



Michael Tropea: Two experiences, one reality

The experiences of bicultural people

And what they teach us about the infrastructure of whiteness in the Netherlands.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the particular position of bicultural people in the Netherlands, who have a certain proximity and distance to whiteness. The focus will be placed on bicultural people that are half white. Their experiences can be placed in three central themes; questions of exclusion, passing and discrimination, which teach us something about the infrastructure of whiteness. The experiences of my respondents will be analyzed with the tools provided by theory about passing, whiteness, infrastructures, and everyday racism. Inspired by Patricia Hill Collins, I hope to have contributed to situated, partial knowledge.

Keywords: Whiteness, biculturality, passing, racism, ethnicity.

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Introduction

When I was young, I used to look at my brother and sister and hate how white my skin was. They're just a bit darker, but you can see that they are not from here, while I was always assumed white and Dutch. I grew up in a very multicultural environment (neighborhood and schools), where having a different ethnicity seemed to be an asset. Being white and Dutch was the equivalent of lame and stiff. Looking like a true Dutch girl, I spent most of my time trying to prove I wasn't (fully) white. I introduced myself as half-Mexican and half-Dutch, in that specific order. If there was any chance to show my 'Mexican' side, I took it. Which is funny because my mom might have spent 10 years in Mexico at the most. So, I wasn't raised Mexican, I just wasn't raised Dutch. The fact that I've always been labeled white, bothers me, because I don't identify as white. But neither do I feel any right to claim I'm not white. Why do I feel like I don't have the right to claim the way I identify, where is the space for people like me? Apparently, we have to create that space.

That brings me to the motivation of this thesis, I want to learn about how other people deal with their biculturality. I want to learn about what keeps us from having that space. I want to learn about the histories that we carry in our bodies and how that affects us. I want to learn how this infrastructure of whiteness has an effect on people that have a certain proximity and distance to whiteness. I will focus on bicultural people that are half white, because I'm interested in this particular position of having very different cultural influences, being difficult to categorize by appearance or just getting categorized wrong and having a hard time with your identity. I hope to learn from the experiences of others to scrutinize how whiteness works in the Netherlands. My research question is as follows:

What do the experiences of bicultural people teach us about the infrastructure of whiteness in the Netherlands?

The practical relevance of this subject is the time and place we are living in. Right now, 24% of the population in the Netherlands has a migration background (CBS, 2021). That includes western and second and third generation migrants, so not all of them struggle with biculturality, but the amount is certainly growing. This is why it's relevant to look at the privileges and problematizations bicultural people encounter in their daily lives. To find where the friction occurs and how? And to gain more knowledge about the infrastructure producing these frictions, so we can start to make a change.

The academic relevance lies in sharing partial situated knowledge (Collins, 2000). The experience of bicultural people "serve as one specific social location for examining points of connection." (Collins, 2000).

Bicultural identity

According to Oxford languages bicultural means "having or combining the cultural attitudes and customs of two nations, peoples, or ethnic groups". This is a group much larger than the one I will research, because it would for example include all the Dutch Moroccans that are fully Moroccan but have been born in the Netherlands, who still struggle with biculturalism because they have to combine two very distinct cultures. I choose to research bicultural people with one half being Dutch, because I'm curious how these people experience a certain proximity and distance to whiteness. Building on the fact that the 'white race' actually doesn't exist and everybody, even white people, are passing as white, I'm interested in people that are 'half white' to see how this plays out in terms of the everyday frictions they encounter and

experience. Ahmed (1999) also states: “Mixed-raceness makes uncertain at the level of the subject’s self-identification what may appear certain in the formation of racial identity. Mixed-raceness brings to the foreground the crisis of identity which is concealed by the invisibility of the mark of passing. To this extent, being mixed-race is both a particular position which involves a set of dilemmas (for example, the frequency of questions about “Where do you come from?”) and demonstrates the general problems of racialized thinking which assumes that race is secure as an origin.” This description of mixed-raceness explains why it’s interesting to look into this particularity and also why I deliberately didn’t choose the term mixed-raceness. Since it implies race as origin of identity. Although biculturalism also doesn’t grasp the complex relation between ethnicity, race, and culture, I do think it is a more inclusive term to use. I want to argue that it’s hard to speak of a collective here, that “the ‘we’ itself is unnarratable beyond the disjointed patching of the ‘I’s’ whose status in the narrative cannot be rendered equivalent.” (Ahmed, 1999). For the narratives sake I will speak of bicultural but knowing that in reality and when speaking to my respondents, their story is unique.

Theoretical approaches

The aim of this research is to scrutinize the experiences that bicultural people deal with in their daily lives, that relate to that biculturality, and to explore what it teaches us about the complexity of whiteness in the Netherlands. To answer this question, I use a theoretical framework that will help me digest the data collected later in this research. First, I go into the concept of passing by using Fanon (2008), Bourdieu (1991) and Ahmed (1999). Together I hope to show how passing happens in different ways. Then I explore whiteness as an infrastructure, first by going into the history of whiteness as a social construct using Roediger (2007). Then I use Ahmed (2007, 2012) to show how whiteness can be seen as an infrastructure. Lastly, I look into everyday racism by Essed (1991) to be able to analyze the experiences of my respondents, that happened on microlevel, and place them in a wider system of race and whiteness in the Netherlands.

Passing

The concept of passing is relevant for this thesis, because I expect that the proximity and distance to whiteness that bicultural people can experience, could be a reason to pass or used to pass. By magnifying the proximity or distance, it might be possible to pass as either white or the opposite. I want to develop a framework to recognize passing and to understand what it does to a person. By using Fanon (2008) I want to introduce the inferior complex that I expect bicultural people could have and with Bourdieu (1991) I want to talk about the denaturalization of the body and its expressions. Building on that I will use Ahmed (1999) to get to the concept of passing as a technique, but also of passing that happens through others.

Fanon (2008) writes as a black man about the inferiority complex of colonized people. “The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle.” (Fanon, 2008). He talks about the assimilation of the narratives that the colonizers brought with them, forcing the colonized to see themselves in relation to the white man, producing an inferior complex. The adoption of cultural standards and the renouncing of one's own blackness is what I think is at the core of passing. Although I believe that biculturality is a very different position from Fanon's, I believe that the concept of passing remains the same. It will be interesting to see to what extent bicultural people also deal with this inferiority complex.

Fanon (2008) also states that “A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language”. This is where Bourdieu (1991) comes in, because he talks about language and power. Bourdieu (1991) makes the analogy between linguistic exchanges and economic exchanges and states that in every interaction, the power structure is present. “The more formal the market is, the more practically congruent with the norms of the legitimate language, the more it is dominated by the dominant” (Bourdieu, 1991). In private spheres language can be free from value and judgement, but the formal law is still valid. When an individual leaves the unregulated areas (the private sphere) and is placed in a formal situation, the formal law reimposes itself, which can produce a form of censorship in formal situations (Bourdieu, 1991). I expect that bicultural people who express themselves not conforming to the legitimate language, could experience frictions more often in formal settings or could produce a form of self-censorship.

Self-censorship also relates to the anticipation of profit or sanctions in a particular market. According to Bourdieu (1991) “The definition of acceptability is found not in the situation but in the relationship between a market and a habitus, which itself is the product of the whole history of its relations with markets.” (Bourdieu, 1991). Not only one’s relation to the receiver at that moment is relevant, but all the different relationships with receivers in the past, weigh in on how one expresses themselves in that moment. If one experiences moments of friction in particular places, this will affect the way one express himself the next time.

Third, Bourdieu (1991) builds on this, stating that these relationships are mediated by ‘the sense of one’s own social worth’. When one can’t apply their own rules of evaluation on one’s own production, a very ‘keen sensitivity’ is grown towards the tension of the market (Bourdieu, 1991). This can produce hyper-correction and insecurity, which can then lead to incorrectness and artificial confidence (Bourdieu, 1991). If my respondents experience an inferior complex, it is possible that they will use these techniques to hide it. These techniques can put a person in a very vulnerable position, because one can ‘get caught’ passing.

Lastly, Bourdieu adds the body to the theory. “The sense of acceptability which orients linguistic practices is inscribed in the most deep-rooted of bodily disposition: it is the whole body which responds by its posture, but also by its inner reactions or, more specifically, the articulatory ones, to the tension of the market.” (Bourdieu, 1991). The body is disciplined, language domesticated and censorship naturalized to conform to the dominant code. This denaturalization of the body most of the time goes beyond consciousness or will. (Bourdieu, 1991). So, it is not only linguistic changes that one (un)consciously makes, but also the whole body: one’s posture, facial expressions, eye movements and gestures.

It is this denaturalization of the body that brings me to Ahmed’s conceptualization of passing. Ahmed (1999) conceptualizes passing not as an ability determined by skin color, but a technique. “The ability to pass for white involves a technique of the self: the projection of a bodily image (say, through the alterations of speech, hair, fashion and gestures) which is seen to be conflatable with whiteness. Bodies become reconstructed through techniques which serve to approximate an image.” (Ahmed, 1999). Although Ahmed (1999) talks about an image conflatable with whiteness, it might as well be that one tries to approximate the opposite.

Ahmed (1999) also argues that passing is something that can happen through others and gives an example. When she was 14 years old, she was stopped by two policemen. She was asked if she was Aboriginal but was treated friendly after they concluded that she was just suntanned (Ahmed, 1999). She was stopped for not fitting in the classification they had in their heads. “Passing here allows a mobility precisely through not being locatable as an object that meets the gaze of the subject; passing here passes through the limits of representation and intentionality.” Ahmed (1999). By being unidentifiable she unfixed the existing classification but after being labeled a tanned white woman, fixation still occurred. She didn’t consciously choose to pass, and she didn’t turn into the identity that was given to her. However, it did transform her (Ahmed, 1999). I think she means that when a person is confronted with such a moment and passes as something they are not. It destabilizes one’s own sense of self. I feel that her experience is an example of the frictions I would like to research.

Whiteness as an infrastructure

The inconsistencies and social construction of whiteness becomes clear when you read Roediger's book "Wages of Whiteness" (2007). His book (2007) gives us a glance at US history between 1700 and 1850 and shows how race and social class have always been intertwined. The minimal wages and circumstances in which unskilled white workers lived was sometimes paralleled to black slavery, both as victims of a greater economic system (David Roediger, 2007). He states the following: "The attempt of Irish-American dockworkers in New York to expel German longshoremen from jobs under the banner of campaigning for an 'all-white waterfront' - perhaps the most interesting and vivid antebellum example of the social construction of race - reflects in part ill-fated Irish attempts to classify Germans as of a different color. But it also suggests how much easier it was for the Irish to defend jobs and rights as 'white' entitlements instead of as Irish ones." (Roediger, 2007). This example in US history shows us how race is a social construction and therefore not only defined by color. The Irish migrant population shared their life with the black population as one of the most unskilled groups until they saw distancing as a possibility to pass as white and therefore receive other treatment and possibilities (Roediger, 2007). He (2007) explains how the term whiteness was dynamic and shifting over time. Groups became white not immediately, but by merit and circumstance (Roediger, 2007).

Ahmed (2007) writes about how our bodies carry these histories with them. "Such histories, we might say, surface on the body, or even shape how bodies surface (see Ahmed, 2004a). Race then does become a social as well as bodily given, or what we receive from others as an inheritance of this history." (Ahmed, 2007). "This history lingering just beneath the surface is already racialized, even if one is not conscious about it, shaping the body or shaping the other" (Ahmed, 2012). Ahmed also argues that whiteness can be described as "an ongoing and unfinished history, which orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they 'take up' space." (Ahmed, 2007). This is in line with Roediger's historical view on the changing notion of whiteness. I do agree with both authors, but I want to emphasize on the 'ongoing' part of whiteness. As much as whiteness has changed in the span of 300 years, in the present it can still be experienced as a solid barrier. Ahmed (2012) states "The wall is what we come up against: the sedimentation of history into a barrier that is solid and tangible in the present, a barrier to change as well as to the mobility of some, a barrier that remains invisible to those who can flow into the spaces created by institutions." This wall that Ahmed talks about, can be as subtle and implicit as just a gaze or it can be as explicit as being stopped by policemen. In any way, it is lived as material and concrete as a wall.

Everyday racism

This wall that Ahmed (2012) refers to is expressed in everyday racism. Essed (1991) uses the term 'everyday racism' to bridge the gap between what Ahmed called 'personal and political trouble'. Essed (1991) formulated it as follow: "The concept of "everyday" was introduced to cross the boundaries between structural and interactional approaches to racism and to link details of micro experiences to the structural and ideological context in which they are shaped." It's relevant to look at her conceptualization of everyday racism, because although she wrote it on the basis of black women, I expect it to be applicable for bicultural people as well. Also, it will help me to place the experiences of my respondents in a framework of the working mechanisms of whiteness and race.

So, what is the difference between racism and everyday racism? Everyday racism “involves only systematic, recurrent, familiar practices.” (Essed, 1991). It is also accumulative; one experience influences the next. The accumulation is how the respondents give meaning to specific instances (Essed, 1991). The instances are all different, but together they can be generalized, they form a practice which is part of a system (Essed, 1991). This system is the same barrier that Ahmed (2012) talks about and the same infrastructure of whiteness that I’m trying to conceptualize. Everyday racism works through three main processes namely “marginalization, problematization, and containment” (Essed, 1991). She explains marginalization as the keeping of ‘the other’ marginal, by keeping the dominant White centric or Eurocentric culture dominant. This is done through passive tolerating black women (Essed, 1991). The marginalization is rationalized by problematizing the perceptions, cultural experiences, and the social and intellectual qualifications of black women (Essed, 1991). Lastly, containment consists of strategies like “intimidation, patronizing, pressure to assimilate, cultural isolation, and the overall denial of racism”, which all prevent or counter opposition to racism (Essed, 1991). Ahmed (2007) also talks about this denial of racism, she states: “Describing the problem of racism can mean being treated as if you have created the problem, as if the very talk about divisions is what is divisive.” This is a very common reaction, that I think my respondents will have experienced.

Another important point Essed (1991) makes, is that racism in the Netherlands is culturalized: “although racial characteristics are still a distinct category of differentiation in Dutch ideology, “racial” racism merges with cultural racism (ethnicism). This process expresses the gradual restructuring of racism from race hierarchies to cultural hierarchies.” (Essed, 1991). This explains why it is hard to point out racism in the Netherlands.

Methods and data

I will write this thesis, inspired by Patricia Hill Collins (2000) who writes about the validation and assessment of knowledge claims, not according to research criteria learned during my bachelors, like generalizability, validity, and reliability, but according to the dimensions described in her black feminist epistemology (Collins, 2000). My intention is not to appropriate the black feminist epistemology, or to use all four dimensions completely, since that would be impossible not being part of the black community. What I'm trying to do is to take Collins's plea to heart. To produce knowledge from my own positionality, making my own intersections and create partial situated knowledge. The dimensions that Collins writes about are: "Lived experience as a criterion of meaning, dialogue, the ethic of caring and the ethic of personal accountability." (Collins, 2000). The first dimension 'lived experience as a criterion of meaning' is quite obvious in this case, as I am bicultural and have experienced the frictions that I want to research. Collins's point is that having experience gives knowledge more credibility and meaning (Collins, 2000). Although my own experience will sometimes be completely different or in some cases, even opposite from my respondents, I do believe that having experienced the kind of frictions that I want to research can give more depth to my thesis. The second dimension is the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims (Collins, 2000). While she (2000) focusses on the assessment of knowledge claims and how the black community uses dialogue to do this. I want to argue that my respondents and I can form a sort of community and use dialogue to produce knowledge claims, not assess them. Seeking connectedness to produce new knowledge, instead of staying isolated. Third, the dimension of caring which consists of three components, namely 'the emphasis placed on individual uniqueness', 'the appropriateness of emotions in dialogues' and 'developing the capacity for empathy' (Collins, 2000). Especially the appropriateness of emotions and the capacity for empathy are important to me. Since the subject of this thesis can be quite delicate and intimate, it is only with empathy that the respondents and I can have a fruitful dialogue. The fact that we share biculturality could help us in building a base for empathy. As for the appropriateness of emotions, I will embrace all the emotions that can be expressed telling a story and I will not resist my own emotions while listening. Lastly, the dimension of personal accountability, which basically means that as an author your ethics, reputation and biography are also relevant for the assessment of your claims (Collins, 2000). Although I cannot decide for the reader if my ethics, reputation, and biography speak in favor of my accountability, I will write as reflective as possible, so that they have the means to do so. These four dimensions have inspired me, and I hope they radiate through the rest of my methodological choices and thesis in general.

The choice for in depth interviews was quite obvious, because I want to find out what bicultural people experience, related to their biculturality. This means that I want to explore and create an in depth-understanding of all their experiences. (Hesse-Biber, 2013). I want to hear about their life, from kindergarten to now. Their upbringing, the different schools, jobs, friends, and other environments. Their feelings and thoughts when their biculturality seem to become an issue, in that moment but also in retrospect. I will not structure the interviews because I really want it to feel like a dialogue. However, I will have a "topics- to- learn- about" list with the topics I want to touch upon (Hesse-Biber, 2013). For example, identity, profiling yourself differently, cultural clashes or similarities, language, confrontations etc. My plan is to start as young as possible and then ask questions that probe as we go along. Examples of probes could be a silent probe, an echo probe, the uh-huh probe and probing by

leading the respondent (Hesse-Biber, 2013). Also, when listening I will not only focus on what the respondent is telling me, but also focus on the silences, the inarticulations and reformulations. As Devault (1990) puts it: "Not as straightforward accounts of "what happens," but as hints toward concerns and activities that are generally unacknowledged.". So, I want to shift my attention to everything unexpected that would be labeled as noise or unimportant. To hear the unsaid and 'make it speakable' (Devault, 1990).

This also goes for transcribing and analyzing the interviews. I will consciously include the messiness, as formulated by Devault (1990), the hesitations, the self-corrections, laughter, the 'you knows', sighs and all of the inelegant features of the way they talk. These could give meaning to the analysis as expressions of emotion. Also, as a small experiment, I want to evaluate the interviews with the interviewees right on the spot. To find out if there are questions and replies that struck them, if there are questions that they missed and if they were comfortable talking about all the subjects or not. To analyze the data, I will look for recurring themes in the transcripts (Bryman, 2012). Then I will divide the quotes into these themes. I will not use sub-themes or codes, because I want to avoid fragmenting the data too much (Bryman, 2012). Also, because I think all the experiences of the respondents will differ widely and I have no intention of making skewed comparisons. To respect the peculiarity of every respondent, I think that recognizing major themes will be better than fragmenting them into smaller categories.

There are a few assumptions that lie in the use of in-depth interviews. First of all, the assumption that my respondents have consciously lived their biculturality. I can imagine that some people do not pay attention to something that in their eyes is a given (their biculturality) and maybe don't even relate that to their experiences, or they give meaning to them in a very different way. However, these would also be results and be very relevant in the notion of including everything that is unexpected.

I will use a combination of convenience sampling and theoretical sampling (Walliman, 2006). Theoretical in the sense that the only criteria for choosing my respondents will be that they need to be half Dutch, because I believe that they will know most about the conditions of having a certain proximity and distance to whiteness (Walliman, 2006). It will also be a convenience sample, because I will try to find the respondents in my own environment based on willingness and availability (Walliman, 2006). The sample consists of 10 persons, which is quite small, but since I have no intention to generalize the results and I want to hear about their whole life and their own particularities, ten interviews could provide enough material to answer the research question. A limiting factor could be COVID, which might make it necessary to do the interviews through zoom. This could make the connectedness with the respondents harder to reach, because I would miss out on gestures and real eye contact (Hesse-Biber, 2013).

Analysis

While writing this analysis, I have been in a constant state of unsettledness. Why is it so hard to write about this topic? Why does it feel like I'm walking on eggshells? Considering whether I'm reflective enough of my privileged position; whether I add too little or too much nuance and thus misuse or debunk the experiences of my respondents; whether I'm writing too conclusive or inconclusive. I'm trying to describe the feeling of wanting to say something, but not feeling the right to do so. My intention is to write from a particular position, to take up space that I feel isn't there yet. This particular position of being bicultural is unique for every person, so it has been difficult to try to speak of a collective.

When I started interviewing my respondents, I was hoping it would be a dialogue and we could talk about our lives, recollecting memories and sharing thoughts on my subject. The first four interviews we just went through every phase and environment that my respondents had lived through, starting as young as they could remember. Of course, I did ask about how they identified, how that had changed over time, what made them conscious of their biculturality, if they had ever profiled themselves differently etc. After the first 4 interviews I didn't ask about every specific environment or phase anymore, I just asked about those subjects and kept talking about the situations or environments that they brought up in the interview. Every encounter was different and in every case the complexity of race, ethnicity and culture showed itself in a new way. Both me and my respondent weren't always able to distinguish these terms consistently. In the interviews everybody seemed careful not to make very hard statements. The word racism or discrimination were only used in extreme and very clear cases. In all other situations they seemed to also want to give a certain explanation like: 'it could also be my personality'; or 'I know we weren't supposed to take that man seriously, he was a particular kind of man', or 'I don't know if I wasn't hired, because of my name, it could also be because I lacked the experience or skills'. These are all examples of how they had a certain feeling but didn't know if that feeling was completely legitimate or just. This feeling of not being able to put your finger on it, will be something that is discussed further in the rest of the analysis. There were three themes that I could recognize coming back in the interviews: Questions of exclusion, questions of passing and questions of discrimination. Questions of exclusion and discrimination relate with the theory of Essed (1991) and Ahmed (2007,2012), because they both give tools to place the experiences of the respondents in a larger frame. Zooming out from the microlevel, to the structural infrastructural level. Bourdieu was very useful for the questions of passing, since these experiences related a lot to conforming to a market where you do not determine the norms.

Questions of exclusion:

This paragraph will be about exclusion in different environments. What do I mean by exclusion? I mean all the situations where my respondents didn't seem to fit; where they felt different, where they felt 'out of place'. Like Ahmed stated, those moments where the body seems to be out of place, are moments of political and personal trouble. Those moments that are lived with a certain awkwardness or self-consciousness- or in other words personal trouble- will become clear from the examples. How these moments are also political, I will explain at the end of the paragraph. The particularity of being half white, is that on the one hand you don't seem to belong to any category or group, but on the other hand, you can have a certain privilege to join the group you want. However, there seems to be a consensus that even when you are accepted as part of, you still feel somehow different. One respondent

formulated it as follow: “The problem is that you can’t identify with anything, because you aren’t part of anything, but at the same time you’re part of everything.” “As a mixed person, I’ve always had the feeling that I wasn’t a complete/ fully fledged being”. This feeling of always being half something and nothing fully, is experienced internally, but still real. It is important to remember that personal traits, social economic status, culture, language, and ethnicity are layers that cannot be ignored in this feeling of exclusion. These are all intertwined and impossible to disentangle. Exclusion takes place in both white environments as black environments, I will elaborate on them separately.

Exclusion in white environments

I will talk about exclusion experienced in white environments such as high school, higher education, and within the context of the white side of their families. I will elaborate on three examples that show how exclusion takes place through culture, religion, and social economic status. All three of them still relate to race in the sense of ethnicism that Essed (1991) talks about.

In the first example, Sarah explained how in the Indonesian culture a form of respect is to be a little reserved, to stay in the background, even more when you are around older people. She experienced that this trait clashes with the Dutch culture of ‘taking your place’, showing yourself and being very assertive. As a very social person, yet introvert and raised in Indonesian norms, it was a struggle for her to survive in that world. Her reserved attitude was misunderstood as arrogance. For her this was an example of why she didn’t feel comfortable in white environments. It is important to note that the world she is referring to is a fashion academy in Arnhem, which is very prestigious. According to Sarah it is “not pedagogical justified”, because “they destroy you as a person.” She refers also to the art world in general, where it is extra appreciated to be ‘out there’. She felt that even though the art world and the fashion academy might be extreme examples, that it is very ‘Dutch’ to put yourself out there. Sarah thinks that this cultural element comes from the very fact that the Netherlands felt the right to take what wasn’t theirs in colonial times. It’s interesting how she linked colonial history with her experiences in daily life and it shows how that history is still felt nowadays. Her personal trouble then becomes political trouble because she is marginalized based on her cultural values. Her culture is lower in the cultural hierarchy (Essed, 1991), so it is up to Sarah to adjust or be marginalized.

The second example is about feeling excluded from your Dutch family. Nadia is half Algerian and Muslim. She explained why she didn’t have any contact with her Dutch side of the family. “Even though we were young, when we still went there, you always had the feeling that you had to sit still, you can’t do anything, because they would have something to say about anything you did. They always seemed to look down on us. It’s hard to explain, but you could feel that they looked at us differently”. Her family didn’t respect the fact that she and her brother were Muslim. They were always trying to give them pork, knowing that they weren’t supposed to eat that. “They didn’t take it very seriously”, said Nadia. At one point the disrespect towards their beliefs and the feeling of not belonging there was enough to decide to not visit their family anymore. This decision implicates a personal decision as reaction to personal trouble, but it’s also political. Whiteness as an infrastructure builds on White centric norms and values, which are a social and material fact (Essed, 1991; Ahmed, 2012). Nadia’s case is particular in my thesis because she linked her exclusion with her religion. Religion and race are intertwined. According to Essed (1991) race, culture and ideological ideas are

intertwined in the Netherlands; racism happens not only on the basis of race, but on the basis of culture or ideological beliefs as well. In Nadia's case it was religion. The question remains: What if she had shared the same religion as her relatives, would the exclusion have been any different?

In the third example, Maya told me, how her years in higher education were very lonely, because she didn't fit in. She only made two friends in 6 years, who also had a migration background. The class changed every 6 weeks, so most of the time she was alone in the class. Maya explained how she tried to talk sometimes with her classmates, but the conversation did not hold. They didn't sit next to her or involved her in conversations or activities. She explained how her social economic state also played a huge role in that. The way she grew up economically and the economic freedom she had at that moment in her life was completely different from theirs and this could be seen in different interests, activities, and traits. She said "They weren't bad people, but we had very different worlds. I think it was just too difficult to overcome the differences". The role of social economic status also came up with other respondents that had felt the same way in higher education. They had to work during their studies and sometimes struggled economically. Their worries and frustrations made them see their world differently from that of their classmates. This was the reason that some of them didn't even try or wanted to be included by their white classmates. Others did try but felt like it didn't work and gave up. Like Roediger (2007) explained, race is a social construct, not only defined by color, but also by circumstances. The economic situation my respondents had, is intertwined with their mixed-raceness. For example, most of them had divorced parents. This alone can influence their economic status. Their personal situation becomes a political issue.

Exclusion in black environments

Two of my respondents spoke of the fact that they felt excluded from the black community. This was even harder for them, because that was the part of their identity that they felt the closest too.

Gianna said "I had the feeling I wasn't accepted in the Cape Verdean community. My skin was very white in comparison, and I didn't speak the language, so that was the reason for many people to tell me 'You're not a real Cape Verdean or you're white.'." She also explained how hard it was for her to claim her black identity because of this. "I have the feeling that, because of my appearance, the outside world doesn't see me like that, but I do have the feeling that I'm black. But I am conscious of the part of me that isn't." She also had the feeling she could never pass as white, because she isn't 'white-white', and she has dark curls. She explained how happy she was to have those curls though, because they were proof of her not being white. This feeling of not having the right to claim your identity, is something I recognize myself in. When people hear my accent and ask me 'where do you come from', I have a little celebration inside of me, because my not being white is recognized and acknowledged. The same way Gianna celebrates having the curls that show she is not white. I think the reason we are happy to have these characteristics is, because we feel the right (a little bit more) to claim the way we identify.

Jamie said something similar: "Black people don't see me as black, but white people don't see me as white, so where do I fit in? Cause I do feel black, I do have the idea that I'm part of them, in my doings, in my culture, in the way I look. I know I'm lighter than the

average black person, but that's not something I chose, so it's just... we're all tinted, so I just feel it's unfair that that distinction is made." It's important to note the distinction that she is talking about. This distinction that exists in the black community, is a product of how whiteness works. I believe Gianna and Jamie are excluded in a certain way, because the history of the white man as the colonizer has not only made a division between the oppressor and the oppressed, but also a hierarchy of struggle within 'the oppressed'. Having a lighter skin tone means struggling less than being fully black, which might be true to some extent but being half black brings its own particular struggles within.

Questions of passing:

I asked the respondents if they ever tried to adjust in order to fit in within certain environments. The response differed. Some had more problems passing as white and some had more problems passing as non-white. Internally we all struggled with the question, which group am I a part of? In which category do I fit? And of course, the answer developed over time. The majority found themselves having identity 'crises' throughout their younger years as teens and as young adults. But even now, much older, confident, and steady they have a hard time claiming their identity. Appearance plays a huge role in this because they are categorized by it. This given category then influences how they identify themselves. Sometimes it wasn't a conscious decision to pass; it just happened non-intentional. I will elaborate on intentional and unintentional passing separately, although I think there is always a subconscious and conscious level when passing.

The Chameleon effect

Passing can be a coping mechanism, a survival method. Like the chameleon that changes color to his environment when he is in danger or stressed, we can change as well. Ironically, we can change practically everything except our color, but the survival method is the same; Blend in; Don't stand out. Like Ahmed explained: "The ability to pass for white involves a technique of the self: the projection of a bodily image (say, through the alterations of speech, hair, fashion and gestures) which is seen to be conflatable with whiteness. Bodies become reconstructed through techniques which serve to approximate an image." (Ahmed, 1990). The following examples will show how my respondents dealt with passing.

Ryan, who grew up in a small Dutch village, told me: "I did try to fit in back then, by making jokes, sometimes even racist jokes about black people. I think it happened unconsciously, just to be part of the group. Or going to pool parties where there was so much mud, and they only drank beer. You just do stuff that you don't really like, like listening to music you don't like, just because the rest listens to it. Things like that, you do stuff because 'you have to'. And then later when you meet people like yourself you start to realize that you really pretended to be somebody else, to not receive a stupid remark or something." I think this really shows how passing is not only about the color of your skin, but about a whole image that you try to approximate. He adjusted his taste, activities, and friends, in order to pass as one of them. He did it unconsciously but realized later that he was just pretending to be someone he wasn't. It's also important to note that by making racist jokes himself, Ryan was able to distance himself from his own skin color, in order to pass, which proves once again how race is a social construct (Roediger, 2007). The color of his skin didn't matter anymore, as long as he conformed to the activities and taste of his white friends.

Samie had a very different experience. He expressed how some of his colleagues always seemed to want to pass as white and how fake that looked to him. So, for him it was and still is a personal mission not to pass. For Samie it meant not forcing a 'babble' with customers; not being overly cordial; or changing the way he spoke. All the things he felt his colleagues were overdoing, in his words 'acting white'. The problem with this, is that he got to hear often that he wasn't nice to customers or that his attitude and posture made him unapproachable. This was the dilemma for him, because: 'everyone wants to be liked', but in order to be liked he had to 'act white', which was against his own principles. There are two things interesting about this. First, that he started to doubt himself, because he knew he was being deemed by norms he did not want to conform to. He knew his behavior was being assessed by a market where he did not determine the norms of acceptability (Bourdieu, 1991). Second, the fact that he, but also other respondents and I associate cordiality, speaking properly and having a chat - I'm talking about having a chat in the sense of being articulate: 'een babbel hebben' - as acting white. Why do we associate those qualities with acting white? I think it's in the word 'proper'. We did not decide what is proper, we did not decide to which norms we're being held to.

At his new job, Samie feels obligated to pass. It's a white environment and he cannot take the risk of standing out negatively. He doesn't care about the rules in Dutch language, but in order to be taken seriously he has to oblige. Grammar is his nightmare. So, before he speaks, he looks up which article comes before a word. When there is no time to look it up, he changes the whole phrase, skips the article, or speaks softly. Samie said that: "Language is a white man's world, it's a language where I'm forced to speak in a certain way, or else I'm not good enough". Maya had the same fear while talking. "When I open my mouth, they can hear I wasn't born here. It has happened that; because of that, I don't speak at all, because I don't want the attention." Maya creates here a form of self-censorship. When she isn't able to speak to the norm of the environment, she just doesn't. Samie does something similar, he tries to conform to the norm by looking up the right words or tries to hide when he doesn't know, censoring himself (Bourdieu, 1991). This censorship is something that frustrates Samie a lot. He explains how language should be free; how he can speak with friends having fun by changing the intonations of words. Or how he can speak with his girlfriend and family about a 'thing', and they will understand what he means. The white man's world removes that freedom, and he resents that. He links his self-censorship directly with the norm of this 'white man's world' imposed on him.

Maya also talks about the fact that even though she has wanted to pass, she is often not able to. For example, with her Cape Verdean family in law, she would like to blend in, by being more outspoken, loosen up, and dance around, but she can't fake that. She doesn't like extremes, because she can't pass as white, and she can't pass as colored. Any mixed environment is fine, but the extremes are more difficult. The 'technique' to pass is more challenging when the environment is not mixed. This relates directly with Bourdieu (1991), that the more formal a situation is, the more dominated it will be by the dominant. What I would like to add is, that apparently also in the private sphere, in informal situations there is a dominant norm, decided by the dominant party. For Maya, the public sphere and some of the private spheres that she is a part of are a space of adjustment. It is only when a space is mixed, that she can relax a little.

Sharon explained how she used to switch between her two sides. In primary school she was in a multi-cultural school, and she was in a dance group where everybody had a different ethnicity. She really wanted to fit in, but her mother is Dutch and did not fit her image of being mixed; so, she felt ashamed every time her mom picked her up. In high school she ended up in a very white class, where she and her twin brother and one other girl were the only mixed people. In this class she stood out, because of her skin color, but also because she didn't take horseback riding classes and she was in a hip hop group. To fit in there, she changed again. She also told me that she straightened her hair since very young and she wasn't really conscious about why she did that. "It was never conscious like I don't want curls... but you do it for a reason. You do it to fit in, to meet something, I think..." So, on the one hand, she did feel that she had to change to fit in, but on the other hand, the small changes she made weren't conscious decisions. It is looking back that she realizes this. So, passing can happen consciously and unconsciously at the same time. Ahmed (2007) states that whiteness orientates bodies in specific directions. Sharon wasn't really conscious about it, but she was directed in a certain way. She formulated it as follows: "So then I changed again to more the other side, then... then I was led more in that direction".

Passing through others

Sometimes people pass unintentionally, Ahmed talks about passing through others. "Passing here allows a mobility precisely through not being locatable as an object that meets the gaze of the subject; passing here passes through the limits of representation and intentionality." Ahmed (1999). When people label you in a certain way, you automatically are seen in that way, which is outside of your own power.

Thyra for example, explains how in the Dominican Republic she is labeled calm and boring, because she's not a party animal or as outspoken as the rest of her family. "I hear them say 'she's my Dutch cousin', like, that's the reason why I'm not as noisy or loud as them." She actually agrees with her family that her mentality is more Western or Dutch, but in those moments some traits are labeled as Dutch and make her pass as a Dutch woman, while she has never heard this in Dutch environments.

Sarah said about the fact that the way she identified herself was very much influenced by the way she was seen. "They fill it in for you... so you profile yourself automatically with it; I think. If nobody had ever asked, or if everybody had told me that I looked Dutch, then I think you would discount that other part of yourself automatically, because you would have the feeling even more that you can't identify with that part." Passing through others, means not having control in which category you're placed. You are a passive actor in passing through others. In Sarah's case her appearance was the decisive factor in being assigned the label 'colored'. It didn't matter how much Indonesian descentance she had.

Questions of discrimination

The line between exclusion and discrimination can be quite thin. When does something count as discrimination? When does a joke become discrimination instead of 'just a joke'? When is it legitimate to feel hurt or offended? Does it count when the person didn't 'mean' it that way? Where do you draw the line? It is something I'm struggling with while writing this thesis, but it is also something my respondents dealt with. The examples I will give were examples that I felt were more explicit than the examples of exclusion. Explicit in the sense that the situations of exclusion were implicit, experienced internally and interpreted by my respondents. The

situations below are experiences where my respondents felt that a certain line was crossed, even though they might have realized it in retrospect. I will analyze both negative and positive discrimination separately, keeping in mind that they are both produced by the same system of whiteness.

Being 'the other'

Why did my respondents feel that a certain line was crossed? Even if it was in retrospect. Like Essed (1991) explained, it is their past experiences that give meaning to the instances described below. If the examples below would have been their only experience of discrimination, they might not have recognized. That also explains why a few of them realized in retrospect that it had been racism. They didn't have material to compare to yet.

Jamie said, "I remember being at a children's party, they were those... you have some really weird parents living in Spijkenisse man. So, at one point they said, "if the pool changes color, we know that Jamie jumped in hahah!" Those are the kind of jokes that you really think...uh, okee..." She then explains how in those moments it bothered her and she found it weird and annoying, yet she didn't really make a link with discrimination. At 8 or 9 years old that's quite logical. Now that she's 23, she looks at a lot of her memories from another perspective. "I think it affects me more than it used to, because now I really notice it. I realize it. It used to be like: "I don't really like her, because she said this and that, not because she was racist or I felt discriminated... but now looking back I really think wow... that's so fucked up! that you would dare to say that to a child of that age, that's just weird!" It's remarkable how even when she looks back and describes how it really was discriminating, she still used the word 'weird'. There is a certain uneasiness to use the word discrimination.

Ryan had the same realization when he got older. Growing up in a small white village he didn't really think about why people were always looking at him. "When I got older, I started understanding more that 'oh, this is the reason that this and that happened'. First, I just thought, 'oh somebody looks at me weird'. I just didn't know. Later, I understood that some people just have nothing with people with a darker skin color." Ryan wasn't conscious about the discrimination in his youth, however it was 'lingering just beneath the surface'. (Ahmed, 2012). This has shaped the person he has become. History keeps shaping the future whether we are conscious about it or not. He tries to have no prejudice against people. He tries to stay open to everybody. He does this because in his village everybody had prejudice and they weren't open to change that. This history of discrimination shaped him but did not define him. He is breaking the cycle of discrimination. Other respondents seem to reproduce discrimination, in the sense that they wanted nothing to do with white people, but Ryan had the opposite.

Another example is Maya that had an interview before being admitted to her bachelors in Utrecht. "Maybe he heard my accent, but he literally asked if I felt integrated enough to follow that bachelor's program. I had to convince him that I was long enough in the Netherlands, at least 12 years, to be integrated. I really thought, if I weren't integrated, I wouldn't be here. I don't remember how I reacted, but the question always stuck with me." The worst part for her was that the university is supposed to represent inclusion and diversity, so receiving that as the first question was kind of a turn off. I think the relevance of this example is how much impact one comment can have on the person. She had this question in the back of her head for years and it just pops up every time there is a comment on her Dutch

accent. “You get brought down. It influences your confidence and people can see, or even feel that”. Maya never called this discrimination or racism though, she just mentioned it when I asked in what moments she became extra conscious of her biculturality.

Lidia had a similar experience when she had her first trial day at her internship. When it came up that her mother was Colombian, the man asked immediately ‘Does your mom work here in the Netherlands and what does she do?’, she told him off, by saying, ‘why don’t you ask that about my father?’. “It didn’t match of course, so I didn’t do my internship there, but crazy things like that, that you really have to swallow three times and think, ‘Did this just happen to me?’ And if you say something about it, you immediately get ‘no, I didn’t mean it like that’, like I’m crazy, I suddenly become the problem.” Ahmed (2007) also explained this, that when you address racism, you become the divisive factor, you created the problem. By doing this, the actual problem is avoided and ignored. Which is one of the containment techniques that Essed (1991) also mentions.

Being ‘exotic’

Something else that my respondents seemed to experience on a regular basis are situations of positive discrimination. Situations where they are treated as the exception or situations where the difference is emphasized in a positive way. It’s actually plain discrimination disguised in a positive coat. Like Essed (1991) explained in everyday racism, marginalization happens through patronizing techniques. Most of my respondents found it quite annoying, but weren’t able to say something about it, because they felt like the other person didn’t mean it in a bad way.

Sharon explained that when she was introduced to the family of her previous boyfriends, it happened a lot that they would say something like “oeeh, how exotic” or “What a nice color you have” and first she thought it was nice, but she explains how it started to bother her. “But at one point, you really start thinking, am I just that? Am I really just that? That really starts annoying you.” Sharon didn’t think that they meant it in a bad way, but the fact that it was always emphasized became more obvious every time. Nonetheless, she also shares how at the university, she’s always treated a little bit special. “You stand out... but in a good way, right? People are concerned about diversity, or they find you exotic, or you stand out because you’re just a little bit different, but actually the same, because you talk the same way, you’re as intelligent as them in their eyes, you’re just the same, but just a bit different, so there’s something special about you, and I felt that. Because it was in a positive way, I did feel more accepted.”

Ryan also experienced positive discrimination as something nice. “I’m glad that I’m bicultural, I always get compliments about the color of my skin and curls. All the people that have comments are just jealous because they never hear anything. They’re as white as can be.” He felt that the compliments were a nice gesture, and that made him more comfortable in different contexts. He had also experienced negative discrimination, so it’s possible that he prefers the positive approach. He believes it’s genuine, so he can appreciate it. Ahmed (2012) talks about how whiteness influences the way bodies take up space. It seems in this case, that the space is given by making Ryan feel comfortable. This doesn’t take away the fact that these compliments are given from the same white superiority as plain discrimination. Would these people tell a white person that their straight hair and pale skin is so nice? If not, these remarks are still a reproduction of whiteness.

Another point I would like to note was the reaction of respondents to discrimination not directed to them. More than half of the respondents mentioned not to feel addressed when somebody made a racist or discriminatory joke about black people, because they had a lighter skin tone. So, although they identified (partly) as black, they felt enough distance to that side of them, to not feel addressed. Which is a particularity to being bicultural. This is how that proximity to whiteness has a certain advantage for them. They still feel the duty to speak up for 'their people', but they do not feel directly addressed. For me it's the same. When people make jokes about white people, I know I look white, so they might also be talking about me, yet I do not feel addressed.

Reflection

When I was doing research for the theoretical framework, I read a quote in ‘Being included’ by Ahmed that I did not use, but I want to reflect on it. “I was struck how apology can be a form of permission: how apologizing for turning up at a person of color event as a white person might be a way of giving oneself permission to do so. The struggle against the reproduction of whiteness is a struggle against these forms of permission.” (Ahmed, 2012).

It made so much sense, but all I could think of was: If I turn up in colored environments am I the invasive one? Do I take up space that is theirs? And if that’s true, where then, is my space? Am I only allowed in white environments because I look that way? Her quote brought up so many questions. Is it relevant that I don’t identify as white? That I wasn’t raised Dutch or western? Was I doing wrong, by trying to create space for people like me? Doing the research for the theory section was an emotional roller coaster. I was moved while reading Dyer on his experience of feeling white while dancing at a black party. I recognized myself completely. Ahmed impressed me many times with quotes that hit you where it hurts. Fanon’s introduction of writing his book 3 years later, because the words were still fire inside of him, also made me emotional. When I started doing the interviews, I was very excited. The dialogues flowed and I got the feeling that we had a lot to share.

There was one recurring topic that was very difficult during the interviews, namely when they referred to not being white and not being Dutch. I asked what they considered as being Dutch or white. They all struggled to answer this question. Samie didn’t want to answer it and stated that Dutch was an empty idea, a delineated idea that referred to nothing, to a lot of things, but that meant nothing. Other respondents gave a few cultural stereotypes like being greedy, stiff, and individualistic. Others defined white as the negation of things like, not warm, not emotional, less helpful, less respectful, less fun. Some of them named cultural traits like eating a sandwich with cheese, having parties with cheese and sausages, and eating dinner at 6:00p.m. These negative notions of the Dutch culture changed entirely, when asked which characteristics they recognized in themselves. Punctuality, standing up for yourself, being mindful of the future, saving money and being straight forward, were some of the things they mentioned. The answers differed widely and white and Dutch were used interchangeably. Which confirms for me the fact that ethnicity, race, and culture are so intertwined- in the Netherlands- that it is hard to make a distinction.

Conclusions

The aim of this research was to get an in depth understanding of the experiences that bicultural have, related to that biculturality and to explore what we can learn about whiteness as an infrastructure through these experiences. The particularity of having a certain proximity and distance to whiteness brought forth three main themes: Question of exclusion, passing and discrimination. In questions of exclusion, I tried to elaborate on experiences where my respondents felt out of place. There were always multiple mechanisms at work. For example, religion and ethnicity or race and social economic status that reenforced the feeling of not belonging. The particularity of being half white caused for them to (feel different internally and) be marginalized in both colored environments and white environments. For future research it would be nice to also make intersections with gender and sexuality.

Questions of passing were about the way the respondent dealt with feeling different. Did they try to conform to the norm? and to which norm? The questions raised were about how they passed in different environments. The particular position of being bicultural, sometimes creates an opening because of the unidentifiability. Sometimes they were labeled something unintentionally and sometimes not passing caused for self-doubt.

Last but not least, I discussed questions of discrimination. This was the most difficult since exclusion is a form of discrimination. I separated them, to show the difference between explicit forms of discrimination and implicit ones. It was interesting to note how positive discrimination seemed very common for bicultural people, because on the one hand we can come very close to the norm and on the other hand we are like this special variation. There is still a certain distance that makes them emphasize (in a seemingly positive way) the difference.

What do these particularities teach us about the infrastructure of whiteness in the Netherlands?

One: We still feel the history of the colonial times through white centric cultural norms. This cultural hierarchy that Essed explained is felt in many ways as a bicultural person; having the feeling you don't speak the language properly, being underestimated and being marginalized because of your religion or ethnicity. Making passing our only option. Second: Being unidentifiable by the same dominant norm, makes it possible to pass as something or to be labeled mistakenly, in our benefit or disadvantage. Third: We reproduce the mechanisms of whiteness, because we have appropriated the norms and values that were inflicted on us. Or because to oppose the system, we reproduce it unconsciously. The point of this thesis is to show the struggles of bicultural persons that are half white in relation to the infrastructure of whiteness. Through the experiences of exclusion, passing and discrimination I hope to have contributed to partial situated knowledge that could stimulate future research and most importantly; to make the subject approachable.

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Appendix I: Autobiography

Let me give you a bit of context. My mom is Mexican, but only lived in Mexico for a maximum of 10 years. Her father was a diplomat, so they traveled a lot. She met my dad in South America, my dad is fully Dutch. They had my sister in Guatemala and my brother and I in El Salvador. When I was 4, they split, and my dad went back to the Netherlands. When I was 5, we moved to the Netherlands with my mom, because she wanted us to have a father around. I look like the Dutch girl next door, white skin, blue eyes, and light brown hair. At 5 years old I was still a sponge, so I learned Dutch pretty quickly.

I grew up in Oude Noorden in Rotterdam, that used to be a neighborhood with only Turkish and Moroccan people. My class consisted of maybe 20 Muslim kids, 3 black kids, one Polish kid and me. In the whole school there were maybe 3 Dutch kids. At a very young age it became quite clear to me that being white AND Dutch made you stand out. I was also one of the smartest in class, which made it even harder to blend in easily. Teachers were always making positive remarks or taking me as an example, which was a very undesired attention. I always wanted to pass as foreigner/ migrant/ 'Latina' everything that wasn't Dutch or white. Everybody had different ethnicities, so the conformity was just not being 'Dutch or white', whatever that means. For me it meant hiding my Dutch side, avoiding my dad to pick me up, talking with slang and sometimes having a smart mouth. Anyways, I did pretty good, I was quite popular in primary school, I called myself Oprah, because all the kids would come to me with their problems, and I would mediate.

This urge to blend in, to pass as not white, went on into middle school and high school; the pressure just went up. There were maybe 6 white kids in the whole school which consisted of maybe 800 kids. I was always very self-conscious, so you can imagine that during puberty, this was heightened to a very annoying personality trait in myself. The first 3 years I was best friend with a Turkish girl, and we really isolated ourselves from everybody, so those years were quite calm as to trying to fit in. But in the fourth year we went to different classes, and I remember seriously looking at my future class and analyzing who could be my friends. I discarded the Turkish group that only talked Turkish, I discarded all the boys who were really a separate gang, and I discarded the weird group that consisted in my eyes of the leftovers. So, there was this group of girls who were all mixed, but in my eyes 'black'. They were really out there, participated in the talent show of the school, knew people from higher classes and were pretty as hell, so in short very intimidating. I still chose them because the rest just didn't seem like an option. I had a strategy; I would just use self-mockery to cover the awkwardness. It worked. Soon, I was part of the gang, and we became friends. It may sound like a masterplan made in my bedroom, but I went on, openly honest with my intentions by making jokes about my insecurities and awkwardness. This is the period where my mom used to say that I didn't have a personal taste, because she saw me copying the girls. Looking back that was definitely true, but I also think that partly might have been just the insecurities of a teenager. High school was also the period of many first experiences, like parties. I've never felt whiter than at high school parties or when my friends decided to dance randomly. I have the rhythm of my dad, I don't hear when I'm going off beat, and these hips do not move like I wished they did. The problem is more that we just didn't grow up with music playing in the background and we had no family parties, since my family was in Mexico, and we only saw my Dutch family at funerals. My friends did grow up with music, so they just had the ear for it, although the difference had a logical explanation, it confirmed every stereotype in my head. I was the white Dutch girl who couldn't dance, and my friends were these rhythmic, confident, outgoing black girls.

University was crazy to me, I remember going the first day and like I did, in the fourth year of high school; I looked into the class, and I analyzed who could be my friend. I looked for someone not white without blue eyes. I saw one girl, I sat next to her, and we became friends, she was Moroccan. The first tutorial group I ever had was magic though. There was such a fun dynamic, that I became friends with a few Dutch super uber white kids, and I loved it, not because I was finally 'at home'. No nothing like that, but because they treated me as if I was foreigner/ migrant/ not white; an image which

I had tried to approximate my whole life and it never felt as legit as in a white environment. We also just really had a lot of fun, but I enjoyed being the exception, the 'exotic' one in a certain way. I always go a bit far in the role I take on though. In high school I never got lost of the awkward label and at university I got stuck with the ghetto label. I started to resent that label at Dudok, it was the first restaurant I had worked in that had a very white team. Diversity was really something they missed. There I had the same role as at the university of being the different one and at one point they started to call me 'ghetto-Anna', which was fine because I laughed along. I fed the image they had of me and worked there three years. In this place there was a certain hierarchy: you go from 'runner' bringing all the food and drinks to the table, to 'barista' making all the coffees and drinks, to 'waiter' having the responsibility over a certain number of tables. I loved being a barista and I actually didn't feel like waitering the tables. I had already done that for 3 years before Dudok, but after 5 evaluations I still got to hear that they didn't feel I could approach the customers in the right way. In my eyes that was crazy, I had already been a waitress, I was great with customers, and I definitely didn't lack any enthusiasm, intelligence, or social skills. So yes, around that time I did start resenting the label of ghetto-Anna. I felt heavily underestimated and a bit marginalized.

After finishing my bachelors, I started thinking about finding a serious job and I felt so scared for the job market. I didn't feel I had the skills, the appearance of a professional or the language of a professional. It was the first time that I started thinking, if I would be able to pass as white in the full sense of it. I have my name and appearance in favor, but when I open my mouth, people seem to notice that I'm not fully Dutch. I used to celebrate that because I felt my non-white side was being recognized and acknowledged. I even strived to be asked where I came from. However, sometimes I had the feeling, that because of my accent and slang they would think I was not very educated. I remember that at Dudok, people would be surprised when I said I was doing my bachelors or when I had a good conversation. It would be like 'wow I didn't know you were this smart.' My association with the professional world is that it's white and old and male, so the way I talk started to become a problem in my own eyes. I hate the feeling of needing to change the way I express myself, because I think it's part of my authenticity, of my identity. I also cannot express myself in the same way without slang or swears; I'm not articulate enough in Dutch. So, if I have to conform to all the rules and norms, I will maybe say half of what I am thinking and feeling. It's very limiting. The point is that in black environments I always felt more pressure to adjust than in white environments, but that's just because the desire to be accepted by black environments, was bigger. And because through my appearance, I'm already accepted by white environments. I still feel different, and they might exclude me later, but I'm initially accepted. That's an advantage that bicultural people with a different ethnic appearance might not have. My rejection of whiteness was produced by the feeling of being different than my environment. Nowadays I oppose whiteness, because it's a power structure I do not want to be a part of. I oppose it in every sense of my being. I try to distance myself from it.

Appendix II: Ethics and privacy checklist

CHECKLIST ETHICAL AND PRIVACY ASPECTS OF RESEARCH

INSTRUCTION

This checklist should be completed for every research study that is conducted at the Department of Public Administration and Sociology (DPAS). This checklist should be completed before commencing with data collection or approaching participants. Students can complete this checklist with help of their supervisor.

This checklist is a mandatory part of the empirical master's thesis and must be uploaded along with the research proposal.

The guideline for ethical aspects of research of the Dutch Sociological Association (NSV) can be found on their website (http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page_id=17). If you have doubts about ethical or privacy aspects of your research study, discuss and resolve the matter with your EUR supervisor. If needed and if advised to do so by your supervisor, you can also consult Dr. Jennifer A. Holland, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: Thesis proposal

Name, email of student: Anna Jacobs, 412726aj@eur.nl

Name, email of supervisor: Willem Schinkel, schinkel@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration: Mid-January – 20th of June

Is the research study conducted within DPAS YES - NO

If 'NO': at or for what institute or organization will the study be conducted?

(e.g. internship organization)

PART II: HUMAN SUBJECTS

1. Does your research involve human participants. YES - NO

If 'NO': skip to part V.

If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research? YES - NO

Research that falls under the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act (WMO) must first be submitted to an accredited medical research ethics committee or the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (CCMO).

2. Does your research involve field observations without manipulations that will not involve identification of participants. YES - NO

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

3. Research involving completely anonymous data files (secondary data that has been anonymized by someone else). YES - NO

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

PART III: PARTICIPANTS

1. Will information about the nature of the study and about what participants can expect during the study be withheld from them? YES - NO
2. Will any of the participants not be asked for verbal or written 'informed consent,' whereby they agree to participate in the study? YES - NO
3. Will information about the possibility to discontinue the participation at any time be withheld from participants? YES - NO

4. Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants? YES - NO

Note: almost all research studies involve some kind of deception of participants. Try to think about what types of deception are ethical or non-ethical (e.g. purpose of the study is not told, coercion is exerted on participants, giving participants the feeling that they harm other people by making certain decisions, etc.).

Does the study involve the risk of causing psychological stress or negative emotions beyond those normally encountered by participants?

YES - NO

Will information be collected about special categories of data, as defined by the GDPR (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a person, data concerning mental or physical health, data concerning a person's sex life or sexual orientation)? YES - NO

Will the study involve the participation of minors (<18 years old) or other groups that cannot give consent? YES - NO

Is the health and/or safety of participants at risk during the study? YES - NO

Can participants be identified by the study results or can the confidentiality of the participants' identity not be ensured? YES - NO

Are there any other possible ethical issues with regard to this study? YES - NO

If you have answered 'YES' to any of the previous questions, please indicate below why this issue is unavoidable in this study.

My research is about biculturality and the frictions of bicultural people in their daily lives, therefore it is relevant to discuss their race and ethnic origin etc. Of course the respondents

only have to talk about what their comfortable with.

What safeguards are taken to relieve possible adverse consequences of these issues (e.g., informing participants about the study afterwards, extra safety regulations, etc.).

I will set up ground rules with my respondents and make clear that they only have the answer the questions that they are comfortable with. Also that they can stop whenever they want. They will also have the option to be included anonymously if they prefer that.

Are there any unintended circumstances in the study that can cause harm or have negative (emotional) consequences to the participants? Indicate what possible circumstances this could be.

Please attach your informed consent form in Appendix I, if applicable.

Continue to part IV.

PART IV: SAMPLE

Where will you collect or obtain your data?

In my own network of friends, family and colleagues. Also friends from friends.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

I want to at least have 10 respondents.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the size of the population from which you will sample?

I don't have actual numbers, but everybody with a mixed descent with one half being Dutch. So pretty huge.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

Continue to part V.

Part V: Data storage and backup

Where and when will you store your data in the short term, after acquisition?

If I am allowed to record them, the interviews will first be on my phone. I will later transfer them to my laptop. I will save the files anonymously and upload them with a safe VPN connection.

Note: indicate for separate data sources, for instance for paper-and pencil test data, and for digital data files.

Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?

I am.

How (frequently) will you back-up your research data for short-term data security?

Once, after collecting all the data.

In case of collecting personal data how will you anonymize the data?

I can change the names of the respondents. If there is more info that they don't want to share I can exclude it from my thesis.

Note: It is advisable to keep directly identifying personal details separated from the rest of the data. Personal details are then replaced by a key/ code. Only the code is part of the database with data and the list of respondents/research subjects is kept separate.

PART VI: SIGNATURE

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the ethical guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing information to participants about the study and ensuring confidentiality in storage and use of personal data. Treat participants respectfully, be on time at appointments, call participants when they have signed up for your study and fulfil promises made to participants.

Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

Hereby I declare that the study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I have answered the questions truthfully.

Name student: Anna Jacobs

Name (EUR) supervisor: Willem Schinkel

Date: 18-03-2021

Date: 18-03-2021