# Online Racism in the Netherlands:
# How Instagrammers reacted to #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL in 2020

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# Abstract

This study provides an insight into the Dutch narrative of support and resistance to #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL, by conducting a qualitative content analysis on Instagram posts using these hashtags in 2020. In 2020, numerous people in the Netherlands decided to share their thoughts about the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. The biggest part of these people supported the movement and the people posting about it, especially on personal Instagram accounts with few followers. Here, mostly likeminded people communicated with each other. However, on bigger, corporate accounts there was much more discussion and conflict around BLM in the comment section. Here, a more diverse public came together. The comments on these corporate accounts included countless racist comments, which can be linked to  white supremacy, white innocence, and white ignorance. This study shows that there still is much work to do in fighting online racism in the Netherlands.

**Keywords**: BLM, Instagram, online racism, the Netherlands, white supremacy

# Preface

To finish my master's degree in Sociology (Engaging Public Issues) at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam, I was given the chance to delve further into online racism in the Netherlands, with a focus on the response to #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL on Instagram, a topic I am keenest on. Because this subject interests me greatly, I have worked on this research with great enthusiasm and tenacity for the past six months. The result of this is lying in front of you now.

I look back at a special and enlightening thesis writing period. Special, because my thesis advisor Bonnie French, my fellow students and I unfortunately were not able to see each other in real life except for our last meeting, due to the Covid pandemic that we are still living in today. Although we have seen each other almost exclusively online, I think we succeeded in supporting each other when that was needed. Enlightening, because I gained a lot of new insights, both by doing my own research and by conversing with my thesis advisor and fellow students about my thesis topic and other related topics. I would like to offer my sincere thanks to them all, for their guidance, their constant availability, their critical and constructive feedback, and their emotional support. I would also like to thank Willem Schinkel for his valuable feedback on my thesis proposal.

I hope you enjoy reading my thesis.

Nikki Daenen
Rotterdam, 20 June 2021

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# 1. Introduction

On the night of February 26, 2012, George Zimmerman, a White neighborhood watchman, fatally shot Trayvon Martin, an African American teenage boy who was unarmed (Edrington & Lee, 2018). Thereafter, Zimmerman was formally charged with second-degree murder in the summer of 2013 (Chase, 2017). Extremely disappointed by the outcome of this trial, in which George Zimmerman was acquitted, Alicia Garza started to share her frustrations in a Facebook post. She wrote: *"Black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter"* (Wortham, 2016, paragraph 1). A friend of hers responded to Garza's post with the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. In July 2013, these two women, together with another friend, decided to move from Facebook as a platform to Twitter. They created an official Twitter page for Black Lives Matter (BLM) and after that, BLM took on a life of its own. The hashtag gained international attention, especially after multiple police killings of African American people in the spring and summer of 2020, including the killing of George Floyd. The hashtag moved from social media to the streets, with protests that were held all over the globe, from the Netherlands to the USA, from Japan to South Africa (Edrington & Lee, 2018). However, important to note here is that decades of organizing work proceed the BLM movement as we know it now. The BLM movement is meeting at the intersection of historical civil rights efforts in the USA, including the civil rights movement and movements such as the Arab Spring, which were made possible because of social media.

The BLM protests and attention on social media in 2020 both indicate a struggle for power in controlling discourse about racism and violence against African American people in the USA (Carney, 2016). The often heated exchanges between Black people, White people and police officers reveal the emergence of a few dominant ideological positions, emphasizing how these different groups of people interpret issues of race and violence in extremely different ways (Smith, Rainie, Himelboim & Shneiderman, 2014). Stereotypes of African American people have become so entrenched in the American society that they seem to serve as a way to legitimate White people committing violence against unarmed Black persons in the eyes of many Americans (Carney, 2016). And this is not only the case in the United States.

Also, in other countries over the world, like the Netherlands, it is common that people have stereotypical images of Black people. Those stereotypes can affect everything, inter alia the way police diagnose danger. An example of such a stereotypical thought is that Black people are more likely to engage in criminal behaviour. The media show crime rates being higher for minority populations, which creates an automatic stereotype that a Black person is more linked to danger than a White person (Milkman & Brabaw, 2020). Therefore, police are often more likely to use

excessive force on Black people than on White people. A Dutch example is Mitch Henriquez, an unarmed, Black man, who died on June 28, 2015, in The Hague, the Netherlands. After he had screamed that he was armed, he was dealt with harshly by the police officers. Eventually, a police officer's neck hold became fatal for Henriquez (NOS, 2021). These stereotypes are normalized and accepted as truth on a subconscious level by many. However, mainly people of color recognize these stereotypes and acts of violence as part of a larger pattern of racism. This indicates that someone's position within complex systems of oppression affects what he or she sees as a 'fact' in the national discourse about violence against Black people (Carney, 2016).

Following Mills and Godley (2017), racism can be defined as *"the beliefs, practices, or structural systems that function to oppress racial groups in society"* (Mills & Godley, 2017, p. 1). In the Netherlands, only a small part of racism is clearly visible, for example when White people verbally or physically attacked Black activists who were demonstrating against 'Black Pete' (Mulder & Bol, 2020). However, the vast majority of Dutch racism is more subtle, and less visible. There are societal patterns and structures that impose oppressive and/or negative conditions on groups of people, based on their race or ethnicity, also referred to as institutional racism (Head, 2020). Systematically, Black people are being excluded or discriminated based on rules, traditions, behaviour, and manners. As mentioned earlier, you can find institutional racism in the Netherlands in police forces. Other places where you can find institutional racism are in the housing market, in medical guidelines and in application procedures (Mulder & Bol, 2020). Following the American example, there were multiple anti-racism protests in the Netherlands last year, to raise attention for the Dutch BLM movement.

With the rise of social media, a new form of access is created that enables many people to participate in the public sphere, who otherwise would not be able to do so. Due to technological innovations and the increased accessibility of cell phones, many people can tap into discourse on social media almost anywhere, anytime, independent of their power, fame, mobility, and economic situation (Carney, 2016). On Instagram alone, more than one billion monthly users can participate in conversations. For example, Instagram users get the opportunity to engage with issues such as race and oppression (Enberg, 2020). Therefore, Instagram is a social media platform that is often used to post something concerning BLM as well (Carney, 2016). Here, people can share pictures, videos, and information to address topics like racism and violence against Black people, while simultaneously people can post something about the counternarrative of BLM, namely All Lives Matter (ALM). Unlike with Twitter, there is not much research that has already been conducted by other researchers into this topic on Instagram.

The aim of this research is to explore the Dutch narrative of support and resistance to #BlackLivesMatterNL as expressed on Instagram by its users in 2020. By 'Dutch narrative' I

mean that I look at responses to the uniquely Dutch hashtags related to BLM. However, I do not attempt to make individual distinctions about the users in an effort to get a broad and diverse sense of the narrative. The central research question is: "*How did people in the Netherlands react to #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL on Instagram in 2020? And what does this tell us about racism in Dutch social media?*". To formulate an answer to this question, a qualitative content analysis on Instagram posts using #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL will be conducted.

First, the core concepts of this research will be identified in the theoretical framework. After that comes the methodology, where it is argued what method is used in conducting this research. Thereafter, the results of this research will be discussed. Lastly, in the discussion and conclusion a final answer will be given to the research question stated above.

# 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Racism in the Netherlands

At the turn of this century, with the 9/11 attacks in the United States in 2001 and the so-called refugee crisis that started in 2015, negative attitudes towards (particularly Muslim) migrants were visibly intensified in the Netherlands. With the establishment of political parties as the Party for Freedom in 2005 and Forum for Democracy in 2015, there has been a transition from somewhat subtle forms of racism to more blatant forms of racism, not only towards Muslim people but towards all non-White persons (Ghorashi, 2020). Multiple Black activists who publicly questioned exclusionary practices in the Netherlands, for example concerning the racist character Black Pete, were attacked. However, it was only a couple of years ago that this led to more public recognition of the existence of structural forms of racism in the Netherlands (Rodenberg & Wagenaar, 2016).

Race is a much-debated concept. Haney-Lopez (1994) described race as a social construct, a continuing process of social categorization by phenotype, origin, and other historically contingent and socio-political conflicts. Following this definition of race, race is always set up in relation to other racial groups, mostly based on ethnicity, physical characteristics, culture, and manners (Mills & Godley, 2017). These racialized ideologies serve as a way to naturalize the idea that a certain race is superior to another (Lorde, 1992). Building on this, racism can be defined as the beliefs, practices, and structural systems that are being used to oppress certain racial groups in society (Mills & Godley, 2017). A quite telling Dutch example of this is the Prime Minister Mark Rutte saying *"We will make sure, ladies and gentlemen, that we give this beautiful country back to the Dutch"* after he won the Dutch state elections in March 2011 (Ghorashi, 2014). With Dutch being a code for White, it is suggested that the Netherlands belong more to White people than to Black people, which is an example of racism.

Three important aspects of structural racism in relation to the Netherlands are white supremacy, white innocence, and white ignorance. These three terms will be discussed in the next paragraph.

### 2.1.1 White supremacy, white innocence, and white ignorance

The fact that the growing presence of explicit racism in the Dutch public space did not cause a public recognition of racism in the Netherlands immediately can be linked to the notion of white supremacy. Gillborn (2006) described white supremacy as the process of placing interests and perceptions of White people center stage, and seeing these as normal, while interests and perceptions of Black people are seen as abnormal and less important. Linked to the framing of

migrants as 'a problem' in the Netherlands, the native people see 'their' Dutch, White culture as superior to the migrants' Black, deviant cultures (Ghorashi, 2014).

Linked to white supremacy, Black people are seen as weaker, and in need of help. The Dutch welfare state is committed to help people in the weak, disadvantaged groups. This has led to the Dutch seeing themselves as a charitable and open society, which undermines the present anger against migrants and Black people, who are seen as ungrateful when they accuse Dutch people or the Dutch society of (systemic) racism (Ghorashi, 2014). This is called white innocence, which is shaped by the Dutch colonial history, informing images of the Self and the Other, with in this case the Self being the White native Dutch people and the Other being the (often Black) migrants (Wekker, 2016).

The last important phenomenon that relates to white supremacy is white ignorance. Mills (2007) describes white ignorance as a contingent non-knowing, in which white racism and white racial domination both play a crucial causal role. Instead of a lack of information, white ignorance is a substantive knowledge practice and a 'need not to know', which operates in habits, norms, institutional practices, and laws. The fact that our current models of responsibility emphasize white moral absolution and the conservation of innocence makes it hard to address certain practices (Boodman, 2017).

### 2.2 Black Lives Matter NL

The shift towards more public recognition of the existence of structural forms of racism in the Netherlands came with the arrival of the Dutch BLM movement. Last year, there were BLM demonstrations in most Dutch cities. Those in Amsterdam and Rotterdam gained the most attention, because of the huge number of participants in combination with the possible risk factors related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the Dutch society and within institutions, structural forms of racism have never been addressed more widely and cross-racially than now, which led to a growing awareness of structural racism in the Netherlands and increasing calls to unsettle the status quo and create more inclusionary spaces and practices (Ghorashi, 2020).

### 2.3 Social media as a new public sphere

Using Habermas' (1991) theory about the public sphere in light of modern technology can help to understand the discourse surrounding BLM on social media (Habermas, 1991). Social media can be seen as a new public sphere. With the rise of social media, the national discourse concerning racism became more accessible, especially for youth who grew up with all these technological innovations (Carney, 2016). While Habermas stated that the public sphere emerged as a space for people to exchange their thoughts and ideas within a nation-state outside of state control, in the

present day we see a multiplicity of public spheres that overlap each other and are constantly shifting. Public spheres are not limited within the borders of a specific nation-state anymore. With social media, people can tap into discourse with each other from anywhere, and anytime (Carney, 2016).

Scholars think differently about the public in social media as a public sphere. On the one hand, some scholars classify social media as a 'weak' public, because publics on social media do not have the power to directly shape decision-making in the state (Fraser, 1992). On the other hand, they can also be seen as a 'strong' public, given that they can put pressure on the state to reform its practices, for example by organizing protests, educating people, and getting recognition for racism, like the BLM protesters do (Carney, 2016). Here, Dahlgren (1995) steps away from Habermas' notion of an audience as a stable, fixed, and passive group of receivers towards the notion of publics as interactive social agents.

Social media as a public sphere can have multiple functions in scaling initiatives for social change. Movements that use social media tools, such as the BLM movement, are more likely to be larger, to scale up more quickly and to be more flexible in tracking, moving political targets and bridging different issues, compared to more conventional movements that are not active on social media platforms like Instagram (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Existing literature about the role of social media in collective action offers an understanding of its importance for mobilization, coalition building, and meaning making (Mundt, Ross & Burnett, 2018). These three strengthening points will be further discussed in the following paragraphs.

### 2.3.1 Social Media and Mobilization

First of all, social media can play an important role in mobilizing new activists. Due to social media's 'public sphere' nature that is discussed above, social media can create participation opportunities for movements, for example supporting fundraising campaigns. As a result, social media can boost protest turnouts. By broadening mobilization, social media help scaling up movements (Mundt, Ross & Burnett, 2018). Khamis and Vaughn (2012) have given an illustration of a case where social media played an important role in scaling up a movement, namely during the Tahrir Square protests in Egypt in 2011. There, Facebook was of great importance, because of its spreading of information, mobilizing the protesters, and creating a safe space for the protesters to meet and talk freely. De Choudhury, Jhaver, Sugar, and Weber (2016) agree on these points. In their article, where they analyze social media participation in the BLM movement, they write about social media, being a platform for continued involvement and reflection around race-related issues. They highlight social media's importance for the development of common understandings of ideology and a shared sense of movement identity. Next to recruitment of participants, social

media activists can also benefit from using social media by mobilizing other necessary resources, such as money (Sommerfeldt, 2013). One way to do so it through digital crowdfunding campaigns (Doan & Toledano, 2018). So, social media can have a vigorous role in providing movements with the needed resources, both human resources and financial resources.

### 2.3.2 Social Media and Coalition Building

Social media can also play a role in shaping coalitions, the joining together of different (groups of) people for a particular purpose. However, there is little literature written about it. The few scholars that did write about this role, speak of social media creating a space for online social networks that enables activists and other people to develop and intensify connections with each other, and build social capital (Ackerman & Duvall, 2005; Shaw, 2013). Social media networks can contribute to the creation of large and sustainable interpersonal networks or coalitions (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). To bring groups together in coalitions, shared narratives, ideologies, and a collective identity are essential factors, according to Chávez (2011). Furthermore, when for example BLM organizations use social media, they send a message to the social media user community that they as an organization are interested in what these users think and what they want to contribute to the conversation. This two-way flow of communication is valuable, and makes it more likely to have a fruitful 'call to action' in the online environment (Guo & Saxton, 2014). Furthermore, Chávez (2011) talks about social media's capability to bring together diverse interests around a common cause as an important aspect.

### 2.3.3 Social Media and Meaning Making

A third role that social media can play in scaling initiatives for social change concerns meaning making. Social media can help shape discourse on relevant political issues, such as racism. Digital spaces, like social media platforms, are important for collective meaning making (Kavada, 2015). Furthermore, social media platforms are of great importance for *"disseminating shared ideologies into public discourse"* (Mundt, Ross & Burnett, 2018, p. 1). Because of social media's role in meaning making, it is possible for diverse groups, such as young and old, Black and White, higher educated and lower educated people and people that live far away from each other, to start a conversation with each other. These conversations would be far less likely to happen in 'real life' (Mundt, Ross & Burnett, 2018). Thorson, Edgerly, Kligler-Vilenchik, Xu and Wang (2016) focused in their research concerning the September 2014 People's Climate March on the broad range of groups that uses social media for framing the climate issue. The organizations behind this march applied a strategy of inclusion: diverse groups of people, such as advocacy groups, governmental actors, journalists, and individual activists were all present in the discussion about

the climate issue. This way, they succeeded in mobilizing a relatively open space of shared attention to the march. They also highlighted the fact that social media enabled users to make their own personalized framings visible to each other. This bridging between different people's visions, thoughts, and opinions can play an important role for movements. It makes it possible to create a sense of collective identity and cause, which is essential to make the social movement organizing effective (Valocchi, 2009).

### 2.3.4 Limitations and Risks of Movements on Social Media

Although a lot of scholars, like the scholars mentioned above, have suggested a positive role for social media in stimulating activism and social movement participation, social media can also have countereffects on strengthening movements. Youmans and York (2012) highlight constraints that social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, can place on grassroots organizers who use these platforms to break down or work against certain movements. They can do so by for example preventing the use of pseudonymous or anonymous posts, removing the accounts of important movement activists, or shutting down the use of social media in its totality. So, social media platforms that can facilitate protests, can simultaneously be used by repressive actors to counteract.

### 2.4 Online racism/cyber racism

Seeing the internet as a new public sphere, where everyone could write freely about their thoughts and feelings, some scholars had extremely high expectations of the internet (Hughey & Daniels, 2013). The internet would give millions access to the truth, to powerful, fast traveling information (Daniels, 2009). It would become a utopian space, free of social distinctions such as race (e.g. Beckles, 1997). However, the internet turned out not to be free from race or racism. Kolko, Nakamura, and Rodman (2013, p. 5) explained this clearly: *"Race matters in cyberspace precisely because all of us who spend time online are already shaped by the ways in which race matters offline, and we can't help but bring our own knowledge, experiences, and values with us when we log on."*

Instead of the (by some) expected disappearance of racism, racism took new and unique shapes on the internet. Unexpectedly for some, overt racism in online comments emerged, in a way that news sites had to think about solutions to delete hateful, racist comments, and to protect the health of the online public sphere (Hughey & Daniels, 2013). Also, on social media racist practices take place on a regular basis. For example, racist speech thrives, of which a big part is posted through covert tactics like the weaponization of memes (Lamerichs, Nguyen, Melguizo, Radojevic & Lange-Böhmer, 2018) and the use of anonymous and fake identities to post hateful

comments (Farkas, Schou & Neumayer, 2018). Users can also (re)produce racism in a more subtle way, for example by using emojis, which has changed to uglier practices in the last couple of years (Matamoros-Fernández, 2018). Also, social media platforms themselves have received critique on their own racist practices. As an illustration, Instagram has come under fire for developing filters that stimulate White people to perform "digital blackface" and filters that lighten the skin of Black people automatically (Matamoros-Fernández & Farkas, 2021). Other social media platforms have also received critique for providing anonymity for users that posted hate comments and threats (Farkas, Schou & Neumayer, 2018). When people are enabled to anonymously post things online, the threshold to post negative, even illegal posts and comments is lower. In other words, the policies and processes of social media platforms around content moderation can play an important role in the existence of online racism, also referred to as cyber racism.

# 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research design

To formulate an answer to the research question *"How did people in the Netherlands react to #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL on Instagram in 2020? And what does this tell us about racism in Dutch social media?"*, a qualitative content analysis on Instagram posts that are related to #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL in 2020 is conducted. Content analysis is a method to analyse written, verbal, or visual communication messages, and therefore it is very suitable for this research (Cole, 1988). By using these two hashtags mentioned above, this research has only focused on what people in the Netherlands have posted about BLM. With more than 7500 Instagram posts that use (one of) these hashtags and limited time to conduct this research, only a selection of these posts is examined (Instajust, n.d.-a; Instajust, n.d.-b). Another criterium was that the posts had to be posted in the year 2020. Unfortunately, current technology did not allow for an efficient way to archive Instagram posts during a specific period, but Instagram does have an option to look at the popular posts instead of the most recent posts. When looking at the popular posts using #BlackLivesMatterNL or #BLMNL practically any post is from 2020. In this section, the 150 most popular Instagram posts were included on the list with posts to analyze. These posts consisted of 424 pictures and videos. During the analysis, pictures and videos that were posted on Instagram with (one of) the two hashtags have been examined, as well as the captions and reactions that were written under these posts. The focus was both on what is being shown and what is being written in these posts, and on how this relates to the discourse on racism in the Netherlands.

The 150 selected Instagram posts, so 424 pictures and videos, have been examined and coded into different categories. These categories have been developed both in an inductive and in a deductive way. Deductive category development enabled me as a researcher to bring the findings in connection with prior formulated, theoretical derived aspects of analysis. Earlier found themes concerning the role of social media in movements can possibly be applied to this new research. For example, Tajfel and Turner (1979), have uncovered three strategies to help people find their social identity where people can, and they refer to this as the social identity theory. These strategies are (1) change group association to one with better status, (2) work together to improve perceptions of their group, and (3) promote social change so the group has better social standing. In this research these strategies have been applied to the Instagram posts concerning #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL.

At the same time, inductive category development made it possible to develop the aspects of interpretation, the categories, as near as possible to the material, to formulate them in terms of the material (Mayring, 2004). After loosely coding the selection of Instagram posts, a close textual and visual analysis on these selected Instagram posts has been conducted, from which more specific thematic groupings will be developed. All the coding has been done by using Word. This computer program is extremely suitable for working with qualitative content analysis, as it enabled me as a researcher to merge all the pictures, captions, comments, and my own notes. It made the steps of the picture and text analysis easier and more manageable.

The aim of this qualitative content analysis was to attain a condensed and broad description of the Black Lives Matter movement and racism in the Netherlands, and the outcome of the analysis were categories describing these phenomena (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Qualitative content analysis is extremely well-suited for analysing multifaceted, sensitive phenomena, of which the BLM movement is a good example. An advantage of this method is the fact that it enables researchers to deal with large volumes of textual data and different textual sources. Especially when it comes down to sensitive topics, like racism, content analysis can play an important role (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

### 3.2 Positionality

An important point to make here is that, as a young, White woman of mainly Dutch descent, I will never be able to fully understand how racism feels personally. I can only imagine how painful it can be for Black people to experience racism on a regular basis. Therefore, I stand as an ally to them, and I hope to positively contribute to the discourse on BLM and racism in the Netherlands with this research. While I did not directly engage in BLM demonstrations and conversations about it on Instagram, I actively followed and engaged in the discourse on the news, Twitter, and Instagram during 2020. I have chosen Instagram as the platform to conduct my research, because of the gap in the literature and because of Instagram's public nature and the prolific engagement of its' users, including many Black people.

### 3.3 Dealing with limitations

Nonetheless, this research faced some limitations. One risk of (qualitative) content analysis in general is the fact that it is very flexible and there is no 'perfect' way of doing it. I, as a researcher, had to judge what variations are most appropriate for my particular problems (Weber 1990). The excessive interpretation on the part of me could pose a threat to a successful content analysis. This could make the analysis process challenging and forces an enormous amount of work (Polit & Beck, 2004). Next to that, in this research I have focused on the Netherlands, but it was not always

clear if someone's Instagram post is from the Netherlands or not. The solution for this was that I decided to look at #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL, but this means that some other Instagram posts from the Netherlands, where the above stated hashtags have not been used, have not been taken into account. Also, unfortunately, ALM does not have a specific hashtag for the Netherlands, which makes it impossible for me to analyze how people in the Netherlands think about ALM. However, when looking at posts with the hashtags #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL I expected to also find posts that included the hashtag #ALM, which was indeed the case. That way, it was still possible to say something about the potential important counternarrative on Instagram in the Netherlands. Furthermore, an important point to make here, is that I have not been able to analyze the Instagram pictures that are posted on private accounts. I only had access to public Instagram posts. In appendix 1 an ethics and privacy checklist is attached, in which it is written how I dealt with the ethical concerns in this research. Lastly, not all comments that are posted under Instagram posts concerning BLM in the Netherlands are still visible today, because some people have meanwhile deleted their (mainly negative) reactions.

# 4. Results

With more than 7500 posts about BLM NL on Instagram, Black Lives Matter is a big topic in the Netherlands. When analyzing the Instagram posts with #BLMNL and #BlackLivesMatterNL from 2020 it is interesting to see when these hashtags have been used. As becomes clear in the graph below, the hashtags have not been used in the months January till May 2020 at all. In June and July, the hashtags are used a lot. These months follow the killing of George Floyd, on the 25th of May 2020. After his death, the BLM movement (including the Dutch version of the movement) gained a lot more attention in the media, including on social media. In that time, many people documented something about the movement, Black lives, and racism. In the months that followed, the hashtags were used occasionally, with some more posts about BLM in the Netherlands around November, when people started to discuss more about Black Pete in relation to the Dutch holiday 'Sinterklaas'. The graph only shows the analyzed #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL posts, but, to the best of my knowledge, this timing of posting is consistent with the #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL posts from 2020 in general.
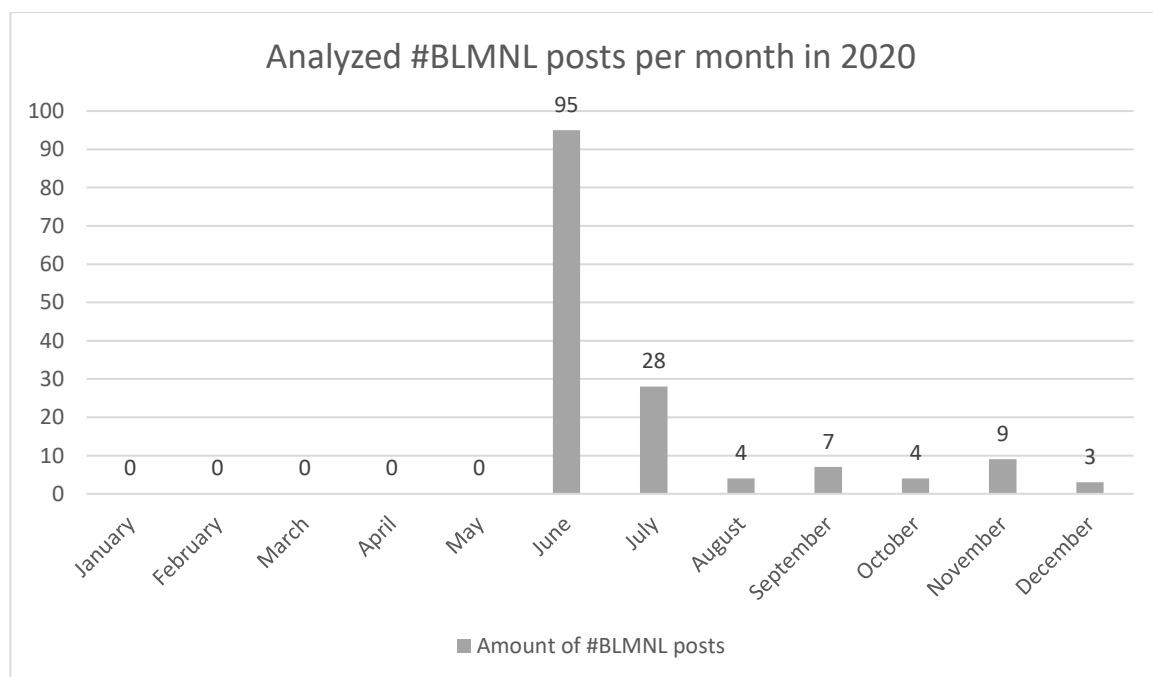


*Figure 1: Analyzed #BLMNL posts sorted by month*

## 4.1 Contexts of using #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL

#BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL are used in ten different contexts. The most important ones will be discussed extensively in the next paragraphs, while the somewhat less important ones will be discussed less extensively. The first context that is mentioned below is the most common one,

while the last context that is mentioned is the least common one. Important to note here is that most of the analyzed Instagram posts fit under multiple contexts.

## 1. Show support

The first context in which Dutch Instagram users posted about the BLM movement is show support, which is the most common kind of post, in a way that a lot of people, on personal accounts but also on bigger, corporate accounts, have shown their support for the Dutch BLM movement. Around 50 percent of the analyzed posts fits in this context. Most of these people showed their support by posting pictures of themselves at a BLM protest, often holding a sign with a slogan like "Black Lives Matter", "Racism is for losers", "Say their names" (referring to the Black people that were murdered mainly in the United States), "Dear white folx, we are the problem", and "Racism is a pandemic" (comparing to the Covid pandemic), like the two women in figure 2 (Agyeiwaa, 2020). Others showed their support by posting pictures and videos of a protesting crowd or speaking protesters in different Dutch cities.



*Figure 2: A supporting BLM post (Agyeiwaa, 2020)*

## 2. Call to action

The second one is a call to action, which corresponds with around 15 percent of the posts. This can be a call to come attend a BLM protest, which applies to a lot of analyzed posts. Instagram users also tried to stimulate other users to speak up to racist friends, and to discuss racism more. Additionally, there were posts concerning another call to action, for example a post with a picture that stated "Four anti-racism organizations that you can donate to today", followed by the names and bank details of these four organizations, shown in figure 3 (Latoya, 2020). Although the type of calls to action differs, they all contribute in some way to the Dutch BLM movement.

*Figure 3: A call to action BLM post (Latoya, 2020)*

3. Recognition

Another context in which people used one of the hashtags is to get recognition, to show there is racism and that it is also a big deal in the Netherlands. Approximately 10 percent of the posts fit this context. As an illustration, there was one post with a video of primary school children speaking about their own experiences with racism to a big crowd during a Dutch BLM protest (Tiwow, 2020). In figure 4 a shot from the video is depicted. Hearing these experiences of racism from these young children can people make facing the facts about racism in the Netherlands.



*Figure 4: A recognition BLM post (Tiwow, 2020)*

Figure 5 below shows one picture from another Instagram post that contributes to getting recognition for Dutch racism. It is a post with multiple pictures of racist practices and incidents, such as a picture of a racist child book, an article about politician Thierry Baudet falsely accusing Black people of being violent towards his female friends, and a picture of a well-known Dutch BLM protester Mitchell Esajas' car that is destroyed by pro-Black Pete hooligans (The Black Archives, 2020). All these pictures show that there is racism in the Netherlands, so they try to contribute to the recognition of it.



*Figure 5: A recognition BLM post (The Black Archives, 2020).*

4. Information about protests

A fourth one is providing information about BLM protests. This accounts for around 7.5 percent of the total amount of posts. These posts mainly consist of posters and announcements, where people can find all the information they need to attend a protest: the date, place, time schedule, and often also some information regarding the Covid rules. By spreading these posts and information about these protests, people try to stimulate the protest turnout. An example of such a post is shown in figure 6, where information about a BLM protest in Amsterdam is provided (Black Heritage Tours, 2020).

*Figure 6: An informing about a BLM protest post (Black Heritage Tours, 2020)*

5. Education

The fifth context is education. In these kind of posts people, organizations or businesses tried to educate their followers something about racism in the Netherlands, which is in line with approximately 5 percent of the analyzed posts. As an illustration, one post consisted of ten pictures that together formed a to-do list to support anti-racism efforts in and from the Netherlands. The first picture of the post is depicted in figure 7 below. Examples of things that were on that list are: support local organizations at the front lines of this (BLM) fight in the Netherlands, watch the documentary "Suspect" about racial profiling in the Netherlands, de-white your media, and take a tour of Amsterdam's black history (Versal Amsterdam, 2020). With this post, people tried to encourage Dutch people to learn more about the BLM movement, and they educated Dutch people how they could support the BLM movement.



*Figure 7: An educating BLM post (Versal Amsterdam, 2020)*

Figure 8 below shows another example of an educating post that is connected to the BLM movement. This post shares a tweet from Saskia Bonjour, who states that there is institutional racism in Dutch universities (Jouwe, 2020). She uses the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (part of the University of Amsterdam) as an example, where 96 percent of the professors is White. With this post, she educates people about the existence of institutional racism and about the importance of collecting data around institutional racism.



*Figure 8: An educating BLM post (Jouwe, 2020)*

6. Celebrate Black people

Another context in which the hashtags are used is to celebrate Black people, for example celebrating big achievements of Black people, and Black beauty. The last category came back multiple times in the content analysis, for example in a post that is shown in figure 9 below (Akumfi, 2020). There, Black people often posted pictures of themselves or a friend, where they described why they are beautiful, usually using hashtags as "#BlackQueen" and "#BlackBeauty" as well. Around 5 percent of the analyzed posts fits in this context.

*Figure 9: A celebrating BLM post (Akumfi, 2020)*

7. Start a conversation

Seventh, they can be used to start a conversation about racism. Although this one is not used a lot, namely in around 2.5 percent of the posts, some Instagram users used the hashtag to start exchanging thoughts about it. For example, there is a picture of a Black guy sitting on the streets with a sign that says "Are you going to talk to me?", shown in figure 10 below (Sawaneh, 2020). He invited random strangers on the streets to start a conversation with him about racism and he tries to stimulate people to talk more about it with each other, also with people that are not like-minded.



*Figure 10: A starting a conversation BLM post (Sawaneh, 2020)*

8. Jokes

Eighth, they can be used when joking about the BLM movement or related issues. This did not happen a lot, in approximately 2.5 percent of the posts, because most of the posts that use the #BLMNL or #BlackLivesMatterNL hashtag are serious content. However, there were some posts where jokes about the BLM were made, for example in a fake news article, shown in figure 11 below, that states that a Dutch female activist switched from a climate movement to BLM because she likes demonstrating and it is her dream come true. This post is clearly meant sarcastic, as a joke concerning the BLM movement.



Activiste Kim (22) stapt over van klimaatverandering naar Black Lives Matter

🌐 Nieuwspaal

*Figure 11: A joking BLM post (Nieuwspaal, 2020)*

9. To get more views and/or money

The second to last one context in which people used one of the hashtags is to gain more views. These Instagram posts had nothing to do with the BLM movement itself, but by using the hashtags more people will look at their picture. The last one is similar to the previous one, namely using the hashtags for economic benefit. The posts, again, had nothing to do with the BLM movements, but by using the hashtags more people will see the post and hopefully more people will buy the product that is advertised for in the post. Here, people tried to profit from the movement. These two contexts together were used in approximately 2.5 percent of the posts. Because these contexts do not tell us much more about the Dutch response to BLM, I will not delve deeper into these two contexts.

**4.2 Instagram users**

Although all kinds of people have shared their thoughts about BLM on Instagram, there are certain kinds of people that seem to speak out more about the Dutch BLM movement. An interesting

point to make is that most of the Instagram posts concerning #BLMNL or #BlackLivesMatterNL are posted by Black people. Also, when looking at pictures of BLM protests on Instagram, there are way more Black people than White people protesting. Furthermore, most people that used these hashtags, around 75 percent, are young adults. There are few elderly people that posted about the Dutch BLM movement, but this has probably to do with the fact that most elderly people are not using Instagram in general. Slightly more women have posted about it, but the difference between the number of posts posted by men is quite small. People with small, personal accounts posted about BLM (approximately 80 percent of the posts), but well-known people with a lot of followers posted about BLM as well, same for Instagram accounts of news platforms, organizations, and businesses (approximately 20 percent of the posts).

### 4.3 Supportive, positive reactions

There was a lot of support on most Instagram posts about BLM. However, most of the support and positive reactions were given under posts from personal accounts, with fewer followers. The supportive reactions mostly consist of beautiful words to the Instagram user that posted something concerning BLM. Examples of these uplifting words are "Proud of you", "You go girl", "Very strong", "I love you", "You inspire me", and "I love your energy sis". In the positive reactions also a lot of Instagram users used emojis to show their support, such as the clapping hands emoji, heart emojis, and fire emojis. Sometimes, Instagram users also promoted other Instagram accounts in the comments by tagging these accounts and writing why other Instagram users should follow or take a look at these accounts.

### 4.4 Negative reactions

On personal accounts, there were few negative reactions. There were only two exceptions on this, with one of them being a comment stating that Black people are responsible for the fact that racism keeps spreading and that they have to go back to their own country. The bigger Instagram accounts, with more followers, mainly Instagram accounts of organizations and news platforms gained a lot more negative reactions when they posted something concerning BLM, or racism in the Netherlands. Most of these bigger Instagram accounts received approximately 80 percent positive, and 20 percent negative reactions, but some posts even receive up to 50 percent negative reactions. These negative reactions mainly consisted of words, but sometimes people also used emojis to show their rejection and criticism, for example with an angry emoji or a vomiting emoji. In the next paragraph these negative reactions will be discussed in more detail.

### 4.5 Online racism in the Netherlands

As stated above, when analyzing the 150 Instagram posts, a large number of negative, racist reactions were seen. The first example is *"Here in the Netherlands racism is not that bad as in the USA"* (De Correspondent, 2020). This comment downplays Dutch racism and comes down to the idea that Black people in the Netherlands are in a relatively good situation, so they should not complain about it. With comments as *"If you (Black people) would behave yourselves we wouldn't even need the police"* people suggest that Black people are likely to be criminal, while White people are not criminal, which is a racist thought (NOS, 2020). Another interesting comment is *"Idiots, go do something useful"*, implying that protesting against racism is not useful and that these people do not do other useful things besides protesting, such as working (Nu.nl, 2020). Furthermore, comments as *"Go away"* and "*If you don't like it here, fuck off"* are seen multiple times towards Black people that are protesting, suggesting they have to leave and be quiet (Esajas, 2020; NOS, 2020). Elaborating on this, a lot of hateful comments were posted on Instagram posts concerning (the removal of) Black Pete. People posted things like *"You screw up a children's party"* and *"You're going to ruin the Netherlands like this"* (Politieke Jongeren, 2020-a). Another example of a negative comment under the BLM posts on Instagram is *"What a age to live in black people got racism priviliges"*, suggesting that White people experience racism in stead of Black people (Politieke Jongeren, 2020-b). Here, White people try to change the subject and play the role of victims of discrimination themselves. In line with this are comments saying *"All Lives Matter"*, where people state that you should not only fight for Black lives, but for all lives, which downplays the seriousness of the BLM movement (NOS, 2020). The most extreme negative comments were threats to commit violence against the Black, protesting people, or even threats to kill them. An example of this is *"Execute them"* (NOS, 2020). Most of these comments were given by anonymous accounts, private accounts without a real name and profile picture. Together, these comments show that there is indeed racism online, in this case on Instagram.

# 5. Discussion and conclusion

### 5.1 Discussion

The Dutch attention to the BLM movement, as well as in countless other countries worldwide, grew a lot over the last year. It was repeatedly covered in the media, including social media platforms as Instagram, where this research is focused on. The qualitative content analysis showed that Instagram users mentioned #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL more than 7500 times till today. Most of these hashtags are used on posts from 2020, and to be more specific, most of them are posted in the months June and July.

Posting about BLM

As became clear during the analysis of this research, the vast majority of people posting about BLM are young adults. This is in line with Carney's observation (2016) that social media enabled especially youth to have this national discourse concerning racism. Because Instagram users posting about BLM sometimes succeed in putting pressure on the state to reform its racist practices we can see these users as interactive social agents, and therefore as a strong public, according to Dahlgren (1995). However, most of the people posting about BLM on Instagram, mostly people with personal accounts, do not have a big influence on the state, therefore they can be seen as a somewhat weaker public, like Fraser (1992) stated as well.

Support vs. conflict

Almost all posts with #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL were posted by Instagram users or organizations that support the movement. People and organizations that do not support the movement seem to use other hashtags instead, such as #AllLivesMatter and #ZwartePietMoetBlijven, referring to their opinion that blackface should not be changed. The Instagram accounts that posted images and videos with #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL did that for multiple reasons: to educate people about things concerning Dutch racism, to get recognition that racism is also a problem in the Netherlands, to call people to action, to show support for the movement, to celebrate Black people, to provide information about the multiple Dutch BLM protests, and to start a conversation about racism in the Netherlands. Only a few posts were posted with other intentions: to joke about the movement, or to gain more views, inter alia to economically benefit from it.

On supportive posts with #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL a lot of Instagram users also responded in a positive way. Often, Instagram users responded with beautiful, uplifting words

and a lot of positive emojis, such as hearts, clapping hands and fire emojis. But as the qualitative content analysis showed, there were also quite a lot of negative reactions on posts with one of these hashtags given by Instagram users, for example downplaying racism in the Netherlands, calling anyone who speaks up about racism names, White people playing the victims, and even making extreme threats to people who support BLM.

When these results are put in a scientific perspective, both similarities and differences can be seen between the existing theory and the results of this research. The existing theory gave some roles that social media can play for movements, for example for mobilization (Mundt, Ross & Burnett, 2018; Khamis & Vaughn, 2012). The analysis of this research showed that Instagram indeed can help the BLM movement in mobilizing people and financial resources. There were Instagram posts with posters and information about upcoming BLM protests in different cities and villages in the Netherlands, to mobilize more protesters. Also, in some Instagram posts people shared a link to donate some money to the initiators of the Dutch BLM movement, which is in line with the theory about social media's ability to mobilize money for movements (Sommerfeldt, 2013).

According to the theory, another role of social media was coalition building. Social media can bring groups together in coalitions, shared narratives, ideologies, and a collective identity (Ackerman & Duvall, 2005; Shaw, 2013). This was also visible in the Instagram posts using #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL. People shared their personal stories about racism, found some recognition in stories of other Instagram users, and connected with each other.

The last positive role of social media in supporting movements has to do with meaning making (Kavada, 2015). Social media can help shape discourse on important issues, such as racism, and it can be a 'public space', where people can contribute to shaping the very discourse on racism. This role of social media is strongly visible on Instagram posts concerning racism. Although Instagram lacks the power to directly shape political decision-making, Instagram users can really put pressure on politicians to reform practices by spreading information, getting recognition for racist practices in the Netherlands, and by stimulating people to speak up and join BLM protests.

However, the theory showed that there are also some limitations and risks connected to using social media for movements, such as the BLM movement (Youmans & York, 2012). People can also work against these movements, for example by removing the accounts of key movement activists or shutting down Instagram as a whole. Although I did not find things about this in the qualitative content analysis on Instagram, I did find some risks that are linked to online movements, and that has mainly to do with the negative reactions on Instagram posts. Today, Instagram is accessible for almost everybody, which means that also a lot of people that are against

the BLM movement can post pictures and reactions on Instagram posts concerning BLM. This can provide interesting conversations where people try to learn from each other, but concerning this case, most of the times it ends up in conflicts, which can be seen as a risk of discussing such a big issue as racism online.

Personal vs. corporate accounts

Another important finding is that there were little negative reactions concerning #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL on personal Instagram accounts, while there were a lot more negative reactions on corporate Instagram accounts with a large number of followers, such as news profiles and profiles of organizations that are committed to fight racism in the Netherlands.

This can be linked to Habermas' theory (1991) about the public sphere. A public sphere is a place where people can exchange their ideas and discuss with each other, free of forcing powers. The digital space, including Instagram, access a new public sphere, where people do have more to say than for example in older media, such as the news. However, the open idea of exchange is a utopian vision, because in reality it is still constrained based on power, access, etc.

Applying this to the division between personal and corporate accounts, you can see that on smaller, personal accounts people communicate with each other about racism, but most of these people are likeminded people who agree with each other. However, on corporate accounts the number of followers is way higher, same as the diversity in followers. Therefore, on these accounts there is more discussion, disagreement, and conflict with each other around topics as BLM. Although these two types of accounts that are analyzed are both public in a sense that everyone can look these accounts up if they want to, the last one can be seen more as a public sphere than the first one, because of its high amount and the diversity of followers, which leads to more discussion than on accounts with almost solely likeminded people.

Social identity theory

The social identity theory gives three strategies to help people find their social identity (Taijfel & Turner, 1979). These strategies are also visible when looking at BLM posts on Instagram. Instagram users posting about BLM try to change their group association to one with better status. They also try to improve perceptions of their group by working together, for example by exposing false judgements about Black people, and by celebrating Black people and their important achievements. Lastly, they also promote social change to better the group's social standing by posting about BLM. For example, Instagram users in the Netherlands do so by showing Dutch racist practices and calling people to fight and protest against these practices.

Online racism

On these bigger corporate Instagram accounts a lot of negative reactions towards BLM were visible. These reactions show that racism is also a big deal in the Netherlands and can be linked to important theoretical insights concerning racism. First of all, these negative Instagram comments can often be linked to white supremacy (Gillborn, 2006). For example, in comments about Black people attending a BLM protest in Amsterdam where Instagrammers are saying that these Black people have to go do something useful, suggesting that these Black people are not doing something useful by protesting and therefore are less than White people. Another sort of comment that was placed numerous times is that the Black protesting people have to go back to their own country, as if the Netherlands is only the country of White people.

Furthermore, people on Instagram wrote that there is nothing wrong with Black Pete, cause every child loves him. This matches the phenomenon of white innocence (Wekker, 2016). Some, (mostly) White, people do see Black Pete as an innocent, happy and festive character, and do not see anything wrong about him. White innocence also matches comments in which people suggest that the Dutch police is just being smart by controlling and detaining Black people more, because such sayings justify an unfair treatment of Black people by the police.

Another phenomenon out of the literature is white ignorance, which refers to the unawareness of White people about systemic racial injustices (Mills, 2007). This phenomenon is in line with comments saying that Black people have nothing to complain in the Netherlands, and comments saying that racism is not bad in the Netherlands, and that it is nothing compared to the USA.

**5.2 Conclusion**

After conducting a qualitative content analysis on Instagram posts concerning BLM an answer can be given to the central question of this research: "*How did people in the Netherlands react to #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL on Instagram in 2020? And what does this tell us about racism in Dutch social media?*".

The 7500 Instagram posts about BLM in the Netherlands show that it is an important topic for a lot of people, although the dates of the posts showed that after June and July 2020 people discussed it way less. Most of the people posting about BLM were Black, young adults. The hashtags were used in different contexts: to educate about racism, to get recognition for racism, to call people to action, to show support for the BLM movement, to celebrate Black people and their achievements, to spread information about Dutch BLM protests, and to start a conversation about racism. Not specifically supporting the BLM movement, there were also some posts that

used one of the two hashtags to joke about the movement or to get more views on their posts that were not related to BLM.

On personal accounts, such posts related to BLM received almost solely positive, supportive reactions from other Instagram users, which suggests that on these accounts a lot of likeminded people communicate with each other. On corporate accounts, with a bigger following, the reactions to posts concerning BLM receive more diverse reactions, both positive and negative. The negative reactions did almost always have a racist character, for example suggesting that Black people do not work and are often criminals, saying that Black people have to go back to their own country, denying that there is discrimination and racism in the Netherlands. In a few extreme cases, Instagram users even posted death threats towards BLM protesters. These reactions illustrate the Dutch context of racism, visible on Instagram. It shows that there still is so much work to be done in fighting online racism in the Netherlands.

### 5.3 Reflection

Due to limited time for this research, only 150 Instagram posts, consisting of 424 photos and videos, were analyzed. Also, when conducting a research via Instagram it is not possible to study Instagram posts that are posted on private accounts. Therefore, the picture that is painted in this thesis is not a complete picture of online racism in the Netherlands. However, it gives interesting findings that show how Dutch Instagrammers reacted to BLM, something that, to the best of my knowledge, has not been studied extensively before.

Another point to reflect on is the fact that I may not have been entirely objective, because I do have a strong opinion about this subject. I support the BLM movement, and therefore I am inclined to have a negative attitude towards all negative responses that BLM posts have received. Nevertheless, I have tried to research the BLM posts and the reactions to them as objectively as possible.

### 5.4 Recommendations

In the future, because of the small scale of this research, I think it would be extremely interesting to conduct this research on a bigger scale, to see if the findings of that research match the findings of this research or not. Another recommendation for further research into this topic is to delve deeper into the negative reactions on Instagram concerning BLM in the Netherlands: why do people write such negative comments, where is the line between a negative comment and an illegal comment, what is the impact of these negative reactions on BLM posts for the people posting them and people, both Black and White, reading them, and to what extent it is desirable that everyone can comment freely on Instagram?

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# Appendix 1

## 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 has to 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 on 'Racism in the Netherlands - How Instagrammers reacted to #BlackLivesMatterNL in 2020'*

Name, email of student: *Nikki Daenen, nikkidaenen@live.nl*

Name, email of supervisor: *Bonnie French, french@essb.eur.nl*

Start date and duration: *March 22, 2021, duration of three months*

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*

# PART V: Data storage and backup

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

*I will save the Instagram posts that I will be analyzing in a private folder on my own Instagram account. Next to that, I will save them in my Cloud, as a backup. I will do this when I start collecting my data (Instagram posts) and will continue to do this every day that I am collecting my data.*

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

*I, Nikki Daenen, am responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from my research.*

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

*I will make a backup of my data every day that I am working on it, to make sure that I can not lose important data.*

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

*I am analyzing Instagram posts from public Instagram accounts, where users have chosen themselves to make their posts visible for everyone. Therefore, everyone who sees the Instagram posts that I will be analyzing is also able to look these posts up themselves to see who posted it. Therefore, it is not completely anonymous. I will not use/add people's usernames or other details that could be used to directly identify people to my own data file. That way, I am anonymizing the data as much as possible. However, I will use people's usernames (which are already public) when quoting them.*

## 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: Nikki Daenen                    Name (EUR) supervisor: Bonnie French

Date: March 21, 2021                          Date: March 21, 2021

# Appendix 2

Some comments that were posted under Instagram posts concerning #BlackLivesMatterNL and #BLMNL were in Dutch. Below, the original comments are stated next to the English translations that are used in this research.

1.   "Hier in Nederland hebben we niet echt met racisme te maken op de schaal in de VS" = "Here in the Netherlands racism is not that bad as in the USA" (De Correspondent, 2020).

2.   "Als jullie allemaal eens zouden gedragen dan zou er niet eens politie nodig zijn" = "If you would behave yourselves we wouldn't even need the police" (NOS, 2020).

3.   "Idioten, maak je eens nuttig" = "Idiots, go do something useful" (Nu.nl, 2020).

4.   "Ga weg joh" = "Go away" (Esajas, 2020).

5.   "Als het je niet bevalt oprotten" = "If you don't like it here, fuck off" (NOS, 2020).

6.   "Jullie verneuken een kinderfeest" = "You screw up a children's party" (Politieke Jongeren, 2020-b).

7.   "Jullie verneuken Nederland zo nog" = "You're going to ruin the Netherlands like this" (Politieke Jongeren, 2020-b).