLM movement. Such shocking information, like police brutality for those who do not experience it, drives those to take action through its emotional implications (Jasper, 2007: 2014). Kate, for example, uses her activism to write her thesis on acknowledging the wrongdoing of Wales' history. She reflects on how the murder of George Floyd sparked an outrage within her: 'I remember at the time just being like, so upset about it. And I was saying to people, have you, like, have you seen this?' (Kate, *personal interview,* 29/03/23). Similarly, this can be seen in the death of Mohan Singh Kullar in 1997. The public of Wales was morally outraged when a gang of youths murdered Kullar with a brick (Williams et al., 2015). This Williams et.al (2015: 138-9) argues, 'puncture[d] the complacent attitudes that had dominated discussions of race in Wales'.

Unlike Kate, other White activists did not reflect on how they felt when learning about racial injustice. This was understandable as I was speaking to those who were already a part of the movement and, therefore, had a level of recognition of how racism is perceived. They did, however, acknowledge and reflect on their privilege as White individuals. Elen attests to this after the hate she experienced with her online petition to remove the statue of Denbigh born H.M Stanley, who was involved in the colonisation of Africa. She states:

> It was a lot of hate; it was really stressful. I don't really want to talk about myself because it's just a little snippet of what black people or people of colour every single day have to face (Elen, *personal interview,* 29/02/23).

This allowed Elen to further empathise with those experiencing racial abuse but reflects on how her position as a White woman is one of privilege. Cath similarly reflects that her anger as a White woman is not comparable to those who experience racism. She says:

> Yeah, I am angry, and I'm hurt. And I do get emotional, but not to the extent that people would experience and also there are some people that will listen to me more because of the way I act and because of the way I present (Cath, *personal interview,* 22/05/23).

Moral shocks could also explain how individuals begin to recognise the privileges attached to their identity in everyday life (Jasper, 2011). They often use 'digital discourse' to educate themselves about their privilege (Clark, 2019). As discussed previously, this can be seen in the online reaction and circulation of information regarding police brutality, such as the death of George Floyd. For ally Kate, this is how 'everybody realised' the extent of racial issues (Kate, *personal interview*, 29/03/23). A part of White privilege is to acknowledge and sympathise with the pain and anger which ethnic minority people experience through racial injustice. Feelings according to Ahmed (2014: 30), White allies 'cannot know or feel'. Moral shocks effectively bring allies into a movement by spurring emotional reactions, which pushes them to educate on their own position in society (in this case, White privilege), alongside taking action against injustice. Additionally, they may be allies to 'one specific protest and discriminate another' (DeTurk, 2011: 585). Therefore, allies may not be as reliable in fighting for the cause, and their longevity with the movement is questionable.

Identities and emotions are apparent factors in why activists in Wales took to participating in the BLM and anti-racist movement. Both racial trauma and moral shocks impact individuals differently but work similarly in mobilising individuals to take action. It highlights that activists act based on their own cultural experiences and how they attach

meaning to racial injustice. I conclude with what Nicole believes to constitute as a 'valuable ally':

> What makes a valuable ally? Honesty and sincerity. Everything stems from that, when you are honest with yourself, recognising racism. When you are honest with racism within your life, and personally only then you can only be a true ally (Ready, 2020a).

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated the importance of activist biographies on social movements. Through the analysis of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales, I show that emotions, narratives and identity impacted their choice of actions, why they participated, and their role in tactics. These findings emphasise the work of scholars who, as outlined in Chapter 2, highlight the importance of emotions, narrative and identity in cultural meanings. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, this thesis is grounded in interpretivism, meaning that individuals experience and interpret realities differently. Understanding social movements from the reality and experiences of their activists allows us to understand the meaning of movements and their role in sociology. As a result, this thesis argues for an analysis of social movements from the individual experience of activists. This tells us more about how action, tactics and racial identity influence the importance of social movement.

This chapter demonstrated how protests helped engage a collective of people and inspired a collective identity, inciting emotions, engagement and group visibility. Social media, however, was a significant topic of discussion, as it impacted how activists now engage in the movement and how it can be used tactically by circulating visuals, discourse and symbols of racial injustice. In analysing their actions, it was clear that social media is a popular method of action because of the agency it provides individuals. Whilst it is beneficial in forming and

engaging a community, mainly as it relates to connecting individuals in Wales, it demonstrates how movements are becoming more individual in their actions. This was again reflected in the movement's tactics, as activists were less aware of movement tactics used to encourage support. As the movement provides agency and power to each participant, it dismissed the use of strategic tactics. Participants' involvement was due to their own beliefs and experience with anti-racism, and they were less affected by recruiting others. This begins to outline the network as consisting of individuals with their own strategies rather than through collective group efforts. Though collective identity was often referred to as an important and valuable part of the movement, we could see its importance only through the individual's experience with it.

Despite the role that tactics play in recruitment, it was demonstrated that individual and personal experiences with racism and moral shocks are what drove participants to be involved in the movement and to seek change. This was not specific to Wales but was observed globally, as seen in the virality of the visuals of George Floyd's death and the BLM hashtag online. This reflects identity's significant role in contemporary movements, placing the findings in line with NSM theories. The role of protesting and crowds shows that a collective identity is still essential in movement action and recruitment, mainly to show the movement's visibility. However, it was unclear how long these collective identities sustained. As activists shared their personal experiences with the movement, the role of the network and the relationships within them were not addressed. This is discussed in the next chapter, which focuses on the role of the network and the individual's experience within it.

Chapter Five: The Internal Dynamics, Culture and Contestations in BLM and Anti-Racist Networks in Wales

Introduction

This chapter looks at the internal dynamics of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and anti-racism in Wales through the eyes of the activists. In doing so, it builds upon the findings presented in Chapter 4 by looking at the lived experiences of activists and their choices, but in the context of the wider networks of BLM and anti-racism. In analysing their actions and relationships with others, I argue that the dynamics and culture of the 'movement' are fractious due to the contestations amongst activists. This occurs because activists engage based on their personal biographies and identities. They act on individual choices and strategies. Therefore, epistemologically speaking, it analyses the meaning of action and its individual interpretations. As a result, activists within the group tend to be loosely tied under the banner of BLM or anti-racism but tend to work on particular actions such as academic research or photography. To study these internal dynamics and complexities within the network, this chapter draws on James Jasper's (2015; 2021) research on players and arenas. As discussed in Chapter 2, players are strategic, but their biographical experiences influence their strategic choices. This chapter will show that these strategies are represented in movement arenas and through interactions with other players.

The chapter begins by defining BLM and anti-racism in Wales. As a global movement with local chapters, it is hard to identify specific goals or hierarchies. I suggest that BLM (widely considered a 'movement') can be labelled a network, a scene, or an organisation depending on players' involvement and due to the lack of structure. In the case of BLM in Wales, I argue that it looks more like a network of individuals than a cohesive movement because of the lack of collectiveness between activists. Relationships exist but are fractious and temporary. Activists come together under the network's name, but their choice for action is individual. This is important as it explains why contestations arise within the network.

Following this, I look at the particular actions and definitions of activism through the concept of players. This chapter demonstrates that players understand activism differently, with some rejecting the term altogether. It also explains why activists choose specific methods, such as protesting and social media activism, based on their unique skills and biographical experiences. Players are thus very strategic. A look into player relationships reveals that contestations arise due to resources such as money and the conflict of governmental relationships. These grievances are mostly reserved towards larger players in the network. Arenas, like social media platforms and protests, allow us to fully understand the internal dynamics of the network, as this is where contestations are manifested and formed. Grievances are aired, and group ties are revealed as less than cohesive. Only an internal analysis of the network would find this as it is through the discourse of activists' individual experiences that these dynamics and relationships are revealed. Hence, an external analysis of the network as a collective would not uncover these dynamics.

This chapter is important because it allows us to ontologically understand how biographies, identity and individual choice affect the dynamic of movements. It demonstrates that the network is situated in NSM Theory as players share the same goals and collective identity in challenging anti-racism. However, how they choose to do this is down to personal effects, strategy and biography. It consequently reveals that social movements are not as cohesive as externally imagined. This is unique. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, NSM Theorists see movements as 'collective' action and discuss action from the view of a collective identity. In this chapter, I attest that BLM and anti-racist action in Wales is engaged with more for strategic choice and lived experience than due to a collective identity. This allows future activists, scholars and organisations to understand that engaging with movements like BLM requires efforts to dissect individual motivators and reflect on how internal conflicts can arise.

This will help in further understanding the successes of similar movements and how they can be supported.

Defining BLM in Wales

In understanding the role that activists play in BLM and anti-racism in Wales, it is beneficial to reflect on whether their actions constitute being part of a 'movement' or whether it aligns with other, perhaps looser, terms. Indeed, studying a particular social movement is complex because there are no designated boundaries to the movement's action; therefore, action can come to mean various things to different people (Mische, 2015). The role that 'backgrounds, commitments, and organizational trajectories' play on one's choice to participate in action further emphasises this, as experiences can impact how we choose to be active (Mische, 2015: 57). The study of an activist's biography sheds light on the variety of individuals within a protest space, but this can only paint a picture on a micro-scale of a movement. To elaborate further, a study of a movement as a whole would suggest that BLM in Wales and BLM in the US (for example) can be looked at interchangeably. However, as Mische (2015: 57) suggests, movements which 'transcend the local scale' are 'fractious entities'. This is further evidenced in Jasper's (1997) analysis of the Civil Rights Movement, as he suggests that once the movement became national, the message of local boycotts became lost. Hence, the study of BLM as a movement is complex due to its factions and global message.

As discussed in Chapter 2, BLM reflects the typology of a new kind of study because of its roots in social media. It was questioned whether the 'movement' would stay a 'trending hashtag' or manifest as a social movement (Faust et al., 2020: 242). Since then, different manifestations of BLM can be seen around the globe, with Wales having its own 'movement'

known as BLM Wales, with specific regional leaders across Wales (Race Council Cymru, n.d). Despite an attempt to create structure between different regions in Wales, independent and local chapters of the movement can be found, with activists in Wales paying particular interest to BLM Rhyl (Mollie, *personal interview, 07/03/23*), BLM Gwent (Andrew, *personal interview, 09/03/23*) and BLM Cardiff and the Vale (Nicole, *personal interview*, 05/05/23). These chapters are reflected as having their own goals and demonstrations, though they struggle to articulate their message. As a whole, however, BLM is a member-led network with no central leader (Hillstrom, 2018). The complications between the decentralised, leaderless model of BLM and the attempt at structures on the local/chapter level further emphasise the complications of the potential movement analysis (Petitjean and Talpin, 2022). This became particularly prevalent when activist Yasmin stated that 'BLM Cymru is not the same as Black Lives Matter' (Yasmin, *personal interview, 01/02/23*). Therefore, activists are aware of the internal factions within the movement and the division within different chapters of the movement. As we shall see, this creates discordance and challenges the collective identity of cohesion.

It may be beneficial then to study the culture and dynamics of BLM activists in Wales through the lens of a network, or rather, it should not be reduced to simply a social movement. Millward (2023) acknowledges this when studying Pride of Football (PiF). He refers to PiF as 'a movement, a social world (or 'scene'), a network, or an organisation'; thus, 'providing its authoritative history is a difficult task' (Millward, 2023: 46). It demonstrates how action rooted in culture and identity, like LGBTQ or anti-racism, can be all or some of those things and opens up the possibility to reflect more dynamically the different actions and sentiments of the activists behind the action. However, it should be noted that groups, or in this case, networks, 'emerge from previous efforts', and a deeper look into the biography of activists in Wales

reflects this (Blee, 2012: 17). Conversations with activists like Irram and Nicole demonstrated how they defined their action through anti-racism more broadly rather than under the banner of BLM. However, they may attend protests organised under its name. Yasmin notably stated that she was a part of 'South Wales anarchists, No Borders Cardiff and No Borders South Wales' (Yasmin, *personal interview, 01/02/23*). Her involvement with networks with anti-racist connotations reflects how Yasmin is part of a broader, more Welsh-focused anti-racist message. The importance of a Welsh-focused anti-racist plan will be discussed in Chapter 6. It also demonstrates how BLM in Wales cannot be isolated from the broader anti-racist message and begins to reflect how biographical experiences and identity politics (in this case, borders and anarchy) influence social action and with whom you align.

Networks rely on loyalties, communicative interactions, and informal relationships (Diani, 2000; Mische, 2003; Jasper, 2007). However, as the analysis in this chapter shows, factions and contestations are revealed amongst individuals when these things either emerge or are absent. This is because individuals, or 'players', make their own choices and react/confront others based on their own beliefs and dilemmas (Jasper, 2004: 5). This reintroduces the importance of studying the internal culture of a movement/network, as only then can these dynamics be revealed. This does not mean that individuals do not seek to join others through organisations in which memberships, structures and roles are given (Millward, 2023: 13). Many BLM activists in Wales refer to being a part of such organisations. Activists like Irram and Cath are examples of individuals who have joined organisations/networks relating to anti-racism in Wales. Irram has been actively working to create a race equality network within her workplace despite pushback from others within her team (Irram, *personal interview, 20/02/23*). On the other hand, Cath is a part of a larger organisation for anti-racism in Wales and donates regularly to different organisations within Wales (Cath, *personal interview, 22/05/23*).

However, it does mean that individuals will join social movement organisations only if they choose to do so. This is evidenced by the fact that activists will just as quickly leave organisations if they do not fit their needs or goals (Jasper, 1997: 228). Yasmin, who has been part of many anti-racist campaigns, left a particular group because they 'didn't have a track record when it came to criticising or fighting racial inequality' (Yasmin, *personal interview, 01/02/23*). Most activists, however, choose to participate in a movement outside of organisational ties and instead participate based on biographical experiences (Jasper, 1997; Driscoll, 2018). Hence, this chapter focuses on the influence of the individual actions of activists in relation to the internal dynamics of BLM and anti-racism in Wales. This will allow the study to uncover influences, actions, choices, culture and biography outside of organisations (Jasper, 1997: 216).

The following section will further explore the individual choices of activists and argue that their biography and identity shape their decisions and the movement's internal dynamics.

The Individual Action and Choice of Players and Their Impact on Contention

According to Jasper (2004), social movement participants 'make many choices', often disregarded in scholarly literature. As we will see, participant choices result from their biographical experiences and relationships with others within the network (Jasper, 1997). Understanding the internal culture within a particular network allows us to reflect on how both components explicitly impact the dynamics of the movement and how these choices manifest. To understand the complexities of choice, Jasper (2004; 2015) uses the term 'players' to describe individuals or groups participating in action. This term is useful because it reflects a person's individuality within a wider network of collective effort, but also highlights the

importance of the actions of individuals within it. Players are also strategic (Jasper, 2004). They choose action and create relationships based on their own goals. In this case, players will join protests, develop bonds and even argue with each other regarding their anti-racism strategy in Wales. This further implies the role of emotions within the study, as they permeate their actions and reactions to others within the network (Jasper, 2015). An analysis of the internal dynamics within the network can provide a further look into the impact of emotions on action (King, 2005: 137). The next section investigates the biography of players and the internal dynamics of the network and uncovers how they result in factions between players.

The impact of players' biographies on choices and strategy

Factions are revealed when we look at various players within a protest space. Particularly, if we look at the goals and interests of players, we can begin to see the range of interpretation when it comes to anti-racist action. This is because 'culture (and biography) can affect choices in tactics, strategy and resource' (Jasper, 1997: 49). Therefore, if each action depends on the individual's biographical experience, it suggests that the collective identity of a network seems dormant. Jasper and Polletta (2001) also ponder this as they reflect on whether the collective identity of a movement is absent until a particular physical event (such as a protest) occurs. The outside perception of a specific event may make BLM activists in Wales seem solid in their identity, but looking into the internal dynamics reveals this is not the case. However, as Jasper (2021: 244) notes, 'players consist of individuals or groups who have some shared identity, some common goals'. It is these identities and solidarities on which new emotional movements rely (Walgrave and Verhulst, 2006). This is what makes it a new social movement (Scott, 1990). After all, those within the network all share similar beliefs of tackling racism and collectivise in the name of anti-racism, but how they do and interpret this is

individually different. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, this is because of activists' individual and personal experiences with identity, emotions, and narrative, which affect their interpretation of cultural meanings.

BLM in Wales comprises many entities (players), all making choices depending on their skills and motivations (Jasper, 1997: 228). This was apparent in how players who saw themselves as academics and researchers would differ in approach to students, anarchists and creatives. Charlotte, a university professor, defined her activism as research:

> They've associated activism with certain kinds of strategies like street protest and collective action, visible collective action. Certainly, in terms of what I would suggest in my profile, it's been very much about influence, about using writing academic work, research, policy work, speaking out, presentations, that kind of thing has been part of my profile of what I would call activism (Charlotte, *personal interview,* 21/07/23).

Robin, on the other hand, documents activism through his photography:

> I'm a photographer, and my work now focuses on the South Asian community, specifically in Britain. [On protest] Nothing crazy happened too much. It was just the police being a bit weird the whole time, really. But I feel like it's a common thing with all of them. The South Wales police are terrible; you're always hearing stories about them doing all sorts of weird stuff (Robin, *personal interview,* 27/07/23).

Charlotte has also worked with the Welsh government on implementing anti-racism policies and researching and publishing articles on BLM. As a result, her academic skills mean she implements activism in ways that may differ from the conventional methods of protesting. Additionally, Robin attends protests and photographs the experience, encapsulating the event's emotions (as explored in the previous chapter). The differences in how both players participate in action highlight how interests are not without their cultural interpretation (Jasper, 1997). Nardini et al. (2021) claim that social movements thrive with diverse people with different skills and abilities. However, these differences can reflect what scholars describe as

‘moderates’ and ‘radicals’ (McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 2011; Mische, 2015). This explains that movements are made up of players who are either agitators or consensus-builders (Mische, 2015). Here, the difference between players is vast, with one actively challenging the police in protest and the other working collaboratively with government actors. A comparison can be drawn here between the moderate tactics of the NAACP and the radical tactics of the SNCC in their fight for racial injustice (McAdam, 1985: 213). Expanding on this, Mische (2015) believes that players working with these different ‘camps’ produce tension within the network.

These differences are further revealed when activists interpret and define activism themselves. When asked what activism means to him, Mo stated, ‘active lover or proactively engaging with people in a positive way from an equal footing. And that's activism. I get active every day. So that's activism’ (Mo, *personal interview,* 25/05/23). Unlike Jessica or Yasmin, whose actions on social media include challenging people online, Mo believes that activism comes from using positive conversations, one of ‘equal footing’, to discuss racial issues in Wales. However, O'Mo's activism was not intentional (O’Mo, *personal interview, 05/06/23*). He stated that he knew he wanted to do something but was unsure what type of action suited him. Interestingly, O’Mo began creating videos and other media content with organisations on projects that revolved around the history of the African diaspora in Wales, which started his activism journey. The impact of biography and identity is evident (O’Mo, *personal interview,* 05/06/23). Jasper (1997: 214) claims that our ‘personal quirks and character traits’ impact our choices. For Mo, it is clear that his motto is reflected in how he engages with action positivity (Mo, *personal interview,* 25/05/23). However, O’Mo’s action is the most obvious in reflecting the impact of identity to benefit those who share a similar background. Activists, however, do not simply ‘choose’ what action they want; there are emotional and moral attachments to them, as highlighted in Chapter 4 (see also Jasper, 2004). It is clear in O’Mo’s case that his emotional

attachment to his community and background shapes his actions. Hence, it reflects that the meaning of action for O'Mo is to 'give back' to his community (O'Mo, *personal interview,* 05/06/23), but it reflects more widely how the meaning of action for these activists is evidenced in the action they choose.

Despite looking at activists with different tastes in tactics, those who do share similar tastes might have different meanings attached to action (Jasper, 1997). This is clear in that, despite agreeing to be interviewed for the thesis, some participants rejected the term 'activist' when describing themselves. Other studies of social movements found that the rejection of the term 'activists' was mainly due to its links with institutionalisation, as well as being emotionally driven to act in protest without adopting an activist identity (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2007; Ahmed, 2014). Nasir stated that he preferred the term community enabler, 'an enabler of the community, enabler because that's where I've seen my community elders that they've enabled us to have our own voices, to stand up and to be seen' (Nasir*, personal interview,* 24/04/23). Despite being involved in organising action, Nasir's positive experience within his community means that action focuses upon the collective effort of his direct community and less from the perspective of a larger social 'movement'. For Mo, on the other hand, taking responsibility for your community makes you a 'personal activist' (Mo, *personal interview,* 25/05/23). Their reflections on action echo Jasper's (1997) claim that action is attached to meaning. Nasir was not the only participant who rejected the term 'activism'. As discussed in Chapter 4, Jessica, too, does not like the label activist because it 'gets me into trouble' (Jessica, *personal interview, 05/06/23*). Rebecca, an academic, would not use activist to describe herself due to her work creating 'limited possibilities' despite recognising that her work includes 'forms of organising' (Rebecca, *personal interview,* 16/08/23). Both Jessica and Rebecca's answers to the question demonstrate the loaded meaning

behind the term activism whilst also acknowledging how being an 'activist' has many possibilities and stigmas attached to it. It reflects Jasper and McGarry's (2015: 5) assumption that 'not every member fits or accepts the label in the same way or to the same degree', exemplified in how both Rebecca and Charlotte work within academia but conceive 'activism' differently. It also highlights how participants must be 'biographically available' for protest in Jasper's (1997: 173) case and for action in general (i.e. through social media, where Jessica is primarily active).

Through reflecting on players' choices in action and how they define activism, it is clear that their approaches to the network are less than coherent, largely due to their biographical experiences and identities impacting their individual choices in action. Despite scholars supporting groups who target action differently, it produces what Jasper (2004) calls the extension dilemma. He explains that the larger a group becomes, the less clear the group's goals and actions are (Jasper, 2004: 7). Seeing as BLM networks in Wales are member-led and widely available to join, it is not a surprise to see the vast differences in players' actions and definitions. It also explains why participants described activism from their own individual point of view. For this reason, the collective identity of this particular network in Wales seems less important. However, it does provide an understanding of how players within the network disagree and contest each other's choices. A look into their relationship with one another demonstrates this.

The role of resources in contention

Though player's individual choices are key in this study, an examination of the relationships of players provides a beneficial understanding of the internal dynamics of the network and what it means to be a part of BLM in Wales. Polletta's (2002) analysis of identity

movements, such as the Civil Rights and Women's movements, looks at the benefits and limits of participatory democracy in movements. She argues that internal conflicts can arise when trying to implement this system. As mentioned, biography and identity shape action. Therefore, a network entails many players with different individual identities. This often results in internal contestations and disagreements on how action should be taken to tackle anti-racism in Wales (Jasper and McGarry, 2015).

Whether explicitly discussed, players had particular issues with certain groups/networks/individuals in Wales attaining power, money and resources. According to Yasmin, they look 'to the white man like they lead us all' (Yasmin, *personal interview,* 01/02/23). Here, Yasmin refers to a large organisation in Wales that, on the surface, represents Wales' anti-racist efforts. However, some activists believe 'they've gotten rich off racism' (Yasmin, *personal interview*, 01/02/23) and 'the only way you could barely economise on that or make a living is by screwing everyone over' (Jessica, *personal interview,* 05/06/23). A look into resource mobilisation theory (RMT) can provide some answers to these dynamics. It reflects the importance of resources, such as the role of money in a network's success and the institutionalisation of groups leading to formal organisation (Zald and McCarthy, 1987). The issue is that the network loses its grassroots entity and thus becomes linked with larger governmental institutions. Though resources are important for the continuation of networks, RMT argues that they are key to the success of a movement (Munshi-Kurian et al., 2019). The theory, however, does not recognise the individual goals and choices of players within the group itself, who may disagree with how larger representative groups handle issues of racism and consequently cause fractions within the group. RMT is not equipped to understand identity-based movements (seen in the #MeToo example) because they imply structure within a movement (Munshi-Kurian et al., 2019). This is arguably a further issue due to the lack of

structure in networks like BLM, which leads to 'implicit hierarchies' and more contestations (Nulman and Cole, 2023). Activist Leena gives insight into these dynamics:

> A lot of the Black Lives Matter groups in Wales didn't get on very well, and there was a lot of lack of working together but equal competition for the same buckets of funding. It caused really bad "aggro", and some of the groups were constituted, some of the groups were not, and that's the risk you run with to protect everyone else, and not everyone does that (Leena, *personal interview,* 03/08/23).

Leena's discussion of 'the lack of working together' between groups encapsulates the internal contestations amongst anti-racist activists in Wales. As each group becomes invested in 'cultural, social and symbolic capital', they risk causing fractures between players in the same network (Ibrahim, 2015: 52). This is further relayed by Yasmin, who states: 'Look at [group 1] what do they do other than work with [group 2], but [group 2] sit on 80,000 pounds' (Yasmin, *personal interview,* 01/02/23). The relationship between groups 1 and 2 is interesting, as it suggests that large groups in Wales retain a level of formal relationships but only when the resource is acquired. Larger groups seem to lose their grassroots agendas and dismiss their individual choices once resources become available, further emphasising the importance of strategy (or at least the move from radical to moderate) (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2007). It also demonstrates how more extensive networks struggle to work with others in the same network. This is not exclusive to groups, as Yasmin references several players she believes have done the same (Yasmin, *personal interview,* 01/02/23). This also goes back to the previous idea of 'moderates' versus 'radicals', that is, once an individual within a larger network (who is required to work with organisations and institutions) gains monetary and resource recognition, they are required to be less radical in their approach to the movement. This is known as 'goal displacement', which is 'the suppression of a movement's original radical goals for more moderate ones', evidenced within European social democratic parties (Tarrow, 2011: 115). This causes issues for the movement, as individuals at the top

become complacent, whilst radicals disagree with how groups deal with the cause. It then reflects how larger networks (players) are 'less likely to agree on goals or on tactics' with other players due to individual and group identities (the identity dilemma) (Jasper, 2006: 127). However, internal contestations are not necessarily all negative, as they allow discussions on how action should be approached and whether tactics should change (Jasper and McGarry, 2015: 10). These contestations help construct and reconstruct the meaning of their action.

Another cause of conflict between players is the government's role in strategic choices. Activists disagreed with larger groups who actively worked and obtained capital from the government. In the book *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2007), this is also discussed, as activists and educators from various non-profit organisations believe that we should find ways to work outside these organisations whom they believe sacrifice their goals for governmental relationships. Yasmin states: **'**I don't think there's an organic opportunity for anti-racism to be reflected in Wales, and when it does crop up like BLM, they're perceived to be represented by [group]' (Yasmin, *personal interview,* 01/02/23). Yasmin disagrees with organisations that are funded directly by the government and who also represent the face of anti-racism in Wales. As activists suggest, this hinders the success of anti-racism in Wales as it is not represented 'organically' within the landscape. Yet, it also allows the government to control the narrative of anti-racism in Wales. Yasmin describes herself as an anarchist, and therefore, the thought of working with the government or any hierarchical group on issues relating to the cause would be particularly divisive. On the other hand, Charlotte discusses the Welsh Government's importance in her activism. She highlights that the North Wales Race Equality Network (which she co-founded) was created in the nineties when the newly devolved government reached out to talk to communities about race in Wales, as they realised they 'didn't have a network or

basis for talking to them' (Charlotte, *personal interview*, 21/07/23). As Charlotte reflects, this was unique at the time: 'We weren't very organised, we weren't very used to governance, we weren't used to having a voice' (Charlotte, *personal interview*, 21/07/23). It reflects a more positive experience in the relationship between anti-racist activists and the government. Charlotte's experience of feeling like she did not have a voice as a Black woman in Wales, to then being instrumental in the Welsh Government's handling of anti-racism, shows a positive experience between both players. This is demonstrative in Charlotte's continued working relationship with the government. Moreover, it adds to the analysis of Chapter 4, as it demonstrates the role of biography and lived experience in one's actions and choices.

However, the ideology of anti-racism challenges structural and institutional racism, as it is argued that racial inequalities are 'structured into everyday practices'(Zamudio et al., 2010; Ahmed, 2012). For this reason, working alongside the government arguably challenges the effectiveness of these organisations, as organisations may be hesitant to challenge their funders. Polletta and Kretschmer (2015) also discuss the fractions that can form when working with governmental actors due to their monetary 'leverage' on particular groups and how the potential for power confronts players with strategic choices.

An extension to the governmental dilemma, players must face moral choices regarding funding, in this case, by the police. Generally, it is explained that 'police agencies may also play a direct role in producing movement conflict' (Polletta and Kretschmer, 2015: 40). However, for anti-racist and BLM activists, their relationship with the police is even more contested. Activist Robin notes how the presence of police at protests has produced friction and physical altercations (Robin, *personal interview*, 27/07/23). Indeed, the relationship between protestors and police has been well documented (Porta and Reiter, 1998; McPhail,

2017). However, attitudes towards the police cause conflict among players themselves. As discussed in Chapter 4, police brutality against ethnic minority people is a large motivator for BLM. The movement/network began as 'loosely organized protests against police violence' (Hillstrom, 2018: 13). However, as Leena reveals, a large amount of funding in Wales is given by the police:

> The other problem was that funding-wise, a lot of the funding was actually coming from the Welsh Government police forces. Which how do you police the police? You know, if you're taking money off them to run certain projects, you know, what point are you actually an independent campaign group (Leena, *personal interview,* 03/08/23).

Leena sheds light on a prominent topic of conflict amongst anti-racist players in Wales by raising the question of, if police forces are actively funding the campaigns of anti-racist networks, how can they ensure that they tackle the systemic racism within the police? This is why Yasmin believes these players (primarily organisations) 'have gotten really rich of deaths in police custody' (Yasmin, *personal interview, 01/02/23*). Tarrow (2011: 115) also emphasises that tactics can become less radical due to the 'threat of police suppression'. It again suggests a moral conflict between monetary leverage and authentic action. I would also suggest that biography plays a role here, too, as those who have faced racial issues against the police may be more opposed to cooperating with them. Hence, it reflects how resource, capital gain, and governmental and institutional allegiance can create division within a network. It shows how players need to make strategic choices on whether to stick with their personal goals or decide whether they believe resources are more beneficial to the network.

Contention Within Arenas

Individual actions and strategic choices of players demonstrate the internal conflict and dynamics of the network. Arenas, however, aid in shaping these decisions and provide space where interactions between players manifest and thus carry the meaning (Jasper, 2004, 2015). Jasper (2021: 244) explains that arenas are 'physical places where players interact to generate decisions and other outcomes'. Arenas are not limited to social movement spaces, like fields; this may, for example, include the media and courtrooms (Jasper, 2004; Ibrahim, 2015). They themselves are not cultural, but the interactions that occur within them are due to the emotions and narratives displayed (Polletta, 1998; Calhoun, 2001; Jasper, 2014) (see Chapter 4 for an in-depth look at this). However, the biographical account of activists meant that any reference to arenas was primarily focused on protesting sites and social media (i.e., this is where interactions came into play). This is where factions, power, ideology and resources were present in activists' biographical accounts (Mische, 2015: 55). The next section examines the impact of arenas by analysing the role of social media and protest sites on players' dynamics and choices.

Social media as an expressive arena

As previous chapters mention, social media is a relatively new and popular way of engaging with activism. As a result, it is now a highly pertinent arena to study. Social media study allows us to understand 'the biographical dimensions of contention' and how identities manifest through narrative (Barassi and Zamponi, 2020: 592). It is also important for players involved in a network on a national and global scale, like those involved in anti-racism in Wales, as it provides communicative means with others in the network. Arenas tend to have rules attached to them (Jasper, 2015). In the literal sense, social media as an arena provides a free space to engage with activism. From speaking to participants, very few noticeable rules

appear to be attached to social media as an arena. This may be because power is distributed, providing individual players and governmental players (for example) the same level of autonomy and communicative power (Castells, 2012). Jasper (2004) explains that players will attach themselves to arenas where their resources and skills are useful. Therefore, arenas also demonstrate strategic choices within players.

This may be the case for creatives such as Nicole and Robin, who use social media as a space to present their activism through creative means (photography, zines and infographics). However, for other activists, social media is a space to air their grievances with other players in the network for their choices in action, organisational decisions and resources. Leena relayed this, who discussed being 'blocked' on social media platforms: 'I'm not a fan. I think I'm still blocked off Twitter, to be honest. I can't remember for what reason' (Leena, *personal interview,* 03/08/23). Jessica and Yasmin, too, were 'blocked' by the same organisation (Jessica, *personal interview, 05/06/23*). Despite discussing social media's power, players also have autonomy in silencing the voices they wish to ignore. This is particularly pertinent as Leena, Yasmin, and Jessica discuss a large organisation within the Welsh anti-racist space. Arenas works to provide certain outcomes (Jasper, 2015). Here, it is revealed that arguments and blocking are often the outcome of these interactions, highlighting the level of contention amongst the networks. Yasmin uses Twitter to air her grievances with other players in the space. From 'trolling' governmental parties and questioning anti-racism within organisations to arguments with other participants (Yasmin, *personal interview,* 01/02/23), Yasmin's use of Twitter interactions highlights the impact of her biography in contention. Her knowledge of anti-racism and personal experience is often used to argue against others within the space. It reflects how looking into an arena can provide insight into the contentions and fractions between players.

Social media provides a ‘new tool’ for action and studying these interactions (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015: 5).

It is notable that arenas are interconnected; thus, actions from one may affect another (Jasper, 2021: 252). This is revealed through Yasmin’s Twitter documentation of an altercation she had at a conference: ‘The whole thing was so bizarre, and the fact dozens of people saw her say “I’m not fucking doing this here”. Doing what?’ (Begum, 2023). This highlights the importance of scholarly work on the impact of emotions on action (Jasper, 1998; Calhoun, 2001; Polletta and Callahan, 2017). As protesting arenas are highly emotionally charged (see Chapter 4), factions between players are apparent. However, it demonstrates how these emotions carry from one arena to another (Jasper, 2015). The ‘good or bad mood’ manifested in one arena will implicate interactions elsewhere between individuals and affect group ties (Jasper, 2015: 15). Tufekci's (2017) analysis of movements such as the Occupy movement and Arab Spring demonstrates the differences in how ‘new’ movements operate. She argues that the use of social media impacted their cooperation and deepened ‘tensions and polarization of movements’, leading to internal contestation (Tufekci, 2017: 79). Yasmin’s decision to replicate her in-person altercation online demonstrates the perceived power and autonomy that social media gives players due to its leaderless structure (Tufekci, 2017). It may also indicate strategy, as sharing such interactions with other players may reveal common interactions, persuading others to disregard the player and form group ties.

Protests as arena

Despite Yasmin’s interaction, protesting sites, on the other hand, reflected a more cohesive setting. According to activists, protests are a physical manifestation of how

individuals ‘come together’ under a specific cause despite having grievances with one another (Robin, *personal interview,* 27/07/23). Protests demonstrate how activists’ identities manifest into networks through their shared actions against a single cause (Jasper, 1997: 174). This does not mean, however, that these group ties exist outside of protesting for a single cause. Cherry (2006) finds within the vegan movement that most moral protestors were not involved in any larger organisation. Therefore, the movement comprises more than those with an organisational membership. However, protests can provide the opportunity to make connections based on shared goals and ideas (Jasper, 1997). Nicole is an example of an activist who has made connections from protesting. She said, ‘From going to those protests, I've been able to make a lot of connections with a lot of people and just even deeper connections like with my own friends’ (Nicole, *personal interview*, 05/05/23). Nicole’s experience in protesting comes from engaging with issues concerning the deaths and abuse of ethnic minority people in Wales. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, Welsh racial issues are not often the focus of BLM protests. Therefore, engaging with others who share the goal of highlighting specific cases in Wales allowed Nicole to form ties with others post-protesting engagement. This reaffirms that collective identity is important for these relations and positive ties in the network, and activist identities inform network engagement and relationships (Jasper, 1997: 174).

From looking externally at a protest, protestors look like cohesive entities with shared goals (Jasper, 2014: 10). However, we can only begin to see these factions occur through internal analysis (Mische, 2015). In his research on the anti-capitalist movement, Ibrahim (2015: 86) highlights how different factions within the movement (anarchists and socialists) are ‘locked in ideological competition because they share the same political space’. Despite being part of the broader message of anti-capitalism, Ibrahim demonstrates how contention between networks in the same arena can occur. It refers to different political identities in the

broader sense, strategy, and identity from a cultural sense (Ibrahim, 2015; Polletta and Kretschmer, 2015). Leena's extensive experience at protests means she is much more likely to observe other players in an arena to understand their intentions. She discusses this at length:

> So, I have always been asked to speak in the past at protests, and I prefer just to go as an observer, watching what's being said and who's talking. So, for example, there was a protest. This wasn't a Black Lives Matter protest, but it was around the Immigration Bill, and there was a protest in Bangor. All of these, like white people who wanted to stand for elected office, talk at this protest when we actually had asylum seekers who could have easily spoken, but they were more worried about having people with a background in politics or people who spoke Welsh or whatever to make the protest look good versus actually have it have an impact. And I think that's a really interesting dynamic (Leena, *personal interview,* 03/08/23).

Leena's observations regarding the internal dynamics of the space are interesting. The choice of speakers at the protest reveals that strategy is important within the arena. Those who may have first-hand experience of the cause are quickly dismissed compared to those who do not share similar grievances but may benefit from participation. It reflects how some may use arenas as resources themselves but also echoes how players within the arena are not equal participants due to resources and power (Jasper, 2004; 2015). Leena notes the choices as the difference between the perception of 'good' versus 'impact'. It, therefore, reveals how choices in strategy impact others' perceptions of arenas, as Leena has been less active in the protesting space since (Leena, *personal interview,* 03/08/23). This is further evidenced by activist Jessica, whose experience engaging with a member of an organisation in protest has impacted her relationship with them moving forward, as she disagrees with how they tackle anti-racism. She states, 'I met her, and I was like, wow, I would never work with you again and [name of organisation redacted], who were already institutionally racist before, so it's all the performance' (Jessica, *personal interview,* 05/06/23). Therefore, despite the collective identity that protesting provides, it can also produce negative relationships and contestations amongst players due in part to their ideological beliefs and choices in action.

Conclusion

Examining the internal dynamics of BLM and anti-racism in Wales reveals a fractious and contentious network. We can begin to see this as BLM, which can be defined as a movement, network, chapter, and more. As discussed in this chapter, this is partly due to the globalisation of BLM, its role as member-led, and its lack of hierarchical structures. As a result, I suggest that BLM is better described as a network. As Jasper (2004) has denoted, activists make strategic choices based on their own biographical and identity impact. Thus, without any formal structures, activists have more agency in choice. Activists do, however, join other networks and engage with organisations, but this is due to their own individual choices, and most participants are individual in their actions.

This chapter took inspiration from Jasper's ideas of players and arenas in understanding the contentious dynamics of the network. Players' accounts of action demonstrated their different views of what activism is and what action entails. Some even rejected the term activism to describe themselves (i.e. they do not see being an activist as a part of their identity). However, activists must be biographically available for certain actions. This allows us to understand how contention amongst the group begins from the choice of action. The contention was wholly apparent in the discussion of power and resources, namely against organisations that largely represented Wales. Players disagreed with how profit was given, how governmental ties impacted activism and even the overall sincerity of the organisation's message. It portrays BLM in Wales as fractious and incoherent. Arenas represent where contention and disagreements between players manifest. Social media allows each player freedom and power, which, therefore, provides autonomy within the arena. With this, players

often use social media to air their grievances with others, which creates more friction within the network. This may explain why social media is becoming a popular arena for activists. As stated, however, arenas often impact each other, and such contentions frequently form through physical interactions within protesting spaces and other arenas. On the outside, protests are perceived as an arena which provide a strong collective identity. This is partly true in that players share a common belief in the protest, and sometimes, relationships are formed. However, strategies and contention mean these relationships are often lacking or contentious after leaving the arena. This is because players make individual choices. Examining the internal dynamics of the network further supports the analysis in the previous chapter on understanding the meaning of activism for BLM activists in Wales, as their action is tied to the impact of the activist's experience, biography, identity and emotion.

The next chapter will expand on both activist biographies and network relationships by analysing the network's relationship with Wales as a nation and why it differs from the analysis of other spaces.

Chapter Six: Wales, Welshness and Anti-Racist Activism: The Myth of Tolerance

Introduction

This chapter examines the role that Wales and Welshness play in Black Lives Matter (BLM) and anti-racist activism in Wales. As previously noted, the global BLM movement has been exponentially documented both in media and scholarship (Rickford, 2016; Ince et al., 2017; Hillstrom, 2018; Stephens, 2018; Nummi et al., 2019; Tillery Jr., 2019; Woodly, 2022). However, the focus on the movement has been primarily reserved for countries such as the US and the UK, often focusing on larger cities (for exceptions see Parker, 2020; Sobande and Hill, 2022). There is very limited discussion of anti-racist activism in Wales, particularly with a concentration on the impact of rural racial experiences. This chapter examines the context of race and identity in Wales and emphasises the importance of movements like BLM in smaller, less-documented nations.

Wales' cultural identity is constructed on feelings of oppression and subsequent resurgence of the Welsh language (Coupland et al., 2006; Watkins, 2007; Williams, 2012). However, this narrative of oppression means that Wales is somewhat reluctant to embrace and incorporate multiculturalism within its definition of Welshness. It thus reflects on the dichotomy of national and racial identities and sheds light on the unique relationship they share in the context of Wales. Examining anti-racism in Wales is unique because there has been a historical narrative of Wales as a tolerant nation toward ethnic minority communities (Williams et al., 2015). This chapter argues that despite this, Wales is not an anti-racist nation and,

therefore, requires anti-racist activists to challenge Wales to incorporate multiculturalism into the meaning of Welshness.

The chapter begins by conceptualising the Welsh cultural identity. It highlights how it is not singular but reflected in many ways. Activists' answers to whether they saw themselves as Welsh was a big part of this study. They discussed their pride in the nation, referencing language, nationalism, and tradition. Despite their ethnic backgrounds, activists generally felt an affinity for Welsh independence and strongly believed in ethnic diversity in Wales. This reflects the importance of the national identity in activists' meanings and interpretations of Welshness.

Despite the lack of Welsh speakers (72.3%) (Welsh Government, 2025), the Welsh language is integral to constructing Wales' cultural identity. Activists discussed the impact of the narrative of Welsh language oppression on their experiences of Welshness. Their feelings of disregard, oppression, and othering resulted in some activists rejecting British as an identity, though this was notably in the context of dismissing any affiliation with England. This highlights Wales' preservation of culture and strong sentiments towards other cultures. Activists passionately discussed how the Welsh language is seen as synonymous with Whiteness. Despite ethnic minority activists discussing how they can speak fluent Welsh, they felt they were 'not Welsh enough' due to the attitudes of others. Their experiences demonstrate how language (being of importance to the Welsh culture) is used as a tool to engender the rejection of ethnic minorities in Wales since it is perceived as something exclusively for White individuals.

The oppressive practices used against the Welsh language resulted in conversations comparing Wales' historical oppression to racism. Despite sentiments of oppression by the nation, people in Wales still play a part in the othering of ethnic minorities. It also reflects findings in Chapter 2 on the contested beliefs that national and racial identities do not co-exist. This leads to conflicting interpretations of identity, according to ethnic minority activists, as they struggle to incorporate both identities harmoniously, often feeling rejected and suggesting that Wales does not reflect its multicultural population. This is not the case for everyone in Wales, as those from larger multicultural areas like Tiger Bay (historic Cardiff docklands) experience multiculturalism as a celebration compared to more rural, less diverse areas in North Wales. Due to this, BLM and anti-racist mobilisation is more challenging in North Wales, which highlights the importance of locally specific tactics.

This chapter explores strategies and events Wales incorporates to tackle anti-racism. This is found in the government's Anti-Racist Action Plan and the events of 'reframing Picton' (an exhibition re-examining the colonial legacy of Sir Thomas Picton). Activists, however, differ in their attitudes towards anti-racist change in Wales. Some see efforts as performative, while others see them as hopeful. It is uncertain how these efforts will engender an inclusive Wales.

This chapter is important because it demonstrates that if Wales is sincere about its anti-racist culture, it must address key issues within Welsh cultural identity, institutions and regional differences that make Wales more welcoming to ethnic minorities. Whilst Wales has been historically conveyed as a 'tolerant' nation concerning ethnic minorities, an analysis of the lived experience and interpretations of ethnic minority people in Wales demonstrates that this is not the case and reflects their drive towards action. As a result, it emphasises the importance

of identity and new social movements on activist mobilisation. The chapter adds a contemporary lens to the meaning and culture behind race in Wales and further substantiates the claim that racial tolerance in Wales is a 'myth' (Evans, 2015: 128). In understanding the lived experiences of ethnic minority people in Wales, this chapter provides insight into the direct issues they face and guidance on how Wales can implement a culture that fully embraces multiculturalism.

Introduction to Wales' Cultural Identity and Nationhood

As laid out in Chapter 2, race and nation are two co-existing distinctions of identity. Studies have sought to understand what it means to have affinities to both your race and nationality and whether both can exist harmoniously (see: Alexander, 1996). However, it is widely understood that a national identity is an imagined community constructed through kinship for the purpose of belonging (Anderson, 1991; Berezin, 2001). It is suggested that identity is more of an inclusive term than community because it allows us to study a variety of identities and how they manifest, which this chapter will explore in the context of the Welsh population (Day, 2002). Recently, more scholars like Evans et al. (2015) have shed light on the dichotomy of race in Wales. Williams et al. (2015) unpack the longstanding narrative that Wales is a welcoming and tolerant nation towards ethnic minorities. However, their research suggests that this narrative does not reflect the experiences of ethnic minorities in Wales. Day (2002) also sheds light on the narrative of tolerance in Wales but points out that ethnic minorities are 'no less likely' to experience inequalities compared to other countries in the UK. Further evidence comes from a report written on race and racism in Wales, which uncovered that sixty-nine per cent of ethnic minority people in Wales believed there is racism in the nation (Crawley, 2012: 10). This is particularly poignant because Black and ethnic minority people

make up 4.3 % of Wales' population, according to the 2011 census (Chaney, 2015: 307). This number increased to 5.4% in 2021 (Census 2021, 2022a). According to Crawley (2012: 2), research on race in Wales is becoming particularly important due to the growth of ethnic minority communities in the nation, who should receive equal treatment regardless of ethnicity and nationality. Figures on race and racism in Wales demonstrate why BLM and anti-racist activists are essential, as racism remains prevalent in the Welsh landscape. To understand the meaning of race and anti-racism in Wales and people's experience with it, this chapter first addresses what a 'Welsh' identity entails, as research on Wales still 'lacks critical mass' (Day, 2002: 5).

Wales' distinct national and cultural identity has led scholars to question what is unique about the nation (Day, 2002). Yet Wales' cultural identity is not singular, as will be contextualised in depth throughout this chapter (Balsom, 1985). Wales has been historically viewed as having three primary identities, including 'Y Fro Cymraeg' (Welsh speaking and Welsh-identifying), 'Welsh Wales' (non-Welsh speaking but Welsh-identifying), and 'British Wales' (non-Welsh speaking and British-identifying) (Balsom, 1985). Despite this, the Welsh cultural identity's role in the nation's cultural foundations is reflected in tradition, language and sentiments towards others. Wales' cultural identity can be viewed in traditional events like the *Eisteddfod*, a cultural festival which celebrates Welsh art (including music, dancing, poetry and so on) exclusively in the Welsh language (Fiona, 1993: 174; Hughes, 2017: 118). The *Eisteddfod* depicts Wales' attempt to retain its cultural traditions amidst its lack of distinctive identity to the rest of the world, partly due to its membership in the wider British state (Watkins, 2007). As Day (2002: 21) suggests, it upholds Celtic traditions, reflecting Wales' attempt to maintain its history and culture.

Wales' language, history and culture were important to activists and their role in BLM and the anti-racist movement. For example, activist Yasmin encapsulated Wales' political history within her statement about 'feeling Welsh'. She says, 'As a multi-racial Welsh subject in a post-evolved and post-colonial Britain, my identity is as important to me as Saunders Lewis' (Yasmin, *personal interview*, 01/02/23). Firstly, Yasmin suggests that despite her mixed heritage, her feeling of Welshness is the same as that of Saunders Lewis. Lewis was a twentieth century Welsh poet and politician, a founding member of Plaid Cymru, the national party of Wales. He also delivered a radio lecture called *Tynged yr Iaith* ('The Fate of the Language') (BBC, 1962). Yasmin's reference to Saunders powerfully demonstrates how her Welsh identity is as important to her as the Welsh politician, reflecting that Wales' cultural identity is just as strong today as it was in the formation of Plaid Cymru in 1925, as well as introducing race into the conversation of nationality. One of Plaid Cymru's visions for Wales is independence from the union with the UK (Plaid Cymru, 2024). Activists like Elen and Ela identified as pro-Welsh-Independence supporters, with Ela being an avid attendee at independence marches. Sentiments of Welsh independence/autonomy are relayed in narratives like *Cymru am Byth* ('Wales forever' or 'long live Wales') (My Genealogy Addiction, 2015). Mollie, a student from North Wales, references this statement to demonstrate her feelings for Wales. She says: 'I am incredibly proud to be Welsh, I am *Cymru am Byth* through and through' (Mollie, *personal interview*, 07/03/23). This highlights the interest of Welsh citizens in seeking more political and cultural autonomy. However, as will be explained, Wales' cultural and national identity is predominantly constructed through the view of a White racial gaze. Therefore, the importance of nationalism and independence raises questions about whether Wales will prioritise multiculturalism in its fight for more autonomy. Irram believes attending Welsh independence marches allowed her to embrace her Welsh identity. She said:

> The independence movement in Wales is about "you haven't got what I got, let's do some work so you can have what I have". It's bringing us up to the same level and all equal. And I started engaging with people who didn't care about my colour. These people have given me my identity back as a Welsh Muslim (Irram, *personal interview*, 20/02/23).

Irram found that being a part of the Welsh independence community allowed her to feel accepted as a Welsh woman despite her ethnic and religious background. It was an experience she believed allowed her to claim back her Welsh identity after years of racial and religious abuse.

Welsh independence groups have changed from holding views of 'ethnic' nationalism to promoting civic nationalism, engaging minority groups in the view of Wales' cultural identity (Williams, 2015a). This is why Nasir joined Plaid Cymru; he believes they encourage a 'Wales that encompasses everyone' (Nasir*, personal interview,* 24/04/23). Other activists, however, have reservations about what an independent Wales would look like. Nicole wonders, 'Would independent Wales also include Black people and like Brown people?' (Nicole, *personal interview*, 05/05/23). The establishment of a Welsh Assembly (latterly renamed as Parliament) in 1999 has allowed Wales' cultural identity to be re-imagined, allowing a platform for Welsh multiculturalism (Williams, 2015a). Though some activist experiences would argue for this, this chapter will reflect that this is not the experience of most ethnic minorities in Wales, challenging the perception of Welsh tolerance.

Activists demonstrate the importance of Welsh identity, language, and culture in their personal accounts of pride as Welsh people. It reflects how traditions and history impact their experiences with Wales. It reflects their strong assertions of Welshness and nationhood despite their racial identities, as in the case of Yasmin and Irram. This next section will explore this further as it shows how Wales' historical treatment sheds insight into why Wales' cultural

identity is sentimental, preserved and protected, which lays the foundations for recognising Wales' treatment towards its ethnic minority communities.

The Role of the Welsh Language in Identity Construction

Wales' distinct cultural identity is also displayed in the continued maintenance of the Welsh language. Efforts from groups like *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg* (The Welsh Language Society) began organising protests in the 1960s against the government with the aim that Wales should adopt a bilingual culture (McAllister and Mughan, 1984). It is estimated that around 27.7% of people across Wales can speak Welsh, the most spoken Celtic language today (Welsh Government, 2025). It is suggested that the Welsh language plays an integral part in the Welsh cultural identity as non-Welsh speakers in Wales experience identity dissonance, suggesting they struggle with the conflict of identities (Coupland et al., 2006: 354). As I will explore later, this conflict is especially evidenced in the discussion and experiences with a Welsh identity and racial identity. In relation to language, however, activist and North Walian Kate gives insight into how she regrets not paying attention to learning Welsh. She says: 'I love being Welsh, and I just feel really annoyed at myself for neglecting the Welsh language in school' (Kate, *personal interview*, 29/03/23). Although Kate does not speak Welsh fluently, this has not stopped her from embracing the Welsh identity and feeling a sense of pride in being Welsh. However, her annoyance of not learning the language suggests that she recognises she would feel more Welsh had she learnt the language. Giles et al. (1977: 173) show that Kate's experience is not unique, as there is a polarity between Welsh and non-Welsh speakers, as those who speak only English feel 'psychologically removed' from those who speak Welsh, further emphasising the importance of the language in feeling Welsh. Representative of one's pride in their Welsh identity can also be explained by the language, particularly the word *hiraeth*. With

no direct English translation, the word *hiraeth* refers to a longing to return to Welsh land, encapsulating feelings of homesickness, love and loss (Petro, 2012). It is suggested that it is a feeling only a Welsh person can feel. Feelings of *hiraeth* can explain why activist Rebecca says that despite her racial identity, 'being in Wales has always somehow felt like a sense of connectedness to it in a way that I haven't experienced in other places that I've moved to' (Rebecca, *personal interview*, 16/08/23). Rebecca also states, however, that Welshness to her may be different to 'the next person' (Rebecca, *personal interview*, 16/08/23), which introduces the notion that Welshness may mean different things to other people and is embraced differently (Williams, 2015: 346). The following section looks at this further.

The narrative of the Welsh as 'oppressed' peoples and the oppression of the Welsh language

Ideas of Welshness are often demonstrated in one's distinction as Welsh, not British. Balsom's (1984: 161) work highlights the varying degrees of Welshness by asking whether people identify as Welsh, British or Other. His research concluded that 57% of people saw themselves as Welsh (Balsom et al., 1984: 161). In 2021, however, this number decreased to 52%, according to the 2021 Census (2022). This is also true for those with multicultural backgrounds. The dominant umbrella identity of Black Britishness is declining and is instead replaced by national identities, i.e. Black-Welsh (Evans et al., 2015). However, other scholars found that ethnic minority children were reluctant to call themselves Welsh because they equated it to being White (Watkins, 2007). Yet, national identities are not fixed markers. People may feel equally Welsh and British. Known as the 'Moreno question', an analysis of Scots and Catalans found that national identities overlap, are plural, and are dual (Moreno, 2006). In Scotland, the duality of British and Scottish national identities is evident as a national identity poll (fieldwork conducted from 1999 to 2023) shows that people see themselves as 'Scottish

not British', 'more Scottish than British' and 'equally Scottish and British', but 'more British than Scottish' and 'British not Scottish' was less favoured (Scottish Centre for Social Research, 2023). The poll reflects the Scottish sentiments and the importance of 'Scottishness' in their national identity.

However, identifying national identity is complex and demonstrates the importance of the individual's identity experience. This is further confounded by activist Elen's statement: 'Being Welsh is something that I'm proud of, and I'd prefer to be called Welsh rather than British' (Elen, *personal interview*, 19/01/23). When asked if they saw themselves as British or Welsh, most interviewees stated they were Welsh. The rejection of Britishness may also lie in the role of Britain in colonial history. Although the Welsh were complicit and instrumental in Britain's imperialist empire, Wales too was regarded as a 'threatening Other' as English migration threatened the existing life and culture of Wales (Aaron, 2015; Bohata, 2015). Elen's argument for not being British echoes others in that being 'British' discredits her strong assertions about her Welsh identity and her belief that British identity is more representative of England than it is of Wales: 'British equals English' (Elen, *personal interview*, 19/01/23). Elen's reception of Britishness as equating to Englishness is a widely felt and believed interpretation. This belief impacts how cultural identity and multiculturalism are also perceived as British multiculturalism is often and interpreted as English, resulting in 'the interplay between Welsh identity and ethnic minority identity is somehow disregarded' (Williams, 2007: 760). It begs the question of how Wales' cultural identity is reflected in the British landscape; for Elen, 'Welsh people are seen to be pushed to the side a little bit. And not many people know a lot about Wales or Welsh culture and language' (Elen, *personal interview*, 19/01/23). This cultural 'invisibility' and oppression has led to Wales becoming a 'victim of institutional racism' (Day, 2002: 61; Watkins, 2007: 129).

Depictions of Welsh people rejecting feelings of Britishness and feeling, as activist Elen puts it, 'pushed aside', is a historical sentiment in Wales. Williams (2012: 30) suggests that the making of the Welsh cultural identity is a result of the 'significant years in the history of the nineteenth-century'. Lumbley (2019), however, indicates that the creation of the Welsh identity began much earlier (in the Medieval period) due to their depiction as racially different compared to Anglo-Saxons and Anglo-Normans. These examples demonstrate that Wales' imagined community is founded on sentiments of oppression and othering. During interviews with BLM activists in Wales, it became apparent that some of their support for anti-racism came from their own feelings of cultural oppression. In particular, activist Kate discussed how her research on Wales uncovered this. She said:

> I'd never heard this before until I researched it, but it was essentially like an educational policy in which English ministers went into Welsh schools and basically wrote this really damning report about basically how Welsh people were illiterate and sexual deviance […]. And I think and this is what interested about Welsh entity in the literature, it's like Welsh identity feels very sorry for itself. And because of this, a lot of Welsh identity is born with anti-English sentiment or want to kind of claim back what they feel they've lost (Kate, *personal interview*, 29/03/23)

The 'damning report' Kate refers to is widely known as 'The Blue Books'. The books published in 1847 (also known as the Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales) questioned the morality of the Welsh and the state of education (Lingen et al., 1847). Furthermore, the books labelled the Welsh as living in 'dishonesty, perjury and drunkenness' (Williams, 2012: 27). The Blue Books have since become a symbol of oppression in Wales, recognising it as a historical moment in cultivating Wales' nationalistic self (Watkins, 2007; Williams, 2012). These feelings are still reflected in Wales' self-image. Contrastingly, the Books encouraged the Welsh to be more like the English, 'hard-headed and business like' (Williams, 2012: 27). Relevant to this study, Welsh people have been historically depicted as racially different from the Anglo-Saxons and Anglo-Normans. Lumbley (2019: 1) accounts

that literature labelled the Welsh 'swarthiness' with 'dark completions'. This demonstrates that the Welsh have been recorded throughout history as being other, different and inferior particularly when compared with their English neighbours. Wales has also been embedded in racialised discourse, as they have often been described as the 'racialised other' by the 'white settlers' of England (Williams, 2015: 336). As a result, scholars have referred to the Welsh identity as an ethnic identity rather than a national one (Day, 2002). Historical comparisons of Wales as the lesser version of England link back to activists' strong assertion of claiming their identity as Welsh and not British, reflected in the nation celebrating culture through the *Eisteddfod* and the maintenance of the Welsh language.

As highlighted, the Blue Books were damning for the Welsh language. However, the language has been through other attempts at eradication. This is evidenced in physical punishments during the nineteenth century in the form of the 'Welsh Not'. The Welsh not was a wooden board given to children in schools to wear around their necks if they were caught speaking Welsh (Johnes, 2024). Johnes (2024) argues that the emblem is a significant reason for the decline of the Welsh language. An interview with Ela revealed that she participated in BBC's *Snowdonia 1890*, a programme that saw families immersing themselves in nineteenth-century Wales' way of life ('Snowdonia 1890, Series 1', 2010). In the show, Ela is punished for speaking Welsh and is given the Welsh Not. She said the experience was 'traumatising and degrading' (Ela, *personal interview*, 31/01/23). Therefore, not only was the Welsh Not a physical representation of the attempts to make the Welsh language extinct, but it was also an 'emotional symbol of the cultural disadvantage of Wales' (Watkins, 2007: 78). This is reinforced by activist Mollie, who believes the 'Welsh language being such an unspoken language now is because of the history' (Mollie, *personal interview*, 07/03/23).

Language has been proven to be important in the construction of Wales' cultural identity (Watkins, 2007). However, as Watkins (2007) points out, the Welsh language has died out as a primary and national language. This raises questions about how the identity of the Welsh has changed when Welsh is no longer the dominant language in the nation. As activists have revealed through their retelling of the Blue Books and the Welsh Not, the language's role in constructing the Welsh identity reminds people of the historical treatment and oppression of the language and Wales in general. As a result of these sentiments, the language and culture are seen as sacred. As activist Dyfrig suggested, there are 'anxieties about the future [of the] Welsh language' (Dyfrig, *personal interview,* 03/08/23). As a result, Welsh language schools, according to Elen, ensure that the history of the language is not forgotten. She said:

> I think in terms of school, it was a lot more that the poetry and songs would often be about how Wales is oppressed, but it hasn't reached the Wales it should be. *Hiraeth*. Longing for something that will never be. In a way, it's romanticised in Welsh culture (Elen, *personal interview*, 19/01/23).

Generations of Welsh speakers are taught about the 'oppressive' practices against Wales in a way that romanticises Wales' struggle and further develops the narrative of the Welsh as an oppressed community. A prominent example is the narrative of the 'Tryweryn flooding'. In 1965, a rural village known as Capel Celyn was drowned to allow water supply to nearby Liverpool (BBC News, 2023). A mural can now be found in its place with the words 'Cofiwch Dryweryn' (remember Tryweryn) painted on it as a recognition and symbol of Welsh oppression (Bowen, 2020). After the rise of BLM, the mural was vandalised with swastikas, connecting the oppression of both, depicting the historical injustice of Tryweryn as in some way synonymous with the injustices of the Black community (Bowen, 2020). This suggests that whilst different, both communities are compared in their oppressive histories whilst demonstrating the efforts placed by Welsh and Black communities to shed light on the oppressive practices they have encountered. Particularly for Wales, Elen's recognition of this narrative being taught in schools reflects how these sentiments are still felt today and play a

prominent role in contemporary imaginings of the Welsh identity. It reemphasises Williams's (2012) previous point that Wales has become more nationalistic in sentiment due in part to historical practices of oppression and argues for Barassi and Zamponi's (2020) belief that identities are constructed and carried through such memories.

The Welsh language as synonymous with Whiteness

As discussed, the maintenance and the prevalence of the Welsh language are important elements in forming the Welsh cultural identity. However, as Alexander (1996: 3) describes, it could also be 'the erection of cultural fences' to preserve native identities. As a result, those who do not adhere to those cultural boundaries see themselves excluded or looked at as 'Other'. These boundaries relating to the Welsh language are seen to be more lenient to White non-speakers compared to ethnic minority non-speakers. Melanie, despite being a Welsh speaker, has noticed these differences:

> We'd never say 'a White person doesn't speak Welsh, so that makes them less Welsh'. It's almost as if somebody of colour who does speak Welsh is a bit more Welsh … I've had it again at least seven times last year where people would come up to our group and speak Welsh to the White people in the group and then go 'oh, I'm so sorry' and then repeat it in English to me and I'll tell them I speak Welsh and they'll say, 'you speak Welsh so well' (Melanie, *personal interview*, 03/07/23)

Melanie's statement reflects the overall perceptions of Wales and Welsh speakers as being synonymous with Whiteness. It reinforces beliefs that 'too often the word 'Welsh' has been used synonymously to denote Welsh speaker' (Williams, 2015: 337). In their Canada and Wales case studies, Giles et al. (1977) found that language was more important than cultural background. However, Melanie's experience would disagree, as she suggests it is only the case for Non-White people in Wales. This links back to Kate (a White activist), who states that she regrets not learning the language but also considers her Welsh identity to be strong. Melanie

suggests that White people who do not speak Welsh are never questioned regarding their 'Welshness'. She also reveals that people are shocked to learn that she speaks Welsh and 'praise' her for her accuracy in the language, as though questioning that it is something she has learnt rather than grew up with because of her race. Interestingly, according to the Welsh government's 2021 census, the number of people speaking Welsh from mixed or multiple ethnic groups increased from 2011 to 2021 (from 11,000 to 16,000). In contrast, the number of White people in Wales speaking Welsh decreased (Census 2021, 2023). Although the majority of Welsh speakers in Wales do identify as White according to the census, these statistics point to a clear effort and interest by those from Non-White communities to learn Welsh and highlight the narrative of Welsh speakers as White is outdated.

In contrast, Leena relays conversations with others who claim that by not accepting Welsh as her primary national identity, it must mean she 'hates' the language (Leena, *personal interview*, 03/08/23). Yet despite being born in Switzerland and growing up in Geneva, Leena has actively learnt the Welsh language and has made efforts to make the language more accessible in her work. Despite this, her role in Wales has been challenged because she does not claim Welsh as her identity. She also acknowledges that non-White Welsh speakers have resided in Wales, particularly Cardiff, 'for hundreds of years' (Leena, *personal interview*, 03/08/23). Ethnic minority populations in Wales (though largely residing in the South) have been a part of the Welsh community in the past 150 years (Evans, 2015a: 44). However, Melanie and Leena insinuate that despite a longstanding history in the nation, because of colour and the lack of Welsh language, people from the community are not considered Welsh in the dominant view of society. This reinforces the belief (as mentioned in Chapter 2) that Welshness is viewed through Whiteness (Williams, 2007: 760). As a result, as we shall see, activists seemed to struggle to embrace both their racial and national identities.

The Myth of Racial Tolerance in Wales: The Multiple Identities of Wales

It is clear that Wales has seen its 'hardships' (Lumbley, 2019), and activists use Wales' oppression in comparison with the social struggles of ethnic minorities. This is also historically referenced as the Welsh have often been grouped with other minority groups, particularly African Americans, in the nineteenth century (Williams, 2012: 18). Irram considers the Welsh 'the originally colonised country by England—the originally oppressed' (Irram, *personal interview*, 20/02/23). On the other hand, Nasir looks at his own experience as a Black Welsh man and states, 'Our struggles (Welsh and Black) are the same, especially regarding grassroots communities, such as social injustice' (Nasir, *personal interview*, 24/04/23). Both activists understand oppression as ethnic minorities; however, both recognise Wales' struggle as similar to their racial struggle. Wales' narrative has often been 'aligned with the Black oppressed' (Williams, 2015: 336). However, social exclusions are 'touchy matters', particularly in Wales (Day, 2002: 248). Some activists highly contest the comparison between Wales' historical struggle and those of ethnic minorities. For Melanie:

> I feel really kind of embarrassed when people try to compare the oppression of Welsh people to the oppression of black people. It's just not even comparable. So, it's, you know, it's a really weird dichotomy (Melanie, *personal interview*, 03/07/23)

Cath, similarly, disagrees with the comparisons:

> You cannot compare it. It's offensive and inappropriate to compare it like it's not okay. So yeah, that is what I feel about my Welsh activism in terms of Wales. I feel like part of it is trying to get people to understand that [on Welsh oppression]. And okay, yeah, that can still be true. And that can still hold. And that can still be part of my identity, but I cannot let it excuse me (Cath, *personal interview*, 22/05/23).

Some BLM activists recognise issues that the Welsh identity has historically faced. However, it was clear that activists had different opinions when it came to comparing this with the oppression of ethnic minorities. As some activists accounted, it is 'offensive' to compare. To

understand why some activists believe this is offensive may lie in the fact that Whiteness is viewed as a privilege; thus, White Welsh people are not discriminated against based on appearance within the dominant society (Harris, 1993). The treatment and 'oppression' of the Welsh based on their national identity in modern society is incomparable to racial discrimination. This is further explained in the example of the historical discrimination of the Irish. Though they were discriminated against in the US, O'Malley (2023) argues that the Irish (and Celts more broadly) should not be viewed as receiving the same treatment as African-Americans because of the privileges their Whiteness afforded them, and therefore contributed to the oppression of the Black community. As noted earlier in this chapter, it is also important to recognise Wales was complicit within the British Empire and, therefore, has historically contributed to the oppression of ethnic minorities (Watkins, 2007: 97; Bohata, 2015: 86; Lumbley, 2019). Moreover, to suggest that the plight of the White Welsh is the same as Welsh ethnic minorities does not acknowledge the existing oppressive issues ethnic minority people in Wales continue to face (Crawley, 2012). Comparisons between the oppression of Welsh and Black peoples are questioned by Williams (2023: 235) in her biography as she states the narrative that 'the Welshman is a Black man at heart' does not recognise the 'Black man who is Welsh or the Welshman who is Black'. As a result, the comparative subject of both identities does not recognise that such identities are not mutually exclusive. It reinforces narratives that Wales' cultural identity is constructed by and for White individuals, leaving ethnic minority people in Wales as disengaged and rejected by the wider population. To expand on this, an analysis of the racial perception of Wales is further analysed.

The role of the Welsh language impacts how activists experience their Welsh identity and their perceptions of what race means in Wales. Despite conversations of race and nation, Alexander (1996) reveals that the identities of both Black and British are viewed as perplexing, as though both identities cannot exist together. However, he argues that these identities coexist,

as seen in the strong community of the Black British youth. Others argue that ethnic minority influences have created 'new ethnicities' that impact the way we view and conceptualise national identities, i.e. Black British (Henriques et al., 2017). Despite this, research on Wales suggests that due to Wales' cultural identity having its own 'moral struggle', people are somewhat more intolerant toward those who adopt a different culture to that of Welshness (Williams, 2012: 28). This has left some activists feeling rejected by Wales and, as a result, their identity. Nicole, Melanie and Irram all discuss their experiences with this:

> Am I Welsh enough? Do Welsh people think I'm Welsh? I'm very proud of being Welsh, but I know there's Welsh people who just wouldn't consider me that Welsh (Nicole, *personal interview,*05/05/23)

> I felt very rejected. I felt like I loved this country, but they didn't love me back. So, I didn't want anything to do with it. And so, for me, it was a real big identity crisis because, of course, I didn't hate Wales; I loved Wales. I just felt rejected, you know, and that's what it was. And so, I felt so different (Melanie, *personal interview*, 03/07/23)

> Well, it's sort of come full circle. For a long time, I didn't feel Welsh. There are people that didn't believe that I was born in this country. When people ask you your background, as soon as I say I'm Muslim, you can see the look of terror straight away in their eyes (Irram, *personal interview*, 20/02/23)

All three activists shared similar experiences with their Welsh identity and the preconceptions of others because of their racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. The emotions of the three women are clear in their retelling of feeling 'love' for a nation 'that didn't love me back'. This links back to Chapters 2 and 4, in which movement participation is affected by emotional experiences. Notably, it reemphasises the impact of racial and cultural trauma in BLM and anti-racist movements (Stephens, 2018). Here, however, it relates those feelings more specifically to how ethnic minority participants are affected by their rejection as Welsh due to their cultural and racial backgrounds. Interviews revealed that the activists have begun questioning the extent of their Welshness. Activist Charlotte also relays this in her book on her experiences as a mixed-race North Walian. She also discusses how she felt that Wales was 'rejecting' her and asks, 'I wonder if this country will ever imagine me when it imagines what it is to be Welsh?'

(Williams, 2023: 236). These anxieties are not imagined, as ‘discrimination is a feature of life for ethnic minorities living in Wales’, suggesting that racial intolerance is still prevalent in the making of Wales’ cultural identity (Parker, 2018: 119). These sentiments were also personified in June 1919 when the town and cities of Barry, Cardiff and Newport (South Wales) became the place for race riots (Evans, 1980). The rise in ethnic assaults during this period revealed that, despite the diversity of South Wales at the time, Wales was hiding under the ‘myth of tolerance’ (Evans, 2015: 128). Racial and ethnic issues are consistent today as many refugees and asylum seekers in Wales face issues of racism, though it is suggested that it is more hidden (Parker, 2018). Racial intolerance may be covert, but it is still – as the activist’s narratives here have relayed - very much present and felt.

National identities are ‘imagined’ communities (Anderson, 1991). As such, there is the potential for it to be reimagined, perhaps in a more inclusive way. To be Welsh is to recognise an ‘inclusive bond’ between people, but those ‘feelings’ of Welshness vary depending on the individual (Balsom et al., 1984: 160). The different facets of Welsh identity can also be highlighted through geographical context. Balsom (1985) first wrote about the three prevailing Welsh identities but this has also been conceptualised by other scholars (Day, 1979; Bowie, 1993). The significance of geography on these identities will be explained further, but the purpose of shedding light on the variety of ways that national identity is expressed in Wales is to highlight the fluidity of the identity. Multicultural Wales challenges Balsom’s theory as the view of Wales’ cultural identity is changing. As Jones (1992: 334) states, ‘Welsh identities, it would appear, are plentiful, but a Welsh identity to be embraced by all, or by a majoritarian current, is proving to be harder to come by’. These sentiments of fitting a certain typology of Welshness were relayed by Leena, ‘I find this a lot of like wanting to box people into a certain category, and there's a sort of view that if you don't fit into a certain box, you don't make any

sense' (Leena, *personal interview*, 03/08/23). It reflects how the imaginings of a Welsh identity can make space for those that reflect a range of racial identities. As Williams (2015: 346) hopes, Wales should 'axiomatically be referred to as a plural nation and Welshness embraced in plural ways'. Presently, however, ethnic minorities in Wales compare both their Welshness and racial backgrounds, as they see them as a contradiction. For Melanie:

> It's a very confusing part because the two don't always go together harmoniously. Sometimes I describe it as like having divorced parents and you love both of them. I think it's a very real identity crisis that a lot of mixed people go through regardless of where in the UK they come from because being British and being of colour, they don't go hand in hand all the time… I haven't grappled with it fully yet. I'm not sure which one I really am (Melanie, *personal interview*, 03/07/23)

Melanie powerfully describes both her Welsh cultural identity and her mixed heritage as 'divorced parents', thus finding it difficult to accommodate both identities, which at times do not comfortably co-exist. She also states that she is unsure which 'one I really am' as though she must choose which best represents her. As Melanie has addressed, her relationship with both identities is complex, reflecting the lack of security racial minorities feel in terms of celebrating their racial history in Wales. However, it is understood that Wales has been 'made up of a mixture of people, possessing different backgrounds' since the nineteenth century (Jones, 2019: 21). It is argued that the resurgence of racism in Wales is because of efforts to cultivate a stronger nationalistic front post-imperial Britain and due to the establishment of Welsh political institutions in 1999, revitalising the imaginings of the Welsh cultural identity to mean Welsh speaker (Coupland et al., 2006; Williams, 2015a). Therefore, the image of the Wales' cultural identity does not reflect the multiculturalism of Wales today. The interpretation of what it means to be Welsh should reflect on encompassing the range of individuals in the nation but in a way that celebrates ethnic diversity rather than creating a space of monoculturalism.

The dichotomy between rural Wales and Tiger Bay

One space in Wales which seemingly celebrates multiculturalism is Tiger Bay in Cardiff. Cardiff's multi-racial community began its roots in the nineteenth century (Evans, 1980: 5). However, the area of Tiger Bay (also known as Butetown, Butan, or the Docks) still upholds Wales' perception of tolerance as it 'remains one of the most diverse areas in Wales' due to its welcoming attitudes to immigration (Weedon and Jordan, 2015: 183). In 2011, it was reported that 66% of people in Tiger Bay were White, with the rest being of minority ethnic backgrounds (Byrne et al., 2023: 376). Despite this, Tiger Bay has received less academic attention than larger multiracial English cities like London or Manchester (Byrne et al., 2023: 374). The view of Tiger Bay as an example of inclusivity in Wales was a subject of interest for some activists interviewed. Many spoke about Tiger Bay in a way that revealed pride in its ethnic and racial diversity. As Nasir contends:

> I was quite fortunate that I grew up and born and bred in Tiger Bay and seeing around the difference in terms of different cultures and people around the world, it was kind of a melting pot in with over 56 nationalities all living in the square mile radius (Nasir, *personal interview*, 24/04/23).

It becomes clear that activists feeling 'fortunate' about growing up in Tiger Bay demonstrate their sentiments of exclusion by the rest of the nation. It also became apparent that the community of Tiger Bay spurred on activism by people like Nasir and Nicole. Particularly, leadership and years of generational activism residing in the area of Cardiff have seemingly become embedded in the community. Nasir recounts a conversation with his father in which he said, 'We've paved the way out for you; you need to be much better than us in terms of activism' (Nasir, *personal interview*, 24/04/23). This, he argues, has driven the current generation of people in Tiger Bay who are 'living and breathing activism and anti-racism on a daily basis' (Nasir, *personal interview*, 24/04/23).

The role that anti-racism plays in Tiger Bay's community is reflected in Nicole's zine 'Docks', in which she speaks to the people of the community and how its space champions the younger generation of diversity. In the magazine, Nicole mentions the role that Betty Campbell (a leader in the community) played in their activist mentality (Ready, 2020b). In an interview, Nicole said she viewed Campbell as 'Black Wales' (Nicole, *personal interview*, 05/05/23), whilst Nasir labelled her as a 'teacher' who 'trained all of us to stand for justice' (Nasir, *personal interview*, 24/04/23). It is clear from both their experiences that Tiger Bay has allowed them to champion their racial backgrounds whilst still embracing their role as Welsh people. The area of Cardiff symbolises a space where ethnic diversity can be and is celebrated and reflected in Wales' cultural identity and landscape. However, it also shows how years of community and challenges have raised a generation of anti-racist activists. Tiger Bay reflects 'much longer histories of ethnic diversity than other parts of Wales' (Crawley, 2012: 15). Still, it reflects how the rest of Wales could take inspiration from its anti-racist and welcoming efforts. Tiger Bay is viewed as unique by the rest of Wales because of its racialised history, which constructs a different image of belonging (Byrne et al., 2023). It is a space that represents how Wales' cultural identity can be viewed and incorporates multiculturalism, but as suggested by its uniqueness, this is not the case for the rest of Wales.

Despite the somewhat positive experience activists have had in living in more diverse areas of Wales, understanding the general experience of ethnic minority communities in Wales requires a look into the 'poverty and rural exclusion' that most ethnic minorities in Wales experience (Crawley, 2012: 8). Nicole even reflects on the different attitudes towards racial diversity in Wales as she states that despite living in Tiger Bay, 'I also recognise how that isn't everyone's perspective, and it definitely seemed like it during BLM' (Nicole, *personal interview*, 05/05/23). Here, she refers to the contrasting perceptions of BLM in areas like

Cardiff as opposed to rural areas of Wales. This is because rural/countryside Wales represent 'authentic Welshness' and still perpetuate[s] the image of the dominant construction of national identity' (Williams, 2015b: 251). BLM's struggle for rural support is not unique to Wales. In rural America, BLM finds it difficult to 'manifest their opposition to Anti-Black resistance' as people struggle to mobilise in meaningful ways (Henderson and Louis Jr., 2017). Kitzmiller and Burton (2021) found that the threat of visibility stopped participation in rural America. They conclude that activists in rural areas face different challenges to people in cities due to close-knit communities: 'the fact that most people in the community know the names and families of individuals' creates fear for protest participation and judgment (Kitzmiller and Burton, 2021: 64). In a similar vein, rural Wales struggles to mobilise against racism. However, as previous chapters have shown, social media makes it easier for activists in Wales to engage and network with one another. Yet, it is unclear how this impacts activists, specifically from rural areas.

Scholars are becoming increasingly aware of the differences in ethnic minority experiences in Wales. Specifically, how the experience of ethnic minorities living in more rural areas of Wales differs significantly from those in Tiger Bay. Rural spaces are viewed as 'de-racialised' communities, where 'Black and Asian incomers do not feel welcome' (Williams, 2007: 741). The lack of diversity and unwelcoming attitudes in rural Wales have made it hard for anti-racist efforts because, according to Charlotte, 'for the actual individual like me growing up, you're on your own […] so there isn't that chance for a sense of the collective' (Charlotte, *personal interview*, 21/07/23). Rural Wales' unwelcoming attitude returns to Balsom's (1985: 6) three Wales model. Notably, he finds that the 'Fro Gymraeg' (Welsh-speaking and Welsh-identifying) tend to reside in the more rural areas of North and West Wales. However, ethnic minorities in Wales remain primarily in South-East Wales (Evans et al., 2015: 6). It is suggested that rural Wales demonstrates 'authentic' Welsh culture (Jones, 2019: 23), which

acknowledges passive ideas of ethnic minorities in Wales as not being authentically Welsh. This reflects how rural areas of Wales changed the narrative of the nation (or indeed Britain as a whole) as multicultural (Williams, 2007: 741). Activists who reside in more rural areas of Wales, such as the North, have noticed the difference in feeling welcome and its effects on their activism. As Kate suggests, people in North Wales do not think issues of racism 'is their business' (Kate, *personal interview*, 29/03/23). Consequently, engaging with anti-racism can prove difficult within these areas, as beliefs that 'it is harder to mobilize against ethnic minorities' seem more exclusive to the South (Evans, 2015: 147). Leena extends on this as she says:

> I'm very conscious that there's not many people like me, so I mean, you probably seen it too. There's not many non-white people in North Wales who will talk about these topics. A lot of people who are involved in movements like Black Lives Matter, Stand Up to Racism, any of that sort of thing. So, I tend to get active and being an activist on social media so that I can give the perspective of what it's like here, and equally just the perspective of rural Wales, because I think when it comes to race and equalities, it's not talked about enough (Leena, *personal interview*, 03/08/23).

Leena recognises that North Wales is a predominantly White space, so much so that she feels she has to use social media to relay her activism, as she cannot rely on those around her to be active. This was emphasised in Chapter 4, as activists discussed using social media for activism. It allowed them to connect with others across Wales, building and forming relationships between anti-racist activists. However, this was seen as beneficial for people across Wales in general, not just the North. Rural Wales is viewed as 'denying change' and sticking to 'traditional values', reflected in its largely White population (Aquilino et al., 2021: 143). She also reflects on the fact she feels like there are not many people 'like her' in these spaces, which echoes Charlotte's previous take on feeling isolated in rural Wales because of their racial background, but also emphasises again how difficult it is to mobilise in rural areas of Wales. Activist Vee has experience organising protests in North Wales because 'we didn't see much of it happening outside of social media. There wasn't a lot of space in North Wales

for the people of colour around us to voice this struggle' (Vee, *personal interview,* 18/05/23). The lack of anti-racist action in rural parts of Wales reflects the importance of White activists like Vee, who believe it is important to engage in anti-racism despite feeling that there is a lack of collective efforts. The contrast between rural/North Wales and Tiger Bay demonstrates how activists within large minority ethnic communities feel more open in their activist efforts due, in part, to its embeddedness within their community, whilst those in more White dominant areas struggle to mobilise. Behaviours are embedded through social structures and relationships (Granovetter, 1985). Therefore, diverse cities will be more likely to mobilise for a social movement due to their relationships and strong ties and the influence of urbanisation on collective behaviour (McAdam, 1982; Nicholls, 2008).

Activists in Wales struggled with embracing their national identities because they did not feel Welsh 'enough' due to their racial backgrounds. However, it is clear that activists in Wales have different experiences depending on their regional locations. The contrast between the different ways that activists who reside in diverse communities and those in primarily White areas of Wales present anti-racism reinforces reports that tackling racism in Wales needs to be 'locally specific' due to contrasting regional attitudes to racism (Crawley, 2012: 12). The final section of this chapter addresses some steps Wales has taken to be anti-racist and reflects the importance and effectiveness of anti-racist activists in Wales.

The Contested Success of Anti-Racism and the Future of Wales

Activists have proven that despite different regional attitudes to anti-racism, their actions have been successful and necessary. The efforts of ethnic minorities in Wales have challenged the national story of Wales through their aims of restructuring ideas of Welshness

(Williams et al., 2015). Because of their efforts, activist Andrew believes 'the fabric of being Welsh is changing' (Andrew, *personal interview*, 09/03/23). However, he believes some people are 'still deeply uncomfortable with this' (Andrew, *personal interview*, 09/03/23). Irram believes that Wales is unique and forward-thinking in its approach to racism. She expands: 'We've developed a reputation for the furthest along in what we've done, and that's despite every obstacle being put in our way' (Irram, *personal interview*, 20/02/23). Irram demonstrates her beliefs that Wales (despite its history with oppressive policies) has paved the way as an inclusive and diverse space.

One way anti-racist activist efforts can be viewed successfully is through the concept and work of 'reframing Picton'. The work of reframing Thomas Picton was largely introduced after calls to remove the slave owner's statue at Cardiff City Hall in 2020 (BBC News, 2020b). This decision has been accredited to the work of BLM activists (NationCymru, 2020). Some activists, however, felt that removing the statue erased Wales' responsibility and part in slavery. As a result, activists like Nicole, Jessica and O'Mo worked with *Amgueddfa Cymru* (the National Museum of Wales) to create an exhibition reflecting Picton's whole history and Wales' part in the British Empire (National Museum Cardiff, n.d). The exhibition shows a positive step in Wales taking accountability for their part in racist practices. Despite this, Jessica believes that Welsh institutions are still racist and cases like this are 'just a performance' and are not ready to employ 'Black staff' due to existing policies (Jessica, *personal interview*, 05/06/23). Her experience working with the arts sector in Wales reflects a persistent issue of performance as she believes institutions on the surface are accredited for their role in anti-racism, whilst their Black employees face very different experiences. Similar to the performativity seen in social media activism in Chapter 4, Spielmann et al. (2023) found that organisations and brands also engaged with BLM through performative allyship. As someone

who works within the heritage and history sector, Nasir also reveals that institutions do not reflect the role of Black history in Wales. He states:

> Here in Wales, it sometimes feels that there is historical amnesia, where you think, where is that contribution that my grandparents and all these people who contributed to Cardiff? It was our elders who contributed toward these things, and where is their history? (Nasir, *personal interview*, 24/04/23)

Despite a large and historical multi-racial community in Cardiff (Evans, 1980: 6), Nasir believes this is still not reflected in the region's institutional landscape. It suggests that whilst exhibitions like reframing Picton are necessary for cultivating an anti-racist environment, ethnic minorities are only represented due to their negative historical experience. As Nasir notes, ethnic minority communities are not celebrated or recognised in the fabric of Wales' history.

Another way in which ethnic minority contributions to Wales may be reflected is through changing the education curriculum in schools so that it represents all of Wales. The change in the curriculum is a part of the Welsh Government's 'Anti-Racist Action Plan', which aims to eradicate racism by 2030 (Welsh Government, 2022). Within it, they aim to make it 'mandatory to teach Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic histories' (Welsh Government, 2022). This was reinforced in a Welsh Government plenary whereby Welsh Conservative member Laura Anne Jones asked Minister for Education and Welsh Language, Jeremy Miles:

> Do you agree with me, Minister, that it's important that we begin to see more literature in schools that is reflective of our communities, of Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities? Obviously, they form an integral part of where we live (Jones, 2022).

Miles replied:

> In addition to encouraging students into the profession, it's really important to support teachers and teaching professionals from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities who are already in the system, and an important part of that is progression, so that we can see school leaders that young professionals can look up to as an inspiration for their own career paths, and we are a very long way from being able to say that that is the

> reality. The discussions that I've had with BAMEed Network and others has really focused on that as being an important part of our plans into the future (Miles, 2022).

Activists like Nasir believe that changing the Welsh curriculum would positively affect Wales' anti-racist future. He said:

> I'm hopeful that change will come, and if we change the curriculum as well at the same time and really start teaching Welsh black history and Welsh history, I think it would empower a lot more young people but also have a great discussion with the wider broader communities (Nasir, *personal interview*, 24/04/23).

He argues for reworking the curriculum to ensure we teach the children of Wales about ethnic minority history and to engender a more inclusive mindset. Providing young children in Wales with the basis of inclusive education allows children to be aware of the space ethnic minorities hold in Wales and their significance in the landscape. This was a message Charlotte encouraged through her contribution to the 'Anti-Racist Action Plan' framework. She said:

> With all students, all institutions involved in shaping a sustainable and inclusive future, and we know that a diverse education and inclusive education enriches everyone. But listen now to the new paradigm of the curriculum of Wales. And it goes like this. Practitioners to think afresh about what they teach, how they teach, and about what we want young people to be as well as to learn and that involves a thorough, reimagining. Education has pressed the reset that and we have to have confidence and power to move beyond the spaces that we already inhabit and reach out to new possibilities (Charlotte, *observation*, 08/06/23).

Despite positive assertions regarding the action plan and its attitudes towards the curriculum, some activists feel unsure about its effects. For Yasmin, she believes that the plan is not 'fit for purpose' because of Wales' bordering regime with England. She believes that the nation's border with England would make implementing the plan difficult because 'if someone calls us the P word in England, they could say "you can only say that on the border" (Yasmin, *personal interview*, 01/02/23). Additionally, both Yasmin and Leena note how implementations are yet

to be made; therefore, ‘it's not tried and tested yet. We don't know if it will work. It could work. It could do great things’ (Leena, *personal interview*, 03/08/23). Both activists suggest that without its implementation, they are sceptical of how useful it will be for anti-racism in Wales. Leena believes that, if done correctly, the plan could be a step forward in eliminating racism in Wales, though only time will tell. It also demonstrates how anti-racist activists in Wales have been somewhat successful in shedding light on racial injustice as protests surrounding the death of George Floyd in 2020 ‘reinforced the urgent need for action’ and thus reinforced the resumed work of the plan that year (Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, 2022: 7). It shows the effects of their action and provides ‘hope’ to some (Nasir, *personal interview*, 24/04/23). Activists are also reworking the ideas and myths of what it means to be Welsh. It is unclear what Wales’ action plan will mean for anti-racism in Wales, as only time will tell.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the experience of ethnic minorities and the need for anti-racist mobilisation in Wales. It adds to scholarly conversations surrounding Wales’ tolerance towards ethnic minorities. This chapter argues that Wales's cultural foundations and constructions have been made by and for White people, and as a result, the nation is not as tolerant as traditionally envisaged.

Previous chapters discussed the importance of individual experiences of action and identity and the experiences of mobilising under the network. This chapter adds to the discussion by expanding the conversations of experiences with anti-racism and highlighting the importance and uniqueness of anti-racist action in Wales. Action in Wales reinforces the

importance of looking at anti-racism on a smaller scale, both nationally and locally, to address specific anti-racist concerns.

Activists discussed the importance of Wales' history of oppression in their sentiments of Welshness. Still, they highlighted that despite this experience, the construct of the Welsh cultural identity does not cater towards those from differing minority ethnic backgrounds. As a result, ethnic minority activists felt rejected by Wales. This resulted in the mobilisation of activists to make Wales more racially inclusive. This demonstrates the importance of activists' interpretations of their racialised experiences. Other experiences suggest that some diverse areas of Wales, like Tiger Bay, accept and embrace multiculturalism, suggesting that an identity that embraces both national and racial identities is possible in Wales. The experience of those from more rural spaces in Wales reflects a contrasting narrative and attitude toward race, attributed to a lack of mobilisation in these spaces. Without understanding the individual lived experiences of activists, this dichotomy would not have been as obviously present. This suggests that each individual carries their own experiences with race and racism in Wales, but all experiences reinforced the need for anti-racist action. Insights from Wales' anti-racist action plan and 'reframing Picton' show the precise impact of activism in the nation, but how this will look for Wales in the future is uncertain. Ethnic minority experiences in Wales demonstrate that despite a growing minority ethnic community in the nation, racial tolerance in Wales continues to be a myth. This chapter emphasises the importance of looking at social movements from a cultural perspective, as it allows us to see how national identity can impact the creation of activists.

The next chapter of this thesis provides a conclusion to these findings and addresses key contributions, research implications, limitations, and avenues for future research.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This thesis examined the lived experience of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, this final chapter will conclude the study. First, it provides an overview of the thesis. Second, it summarises and situates the research findings within the main research questions. Finally, I reflect on the implications and limitations of the study and provide options for future research.

Overview and Contribution of the Thesis

Social movements have been a popular and integral part of our political and societal landscape. Now more than ever, there is an interest in movement mobilisation focusing on cultural and identity factors (Offe, 1985). This is attributed to the role of social media in activism in a movement's popularity and global reach, which have given rise to movements like BLM and anti-racism. This study, having examined BLM in Wales, adds to the evolving research on social movements, particularly as it relates to contemporary ways of action. It contributes significantly to understanding social movements, racial identities, and anti-racist activism in Wales, as it is an unexplored but critical national case study. By focusing on the lived experience of BLM and anti-racist activists, this study adds to existing literature on new social (identity-based) movements, provides empirical insights into activist mobilisation in smaller nations and emphasises theoretical and cultural importance in contemporary social movements.

As noted in earlier chapters of the thesis, previous scholarship examined BLM through the lens of US experiences or larger cities in areas like the US. This study brings Wales into the conversation. An examination of BLM and anti-racist activism in Welsh towns and rural spaces highlights how national and cultural identities and historical narratives influence the manifestation of racism and anti-racism. This thesis demonstrated how activists in Wales reshaped BLM's global and US-centric message by adopting it into a unique framework of Wales' historical experiences with national linguistic and cultural oppression. As seen in Chapter 6, this provides a distinctive understanding of the connection between cultural and racial oppression, which, in this case, provides difficulties for ethnic minorities in Wales to feel included in the cultural landscape of Wales. The analysis of BLM in rural areas in Wales demonstrates difficulties in advocating and mobilising for anti-racism within predominantly White spaces. It remained unseen how anti-racism exists within these localities, particularly as it relates to rural racial experiences. The case study of Tiger Bay, however, reveals a refreshing approach to inclusivity and championing anti-racism in the nation. It also provides insight into how Wales's unique cultural, historical and racial dynamics impact the experiences of activists in the country. This study reimagines the Welsh cultural identity and argues for a reinterpretation of the nation's cultural identity, which would represent its inclusive and diverse population. It thus contributes to broader debates about national belonging and the role of minority voices in the making of a national identity. These dichotomies add to conversations around Wales' racial (in)tolerance (Williams et al., 2015). The study also expands the geographical and cultural scope of social movement studies and challenges the homogenised understanding of BLM in US and UK discourse.

As a result of its focus on Wales, this research offers practical insights for activists, organisations, and political members who seek to address racial inequalities in the country. As

examined in Chapter 6, ethnic minorities do not feel represented in the Welsh landscape, particularly regarding teaching diverse histories in schools. Chapter 4 also revealed their experiences with racial abuse in schools. This contributes to the focus of the government's Anti-Racist Action Plan, which seeks to implement more inclusive practices and curricula in Welsh schools (Welsh Government, 2022).

This thesis also makes several theoretical contributions by integrating New Social Movements (NSM), cultural approaches and Critical Race Theory (CRT). Chapter 2 highlighted several factors within the NSM framework that can be seen in BLM, including the role of identity, culture, digital activism, and decentralised leadership. Chapter 4 examines the importance of identity as it relates to allyship and racial identity in the participation of activists. However, as this is a study of race, the impact of racial identity is predominantly highlighted throughout. BLM encompasses digital activism, which was revealed to be important in all aspects of activism. It was shown that social media is a popular choice of action and important in tactics in Chapter 4, an arena of contention in Chapter 5, and provides connections between activists in Wales in Chapter 6. It, therefore, builds on the importance of digital activism, particularly social media, in the new age of activism. The impact of BLM's decentralised leadership was clear in Wales. Both the decentralisation of the movement and its member-led model saw the movement being interpreted in individual and strategic ways by its activists in Chapter 5. This impacted the formation of solid relationships and collective identity in the movement.

The cultural significance of BLM and anti-racism in Wales is more significant than simply a component of NSM; it was integral to the approach of this study. Therefore, this study adopted a cultural approach to examine the lived experience of activists in Wales. As examined

in Chapter 2, culture is intertwined with the construction of meaning. These cultural meanings can be found through identity, narrative and discourse. Chapter 4 adopts this framework and shows that these three components can be found in the mobilisation of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales through action, tactics and lived/cultural experiences. In this thesis, therefore, I argue that identity, narrative, and discourse impact the mobilisation of activists, but I also reveal how they often intertwine to shape meaning.

Adopting both NSM and a cultural approach contributes to a deeper understanding of identity in impacting movements. As stated, however, race is a focal point of discussion in this thesis. By putting the lived experience of racism and racial identity at the heart of this study, it contributes to CRT. It also provides a fresh approach to social movements. NSMs often focus on identity through a collective lens. I, however, offer a nuanced approach by looking at activism from the perspective of the individual activist. A cultural approach inspired by Jasper (2004; 2007) shows how activists are strategic and are influenced moreover by personal choices. As Chapters 2 and 5 demonstrate, activism (in part due to digital activism and decentralisation) is becoming more individual. This offers a new approach to NSM, which sees the importance of examining the individual/personal perspective of activists before understanding the role of collective identity.

The last contribution rests on the methodological choice of this thesis. Using IPA, the framework of analysis provided a tool to explore the lived experience of the participants. As explained in Chapter 3, IPA is often used within the discipline of psychology (Smith et al., 2009). As a result, there is limited use of IPA within social movement studies. This thesis provides a framework to do this. In addition, this study demonstrates how social media (namely

Twitter) can also be a method implemented in the framework through an analysis of the discourse of Tweets to interpret and supplement interviewees' interpretations.

Answering Research Questions and Addressing Overall Findings

The main research question of this thesis is: '*How do Black Lives Matter and anti-racist activists understand and express anti-racist action in Wales?*' To answer this question, this thesis examined the lived experience of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales. To understand the particular motivations of activists, it was integral to speak to them directly, uncover the experiences that led them to action, and analyse the specific activist methods they used.

The three empirical chapters in this thesis draw on and answer each sub-question. This section summarises these findings in relation to each question. The first sub-question: '*What are the personal experiences of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales, and how do these experiences shape their engagement?*' was answered in Chapter 4. The chapter argues that emotions, narrative, and identity shape cultural meanings, which fosters the participation and mobilisation of activists. To do so, it begins by examining the biographical experiences of BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales. Activists demonstrated how protests were beneficial in influencing a collective identity by creating engagement through emotions and group visibility. Additionally, it was also shown how the favoured method of social media activism contributed to the participation and popularity of BLM in Wales. Further, it reinforced visual, discursive and symbolic engagement around racial injustice. Social media was shown to be popular because of the mobility and freedom it provided activists in their participation under BLM. Whilst it offered a community between those in Wales and allowed those to connect with each other, it demonstrated the importance of individual and personal action, revealing the less

significance of collectivitiy in contemporary social movements. Additionally, social media was crucial for tactics under the movement, though these were not overtly deliberate. It shows how activists are less concerned about motivating others to join the movement as they mainly focus on their personal actions. This reflects their own personal goals and strategies rather than the care of a collective (identity). Subsequently, it was through individual and personal experiences that activists joined the movement. This was evidenced in the role that moral shocks played in ally participation and experiences of racism and racial injustices in the participation of ethnic minorities in the movement. Both factors exemplify the role of emotions and identity in lived experience and participation. This reflects the importance of experiences in shaping and motivating engagement.

The second sub-question, '*What are the internal dynamics and culture of anti-racist activists in Wales?*' was answered in Chapter 5. This chapter argues that the relationship between BLM and anti-racist activists in Wales is fractious and contentious. I demonstrate that this is partly due to the decentralised and member-led structure of BLM, which results in BLM in Wales being reflected as a loosely tied network of individuals working on personal, biographical and strategic choices. This chapter is influenced by Jasper's (2004; 2015) work on strategic choices and players and arenas. An examination of players' definitions of activism revealed their distinct and contested ideas of what activism is. This was the result of their biographies, which affected their chosen methods of action (i.e. education activists, photographers, protesters and so forth). Players also shed light on the role of resources and power in anti-racism in Wales. They disagreed with players within larger organisations who represented Wales in anti-racism as they believed they negatively affected the message of smaller players due to their relationship with governmental organisations. On the other hand, arenas demonstrated physical manifestations of these disagreements and contention between

players. The examination of social media as an arena revealed the impact of digital activism on the internal dynamics of the network. It provided autonomy and freedom for each individual on the platform/arena. As a result, activists used social media to be vocal on matters and highlight grievances with other players. This differed from interactions in the arena of protesting. This is because players within the space often share similarities in their actions, forming a collective identity. On the outside, this reflects the arenas as a collective space. Yet this collective identity is not often long-lived due to the individuality within the player's choices. In summation, this chapter reveals that the internal dynamics and culture of anti-racist activists in Wales are fractious and contentious.

I addressed the third sub-question, '*How do cultural narratives in Wales impact the experiences of ethnic minorities in the country?*' in Chapter 6. This chapter examines the uniqueness of BLM and anti-racism in Wales as the nation's history of cultural and linguistic oppression contributes to a national narrative of oppression. This narrative often marginalises the stories of ethnic minorities, framing Wales' cultural identity primarily through a lens of White, rural, and linguistic nationalism. Despite Wales' own experience of cultural oppression, Wales's cultural identity does not accommodate ethnic minorities in the nation. Activist's interpretations of their racialised experience in Wales reflected their feelings of rejection by the nation. This differed depending on regional locations. Activists in Tiger Bay reflected on a culture of inclusivity and multiculturalism in the area. This starkly contrasted with experiences of anti-racism activism in rural Wales, suggesting attitudes surrounding racial inclusivity depending on the location. This chapter addresses the narrative of Wales as a tolerant nation and argues that the experiences of ethnic minorities in the country would argue that Wales is not tolerant. Despite this, there are contemporary steps to improve anti-racism in Wales, as

seen through the Anti-Racist Action Plan. However, activists in Wales are unsure of its successful implementation.

This thesis argues that social movement meaning is not static or universal but emerges through the activists' cultural experiences, individual strategies, and the unique national and local contexts in which they operate. By examining anti-racist activism in Wales, this research demonstrates how activists construct and negotiate movement meanings through personal narratives, cultural impact (identity, narrative, and emotional), and context-sensitive strategies. This challenges dominant understandings of social movements as cohesive or universal phenomena, instead highlighting their fragmented, adaptive, and culturally embedded nature.

Implications, Limitations and Avenues for Future Research Potentials

The concluding section of this chapter discusses the broader implications of the key findings concerning existing literature, acknowledges limitations in the study and suggests potential directions for future research. On a broader level, this thesis illuminates the significance of the role of BLM and anti-racist movements on a societal and cultural level. BLM and its impact is an exceptional case study for the importance of social movements. The first implication of this study relates to this but argues that localised context matters. Understanding the impact of Wales's unique cultural identity on the lived experience and the relevance of BLM and anti-racism in Wales demonstrates how decentralised movements should be analysed in accordance with specific localities if it is to understand the importance of the movement. BLM has been well-researched from the viewpoint of the US, but examining the movement from the context of Wales demonstrates the importance of local specificities. This is more important for a movement that is decentralised and member-led. This also adds a

meaningful conversation on the intersection of race and national identity. In doing so, it provides specific strategies on a regional and national scale to improve strategies for inclusion, reform institutional practices, or reveal areas for improvement in policies, such as the Anti-Racist Action Plan.

The second implication rests on the importance of activists' lived experiences. As discussed, this thesis heavily focuses on these experiences. Due to the nature of collective identity, we rarely see them as a focal point of social movements. Understanding activists' individual experiences helps us understand how biographical experiences shape participation and strategic choices. It also addresses why people join movements, which can be applied for recruitment or to address performative practices.

Lastly, this thesis highlights the importance of analysing the role of social media in the study of action. This thesis did not set out to look at the role of social media in BLM, as there is an already large body of literature that does so. However, it was apparent that a study of the movement related to the lived experience and actions of activists would have been impossible without discussing the implications of social media. It was revealed that social media was a significant factor in the cultural impact, creating meaning, forming networking relationships, connecting people in Wales and creating contention amongst members. It was a focal point in every aspect of action. Social media has also challenged how we view activism and thus is essential in discussing the evolution of social movements in a digital age. Its application has been crucial in the globalisation of BLM but has also been argued to impact genuine and sincere change due to short-term engaged activists. It would be beneficial to study social media for examining other contemporary movements to see if online platforms are becoming intertwined and integral to movements in general or just to some. I have argued the continued importance

of protesting in addition to social media, but this may change with time. Social movement scholars could also benefit from implementing strategies for future activists to use social media for maximum impact.

As with any research, this study has limitations that should be acknowledged. The first limitation refers to the use of social media for sampling. Whilst I believe this remains the best way to find interviewees, mainly as social media is intrinsically important in the movement, I may have missed valuable activists who were not active on social media. This particularly relates to the older generation of activists. Although snowballing introduced me to activists who were not overtly present online, I would still need to research and contact them digitally. This meant I did not interview some people within the anti-racist activist space in Wales. However, to mitigate this, I interviewed 21 participants, which exceeds the typical number required for IPA studies. This meant that I could engage with more varied and diverse range of activist experiences.

Lastly, I want to note the potential limits of looking at activism from the view of a nation as a whole. As mentioned extensively, research on BLM often focuses on large national impact. This research introduced a study of BLM from the perspective of a smaller nation. I also pointed to the importance of regional and localised efforts in action. Activists highlighted their different experiences depending on localities, with some arguing for locally specific practices. While this was mentioned throughout, a more refined look into different localities in Wales would further show the dichotomies of race and nation in Wales.

This also leads to a potential avenue for further research. As this research only reached the surface regarding locally specific racial issues in Wales, narrowing the search in this way

would further flesh out the nuanced approaches that may be tackled regarding anti-racism in the nation. It was revealed in Chapter 6 that the experiences of activists in rural Wales and Tiger Bay differed. This showed a contrast in the multiculturalism and diversity in Cardiff as opposed to areas in the North of Wales. Further research could look at this more intensively whilst adopting it as a focal point of discussion.

Additionally, further research relates to the case study of other nations. This study's theoretical and methodological framework may be applied to other smaller nations to understand the role of anti-racism more broadly and activism more specifically within that nation's landscape. This could be most notably applied to anti-racism activism in Scotland or Northern Ireland. My suggestion for these nations also rests on their distinct cultural and national identities and historical sentiments of oppression concerning England. Moreover, future studies may look at these nations comparatively to see how and why they differ regarding anti-racist practices. This would ensure that anti-racism could be most effectively adopted within the UK landscape and not centred on England.

Lastly, it should be recognised that the Welsh government is taking steps to become more anti-racist with their implementation of the Anti-Racist Action Plan. This is undoubtedly positive as the government is recognising the need for this. However, the plan should be accompanied by a deeper community engagement. It should hence be revisited to incorporate the nuanced lived experience of anti-racist activists and ethnic minorities in Wales. Future research could apply the experiences of activists alongside the plan to reveal its effectiveness by placing the lived experiences of racism and racial trauma at the forefront of the plan. This, in my opinion, would make the plan as effective as possible.

To conclude, this thesis explores the question of, 'how do Black Lives Matter and anti-racist activists understand and express anti-racist action in Wales?'. This chapter demonstrates how each empirical chapter answers the study's sub-questions by examining activists' personal experiences with action, the contentious dynamics between activists and the role of Wales in activist mobilisation. Overall, it argues that the meaning of action is influenced by culture, strategies and local/national contexts.

This chapter also summarises the study's contributions to social movement studies, notably its unique perspective on activism in smaller nations. It also places BLM within a cultural approach, CRT and NSMs, because of the importance of identity, culture, decentralised leadership and digital activism in mobilisation. Furthermore, it reflects the methodological contribution of using IPA to explore the lived experience of BLM activists.

The chapter also discusses the study's implications, including its practical benefits for organisations and institutions in Wales in the implementation of anti-racist practices. It discusses the importance of individual experiences in understanding movement mobilisation and the benefits of social media in social movement studies. In relation to this, it also addresses how I offset the limitation of online participant sampling through a larger sample size. Furthermore, this chapter provides further avenues for research, including comparative studies relating to the topic, and highlights how Wales' anti-racist policy documents could benefit from incorporating lived experiences.

Whilst it remains to be seen what the future of anti-racism in Wales looks like, my hope is that this thesis will inspire more conversations surrounding race in Wales and will encourage more accepting and welcoming attitudes across the nation.

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