

Are Erasmian values anti-racist values?

A phenomenological critical race study in the racist experiences of students of colour

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Abstract

The 2020 anti-racist statement from the Erasmus university was met with a lot of criticism from students. They mentioned a lack of representation at the university, racist comments by professors, and disappointing responses to complaints. These reactions on the statement can be understood through the scientific exclusion of people of colour, and the university's emphasis on diversity. In order to rectify this I asked how students of colour experience racism at the Erasmus university Rotterdam.

I chose a phenomenological study method to centralise their experiences, combining it with a critical race approach to remain aware of societal consequences of race and racism throughout the research process. In accordance with critical race I did not only describe these experiences but also add to achieving social justice by asking participants what they need from the university.

From the in-depth interviews, three themes were uncovered; the daily reality of students experiences regarding racism, the use of safe spaces and the false diversity of the university. In conclusion students experience racism at all levels of the university, use safe spaces as a way to 'deal' with their racist experiences and find the diversity policy of the EUR inadequate to reach real diversity and inclusion.

I ultimately interviewed only female students of colour and one recommendation is thus that the scope of the study could be expanded to include experiences of people of colour at different intersections. Based on the results of my study, I also recommend further research into safe spaces and decolonising universities in the Netherlands.

Keywords: *CRT, diversity, minority viewpoints, racism in the Netherlands, university*

Introduction

In 2020, the murder of George Floyd increased attention towards the Black Lives Matter movement, as yet another killing of a black person by the police sparked mass protests around the globe. The increasing awareness towards the attempts of the movement spurred the attention of major global businesses and institutions, who vocally pledged their support and supported a call for change. One of these institutions who 'spoke out' against institutional racism was my own Erasmus University (EUR), who on June 3rd shared the following post on their Instagram page:

"Systemic Racism blights our societies, whether in policing, health or in education. We at EUR are committed to addressing it through taking responsibility, through respect and through the power of research. For this is one societal challenge that we shall overcome. Together." (Systemic Racism blights our societies, 2020)

It was later followed up by a press release which is included in Appendix III.

The announcements were met with a lot of reactions. Some comments included tips to further bring the BLM movement under the attention of the general public and some of these comments however, were more critical.

One commenter commended the statement and provided concrete tips for improvement at the university. He mentioned attention for representation and the need for educating the staff regarding diversity and inclusion. Other commenters shared their own experiences of racist comments by professors during colleges, or the disillusionment after actually complaining and realising nothing had been done. Others still illustrated the need for an actual course of action regarding the infrastructure of the university itself, the lack of accountability and a lack of faith in the system. This is quite remarkable, as the EUR has invested extensively in an Diversity & Inclusion office and, in the comments, directs people towards confidential counsellors, their information about diversity and inclusion and assures that it does not tolerate racism in any form (Systemic Racism blights our societies, 2020). I share these critical and sceptic reactions to the post, because as student of the Erasmus university and a woman of colour myself, I do not see the content of these statements reflected at the campus.

From the comments on the post and my own immediate reaction it becomes clear that a discrepancy exists between what the university appears to commit to and the lived experiences from these students, those who should be protected by the practices of the EUR. The question then rises why this discrepancy exists. A possible explanation for this can be found in the relation between the university and its students. The victims of racism, people of colour, have historically not been included in important decision-making matters, research, theory formation, and implementation of rules, practices, or otherwise important concepts that have build social life around us as we know it (Malagon, Huber & Velez, 2009; Smith, 2013). It seems that they are still not included, and this has lead to a situation in which the university tries to dismantle racism without trying to change the institution itself. In order to rectify this situation I want to centralise the experiences, thoughts, voices,

and issues of people of colour regarding racism at the university. I focus on the central question *how do students of colour experience racism at the Erasmus university Rotterdam?*

To answer this central question, I use the context of race and racism in the Netherlands, where I make use of the extensive work of dr. Gloria Wekker (2016) and dr. Philomena Essed (1984) to paint a concise, but complete picture to help contextualise the experiences of my participants. The university claims to work towards diversity and inclusivity but as Sara Ahmed (2012) explains, these terms could be used as marketing tools to sell a positive image of the university while not making any institutional changes. I therefore pay specific attention to the changing role of the university with regards to a decolonial context (Bhambra, Gebrial & Nişancioğlu, 2018).

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to centralise experiences of racism by members of marginalised groups that have historically been ignored by Western scientific research (Essed, 1984). I follow the participants own identification as people of colour. The aim is to fill the deficit that exists between dominant scientific knowledge and the knowledge that marginalised groups can provide in order to work towards the eradication of racism. I also hope to add towards fighting racism by asking my participants to use their expertise to define areas where the Erasmus university can take action.

Theoretical framework

This study is about experiences of racism in the context of the Dutch Erasmus university. With this theoretical framework I paint the relevant context to help me understand the experiences of my participants and then interpret them correctly. I first paint the context of race and racism, and then explain how we can understand both concepts in the context of the Dutch society. In particular I explain why it is so difficult to talk about racism and research its effects on those belonging to the global majority, but a minority in this country. After, I delve into the atmosphere of the university to better understand the interplay between race and racism, and the university as an institution. I explain how I understand decolonisation and diversity and lastly I apply this knowledge to the Erasmus university in Rotterdam.

1.1 Understanding the context: CRT, race and racism

I want to introduce Critical Race Theory (CRT), as it takes a central place in my research. CRT originated in the US of the 1970s to analyse concepts of race, racism, power, and its intersections to understand why racial justice had not been achieved. Scholars who use CRT in their work centre their focus on systems of oppression to make visible how racism influences these systems (Huber, 2009). Maria Malagon, Lindsay Perez Huber and Veronica Velez (2009) further elaborate on CRT and its use as a methodological tool. Intersectionality plays a central role, it is a tool to challenge the dominant ideology, it centres a commitment to social justice, centralises the lived experiences of people of colour, and invites researchers to adopt methodologies from other perspectives. The goal here is to use methodologies that have specifically been developed for the centralising of viewpoints of

marginalised communities. I use CRT to help me centralise and validate the experiences of people of colour, understand how race and racism influences their experiences at the university, and try to use my research to aid towards combating racism. CRT is the point of departure for this theoretical framework and I elaborate on its use as a research framework in the methodology.

In accordance with CRT, I adopt the understanding that race is a social construct, 'invented' by humans in order to define groups and differences between them to decide who is and who is *not* part of that group (Huber, 2009; Malagon, Huber & Velez, 2009). Racism is a concept in which one group considers itself superior to others and has the social power to favour themselves at the expense of other racial and/or ethnic groups that are considered inferior. The imposed inferiority of these other ethnic groups make it acceptable in the eyes of their oppressor for them to be subjugated, treated differently or denied (access to) social services. Racism serves as a tool to legitimise oppression and keep the 'superior' group in power (Essed, 1984). Racism and racist beliefs thus shape a society and have far-reaching consequences for those who are denied that power. This is why the existence and the use of CRT as a central framework in research is so necessary, as it exposes infrastructures of power connected with race (Huber, 2009).

1.2 *Race and racism in the Netherlands*

To comprehend how racism operates in the Netherlands, we must first understand that there is a widely held national belief that racism does not occur in the Netherlands (Essed & Hoving, 2014). This is indicative of a narrative of tolerance, diversity, and a (successful) multicultural society in which there is no room for criticism or accusations of racist behaviour. Examples of racist treatment are neatly compartmentalised and attributed to bad *individuals* while the positive self-image of the Dutch society is protected (Çankaya & Mepschen, 2019). It is difficult to talk about racism when this is the general narrative, let alone discuss changes in the attempt to achieve racial justice; how can we work towards dismantling racist structures in the Netherlands while the very existence of those structures is denied?

Fortunately, even within this existing narrative a lot of work has already been done to show how racism *works* in the Netherlands. I highlight the work of dr. Philomena Essed, who wrote one of the first studies of racist experiences in the Netherlands in 1984, and dr. Gloria Wekker, whose book *white innocence* (2016) was instrumental in understanding the context of the 'white' response to the notion of racism. Their work helped me understand the different expressions that racism can have. I briefly feature 3 Dutch attitudes regarding racism, as distinguished by Essed and Hoving (2014). First we have the attitude of superiority that comes with the narrative of the tolerant Dutch society. Under this mindset, racism is denied and claims can be made that we are living in a post-race or colour-blind society; a society in which race and racism have no role. Racist occurrences are attributed to uneducated, low class individuals who do not reflect the general positive mindset of the respectable middle-class (Çankaya & Mepschen, 2019). Second, what dr. Wekker (2016) calls white innocence, denial of racism and responsibility, sometimes even vicious, while rejecting any other than the dominant narrative and thus refusing any chance of being educated. Here, the *intent* is centralised

and not the *impact*; the feelings of the person experiencing racism are subordinate to the (possible) non-racist intent of the perpetrator. Third, we have the mindset of entitlement and resentment where minorities must be grateful for the chances that they get here, should not complain and definitely not claim anything regarding racism. This can lead to *entitlement racism*; the idea that anything can be said under the protection of freedom of speech and racism is a personal opinion (Essed, 2017).

Second, I discern between different types of racism. As dr. Essed (1984) explains, we can distinguish 3 types of racism; cultural racism, institutional racism, and individual racism. Beliefs about 'other' people and their cultures such as stereotypes are examples of cultural racism, it maintains the difference between the good *us* and the lazy/uncultured/uncivilised/etc. *other*. In his book *Orientalism*, Edward Said (2003) explains how the representations of *the other* shape an imagined hierarchy between different groups of people and the consequences of this one-sided representation. Institutional racism is the way public services serve white people more than people of colour. The recent *Toeslagenaffaire* with the tax authorities is a good example. During this affair it became clear that most victims of a unreasonable strict fraud policy for childcare allowance were Dutch people with migrant backgrounds (Achbab, 2021). Institutional racism is not always *explicit*, or direct, but often *implicit*, indirect. The policy might not have been set up to explicitly exclude people of colour, but the effects are that those people are excessively disadvantaged. Individual racism, lastly, is the collections of attitude and behaviours of individuals that is influenced by racist attitudes. It can range from asking a person of colour where they *really* come from, confirming to them that they are not really Dutch, or not Dutch enough, to actively prohibiting people of colour to work in your office by not hiring them. It is important to differentiate between *active* and *passive* racism. Active racism can be more easily identified, but a victim of passive racism might not even be aware of their victimhood. These nuances also further explain why it is difficult to act against racism; both the person portraying racist behaviour and the person experiencing racist behaviour might not be aware of the racist influences (Essed, 1984).

This very brief overview is not meant to be a comprehensive summary of racism in the Netherlands nor a complete and divided categorisation, which leaves no room for nuances or understanding of the connections between different attitudes and types of racism. I mention these attitudes and types because I believe it helps us understand *what* racism entails and *how* it is experienced. This then aids me in understanding and interpreting my participants answers. Because these are not detached incidents, but expressions of societal infrastructures and can therefore not been understood without this context.

2.1 *Understanding the context: The university & decoloniality*

Providing a context of the role of the university and racism cannot be done without centralising processes of decolonialisation. Decolonialisation entails the practice in which ex-colonised nations criticize and reject the Eurocentric ideas of knowledge, knowledge production, Western superiority, and focus on a new shared national identity. This comes with a re-validation of ways of thinking about and understanding the world that have been suppressed by the Western colonizers, and a critical view

towards subjects like racism, imperialism, colonisation and Western superiority (Bhambra, Gebrial & Nişancioğlu, 2018; Mignolo, 2018). Calls for decoloniality have also been addressed to the university as illustrated by student-led movements all over the globe ¹.

As explained before, racism and racist beliefs shape society, and it stands to reason that the university is not free from racism and its corresponding beliefs. In fact, universities have played a central role in the production and reproduction of *scientific racism*; the belief in empirical evidence for a justification of racism and a racial hierarchy (Andrews, 2018). Even though scientific racism has officially been denounced since the 1950s, the university is still instrumental in the reproduction of beliefs of white superiority. For example by what Dolores Delgado Bernal and Octavio Villalpando (2002) call the *apartheid of knowledge*; the maintaining of racial divisions between the dominant Eurocentric epistemologies and other forms of knowledge that are deemed unscientific. Because of the historically created impenetrability of academia by 'others' i.e. all those who are non-white, non-male, non-elitist, research fields have become entirely dominated by the viewpoints of those elite, white males who's beliefs are then considered true and objective 'knowledge' and reproduced within academia. This is also known as *imperial scholarship* and the risk here is that white superiority remains justified and maintained, because viewpoints that challenge this dominant discourse or other ways of knowing the world are not introduced within academia (Aparna & Kramsch, 2018; Icaza & Vázquez, 2018; Malagon, Huber & Velez, 2009). The adage 'knowledge is power' remains true, universities have the power to legitimise the produced scientific knowledge and so aid the superior white group by keeping them in power and shape society as we know it (Huber, 2009). Decolonising the university then means that we understand how concepts of white superiority are reproduced within the walls of the university, not only in research, and how we can combat them.

2.2 *The Erasmus university*

While reading the acknowledgment that 'systemic racism remains as an ingrained stain on our society' and the reassurance that 'Erasmian values are anti-racist values' (Erasmus university Rotterdam, 2020) I make the assumption that the Erasmus university is taking decolonial steps towards its own institution. The response from the university to the BLM protests in the Netherlands has inspired a lot of critical reactions, as I mentioned in the introduction (systemic racism blights our societies, 2020). The university² responded by inviting respondents for further reading to the diversity and inclusion (D&I) office. The D&I office is part of a diversity & inclusion programme that started in 2015 and is still ongoing (De Bruin & Denktas, 2019). The office is concerned with social safety and equity for all as an integral part of the EUR. The existence of this office and the information gathered on the site

¹ i.e. Rhodes must fall in South Africa for the removal of a statue of Cecil Rhodes; 'Why is my curriculum white?' in England against a Eurocentric curriculum; the rise of Indigenous universities all over Latin America

² With *the university* here I mean the social media representative who manages the Instagram account

gave me the impression that the EUR takes diversity and inclusion of students very seriously and is allocating resources towards achieving social safety at the campus.

There is however, no mention of decoloniality. Diversity and decoloniality are different concepts, with diversity being identified as a corporate term in which the composition of a group can be quantified (Ahmed, 2012). Diversity becomes a concept that can be managed and improved upon, a way for institutional problems within the university to be individualised and measurable while the problematic institutional structures remain unchanged and uncontested. Sara Ahmed (2012) has written extensively on diversity work and its possibilities of being a tool for marketing instead of a tool for change at the university.

The focus on diversifying the student population can also be understood as another method of exclusion itself. It keeps those who are at the university and considered proof of diversification in the role of the 'other', still being seen as an object for further scrutiny and the projection of prejudice with them still being denied access to parts of the institution (Icaza & Vazquez, 2018). The emphasis lies on that diverse other instead of the adjustment of the structures of the university to accommodate different viewpoints and create a space of solidarity and equality (Aparna & Kramsch, 2018). Diversity and inclusion then become ways of tokenism, or as Kehinde Andrews puts it "the sprinkles of chocolate on the vanilla ice cream that is the white university" (2018, p. 135). With the EUR being seen as 'the most multicultural university in the world' (EM, 2016) I wonder if D&I is indeed only used as a marketing tool and how my participants experience this.

Methodology

1. Research design

In order to formulate an answer to the central question "How do students of colour experience racism at the Erasmus university Rotterdam?" I chose a qualitative research design. With qualitative research, one can study something in its natural setting and focus on the meanings people give to them, a researcher focusses on the words and viewpoints of the participants (Creswell, 2017). By interviewing participants and allowing them to set the pace for the conversation, I built my research upon their words, their explanations and their viewpoints. I attempted to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of racism at the university by using a phenomenological approach. A phenomenological study aims to find the common meaning that several individuals give to a shared phenomenon, it attempts to describe this phenomenon in general, shared terms in order to deepen our understanding of the phenomenon and the various ways it can manifest (Creswell, 2017). With my study, I aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the ways racism is experienced by students of colour at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam. I wanted to not only collect a number of individual experiences regarding racism in all its facets, but also combine these to a shared essence of what experiencing racism at the university is like for its students, how racism is experienced and what this means for them. I have used the outlined context in the theoretical framework to better interpret the experiences of my participants and thus present a full picture.

I used Critical Race Theory (CRT) as an enrichment of this phenomenological study and a completing framework which helps me keep in mind what I wanted to focus on. The phenomenological research design is complemented by applying CRT as a method by centralising lived experiences of people of colour and employing these experiences to challenge the dominant ideologies; I centralised the experiences of my participants while considering them valid, not going with the dominant viewpoint that the existence and effects of racism are debatable and adopted the knowledge that racism constantly influences the lives of people of colour. I made use of an integral part of CRT, my cultural intuition by combining my personal, academic, professional and analytical experiences to bring further meaning to the study and help me share and interpret the data (Malagon, Huber & Velez, 2009). This is why I used the theoretical framework to help deepen my knowledge about racism and the environment of the university to apply that knowledge to help interpret the experiences of my participants. An important part of CRT as a methodological tool is the attention for the commitment to social justice. I did not want my study to only be another example of black pain, which is why I asked my participants to share their ideas about how the university might be improved for them based on their experiences. By actively thinking together about what the university can do for people of colour I tried to work towards to elimination of racism and take some agency and centrality for a marginalised group.

2. Data collection

My research is built around people's experiences in their own words. It therefore goes without saying that I have conducted long interviews with my participants. As is fitting within a phenomenological approach I had to find people who have experienced the central shared phenomenon, in this case racism. Finding people who have not only experienced racism but are also willing to talk openly about these experiences is not always easy.

It was important, for me personally but also for my research, that the participants felt comfortable enough to talk freely and honestly about their experiences without feeling the need to 'rationalize' them or 'justify' why they considered it racism or worse, not mentioning them at all because of scepticism or anticipation of the fact that I would not believe them (Woodson, 2015). This is why I have specifically chosen participants with whom I share a relationship in which both of us know how I regard racism, and racism in the Netherlands. This is also why I chose to focus on the experiences specifically of women of colour and their experiences regarding racism. I share a relationship of trust and understanding with them that benefits my study by allowing them to openly talk about their experiences.

As a way of gaining access and developing the rapport that I consider necessary to talk about racism, I have made use of my connections within the Erasmus School of Colour (ESOC)³ by inviting

³ ESOC is a collective that works towards dismantling racist, patriarchal and ableist structures within and beyond the university. Members of ESOC, among which myself, have written a statement in response to the anti-racist statement of the EUR where they challenge the EUR to 'do better.'

participants among the members of ESOC. The women within ESOC that I know have experienced racism at the university, can articulate these lived experiences and trust me enough to talk openly about them. Thus I have chosen to combine both the snowball method (asking participants for others) and the intensity method (actively looking for information-rich cases) as sampling strategies to find the female participants with whom I share a bond of trust strong enough to be able to talk about racism, who are students at the Erasmus university or have recently graduated, and who have experienced racism there (Creswell, 2017).

I conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants that were about 1,5 to 2 hours long. Rather than asking a lot of predetermined questions, I guided the conversations towards 4 subjects, namely racism in general/in the Netherlands, racism at the university, diversity & inclusion and the 2020 statement that *Erasmian values are anti-racist values* (Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2020) which is included in Appendix III. General questions about the participants academic careers and their thoughts about the university were used as an ice-breaker. During the interviews I tried to remain flexible and patient to allow the participants to take the lead in the conversation about their own experiences, because I did not want to create too much distance or reproduce any possible power dynamics. I wanted the participants to feel comfortable as they talked and shared sometimes painful experiences with me. The interviews were conducted via Zoom due to COVID-19 safety measures and as an extra safeguard recordings were both made via Zoom and with an external recorder. The Zoom recordings were deleted after a successful transcription and participants were given the option to turn off their camera during the recording. The double recording allowed me to fully focus on the conversation taking place while taking notes to write down interesting words or phrases that I used for further interviews.

3. *Data analysis*

The notes that I kept from each interview were used to identify common phrases how participants describes their experiences. After transcribing the interviews, I re-read the transcriptions multiple times, made margin notes and highlighted significant statements that described the participants' experiences of racism. I did not try to create a hierarchy of statements, each statement had equal worth and my only goal was to develop a list of nonoverlapping and nonrepetitive statements (Creswell, 2017).

At first, I created a rather confusing map of interconnected statements and quotes which I then sifted through to select only those that were really relevant to the general question. This was a difficult process because my participants shared a lot of insights that I consider worthy of mentioning, but I saved that for the conclusion and discussion. The significant statements were used to create larger overall themes, and these were used to create a rich description of the "what" and "how" of racism at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam. I selected a lot of quotes from all participants for every theme, added the relevant context and then explained how each theme is an integral part of understanding racism at the university.

4. *Ethics and privacy*

Speaking out about racism and related issues is commendable but can also be damaging to a person or their (academic) career. The participants in this study suffer from an unequal balance of power with the university, whether it is the fact that they are obtaining a degree and are dependent on the university for (good) grades, rely on a partial income via work at the university or need the institution for anything else. I have therefore anonymised my data and kept identifiable information to a bare minimum in relaying their experiences. This is why some examples might be a little vague, I have tried to stay true to the essence of the example by relaying the words of the participant while also respecting their vulnerable positions and protecting their identity. The participants have all been informed of these risks and have nevertheless agreed to participate in this study but I am responsible for their well being and have therefore chosen to maybe err on the side of caution.

All participants have been made aware of the possible risks and have been presented with consent forms. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and the impossibility of signing a consent form via zoom, oral permission has been given and recorded by all participants to participate in the study. A copy of the consent form that has been read aloud can be found under Appendix II.

5. *The researcher & credibility*

As I mentioned in the introduction, I share a lot of characteristics with my participants. I myself am a woman of colour, I am a student at the Erasmus university and have experienced racism there, and I thus add my experiences to 'answer' the general research question. I am also an active member in the aforementioned ESOC community, which means that I have spent ample time talking and thinking about racism and other forms of inequality. I consider this a strength for the study. Because of my earlier mentioned cultural intuition I was able to connect with my participants and build on an existing relation of trust, which I consider essential when one asks people to be vulnerable and share deeply personal and emotional stories in the name of science. This intuition also aided me in respecting my participants and not weighing their stories to identify the amount of 'truth' they had. I do have the power to decide what is 'true' and what is not, I am to centralise and emphasise the voices of these marginalised groups. Their experiences are true because they are theirs and told in their own words and I see my role as researcher to understand these within the bigger context of racism at the university and by extension, in the specific Dutch context.

I do want to mention a possible danger, especially because the stories of these women are also my stories, which is to centralise my understanding of their experiences too much and thus presenting my experiences as the essence of a racist experience at the university. I did catch myself a couple of times during interviews when a participant was telling a story that I was finishing in my head with the context of my own experiences. This is why I engaged in member checking by asking the participants their opinions on my results and whether they wanted to add or omit anything. I also tried to stay very close to the data, sharing extensive quotes in the results so that the reader can check my interpretations with my participants own words.

Results

The purpose of this study was to shed light on the experiences with racism of students of colour at the Erasmus university. In order to achieve this, I was aided by 4 female students, who I will refer to by the first 4 letters of the alphabet in order to protect their identity. All participants have more than 5 years of experience studying at the EUR, they self identify as women of colour, participant B identifies as a black woman, and all were very open and honest to me. From our conversations I extracted three general themes; racist realities at the university, the role of safe spaces, and (fake) diversity. I make use of extensive quotes to fully flesh out the experiences of the students in their own words, while providing a bit of context and a short summary every now and then.

1. Theme 1 – racist realities at the university

My participants and I first talked about racism and racist experiences in general and at the EUR. They all shared experiences that they considered racist. Interestingly enough not all racist encounters were immediately recognised as such, as this story of participant B shows.

She describes that quite early in her academic career, her student pass stopped working. She needed the pass to access the study facilities, but could not open the doors herself. She resorted to asking campus security for access, while always having her student identification with her.

"The security guards literally always asked for my ID. While they had been there the week before and you can count all black women at the faculty on half a hand. Besides that, I saw white students in front of me not being asked to show their ID but I was. And only after I left I understood. Only then I understood like they did it specifically towards me. [...] Do you know why I only noticed towards the end? [after picking up her diploma at the faculty]. I was walking downstairs [with the freshly picked up diploma], do you know what this mofo literally told me? 'Oh well, now you can hand in your student ID because you won't be back right?' [...] I literally asked other students whether they had to hand over their ID and no one had to do that."

Even after finally noticing that the behaviour of the security guards towards her was different, B felt like she had to verify that their behaviour was indeed racist with her fellow students. Participant C too explains that she does not always know when to call something racist.

"You kind of expect the worst [from white Dutch people]. And when you do not get the worst you're already grateful and happy and you're like, pff, I dodged a bullet [...] So I often did not recognise racism. So all those implicit small daily racist experiences that you are confronted with... Like for example those stupid jokes. Like, 'oh your Dutch is so good'. Or 'if only all [people of colour] were like you'."

The worst here is the explicit racism that a lot of Dutch people consider the only racism; violent actions, explicit racist name-calling, or clear exclusion based on race.

The participants describe how racist encounters or the realisation that they were minorities initially influenced their behaviour as explained by participant D.

"The university is essentially kind of a white institution to call it like that. So I think that I was confronted with the fact that I am a minority. Or, I became more aware of that because when you are in a classroom where you are the only person with a colour, or the only person with a specific cultural background. You become more aware of that and [...] I often had the feeling, because I was one of the few that I was kind of the poster child for everything that others do not know. So if you as a white person [at the university] that is also white and you sometimes see a person of colour. I then want that, that I as a person of colour present you with the best version of people of, do you get me? So there was a kind of responsibility, at least that is what I thought. Well, subconscious responsibility maybe, but that does make you, think about the things you say, the things you do, what you hand in, that I was often very insecure about my work."

Participant A too described how her understanding of herself as a minority at the university initially influenced her own self image.

"[talking about the curriculum] I have heard a lot of things from social theories at the EUR that took me out of my strength somehow because it really made me doubt myself. In retrospect I don't think that there was a lot of respectful social theory that really reflected who I was. [Describing her life versus that of the white majority at the university] I thought that oh I live a really weird life or something, and these people [fellow students] say that too and I do not feel accepted, but I really wanted to be accepted."

Participant C adds that even when she was able to identify behaviour or comments as racist, it still influenced her behaviour instead that of the perpetrator.

"I had a job at the campus and you have to apply for the job and come by for a conversation and I just know that they are extra surprised or extra happy when they see me. So the other person was often a white woman or man and they had this attitude like, oh you did so well. Extra applause almost. Because they feel like, oh you are not a white person but you are doing so well, good for you! So apparently in your head I exceed your expectations. Well I think that is fucking racist but also very uncomfortable. Because it has that positive sauce." C explains that this positive sauce as she puts it, makes it difficult for her to react. Because she does not want to screw it up for other people of colour. "because you hear this often from white people. Like 'I said this and I really meant well but yeah, so backward, so barbaric. I did something positive towards a person of colour and that person was not grateful!' And then they have something like, well, 'I'm not going to do anything the next time' and I don't want that. [...] I don't want my behaviour to influence the image of my group [people of colour] or fuck it up more that it already... yeah."

The participants described how the infrastructure of the university too can be racist. As the example of participant B shows, her presence at the university was often questioned. We talked about the posters in the Mandeville building with participant A.

"Those posters that hang at the campus. Those 'Erasmian values' and 'excellence and start' and then a blond guy on a banner who is the paragon of excellence and the general student. That made me feel very unwelcome, not unwelcome, but not represented."

Both participant C and D have had experience asking for an extra resit due to personal circumstances like mental health (C) and a death in the family (D). They were both not granted an extra resit, which they naturally were disappointed with, but that was not all. As D explains: *"That case stirred a feeling in me like 'not sure about you guys'. Because a fellow student had the exact same case [...] and she just got the resit without a trial or anything"*. She then explains that when she appealed to the decision and used the case of the fellow student as an example, she was eventually granted her resit. C did not appeal her case, but she too knew a fellow student who had a similar case and who was granted a resit while she was not. *"I really think, this might sound fucked up, but I know that her grades were really not that high for example. [...] They see a woman of colour, alone, who did not pass the course."*

Both participants could not help but shake the feeling that their skin colour had something to do with the outcomes of their cases. They could not find any other difference between their cases and the cases of the fellow students, whom were both white.

These examples show how difficult it is for people of colour to identify racism and finding the correct articulation for describing a *feeling* that something is not right. Only after careful consideration, the sharing of experiences or learning about racism as a bigger social concept can they 'see' the racism that they themselves are subject to.

Initially my participants attempted to modify their own behaviour, whether out of a feeling of discomfort or uncertainty of because they felt responsible for the 'image' of 'people of colour' as a whole. Participant D adds that her unconsciously feeling responsible for the image of people of colour even influenced her level of work.

The participants considered it all very important to mention that even despite these examples, their time at the Erasmus university has been mostly positive and they often feel comfortable at the campus. Even though they can feel very hurt or confused or even starting to doubt themselves by simply existing and interacting in this white space, it is just part of their daily realities.

2. Theme 2: dealing with racism: the role of safe spaces

An interesting theme that came out of the conversations was dealing with racism by the use of safe spaces. We talked about how studying at the university allowed for the 'birth' of their own safe spaces, how processing their racist experiences was made possible with them, and hypothesized a little about the possible role of the university in creating and maintaining safe spaces.

The participants first described how studying at the university helped them find safe spaces and what those provided for them. As B mentions:

"[at the university] you can find like-minded people and with them you can create a safe space. You can create a space where you can talk about things that matter to you both and are kind of heavy subjects and that is why you need the safe space. [...] But yes, there are a lot of things that I cannot discuss at work. The micro-aggressions of other people of colour and especially other white people. Oh, about hair, people who want to touch your hair."

Here, B describes how it took a lot of time for her to change her look by dyeing and cutting her hair because she feels that *"people might consider you not professional enough, they don't understand your hair. As a black woman you cannot do a lot with your hair in a professional setting"*. The ladies that her safe space consist of helped her make that decision and took her hesitations seriously. She then goes on explaining what she considers so important about her safe space, other then sharing experiences:

"[white women and I] we cannot connect on a certain level. And I would never be able to discuss that with other people but I can with them [safe space ladies] because we feel the same thing. We know what level we're at, we understand each other well and our feelings are valid. That is so important. If one of us has experienced something [racist] we never question the validity of the experience, it's always valid [...] I knew it was racist and I believe you."

Participant C mentions how studying at the university helped her make new connections:

"I became friends with other non-white people and suddenly you understand each other on a whole other level and I have always known that my family situation or our thinking or our practices and our culture was really different than the Netherlands. And all of a sudden I came into contact with all these people who not only understood my experiences, but have experienced them themselves. This is a completely different relationship, that you talk to somebody and they tell you something and you completely get it. And that you don't have to explain anything. That they get it on another level. That was really great. It creates a connection. And security. Also that you know that you won't be judged, there is no judgement."

The participants describe how sharing their experiences in these safe spaces made them feel validated and secure, about how these shared understandings made them feel *normal* and not just different in a place where they are the minority. They also exchanged different tactics of dealing with racism or racist environment.

The safe spaces don't have solely consist of people of colour or as a independent group within the university as participant A explains. She talked about finding a great community with ESOC as a group of *"people who are really knowledgeable about what really goes on. Upholding certain values that I value too and just compassion. Not thinking that you have a gods view to know why someone does what they do"*. She then explains that the ESOC community however is not the only space where she felt validated:

"That attitude also existed with our master and that really touches me that these, even though they are white people, put their time and energy in giving this a place and space in education."

[...] In our master there was an atmosphere of open thinking, but that is, those are foundations that are laid by the engineers of the course, those [students] are also people for whom this would go over their head if it was not discussed. So I think that if you approach it strategically that [institutionalisation of safe spaces] it can definitely have a space and then if you strategically think about a certain amount of respect. Appropriateness."

Participant B also added that she felt safe at her faculty:

"I do not think that the bubble at my faculty was really about a safe space [as she described earlier with her friends], but a bubble as in how education was provided, how I received my education. But also that there was space for student input. [at my faculty] you could say I would like to change this, put these sources in, maybe take a look at these scholars of colour who published this. Whether they would actually implement that was secondary. But they were open to our input."

Further in the conversation she does indicate that her faculty was a safe space where she felt comfortable enough to complain about racist encounters. *"I would have felt safe enough to indicate that I felt treated unfairly. And treated racially different. And a micro aggression, I would have indicated it."* She adds that she would first gain insight from a trusted mentor, who, as a Latina, shared a lot of her experiences and with whom she shared a bond of trust.

Here the participants make note of different degrees of safe spaces. They talk about safe spaces as a place for marginalised groups to share experiences and more and they mention engineered environments within the university in which they feel free to talk about their experiences. An interesting note is how B describes that she would feel safe enough to talk about racism with her faculty, but would first discuss the situation with a trusted person within the faculty.

The participants talked about the question whether the university could institutionalise safe spaces and what that would mean for them. The motives of the university to do this were questioned though. As participant C describes:

"I think that it is twofold. If the EUR would do that, it would always be about prestige. So that it looks good on their CV. That it is a nice PR thing, look at them doing a lot. On the other hand, I do not think that they [the EUR] would know how to shape that and in some way I think that these things should be grassroots, bottom-up, but that it should be facilitated. Not literally the space, but also financially. But I do not think that it can exist, I do not think that they are capable enough. Also because you want it for different people, you don't have that insight. I don't have that either. I would never want to fill that in for others. A safe space has to develop, that safety must be created, that does not just happen. There has to be a certain amount of trust and also space. Also space to grow and for development. That it is okay to have like, I do not know. I don't know what I think or what I experience. That space exists for not knowing, for figuring out together. And I think that it would be very beautiful if it just occurs."

C then continues talking about an example of an institutionalised safe space, The Living Room.⁴ She describes how it is very broadly defined, how a lot of focus is on the amount of people present at an event and how much time is spend on accountability. *"It is of course al lot, it is about reports and measuring is knowing. And it is not about, apparently this is a very unhealthy environment for students and staff, because that is what it is. Because even when we do not talk about racism, a lot of people suffer from burn-out. If you do not change the entire culture..."*

The role of the university regarding safe spaces is a bit murky. A university has the means, space, money and connections, to provide for safe spaces and cultivate them within its walls. However, the justified fear exists that if safe spaces become institutionalised, they can become part of the university's PR machine or quest for diversifying. This could lead to another version of individualising racism while concealing the need for structural change as is already indicated by C and her example of the Living Room.

3. Theme 3: (fake) diversity: a call to action

My participants and I talked about the Diversity & Inclusion policy of the EUR that I mentioned in the theoretical framework. They discussed whether the policy works and how they would like it to be. Through these topics they offered a lot of tips for the university for an actual anti-racist practice. This sections first contains a reflection on the 'diversity' of the EUR. Then, they provide points of improvement, all through free emotional labour.

The participants reflected on the 'diversity' of the university. I put the word between brackets because as participant A puts it:

"I feel that they [the EUR] see that they have a lot of people from different countries at the campus and consider that diversity. While I, when I use my eyes can see that yes, that person might be from South America, but they are white in South America! You might not see it as such, but it is. [...] I want people from different parts of the world to come together, but I also want the reflection of Rotterdam in its university. And I don't see that. [...] I see very little dark skinned black people, very few people from the Antilles."

B added: *"White internationals are still white. They are the same white people that enjoy the same privileges as the white people here in the Netherlands."*

What the university considers diverse and what the participants consider diverse does not really align. The participants did not only talk about diversity in skin colour, but different sorts of marginalised groups that are not well accommodated at the university. As B adds some more:

"I have interviewed a couple of students with a disability. Often a physical disability. And there are still elevators that do not work. The moment a student with a disability sets foot on the campus,

⁴ The Living Room is a collaborative effort of student initiatives focused on improving student well-being, sense of inclusivity, and health of the EUR community.

they should know all elevators work, wheelchairs are provided, I can access everything. Like, they should not have to ask for anything. Someone with a visible disability can read the signs because of the font style [...] What are the parameters of diversity or inclusivity? Like who decides that? My mind immediately goes to privileged white men or women who decide that."

When I presented the participants with the statement⁵, they found it difficult to extract the true meaning of those very well put but empty words. They missed a clear call to action. B proposes an interesting approach:

"D&I are empty words. Like actions speak louder than words. You know what, the office itself is fine. But this is my issue, D&I is a hot topic. Like now we are going to be diverse and inclusive. But we have always been diverse, the numbers are here, we are here. And inclusivity is about what you do with us so how do you make it inclusive for us. [...] You know, you don't want to put the right person in the right position to do it. [...] I think that if you want to diversify, there are a lot of intersections in inequality. So lets take from all those intersections on of the most marginalised groups and arrange our spaces for that group. That way all marginalised groups above, not above, with less intersections within marginalised groups, benefit as well. So white women will never understand the perspective of black people."

Direct action can also be undertaken by practicing what you preach.

"You can say that your values are anti-racist, but you're still working with universities that oppress other Palestina [like] the university of Tel-Aviv. [...] Do you have special vacancies for black folk? [...] Does the EUR do any research towards their own connections with slavery or sketchy organisations that they work with?"

The participants agreed that the university should focus on educating their staff about diversity, inclusion and racism. As participant B complains, who has a lot of experience talking with deans, executives, boards and members of the diversity & inclusion office:

"You still have to convince the Executive Board why diversity and inclusion matters. And I do not do that anymore. Its 2021. If people in your board still don't get this, you have to sign new people. Because they ain't here for us. It is bullshit."

Education thus does not only mean the direct teaching staff and teaching assistants, but within all hierarchical layers of the institution. Though educating the teaching staff about the specific challenges that students of colour face is not such a bad idea either. The participants mentioned difficulty with understanding how the university works, or feeling a distance between the students and the staff. Participant C talked about an experience that she had in a working group, where she felt uncomfortable discussing a subject about migration. When asked whether or not she asked the TA for assistance, she said *"I would never talk to a TA about that. Because I do not want to complain."*

⁵ Erasmian values are anti-racist values, as can be found in Appendix III

The university could reach out to its students. The participants mentioned an unwillingness to talk about their problems or questions, not because they felt like they could fix everything themselves, but because of impostor syndrome, as participant C and D explain.

"They [students] think that they are imposters and constantly fear being discovered and then send away." "you are less likely to ask a question because you feel, that someone will find out that you do not belong there. [...] Research shows that this in particular is true for students who are the first in their family to go to university. [...] If contact is initiated by the staff [...] you are more likely to accept that help."

This recommendation is not only aimed towards students of colour, because participant D explains that it is difficult for people who come from a low socio-economic background to adhere to the policies of the university:

"The university implements policy that is aimed at a certain pressure to perform for first year students, which is difficult for students who do not have anyone to ask questions to about the university. [...] If you're from a low socio-economic background, you have to work, I always had to do that."

Here again, understanding intersections of inequality is important. People of colour are not the only ones that can benefit from a more, attention rich approach, but students who in any other way do not conform to 'the norm' or the 'average student' could benefit from it too. This is what true inclusivity entails, according to the participants.

The participants call for the decolonisation of the curriculum. B states that *"I still have not been educated by a black woman. [...] Everything is taught with a white gaze perspective."*

A adds that *"I would like to learn about black people from the African diaspora about their roadblocks and a philosophical framing like appreciation for dialogue while white people really like discussion and things like that. [...] that classification, what it does to people who are considered 'black'. And there is room for that in my master so it can be done"*

Important questions to ask here are who the teacher is, which perspectives are included and who is considered a subject within social theory.

The participants also point towards universities in Amsterdam as examples of universities who take decoloniality seriously. The Erasmus university does not have to invent the wheel but can build on the work that already has been done and that continues to be done.

I give the last word to participant B who makes an observation about the D&I office and its function.

"That is the problem, we are erecting an office, if you want to talk about diversity and inclusion you talk to that person, while in reality your whole institute should be drenched in inclusiveness. It should be drenched in being inclusive."

Conclusion & discussion

With this study, I attempted to formulate an answer to the central question *How do students of colour experience racism at the Erasmus university Rotterdam?* The central question generated 3 main themes, namely racist experiences at the EUR, safe spaces and diversity or decoloniality, and. I shall first provide a brief conclusion of all 3 themes which I will use to formulate an answer to the general question.

1. Conclusion

The results show how students experience racism at the EUR. They are made aware of cultural differences between 'them' and 'regular white Dutch people', they feel that the colour of their skin influences important decisions the university makes and they are extra policed or are confronted with 'compliments' about exceeding white people's expectations. The racism they encounter influences how they doubt their own experiences, need external validation, consider themselves or their cultural background weird, and police their own behaviour because they feel responsible for the 'image' of people of colour.

The concept of safe spaces brought a paradox to light; studying at the university helps students meet other likeminded people to form a safe space with, but it also is a reason why safe spaces are needed. For the participants, safe spaces can bring a connection, cultivate trust, provide a judgement free environment, add validity to experiences, and thus create a sense of belonging. Safe spaces are created organically, bottom-up, but can also be engineered with the right amount of appropriateness. Fully institutionalising safe spaces however, might shift the focus towards managing, accountability, and marketing.

The theme of diversity shows that it is important to keep in mind who has the power, not only to make policy, but also to define parameters. The reality of the participants does not correspond with the university's presentation as diverse. The participants provide 4 points of improvement if the university really wants to be inclusive; define a clear call to action with accountabilities, educate the entire staff, reach out to different marginalised groups, keep intersectionality in mind, and decolonise the curriculum.

2. Discussion

As my research question was about how racism is experienced, it is not a surprise that my participants had such extensive examples. They provided examples of racism on both a cultural, institutional and an individual level (Essed, 1984). They also explained how reactions to their racist experiences can be framed under white superiority (Essed & Hoving, 2014); the belief that racism does not exist here, and under white innocence (Wekker, 2016) as the non-racist intent is considered more important than its impact. The attitude of the EUR interesting to interpret as well, as it does not deny that racism exists, but it also does not acknowledge that its institution is racist either. Perhaps the attitude fits the frame of superiority as well, racist occurrences are individualised and framed against the general

positive mindset of the respectable university (Çankaya & Mepschen, 2019) as a beacon of diversity and inclusivity.

I found it interesting as well to notice that my participants, while being well aware of racism and its implications, were not always able to identify it. This shows that they too are not immune to a general societal viewpoint; they too can be unaware of being victimised by racism (Essed, 1984).

What I did not expect and did not prepare for either, was the talk about safe spaces and the positive effects they had on my participants. I too feel very comfortable as part of the ESOC community, that my participants consider an example of a safe space that was created within the university, but not by the university. I would recommend further research into how safe spaces can aid people of colour and other marginalised groups to deal with existing in an environment that was not built for them and whether institutionalising them can aid in that goal, or oppose it. I am a sceptical towards institutionalising safe spaces, as the example of the Living Room shows that they can become a marketing tool, but I do acknowledge that it does have a space and a sizeable budget. So further research could be about exploring that field.

The last thing I want to mention is that my research shows that marginalised groups have a lot of expert knowledge, lived experiences and insight towards not only subjects of race and racism. I would recommend further building on a new scientific epistemology that includes these sources in a respectable and equal manner. So let's not only decolonise the university, but decolonise science while we're at it.

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Appendix I: Checklist ethical and privacy aspects of research



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: The role of the university

Name, email of student: Alyssa Renfurm, 457277ar@student.eur.nl

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

Start date and duration:

Is the research study conducted within DPAS YES

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

If 'NO': skip to part V.

If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research? 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. 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? NO
2. Will any of the participants not be asked for verbal or written 'informed consent,' whereby they agree to participate in the study? NO
3. Will information about the possibility to discontinue the participation at any time be withheld from participants? NO
4. Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants? 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.).
5. Does the study involve the risk of causing psychological stress or negative emotions beyond those normally encountered by participants? NO
6. 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
7. Will the study involve the participation of minors (<18 years old) or other groups that cannot give consent? NO
8. Is the health and/or safety of participants at risk during the study? NO
9. Can participants be identified by the study results or can the confidentiality of the participants' identity not be ensured? YES
10. Are there any other possible ethical issues with regard to this study? NO

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

Information about race will be collected because it is an integral part of the research and the central question. It might also be possible that participants can be identified via their answers because of the relative small size of the research population.

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

The gathered data will be anonymised and saved on a password protected online drive. The utmost care will be used when using direct quotes from participants in order to minimise the chance that statements can be tied to individuals e.g. not mentioning specific identifiable details such as age, profession.

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.

None.

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?

At the Erasmus University Rotterdam campus.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

10 to 12 participants.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

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

50 to 100 people

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?

On a password protected online drive

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?

Myself

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

On an offline password protected USB stick.

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

By removing identifiable details such as name, age, occupation and gender.

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: Alyssa Renfurm Name (EUR) supervisor: Bonnie French

Date: 19-03-2021 Date: 19-03-2021



Informed consent Racism at the Erasmus University Rotterdam.

- I declare my intention to participate in the research of Alyssa Renfurm, hereinafter referred to as the researcher, regarding racism at the Erasmus University Rotterdam
- I understand that I can terminate my participation without having to explain why at any time.
- I understand that the researcher will handle the information I provide with care, will ensure that my data is kept anonymously and will only that my provided information if it cannot be traced back to me. I consent to this.
- I consent to the sharing of parts of the interview, quotes or examples with the researcher's supervisor, Bonnie French, and I understand that this will only be done to ensure the quality of the research. De researcher and her supervisor will not share any such information with third parties.
- I consent to recording this interview, both as an audio transcript and a zoom recording (video) if applicable. The zoom recording will only be used if the audio transcript is corrupted in any way.
- I agree that I can be approached during the course of this research project for additional questions and that I can decline further participation at any time.
- I am aware that I have the right to view and supplement the information I provided later during the research process if I wish.
- I have been able to ask for any clarifications f required before participating in the interview.

Name Date Signature

Alyssa Renfurm _____
(researcher) Date Signature

Appendix III: Erasmus press release

Erasmian values are anti-racist values

📅 Saturday 6 Jun 2020, 12:10 📄 Press release

The recent worldwide protests against racial injustice along with COVID-19 have invited all of us to think carefully about what we owe each other as a society. For us, as a university, it also prompts us to think about our values, our role and our societal engagement.



Erasmian Values are anti-racist values

Our Erasmian values are clear. EUR stands fundamentally behind the creation of knowledge across all barriers of race, language, culture, and background. We believe in shared opportunities and in challenging discrimination and exclusion wherever they may be.

Our role is also clear; EUR is an institution driven to address societal challenges by the power of research, and allying it with policy and our wider community⁽¹⁾. Fulfilling our role, however, begins by speaking clearly about the challenge we face:

That systemic racism remains as an ingrained stain on our society.

We know this as our research has shown it continues to affect our health⁽²⁾, education, how we watch sports and that sadly, minority ethnic groups will be disproportionately affected by the impact of COVID-19.

But frankly, we also know it affects us **as a community**.

So what do we as EUR owe to society?

We as a community can do better by not being blind to the structural barriers faced by minority ethnic members of the EUR community; and by taking responsibility to ensure fair opportunity for all.

By taking ownership to maintain an equal, diverse and inclusive community. One that empowers people to speak out against racism, and ensures that people who are disenfranchised feel safe to speak out, are listened to, and can be supported.

That way, we can continue the fight against racism in all its forms. For this is one societal challenge we shall overcome together.

Stay safe.

The Executive Board:
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Rutger Engels
Roelien Ritsema van Eck

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Semiha Denktas

On behalf of the University Council:
Hans van den Berg
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