
THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON CHILDREN OF COLOUR IN SCOTLAND: METHODOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL REFLECTIONS

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Abstract

In this article, we offer methodological and ethical reflections from our research project, “The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Children of Colour in Scotland: Visions for Change”. The project was conducted from January to July 2021, largely under Covid lockdown conditions. Our reflections take the form of creative writing, spoken-word poetry, images and reflective writing. Particularly, we highlight the ongoing, enmeshed and entangled nature of researcher and researched and how this relates to extractive practices, ethical care and navigations of systemic racism in children’s rights research with children of colour. We do so by positioning ourselves and our personal narratives, at times, as axles within this piece of work using Unarchigal (உணர்ச்சிகள்)—Modalities of Resistance, which is an embodiment resistance approach created within postcolonial radical feminist autoethnography. We suggest that researchers might consider similar reflexivity around these issues in their own children’s rights research.

Keywords: children’s rights; anti-racism; ethics; auto-ethnography.

¹ The authors would like to thank the children and families who took part in this project and trusted us with your experiences and vision, and Shakti Women’s Aid for help with ethical reflections and recruitment. Thank you as well to Dr Osarenkhoe Ogbeide and the artists from [New Africa Comics](#) for creating beautiful panels illustrating the children’s views. This project was funded by the Scottish Funding Council’s “Research Funding to Mitigate the Effects of COVID-19 on the Research Base”, and the School of Arts, Social Sciences and Management at Queen Margaret University.

A note for readers: in keeping with the enmeshed nature of researcher and researched, particularly as two researchers are women of colour, we use swearing in one section via spoken-word poetry. Swearing is framed as a coping mechanism and response to narratives witnessed in the project, alongside the navigation of systemic racism and the colonial edifice that children and young people of colour and their families are forced to navigate. There will be usage of Pavi's mother tongue, Tamizh (Tamil), via phrases and a few sentences alongside translations, capturing these intimate reflections.

[A] INVOCATION

To begin the paper, we have placed an invocation, written in Tamizh (Tamil), Pavi's mother tongue. The invocation draws attention to resistance, drawing on verses denoting liberation from British colonial rule. Please watch the video for an explanation and a translation.

Kummi Adi Invocation



Figure 1: Invocation

Invocation Video

Invocation Transcript

[B] INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In this article, we offer methodological and ethical reflections from our research project, “The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Children of Colour in Scotland: Visions for Change”. The project took place from January to July 2021, largely under Covid lockdown conditions. Fatmata was the research associate, Cara the project lead, and Pavi a consultant on the project. In the first half of the article, we review the background, methodology and findings of the project. We then offer methodological and ethical reflections, which are rooted in our own experiences but relate directly to the ways the project with children of colour was designed, carried out and disseminated. These are inspired by Unarchigal (உணர்ச்சிகள்)—Modalities of Resistance, an embodiment resistance approach created within Pavi’s Masters research, drawing on postcolonial radical feminist autoethnography. We hope these offerings help other researchers think through similar tensions and questions, although there are not always clear answers.

At the time our project began, early data about the spread and distribution of the Covid-19 virus in the United Kingdom suggested that in England and Wales, people from Black and South Asian ethnic backgrounds had increased risks of death involving Covid-19 compared to the white population (ONS 2020), a pattern that persisted through the first two years of the pandemic (ONS 2023). In Scotland there was a similar pattern, with those of Pakistani, Chinese, Indian and other Asian ethnicities suffering higher rates of hospitalizations and deaths compared to the white population (Public Health Scotland 2022). The disparity illustrated how effects of the Covid-19 virus intersected with existing racist inequalities in healthcare and social/working life (Nazroo & Becares 2020), as well as increased vulnerability in racialized groups because of the long-term health impacts of experiencing racism (eg Selvarajah & Ors 2022). However, there was little research at the time—and still today—that focused on children of colour and their views on the pandemic in Scotland. This gap compounds the silencing of children of colour (eg Intercultural Youth Scotland 2020), who have the right under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNCRC) to express their views on all matters that affect them and to have those views given due weight (Article 12), but who are frequently left out of policy and practice research.

Children and young people’s participation in research about their lives is not a specific right enshrined in the UNCRC but has been linked to several Articles in the Convention. For example, Beazley and colleagues

(2009) argue that Article 12 (right to be heard), Article 13 (freedom of expression), Article 3 (highest possible standards in work with children) and Article 36 (protection against exploitation) interweave to create the “right to be properly researched”, encompassing considerations around ways of participating, methodological approaches and ethical issues. Indeed, children’s participation in research studies has burgeoned in recent decades, with an accompanying body of literature examining the shifting positionality of children as objects, subjects, participants and/or co-researchers (eg Woodhead & Faulkner 2008; Nkimba 2023); methodological considerations (eg Punch 2002; Nxumalo 2021); and ethical principles and practice (eg Garcia-Quiroga & Agoglia 2020; UNICEF 2022). However, as Abebe and colleagues (2022: 258) note, a great deal of published research with, on and about children proceeds from a northern/Euro-Western-centric gaze, with “accompanying knowledge extractivism”; the role of the child being to supply data, from which northern-influenced “universal” experiences are produced and circulated. Decolonial scholars have called for change in the “why and how” of knowledge production and representation—for example, the dominant practice of extracting data in the form of disembodied “voice-reliant” methods, the dominance of publishing in English in Euro-Western academic journals, and the expected structuring of papers into methods, findings, discussion etc (Abebe & Ors 2022). As our article will demonstrate, these are issues we have grappled with ourselves as we reflect after the project concluded.

[C] METHODOLOGY

Given the gaps identified in research about the perspectives of children of colour, the Visions for Change² project aimed to explore the social and cultural elements of how children of colour were experiencing the pandemic in Scotland and how they wanted public services to support them and their communities. To facilitate participation beyond an Anglocentric lens, the informational flyers were translated into 16 languages by community translators recruited through Pavi’s grassroots networks. To maximize flexibility, participants were offered a range of ways to take part:

- ◇ Zoom interview;
- ◇ writing or drawing;
- ◇ making voice recordings.

Participants could also choose a combination of the above or suggest their own Covid-safe way of participating. These methods were designed in conversation with two Scottish children of colour acting as advisors

² See the project webpage: ‘[Impact of Covid-19 on children of colour in Scotland](#)’.

(age 11 and 12 years), and with the project advisory group comprised of three adult women of colour anti-racist activists living in Scotland. Given the disproportionate effects of Covid on people of colour, we focused the research on children's desire for change rather than asking them to recount individual traumatic events.

Underpinning these methods was an anti-racist, intersectional perspective in which the realization of children's rights—including participation rights—was understood as a recognition of children's "presence", embedded in interdependent relationships and shaped by the power dynamics of broader social relations—including racism and colonialism (Moosa-Mitha 2005; 2017; Nxumalo & Cedillo 2017). Therefore our project offered multiple, flexible ways of taking part and did not seek to extract perspectives from children isolated from the relationships of their lives. For example, many child participants were supported by an adult, and several adults took part with/on behalf of their very young babies. Overall, 35 children and young people of colour in Scotland took part. The age range of child participants was nine months old to 15 years old. The participants were fairly evenly divided in terms of gender, with 57 per cent identifying as male and 43 per cent as female in an open text box.³ Most children were living in Central Scotland, with the majority in SIMD 1 and 2 postcodes.⁴

[D] SELECTED FINDINGS

The data was analysed thematically, with four key findings emerging. Some of these are encapsulated in Figures 2 to 4, over the following pages. The themes were also mapped onto the UNCRC. As the findings illustrate, children of colour expressed a range of ideas for how they wanted things to change. These desires relate directly to children's rights as enshrined in the UNCRC. First, children of colour want to be heard (Article 12: and see Figure 2). The child participants were very clear that people in power should hear their experiences and learn from them. They wanted us to "give [the findings] right to them"—ie tell people in power about the research. However, another participant was pessimistic about the effects of this, saying they didn't think people in power would listen. Second, children of colour should not experience racism (Article 2). The

³ We used an open textbox to avoid limiting the ways children might describe themselves. However, going forward, it may be more meaningful and consistent to LGBTQ+ participants to offer multiple choices and an open text box (eg Guyan 2022).

⁴ The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation is a relative measure of deprivation across 6,976 small data zones. If an area is identified as "deprived", this can relate to people having a low income, but it can also mean fewer resources or opportunities (Scottish Government 2020).

participants wanted everyone to be treated equally and that there should be “support for all races”. However, two participants described their experiences of racism related to the pandemic. For example, a child aged seven, who identified themselves as Chinese-British, had “horrible names” shouted at them in the park and was told they were not invited to a birthday party because they were Chinese. Third, children of colour and their communities should have what they need to thrive (Articles 22, 24, 27, 29: and see Figure 4). This included specific resources and groups for people of colour, appropriate healthcare services, adequate benefits including good housing stock, support for refugees and asylum seekers and resources to support their education. Finally, children did not want to be isolated, should lockdown measures return (Article 15). They missed things like playgrounds, youth clubs, museums, the zoo, cinemas and restaurants, and wished they could see family who lived at a distance. When returning to school, they were arranged into strict groupings and not allowed to mix and match, which meant they missed their friends in other groups (although one child thought the groupings made it easier to concentrate at school).

The thematic analysis also led to three recommendations from children:

- ◇ Recommendation One: People in power should learn about racism and take an active role in fighting racism! (see Figure 2)
- ◇ Recommendation Two: People in power should invest in services, to support children of colour and their communities to thrive!
- ◇ Recommendation Three: People in power should fight Covid!

Selected themes from the findings and recommendations are represented below in Figures 2 to 4, in the form of comic book panels created for the project by [New Africa Comics](#).⁵ The panels were created based on the thematic analysis and represent a composite based on data collected with multiple participants, sometimes dramatized as a single story. The comic book offers a different way to engage with the findings, going beyond the written word alone, and particularly highlights the emotionality of the project’s findings.

⁵ The full comic can be found on the [project website](#).



Figure 2: Black and Brown children should be heard by those in power (Article 12: the right to be heard).

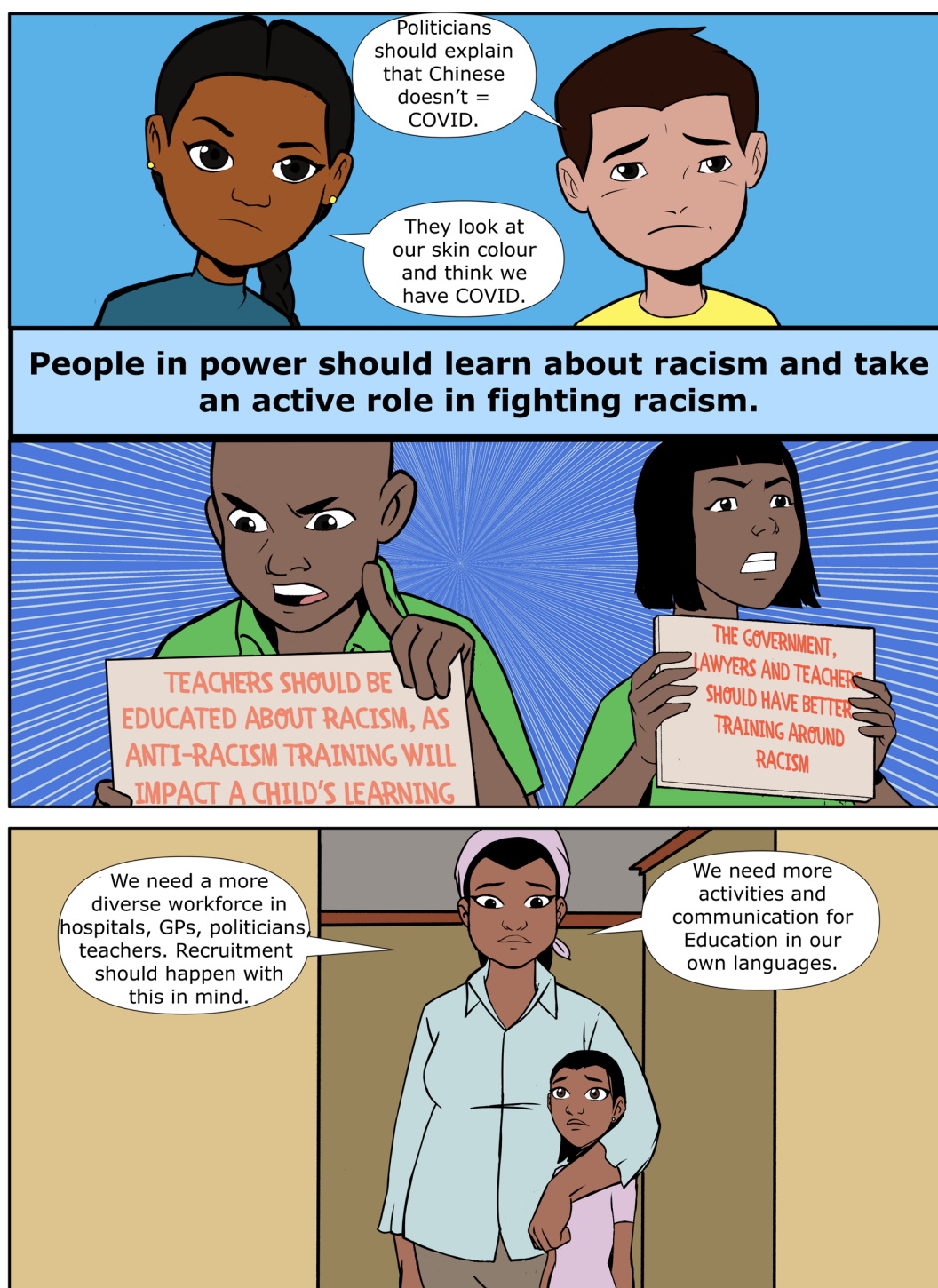


Figure 3: People in power should learn about and fight racism (Article 2: obligation to ensure non-discrimination in the realization of rights).

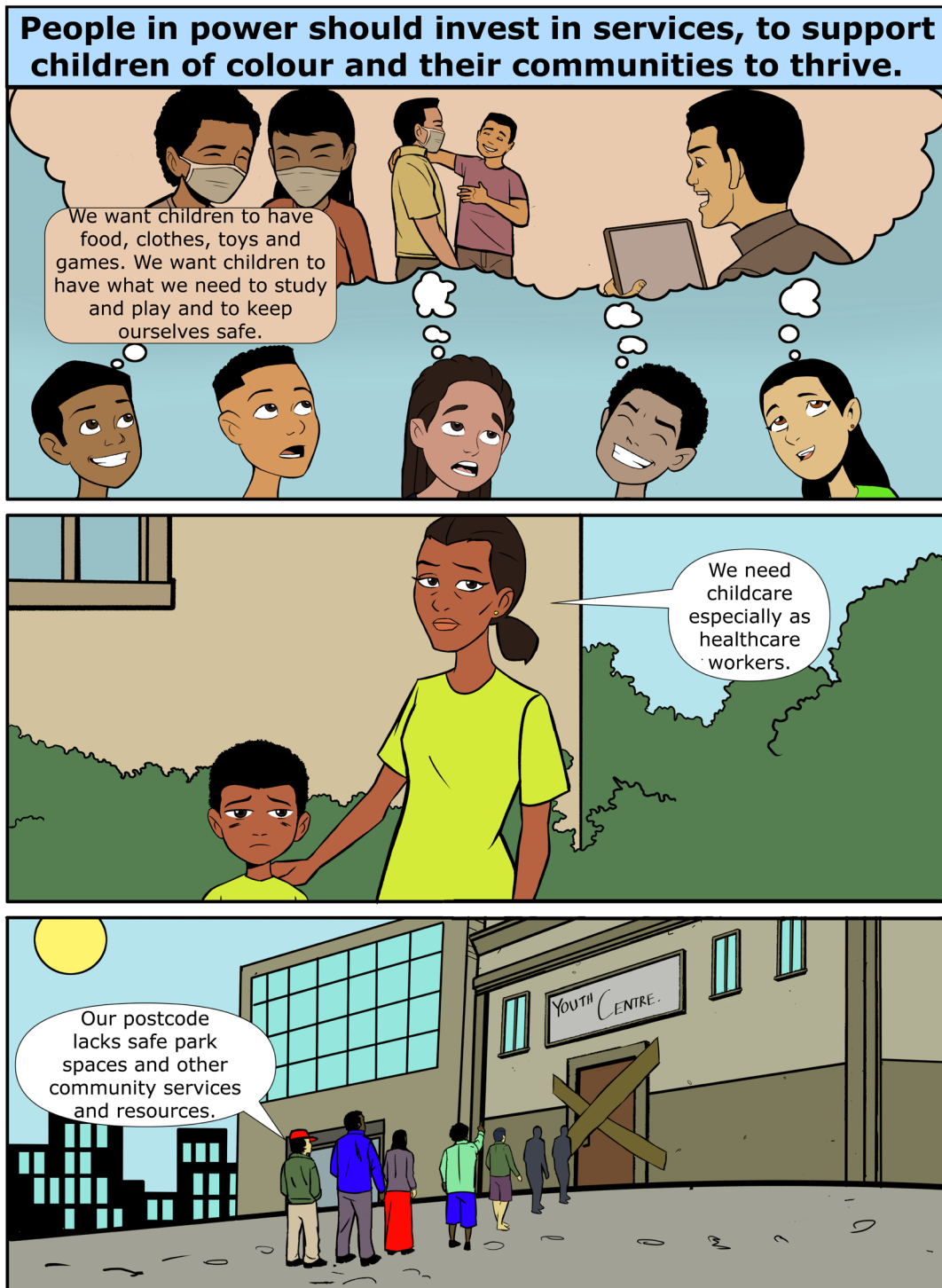


Figure 4: People in power should support children of colour and their communities to thrive (Article 27: right to a standard of living adequate for the physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development of the child).

[E] METHODOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL REFLECTIONS

In the second half of this piece, we each offer intertwined methodological and ethical reflections on the project. We hope these provoke thought and action for other researchers doing similar work. To guide our reflections, we have been inspired by Pavi's work on Unarchigal (உணர்ச்சிகள்)—Modalities of Resistance, an embodiment resistance approach created within Pavi's Masters research, drawing on postcolonial radical feminist autoethnography. Unarchigal, which means "emotion" in Tamil (Pavi's mother tongue), is a conduit and praxis for learning, feeling, disrupting and resisting colonialism, coloniality and its violence. Pavi has created a short audio clip explaining Unarchigal in more depth, with a transcript also available.

[Audio Clip Explaining Unarchigal](#)

[Unarchigal Transcript](#)

Our reflections, inspired by Unarchigal, take multimodal forms including creative writing and poetry. Fatmata and Cara have framed these in relation to one particular participant, Yewande,⁶ while Pavi's reflections range more broadly and encompass the plethora of entanglements that emerged in her role as a consultant on the project and continue to be present in her ongoing grassroots and academic work.

Yewande was a new (single) mother, seeking asylum, recently arrived in Scotland from an African country. She took part in the project on behalf of her baby, who had been a newborn when the pandemic began. Figure 5 is a composite panel from the comic, visualizing many of Yewande's statements while also incorporating broader themes from children and young people regarding support for refugees and asylum seekers. As Figure 5 illustrates, during her interview Yewande described the isolation of being a new mother in a new country during lockdown, her attempts to access support, and her fears that social services would take her child. Other participants highlighted the need for help in the immigration process and the need for provision of money and housing for asylum seekers.

⁶ Pseudonym.



Figure 5: Refugees and asylum seekers should have support (Article 22: protection and assistance in enjoyment of rights for refugee children).

Fatmata's reflection: "What was the point of doing this research?"

During the course of this project, as a Black individual and thus an insider researcher, an array of emotions unfolded. When conducting the interview with Yewande, profound empathy became the lens through which I not only comprehended, but also felt the pain articulated by the participant. However, despite the wealth of knowledge gained as part of the research, a sense of powerlessness permeated my experience. The awareness that this poignant story, the struggles faced by Yewande and her child, would ultimately be distilled into a mere few lines within the confines of a thematic analysis, remained ever-present.

Being an insider researcher thus became a double-edged sword, with a heightened awareness of the inability to enact change on behalf of the participant. Deep empathy became a burden. I felt guilty and somewhat self-indulgent for finding the interview emotionally taxing when the participant was the one experiencing turmoil, not me. The participant's struggle tugged at my conscience and evoked a deep sense of responsibility. Some questions nagged at me: "What was the point of doing this research if I couldn't do anything tangible to help this mother and child right now? What could I do to help?"

The following story is a vehicle for conveying the emotions that unfolded during the interview process. The story is rooted in Yewande's experiences and also weaves in aspects from other participants' experiences, creating a composite that blends data with emotion and narrative.⁷ This narrative technique transcends the conventional approach of merely outlining thematic elements and allows readers to experience and resonate with some of the emotions portrayed. Importantly, the story acknowledges the importance of understanding not just the children in the study but also the experiences of the parents and how those experiences could have a profound impact on their offspring.



Yewande stirred from her sleep, her ears perking up as she listened out for her two-month-old baby Oluwa⁸ who she had finally managed to get to sleep.

"Please God ... please let him stay asleep," Yewande whispered into the silence, hoping, pleading and praying that God would hear her prayers.

⁷ Direct quotes from participants are indicated by bold text.

⁸ Pseudonym.

Covid-19 had started about a month ago, just one month after she had given birth to her baby. Things had been crazy. **Everything was crazy.** For an asylum seeker with no family or friends to help, Covid-19 had truly led to a disaster that she did not know how to survive.

Oluwa had gone quiet. Still listening out for him, Yewande gingerly lifted her legs out of the bed and headed towards the small kitchen. Her throat felt ticklish and tight, the same way it did before she had one of her painful coughing episodes. Turning on the tap, she filled a glass with water, carefully lifting it to her lips and sipping it, hoping she did not have another coughing episode.

As she set the glass down on the countertop, Oluwa exercised his lungs and started crying. The piercing sound reverberated through her body and reached her head, triggering the piercing headache she always now had lingering at the back of her eyes.

She rushed back into the bedroom to pick up her baby, who had managed to sleep for a whole hour. She pulled out the changing mat. Changed his diaper. Made his milk. Fed him. Burped him. Tried to soothe him. Oluwa wailed through the whole process, his tiny body flailing in anger. Not knowing what else to do, Yewande held her **crying baby** and also started to cry.

She spun around with her baby in her arms, making shushing noises as she glanced at the clock on the nightstand. The red bulky numbers on the clock were blurry through her tear-filled eyes ... 2:27am. She knew she would not get much sleep tonight. Again. With tears streaming down her face, Yewande did everything she could to stop her baby from crying.

Nothing worked.

3:52. Oluwa threw up.

4:18. Oluwa quietened down. He was clean. He wasn't too hot or cold. He was fed. He was cuddled. But he was still awake.

5:51. Oluwa finally fell asleep again.

Yewande decided that when she woke up from her short sleep, she would again contact one of the charities or services that were supposed to help her. The antibiotics she had been given to help with her chest infection were not working, and she suspected that the lack of sleep was contributing to her ill health. She needed help. She had called before, but they had said that because of Covid-19, they could not have someone visit her to help teach her how to take care of her baby, even though this was her first child. She had no one. As an asylum seeker, she was in Scotland with no one. No family, no friends—nothing.

She laid back in bed and thought about her home. She thought about the support she would have been able to get from her family. Someone

back home would know what to do with a crying child. With these thoughts in her mind, she drifted off to a fitful sleep.

The next morning, Yewande picked up the phone and started working through the list of charities and health services she had been recommended. This was the sixth time she would be calling to see whether anyone could come and offer some physical help.

She disconnected the phone after two hours, disappointed and full of sadness. The answer was the same. No one could come and offer any physical help including maybe having the baby sleep so she could also rest. Covid-19 meant that the staff were not allowed to do so, and if they came to visit, the nurses could not come inside, only stand outside the door. The only help she would be able to get was from social services. However, Yewande had heard stories of other people having their children taken away for good by social services, and she did not want that to happen to her. More than once that day, she wished for **more support during the immigration process**.

Yewande looked around the room and wished for some company. The only sounds she heard were either that of Oluwa crying, or stifling silence. There was no one to talk to, and with the panic attacks she had been having, the thought of taking Oluwa out in his buggy to go for a walk scared her. She knew some people might find it silly but she was scared to even use the buggy ... how was she to carry her boy? Yewande remembers the zoom call she had had with another new Mum, who was also struggling with her new baby. Her friend had said that her baby **cried a lot whenever in public**. The fear of distressing the baby meant that a lot of people were scared to go outside for fresh air or exercise.

There was nowhere to go because of Covid. No one could help beyond phone calls because of Covid. She was sick but could not be properly checked out by the doctor because of Covid. She was isolated because of Covid. She did not know how to take care of a baby by herself and any of the health visitors who would have normally helped could not because of Covid.

Holding the phone in her hand as a failed lifeline, Yewande slid down onto the floor and stared at her baby who seemed to be finally dozing off. She hugged her knees to her chest, resting her heavy head on her knees and closed her eyes. She hoped for respite. She hoped for anything to be different. To be better. Anything. Anything at all.





Figure 6: An idyllic walk in the countryside.

Cara's reflection: responsibility and fragility

The Impact of Covid project was the first time I had led a project with the size of budget, number of people, and—crucially—the urgent importance of the topic. I had been working with Pavi already for some months, as part of an anti-racist collective, and proposed to her we submit a funding application. When it was successful, the fear set in. As a white American woman, who was I to lead this project about children of colour?

I have organized my reflections around two images. The first image (Figure 6) captures a friend's Labrador swimming in a lochan near their home. When Fatmata interviewed Yewande over Zoom, I was visiting this friend, who had recently moved to the countryside. In Scotland, lockdown restrictions had only just been eased, to allow travel outside our local area and limited socializing in other people's homes. The image captures a moment from an evening walk we took later that day.

Fatmata called me after the interview because it had been so intense. I took the call in my friend's back garden. Standing in the garden, looking over the wall at the picturesque cow pastures in the distance, I was struck by the disparity between my idyllic surroundings and the suffering Yewande had described. I was also struck at how separated I was from Fatmata's experience of the interview, taking a call while listening to birdsong, while Fatmata processed the intensity of the interview and her desire to do something, anything, to help Yewande. Our ethics forms included the usual signposts to resources, such as mental health support,

but Yewande knew all the places she could go—they just hadn't delivered. There was actually nothing we could do for her. We had also written into our ethics forms a process to follow should any of us, particularly the women of colour, be subject to harassment for working on an anti-racist project. However, I had not thought through the provision for Fatmata's own wellbeing as thoroughly. This was because we had tried to avoid eliciting children's stories of trauma or difficulty, but it was naïve and a sign of my own white detachment and privilege that I thought this would avoid Fatmata being exposed to trauma as a Black woman herself.

The second image (Figure 7) relates to the online launch event we held for the project in June 2022, a year after data collection was completed. The timeline of the project, my own health issues during the pandemic, and general malaise and struggle of lockdown meant I always felt like I was failing in my role as principal investigator. Throughout the project, I struggled with feelings of responsibility and imposterhood—although, it is not imposter syndrome when you really are an imposter. I felt that I hadn't done enough to push the findings into the world, that I should do more to put them in front of policymakers and practitioners. I tried to keep these from tipping over the edge into a white fragility reaction such as defensiveness and outbursts of discomfort (eg Bates & Ng 2021), but fragile and on the edge was exactly how I felt. Now, I wonder what could have happened if I had expressed these feelings more openly to Pavi and Fatmata. Could that discomfort have been generative, moving beyond guilt to informed action (Lorde 1987)?



THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON CHILDREN OF COLOUR IN SCOTLAND: VISIONS FOR CHANGE

Welcome!

Research launch
7th June 2022

*Funded by the Scottish Funding Council
(Research Funding to Mitigate the Effects
of COVID-19 on the Research Base)*

*Follow up funding from the School of Arts,
Social Sciences and Management and
Centre for Applied Social Sciences at QMU*

AMIC Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

Figure 7: Welcome message for the research launch.

When we held the research launch event, there was much interest beforehand and it was well attended by a range of policy and practice workers across Scottish sectors. But there was radio silence afterward. During the launch, we read out and displayed the full comic book ([available here](#)), which demonstrated very clear messages from children about how people in power could help fight racism. We also had a panel discussion from women of colour activists in Scotland and voice clips from children of colour about their experiences and vision. In the final moments of the launch, as we prepared to close the session and log off, someone asked a question in the chat box along the lines of: but what did the children want people to *do*? This question still haunts me. I cannot remember how we answered. What level of clarity and detail would be enough? Were children of colour expected to produce a fully costed policy proposal to solve racism? Were we? This was like Ahmed's (2017) metaphor of diversity work as banging your head against a brick wall; the wall does not simply stop you but also serves to harden and create a boundary around what is possible. In this case I felt the brick wall was "atmospheric" (Ahmed 2014); it allowed people to appear to listen, while avoiding seeing and hearing what the children were saying. As a white woman, this was the first time I hit this particular wall. Lorde tells of how oppressed people are continuously required to bridge the gap that denies racism, putting their own humanity on the line in service to others' supposed learning (1987). I suspect that brick wall was more familiar to my women of colour co-researchers, and, enragingly, to the children and young people themselves.

Pavi's reflections: anger and resistance

My first reflection takes the form of a poem/free verse called "Bad Ass Bitch", and the second is a spoken free verse performance called "What the Fuck is Your Problem". The swearing throughout my reflections acts as a response to embodied and visceral experiences of trauma, pain (Stephens & Ors 2009) and various forms of violence. Both pieces encapsulate my reflections for our project, expectations around "doing research", the myriad ways in which we navigate colonial architectures as bodies of colour and how systemic inequities and inequalities continue to be reproduced.

"Bad Ass Bitch" was part of an introduction I wrote for a final essay submission for my Froebel and Social Justice course, as part of my Master of Science in Education (Sarma 2023).

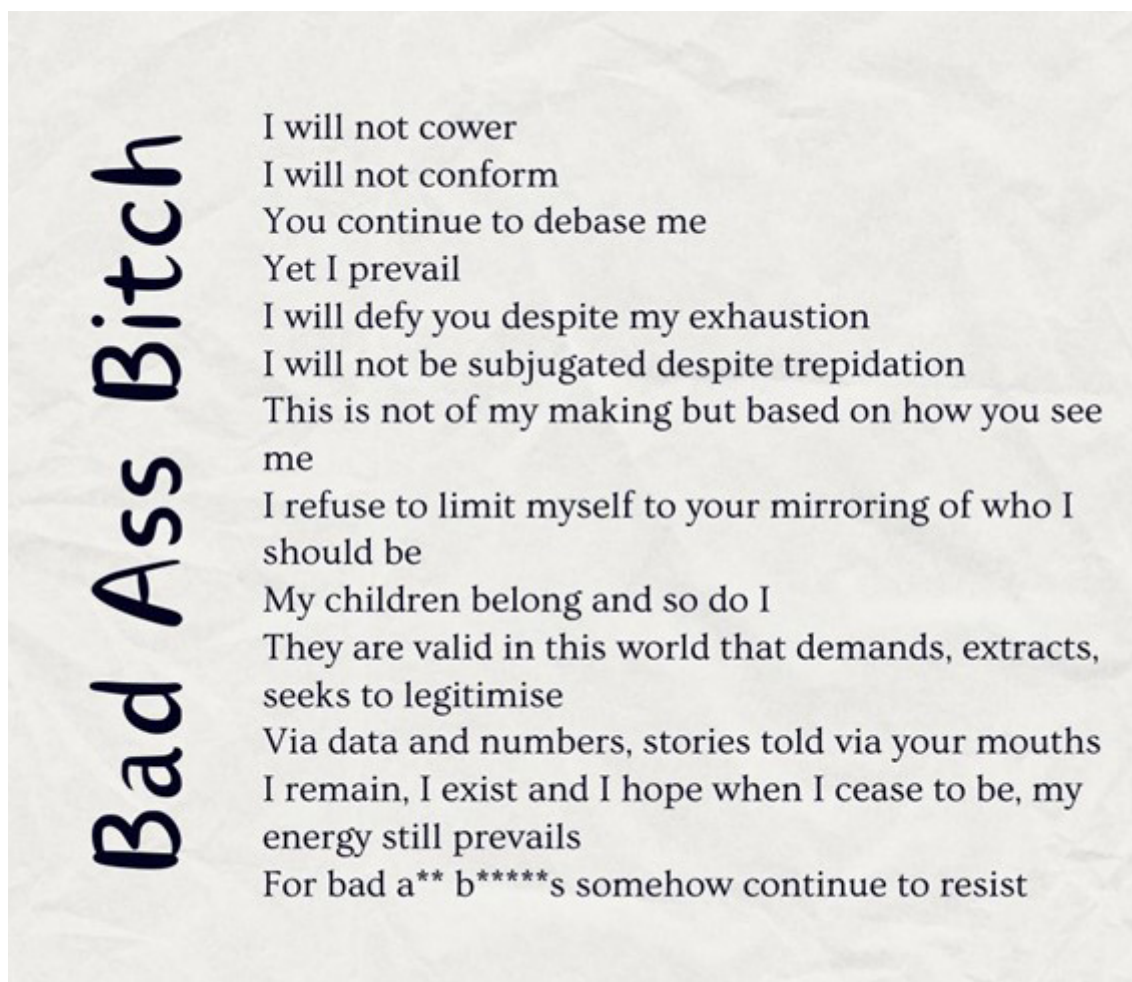


Figure 8: “Bad Ass Bitch” poem/free verse.

As Cara’s reflections point out, in our project launch, four women of colour shared our experiences, as did two children of colour via pre-recorded voice clips. We were angry that our children had experienced various forms of violence in Scotland ranging from a combination of physical, emotional and psychological abuse within schools and outwith, before, during and after Covid. Our experiences mirrored the data collected with children of colour during the project. We were angry and we also questioned policymakers and the civil servants from the Scottish Government whether there was any actual intent to engage with the lives of children and young people of colour within communities, as opposed to assuming a “one shoe size fits all” approach. The query raised by a white woman in the audience around what these children actually want, after we had shared our experiences and presented the findings from our project, suggested what so many of us of colour know—our anger is invisible and makes you uncomfortable. Our anger will be dismissed, ignored and not validated within whiteness. However, our anger is not for you to consume though.

The performance of “So What the Fuck is Your Problem” is a further response to the requirement to appear detached, impassive and cold as an “appropriate” reaction to oppression. The poem can be heard below, mixed and edited in the Music Maker Jam app. A visual slideshow version is also available, created on Canva.

Spoken Word: So What the Fuck is Your Problem?

Visual Slideshow Version

The tonality within the audio clip for “So What the Fuck is Your Problem?” can be interpreted in myriad ways and I would leave this up to the listener. My children, for example, thought I sounded like an AI (artificial intelligence) activated voice due to the monotones in parts. A couple of colleagues of colour suggested I recite with more power and the varied feedback received around the draft version of this audio narrative only encapsulates my reasoning for oscillating between sounding weak, exhausted, angered, frustrated, a monotone, so as to accentuate how communities of colour, in particular, are expected to respond to violence and oppression. There is also an allusion to DARVO (Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim & Offender), a tactic and mechanism commonly employed by perpetrators of different forms of abuse, sexual and domestic violence. The layering of echoes during the narration refers to the level of outrage, the frustrated and despondent cries for the genocides to stop alongside the demand for an acknowledgment of racism and systemic disruption. The voices then abruptly stop to ask if people are actually listening.

The use/origin of a phrase like “bad ass bitch” is synonymized with African American Vernacular English (AAVE)/ebonics, which has also been used by Black female rappers to subvert patriarchal oppression and reclaim power (Layne 2014). The commodification of rap, its origins, subculture, the potentially appropriative usage by myself as a Brown woman from India and its possible reinforcement of essentialist views of Black women, are all ruminations I have been engaging in. However, when I titled the piece as “Bad Ass Bitch”, it was in the context of the morphological significance that this phrase possesses in Tamil, my mother tongue, which I translated into English as such. This phrase is a contextual translation of two pejorative phrases, namely “porikki thevadiya” (பொறக்கி தவேடியா) or “Theru poriki” (தரெபொரிக்கி). “Poriki thevidiya” is a term used against men and masculine people, but can also function as a gender-neutral term, with “Poriki” possessing

various synonyms such as “crazy”, “insane”, “useless”, “a wastrel” and “thevidiya” being a pejorative way to describe a sex worker as a “whore” or a “prostitute”. “Theru poriki” means street picker/scrapper/bitch and it can imply “bad bitch”, amidst other variations when used against women and femmes. As a girl and then a woman who dared resist sexist, casteist and patriarchal impositions, I was subjected to these pejoratives to imply “bad bitch” alongside other forms of violence, to subjugate, dehumanize and vilify me. Therefore, I use “bad ass bitch” in a manner where I reclaim my power and agency to suggest that I refuse to be subjugated to, and will continue to resist, colonial and patriarchal impositions around power and violence.

[F] CONCLUSIONS

In this reflective piece, we have presented an overview of the project and shared methodological and ethical reflections, which are intertwined. We have done this through the lens of Pavi’s Unarchigal approach, which helped us draw out the role of emotion and connection to tensions that continued to unsettle us after the research was concluded. Key issues included the double-edged sword of the insider role for researchers of colour, obligations and responsibilities to participants, the danger of white detachment and role of white fragility, and the transformative capacity of anger and resistance in anti-racist research with children of colour. These reflect only a fraction of the ethical and practical considerations around the project and the authors welcome contact from fellow researchers to discuss in more detail. While the reflections focus on our own emotions, they connect directly to the ways that the project was designed, carried out, and the findings shared, with much learning for future work. These tensions do not have clear outcomes or resolutions; we have shared our reflections in the hope they will help other researchers think through similar issues in their own children’s rights research.

About the authors

Caralyn Blaisdell is a Senior Lecturer in Teacher Education at Queen Margaret University. She is an experienced early years pedagogue, having worked in corporate, Reggio-Emilia-inspired and Froebelian early years settings in the United States and Scotland. Her research focuses on two main strands. First, she explores children’s rights in early childhood, particularly participation rights and listening to very young children. Second, she works on outdoor learning in the early years, particularly young children’s experiences and relationships with land and place. She approaches both strands from a relational perspective, looking at how young children’s lives

and experiences are shaped by intergenerational relationships, attitudes toward childhood, policy/practice trends, and relationships of power. Her research has been supported by funding from the Froebel Trust, the Scottish Funding Council and Starcatchers, Scotland's arts and early years organization. Recent publications include papers in the European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, Emotion, Space and Society and Policy Futures in Education.

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Pavi's ongoing doctoral work/life/living explores home education, race, class, gender, coloniality and self-directed learning using postcolonial radical feminist autoethnography. Pavi has been engaged with decolonization of "research", ways of doing it and the linguistic rupture around the conceptualization of research.

Pavi was also an ethical entrepreneur and has worked extensively with communities, third sector and in domestic violence, enabling her to see the lacunae between policies, theories and practice, thus facilitating her own (un)learning around whiteness and the need to address injustices through embodied decolonial and intersectional ways of doing, being and living.

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Legislation, Regulations and Rules

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989

Appendix 1: Kummi Adi Invocation Transcript

Invocation

Script:

Hi there, my name is Pavi. My full name is Pavithra Sarma and I shared these verses on the slide during an introductory workshop with the Centre for open Learning, University of Edinburgh in March of 2023. This workshop is part of a series of modules I had created for my anti-racist and decolonial work called 'Learning to Unlearn' and was titled "Exploring decolonisation: An Introduction."

Therefore, it is only apt that we begin our paper with an invocation to resistance, using some of the verses denoting liberation from British colonial rule, which was penned by Mahakavi Bharathiyar or Subramani Bharathiyar. This anticolonial piece of work and Bharathiyar's verses has a huge historical context in my Tamizh ancestry and in the Indian independence movement. I have not recited this poem in its entirety and have only picked two paragraphs, which I will translate, but I'm going to show you how it actually sounds and I have set the rhyme and rhythm of the accompanying clapping to my own tempo.

கும்மியடி தமிழ்நாடு முழுவதும் குலங்கிட கைகொட்டி கும்மியடி...
நம்மை பிடித்த பிசாசுகள் போயின நன்மை கண்டோமென்று
கும்மியடி...

ஏட்டையும் பெண்கள் தொடுவது தீமையென்றெண்ணி இருந்தவர்
மாய்ந்துவிட்டார்...
வீட்டுக்குள்ளேயே பெண்ணை பூட்டி வைப்போமென்ற விந்தை மனிதர்
தலை கவிழ்ந்தார்...

And we can also sing the song like this.... Expedite clapping....

Mahakavi translates to 'great poet' in Tamil, my mother tongue. Mahakavi Bharathiyar was an anti-caste feminist fighting for liberation in India and was from my state of Tamil Nadu, one of the Southernmost Indian states. He was a polyglot who wrote this poem when the British were finally forced to flee India in 1947, in the aftermath of genocide, pillage, rape, carnage, wealth, riches that were extracted, exploited, severe devastation and divisions that were stoked and ignited.

Kummi is a folk dance performed in Tamil Nadu and possibly in Kerala to denote auspicious occasions and festivals, such as the harvest festival known as 'Pongal' in Tamil. From what I've understood, Kummi is actually said to originate from the Telugu word 'Kommai' meaning 'dance involve hand clapping' or 'hand clapping dance'.

Women, femmes and other folk tended to dance in circles clapping their hands to a rhythm and maintaining a tempo. The dance itself is a joy to behold with alternate bowing and clapping, with sometimes men joining in the outer circle with sticks. This dance and genre of folks songs, is actually said to originate from a time with no instruments and is a popular art form in Tamil Nadu in India and by The Tamils of Sri Lanka.

Kummiyadi – Thundering claps/ clap your hands.... Let the whole of Tamil Nadu resound with the thundering claps and with open palms.

The demons who caught us are gone and we have seen the good...

The man who thought it was evil for women to touch the book has died...

The strange man who said women should be locked up inside the house has bowed his head...

Thank you very much

Appendix 2: Unarchigal Transcript

‘Unarchigal (உணர்ச்சிகள்) – Modalities of resistance’

I created ‘Unarchigal (உணர்ச்சிகள்) – Modalities of resistance’ as a part of my recent Masters thesis in 2023 titled “Using postcolonial radical feminist autoethnography to explore self-directed learning within home education”. Unarchigal became both a path and a funnel that allowed me to sit with complex and often deeply uncomfortable emotions, that did not always require a solution, an outcome or a conclusion. Some of these reflections and emotions are unfinished and continue to evolve, like a tapestry that continues to be woven.

A postcolonial feminist autoethnographic approach allows me to explore and disrupt the fluidity between the researcher and researched, while also delving into the cognisant tensions of traversing through white spaces through dual/ multiple and intersecting identities. Hence, the conceptualisation and perception of ‘data’, its ‘collection’, and the power dynamics/ differentials between a researcher and a research participant or research partner, will be explored through these approaches and reflections. This is perhaps best encapsulated by the following paragraphs on pages 27 and 28 of my thesis within the section titled ‘Autoethnography and Postcolonial Radical Feminist Autoethnography – How do they differ?’.

‘Autoethnography has intersects with Critical Race Theory (Delgado and Stefancic, 2013), which considers race to be systemic and shaped by socio-political frameworks influencing the legal system, legal and media discourse which are symbiotic. It also pushes against rationalist and positivist thinking which demands objectivity and numbers. However, the history of autoethnography pre-dates its usage and coinage within the Western episteme. For example, I was profoundly inspired by Arab women’s poetry (Abdullah al-Udhari, 2017), which were rendered via deeply immersive writings as a response to identity, sex, gender, resisting ‘the male gaze’ and traversing through life, spanning a period of 5000 years. This poetry sought to be emotive while seeking to situate the voice, the narratives and the observations of those who embraced their power, exerted defiance, were oppressed and also systemically excluded in spaces, thus offering resistance to the embodied power differentials that existed and continue to.

I reflected on the challenges traversed by autoethnographers and on postcolonial feminist activism and scholarship, which sought to intervene in response to men who were proponents of postcolonial theory but were primarily focused on nation-building after the extirpation of

colonies due to European colonisation. The significant difference between autoethnography and postcolonial radical feminist autoethnography is that, I draw inspiration from my Arab sisters in summoning my resistance to patriarchy in its various forms, including its impact on masculinities, by situating my voice as someone from a former colony which continues to be steeped in coloniality. When I searched and explored postcolonial radical feminist autoethnography as a term, it did not exist, but autoethnography as a feminist tool and de/postcolonial autoethnography have been explored and written about. Postcolonial writers, scholars and activists like Lorde (1983), hooks (1984, 1994), Mohanty (1984), Curiel and De Roo (2021) and Venkateswaran (2021), to name a few, are all postcolonial radical feminists who have engaged in autoethnographic work. Their resistance echoes much of what we tend to do and what we have done all our lives, where we tend to 'just do and be' without coining a term that requires validation within the western episteme (Chawla and Atay, 2017)'.

I further expand upon Unarchigal within my thesis as such: '*Unarchigal, which means 'emotions' in Tamil (my mother tongue) seeks to disrupt the current normalised modalities that are colonialist and steeped in white hegemonic praxis. We are all made up of emotions and emotions not only are seen as unnecessary, and heightened emotions are also ascribed to femininity as a defining trait that usurps one's mind and renders them incapable of logic (Ahmed, 2017). However, emotions are needed and necessary in our bid to survive, fathom how to make sense of the world and how we traverse it together. Simply put – Unarchigal is our conduit for learning and, much as we would like to remain detached, we cannot. (p.30)*'

Resistance and disruption are concomitant with dismantling, and this takes a toll on the body, as the mind and body are acutely connected, and hence we feel, react and respond as we continue to receive, experience and process emotions. The resistance I was engaged in at the Scottish Government sub-committees on education and anti-racism, while being subjected to repeated forms of violence (racism, ableism, sexism), caused my body to store stress around my hips and back, eventually causing my lack of mobility. Bodies store memories, an array of feelings and primaeval responses, in the same way decolonial feminist philosopher Favela (cited in Trejo Méndez, 2023) refers to 'everyday memories' and 'enfleshed resistance' (Trejo Méndez, 2023). Hence, Unarchigal via its fluidity, troubles this long-accepted Western hegemonic rigidity and conformity posed by the separation of method and methodology, as this approach stems from multitudinous emotions relating to severe lassitude while traversing colonial systems of education and living. These systems are racist, ableist, sexist, patriarchal and heteronormative, alongside the coloniality that internalises and replicates this.

Unarchigal has undergone a process of ligature, convulsing and metamorphosis over the years resulting in its germination within this dissertation. Hlabangane's (2018, quoted in Sheik, 2021. p. 119) insightful observation about imperial approaches expresses this succinctly "The very idea of 'methods' follows the imperial need for certainty and stability. It is antithetical to ambiguity and flux". (p.31)

Anger is a very pivotal part of Unarchigal and I raise the context of anger, its potency, viscosity, its transformative capacity and, therefore, the recognition of pluriversality around harnessing anger as opposed to the dichotomy of emotions as positive and negative. Pluriversality and pluriversal knowledge systems, as Hlabangane (2021) discusses, offer resistance to western hegemonic impositions. Whose oppression and responses to understanding oppression is privileged? Why is anger not an appropriate response to oppression? Anger informs our agency and autonomy, as a response to violence.

The imposition to seem cold, unaffected and polite within whiteness as an 'appropriate' response to oppression, only amplifies the cycle of abuse, violence and reiteration of power hierarchies. As Lorde (1987) states: *"Women respond to racism. My response to racism is anger. I have lived with that anger, ignoring it, feeding upon 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. Your fear of that anger will teach you nothing also.*

Women responding to racism means women responding to anger; the anger of exclusion, of unquestioned privilege, of racial distortions, of silence, illuse, stereotyping, defensiveness, misnaming, betrayal, and co-optation."