

ACTIVIST IN EXISTENCE

*How students of color are
decolonizing Dutch universities*

HOW DOES OUR UNIVERSITY
KEEP FALLING FOR
THE GREENWASHED
(OBVIOUS) LIES THOSE
INDUSTRIES

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Activist in Existence:
How Students of Color are Decolonizing Dutch Universities

Master Thesis

International Sociology: Engaging Public Issues

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August 6, 2023

Acknowledgments

I thank my professors in Engaging Public Issues for introducing me to decoloniality studies. I thank my supervisor: Willem Schinkel for being considerate throughout the whole research process and for inspiring me from the beginning of my studies.

Special thanks to the participants of this study for opening up and co-producing knowledge with me. I thank the ESOC Community for offering a decolonial space. I thank Erasmus University and Erasmus School of Social and Behavioral Sciences for their investment in critical learning and hope they continue to do so.

Above all, I thank my grandfather: Ali El-Fassi for everything he has done for his family and his community. His journey I hope to continue. And my mother: Aicha El-Fassi for her continuous love and inspiration I cannot express in words.

Abstract

Adopting a decolonizing methodology, the research explores the experiences of people of color who have attended Dutch academia and participated in social movements. These individuals' migration backgrounds are intertwined with processes of colonialism and colonality. The study reveals that from early education on, they experienced racialization, and although knowledge of colonialism was limited, their existence was an inspiration to develop critical and decolonial thinking. In academia, they confronted the colonality of knowledge through the lack of ethnic diversity in people and the curriculum, as well as the emphasis on objectivity and written knowledge. These experiences activated their decolonial engagement and student organizing.

Keywords: European colonialism, decolonization, higher education, knowledge production, student activism

Activist in Existence:

How Students of Color are Decolonizing Dutch Universities

Although Dutch majority-minority cities are known for their large ethnic diversity and internationalized universities, most students who go to the cities' universities are predominantly from other Western countries (Van den Broek et al., 2022). Over the past years, this has sparked discussion on the inequality of opportunities for students from migration backgrounds (El Hadioui et al., 2019; Smid, 2020). As Dutch prime-minister Mark Rutte said in an interview: "It cannot be the case that half of the residents in large cities have a non-Western background, but at universities that share is only 15 percent like in Rotterdam"(NU, 2022). Discussions on diversity in universities became more salient after the student occupation of the Maagdenhuis at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) when students demanded the decolonization and the dismantling of the white patriarchal colonial structures of the university (De Ploeg & De Ploeg, 2017). UvA responded by issuing a report on diversity which showed most people in the university are relatively confident in speaking on internationalization and gender¹, but they experienced speaking on race and ethnicity as uncomfortable as addressing ethnic differences has contributed to stigmatization and polarization in Dutch society (Wekker et al., 2016).

Concurrently, Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR) re-announced its commitment to diversity and inclusion with specific attention for gender equality and ethnic diversity (Essanhaji & Van Reekum, 2022). Since 2015, Rotterdam's university: Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR) makes efforts in *diversity and inclusion (D&I)* and *internationalization* (EUR, 2021). While EUR has made significant changes in terms of gender equality as it fits the university's whiteness, changes in the ethnic make-up of the university are resisted as EUR

¹ It is essential to acknowledge that gender is a colonial construct, as elaborated by Lugones (2010), and while this study touches on the topic, further exploration and analysis are necessary to fully understand its implications within the context of decolonizing Dutch universities.

stalls concrete actions and change for people of colour² (Essanhaji & Van Reekum, 2023). Furthermore, the university presents itself as an international university with the core task: “to prepare students well for a career in our open, internationally oriented society and knowledge economy” (EUR, 2021). However, because of internationalization, developing countries are at risk of brain drain when highly educated individuals migrate, typically to Western countries, while higher education institutions (HEIs) in their country-of-origin struggle to get their credentials acknowledged (De Haas, et al., 2020). Moreover, postcolonial and decolonial scholars argue that the Western university is a key site through which colonial knowledge is produced (Bhambra 2009, 2014; Bhambra et al., 2018; Said, 1978; Sharp, 2008). Previous research showed 184 out of 500 top universities were in European colonizing countries and 137 universities in North American and Oceanian settler colonies (Abarkan, 2021). Furthermore, enrolment rates in “developing countries” lag behind “developed countries”: 31 percent in sub-Saharan Africa and 21 percent in Central Asia in contrast to 3 percent in Europe and North America (Schmelkes, 2020).

In response to the persistent ethnic inequalities and the coloniality of power and knowledge, students have organized themselves in activist student movements such as the Erasmus School of Colour (ESoC) and OccupyEUR in which students carve out spaces and offer alternative programs on colonialism, such as reading groups, seminars, and protests. In May 2023, thousands of students across Europe occupied their universities to end the ties universities have with fossil industries (Gayle, 2023). By doing this, they act in *decolonizing* the Western universities they attend (Aparna & Kramsch in Bhrambra, 2018). It therefore remains the question how students of colour who are part of these movements experience the gap between talk of the ‘diverse, international university’ and their actual experiences of the

² The term "people of colour" is used in this study, but it is essential to acknowledge that it is a colonial construct, as elaborated in the theoretical framework, drawing on Quijano (2000).

white patriarchal colonial university. My study aims to address these experiences by posing the following research questions: How do (ex-)students of color who are active in social movements experience ethnic diversity³ in education and the Western coloniality of power and knowledge in academia? And how does that experience enable and configure their activist organizing and togetherness? The study also aims to foster a deeper understanding of the impact of colonialism on racialized people in Dutch academia and to challenge exclusionary power structures in academia. Such knowledges are important to intervene in current debates on inequalities, diversity, and internationalization within universities.

The critical theoretical framework shows how scholars offered counter-discourses on colonialism such as postcolonialism (Bhabra, 2014; Said, 1978), decoloniality, and coloniality/modernity (Bhabra, 2009, 2014, 2018; Quijano, 2000). Elaborating on this, critical race theory (CRT) is used as a lens to focus on Dutch academia (Beaman, 2017; Essed, 2001; Robinson, 1983). In the method section, a decolonizing methodology is employed around data analysis of narrative interviews with participants in the field. The analysis constitutes five parts: 'The Past as the Present: The Awareness of the Continuity of Colonialism' (1), 'Being Other: Experiences in Early Education' (2), 'A Western Privilege: Ethnic Diversity of People in Academia' (3), 'Coloniality of Knowledge and the Decolonial School' (4) and 'Activist in Existence: Ethnic Diversity and Activism' (5). Lastly, the study concludes with a discussion and a conclusion with recommendations for further research.

³ The concept of "ethnic diversity" is a form of racial classification, as discussed by Ahmed (2012) in her work "On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life," serving as the theoretical framework for this study.

European Colonialism and Rational Knowledge

Studies on colonialism focus on the physical occupation of land by colonizers who exploit resources and build settlements: agriculture, industries, and institutions. More instances of colonialism existed, but European colonization was most notable in its scale especially given its establishment of *rational knowledge*, also known as the European Enlightenment, which saw *science* emerge as the most important form of knowledge (Benjamin, 2007; Sharp, 2008). In the colonial era, European universities, including seven out of the eight Ivy League universities, were established in colonized nations before the United States gained independence (Peterson, 1983). From then on, European knowledge was disseminated worldwide, coinciding with the rise of *mercantile capitalism*: scientific knowledge commodified the world into measurable peripheral land with resources to exploit (Sharp, 2008). This resulted in European dominance and control over both territories and populations. Therefore, colonialism was not only social and cultural but also epistemological as it imposed Western structures of knowledge on non-Western others (Quijano, 2000).

Postcolonialism & Decoloniality: Western Power/Knowledge and Coloniality/Modernity

Postcolonialism developed as an intellectual movement around the ideas of Said, Bhabha, and Spivak and examines the temporal and scholarly aftermath of colonialism (Bhabha, 2014). Said (1978) explored Western colonialism in relation to *knowledge production* and the Western attitude toward Middle Eastern, Asian, and North African societies. He revealed how Western knowledge divided the world into the Occident (the West) and the Orient (the East), positioning the West as superior and rational, and the East as inferior, primitive, and threatening (Said, 1978, 1998). This perception justified Western *knowledge systems* studying and transforming Eastern cultures, reinforcing power dynamics between the

West and the East. The binary and hierarchical distinction legitimized the material and epistemological domination of the Other (Bhambra, 2014).

Decolonial scholars aim to challenge and deconstruct knowledge and power structures that originated during colonialism (Bhambra, 2014). They argue that colonialism still serves as the foundation for the functioning of capitalist modernity: *coloniality* (Bhambra, 2009, 2014). According to Quijano (2000) the history of coloniality, which encompassed enslavement, extraction, and capitalism, is inseparable from the development of the modern world as we currently know it, hence: *coloniality/modernity* (Bhambra, 2014). Crucial within the coloniality/modernity framework are the concepts of *the coloniality of power* and *the coloniality of knowledge*. The coloniality of power referred to the establishment of power hierarchies based on social categories of race and gender. Similarly, the coloniality of knowledge refers to the epistemic hierarchies privileging European knowledge. As decolonial studies developed, Tuck and Yang (2012) argued *decolonization* became a metaphor, evidenced by calls to "decolonize our schools" or use "decolonizing methods". This metaphorization enables settler moves to innocence and perpetuates settler guilt and futurity. Therefore, it is examined how students organize against coloniality in universities without it becoming a metaphor.

Critical Race Theory: Coloniality of Race, Racial Classification and Diversity

According to Quijano (2000), race as a concept was constructed during the colonization of the Americas in which colonized people were rendered inferior due to their phenotypic traits and cultural features. The colonizers later codified the phenotypic trait of the colonized as *color* and thereby constructed a scale of colour with distance to and proximity to whiteness with "blacks" being the most oppressed people. Racial identities were considered constitutive of hierarchies, corresponding social roles, and consequently: the model of colonial domination.

Racial categorization in the Netherlands has changed over time. The governmental institution for statistics: CBS distinguishes between: "born in the Netherlands" and "country of origin" (WRR, 2020). Previously, a postcolonial immigration perspective classified people as "persons with non-western migration backgrounds" or "persons with western migration backgrounds". Scholars who have looked at the Netherlands from a critical race perspective observed that *racism* is often considered taboo and avoided in public discourse as it relates to Nazism and extremist, right-wing ideologies of racial superiority (Wekker et al., 2016; Van Dijk in Essed, 2001). If spoken about racism, terms like "discrimination" or "xenophobia" were used instead. This does not mean racism does not exist in the Netherlands, rather this *colorblindness* undermines the experiences of people of color (Beaman, 2017). Van Dijk argued that in elite media and universities white males are overrepresented and "fundamental relations of group power are stacked against women and minorities" (p. 481 in Essed, 2001). Moreover, 95 percent of research about ethnic minorities in the Netherlands was carried out by white Dutch researchers, often focusing on problems associated with minorities rather than the racism these minorities experience.

Furthermore, Ahmed (2012) argued that "diversity" functions as a form of racial classification that does not effectively address or combat racism. Ahmed exposed how diversity initiatives often perpetuate systems of racism and oppression, rather than dismantling them. Organizations appear to be committed to diversity and inclusivity on the surface but fail to change underlying power structures that sustain racism. Furthermore, she highlighted how institutions rely on "diversity workers", often marginalized individuals who become representatives of diversity. They are expected to embody cultural characteristics, which reinforce stereotypes and sustain racial hierarchies. This perpetuates emotional labor and tokenism, instead of critically examining discriminatory practices that prevent marginalized individuals from advancing within these institutions.

Methodology

Decolonizing Methodology

As discussed before, ethnic “minorities” are often the subjects of studies rather than researchers of studies. Decolonial research challenges the colonialist epistemologies that have colonized, racialized, and marginalized communities (Smith, 1999). In conducting decolonial research it is important to be aware of the position people have in research. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999):

The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary. ... It is a history that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity. Just knowing that someone measured our 'faculties' by filling the skulls of our ancestors with millet seeds and compared the amount of millet seed to the capacity for mental thought offends our sense of who and what we are. (p. 1)

Therefore, a decolonizing methodology was employed to center the voices of people of color and produce knowledges with them rather than about them. Ethical considerations were taken into consideration, including cultural sensitivity, informed consent, privacy protection, and withdrawal rights. By member checking, the accuracy and interpretation of findings were ensured. Reflexivity was practiced acknowledging the positionality and situatedness of knowledge (Sharp, 2008).

Data Collection: Narrative Interviewing

As a student of colour, I engaged in active participatory observation along with narrative interviews with other people of color with whom I co-produced the knowledges presented here. I conducted eleven in-depth interviews which were recorded and transcribed.

Purposive sampling ensured diversity in race, ethnicity, and gender, with participants being academically educated and involved in movements such as ESoC, Palestine Solidarity Rotterdam (PSR), and OccupyEUR. The interviews took place online or face-to-face. As part of my decolonial methodology, I recognize the impact of colonialism on participants' lives (Smith, 1999). Hence, I reflected with respondents on their "migration backgrounds" and the effect of European colonialism on their countries. In addition, we discussed their educational experiences, positions in Dutch universities, perceptions of diversity in people and knowledge, the colonality of power and knowledge, modernity, decoloniality, and their activism in academic and decolonial contexts. Photographic documentation of demonstrations and other meetings was made for the in-depth exploration of their experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). These pictures are presented on the cover.

Systematic Data Analysis

By using the program Atlas.ti, I systematically analyzed the data by coding and identifying patterns (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Open coding labeled raw data, such as sentences, as codes (written in *italic* font in the analysis). This was followed by axial coding to connect subcategories and identify higher-level concepts and themes (subheadings in analysis). Finally, selective coding selected an overarching category as a framework (headings in analysis). This approach sought qualitative rigor in inductive research by extracting first-order concepts, second-order themes, and aggregated dimensions (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013). Higher dimensions were hidden and inferred indirectly while underlying themes and concepts were more observable and explicitly expressed by respondents.

Analysis

Part 1. The Past as the Present: The Awareness of the Continuity of Colonialism

Postcolonialism: Colonialism of Country-of-Origin

The participants were aware of the histories of colonialism that shaped their ancestors and their own lives. Nine interviewees had parents who migrated from *post-colonized countries* to Europe in the 60s up to the 90s and five participants described parents as migrant workers often part of a “migration wave”. From the perspectives of the participants, parents experienced migration differently. Amira’s grandfather was one of the first Moroccans to arrive in Italy:

“There wasn’t any migration laws or issues with visa. He always tells me about how easy it was to go to Spain and then come back.” Her father’s migration story was different: “My dad looks more Moroccan, he is tanned. When he arrived, it was very harsh. ... That's when people started being more conscious of immigrants and started talking about them in the news.” In this, Amira highlights intergenerational differences in confronting racism. She also recalled how her father experienced *racism* more often than her mother who was *white-passing*: “Somebody would insult my dad [...] they would call him the n-word or something.... they would turn to my mom and be like: ‘Why did you marry him?’ They were like: ‘Italians need to stay with Italians’.” Thus, Amira was aware of the proximity to *whiteness* (Quijano, 2000). Italy’s connection to colonialism differs from other European countries like the Netherlands, France, and Great Britain. However, Amira has Moroccan descent, together with Mehdi, Khalil, and Latifa, and they were aware of Morocco’s colonization by Spain and France. Two students came from countries colonized by the Netherlands, including Isaiah from Aruba, who also was knowledgeable about the *history of colonialism*:

When colonialism started in 1492 and was first “discovered” by the Spanish, they nicknamed it Useless Island, because there was no materials or sources to extract from.

And the ground was not fertile for farming so they didn't really do much with it. They did, however, unfortunately displace the indigenous population ... And I believe later on in history, the Netherlands, the Dutch kingdom, came along and ... of course, played its role in the slave trade.

Only two respondents came from countries that were not colonized: Emir and Selena who had Turkish heritage. Emir mentioned this was the reason he didn't learn much about colonialism from home, in contrast to his Moroccan friends: "... especially Riffians, tell me very proudly that they fought against the occupier. ... So, they grow up with a certain pride that is part of their identity." However, he and Selena explained Turkey was invaded by the English and the French in the early twentieth century through the Lausanne Treaty. Overall, the countries of origin of all participants have been and continue to be impacted by colonialism.

The Coloniality of Race

Isaiah was aware of how colonialism focused on the domination of extraction of value from nature and bodies which are displaced and subjugated (Bhambra, 2014). Such colonialism leaves traces in how colonized peoples interact with each other. Indeed, Aaliyah who came from Suriname – a country with many ethnic groups -, described *internalized racism*. Her father used a football analogy of how this operated:

'You will see all kinds of colors on the field. The men respect each other very much. They're friends But at the end of the day, the Maroons and the Hindus have some kind of unspoken rule of: we're not mixing. Our daughter and our son are not going to talk.'

Aaliyah's father's explanation of the racial relationships in Suriname underlines the colonial legacy of the codification of the phenotypic trait of the colonized as "of colour" (Quijano, 2000). The lack of "mixing" between respectively darker and lighted skinned people underlines how a hierarchy of colour based on the distance and proximity to whiteness continues to shape racial preferences and relations after colonization has formally ended. Aaliyah, Isaiah, and Mehdi described themselves as mixed. Isaiah specifically described himself as "a mix of a mix". He questioned the notion of being "really Aruban": "Everyone in Aruba is technically, historically from somewhere else." Isaiah related this to *the coloniality of race*: "The whole idea of race is created by colonialism ... that's also the reason why I feel so uncomfortable saying my ethnicity. ... I'm still perpetuating this colonial project." Zeina also discussed the coloniality of race: "I started to see the influence in the culture [of Egypt], in the way people speak about different races and different colors as well". Aymen also talked about the coloniality of race as he said that people in Egypt tend to hold Western people in higher regard. He found this problematic: "The fact that they smile at a blond woman, and when someone else with a hijab comes: they just [talk] normally to them ... Whereas here [the Netherlands], it's the total opposite." Thus, coloniality, which is epistemological, has internalized racism in Aymen's perspective too.

Neo-Colonialism: Coloniality of Country-of-Origin

Decoloniality views colonialism as the current function of modern capitalist society: *coloniality* (Quijano, 2000). All participants were aware of this, although not always having the language to describe this awareness. Aaliyah discovered decoloniality recently: "I thought: oh my god, this is what I've been thinking about! But I didn't know there was a whole academic body of work about it. We experience it but don't always have the words to express it." Sayed quoted an aboriginal person: "Postcolonialism? What do you mean? They're still here." Sayed

was born in a refugee center after his parents fled Afghanistan: a country “not officially colonized in European colonial times.”. He explained that colonialism in Afghanistan manifested as a war between the British and the Russians: “There was just war in that, and not necessarily a successful colonization until, you could say, America ... that was after 9/11. And now it is back under Taliban rule.” The mention of the United States' role adds another layer of complexity to colonialism as Sayed implies the involvement of the U.S. is a form of colonization.

Other participants' experiences also add depth to the understanding of coloniality as an ongoing and complex process. In Morocco, Khalil's grandparents lived and worked in a rural area called “Compagnie Doce”: a community of twelve houses of Spanish inhabitants. When he got older, he realized: “It's actually quite strange my grandparents lived with my father together with a Spanish family in Morocco and had to work on the land That is of course just very colonial to the bone.” When he visited Morocco as a child, he saw his grandparents live in poverty and later he realized: “Morocco was *underdeveloped* by France.”

It's not just like: oh, there are a few systems... It's all becoming more urgent for me because it has to do with where I come from, where my parents come from, and what my whole family has had to live through. And still affects my family and me.

Latifa visited Morocco as a child: “[I] thought: why is there so much poverty here? ... This is totally not modern.” She constantly caught herself using “the white criterion”: “That link [between coloniality and modernity] wasn't clear to me.” Zeina observed architectural similarities between Egypt and Cyprus due to English colonialism. About coloniality in Egypt, she said:

It's in everything. Egypt was both [colonized] by the British and the French. It's, of course, in the language. It's in the self-expression even of the people and the education ..., history and everything else is through *that white gaze*. ... Egypt is still a third world country. We're still not over all the colonization that happened to us. Those countries stole so much of us, and now they flaunt it around in their museums ..., and we have no right over it.

Aymen, who attended a school originally built by the French, described migration as a consequence of European colonialism:

What goes around comes around. ... It's almost as if we're colonizing them in a non-aggressive way. ... You're the one who came to us in the beginning. And stole all our resources, so now that we're doing it to you and we're not even killing or harming you, you're complaining about it. That's just something that is constantly always on my mind.

Aaliyah and Isaiah were conscious of *neo-colonial relations* within the Dutch Kingdom. Aaliyah mentioned “de boeren”, Dutch farmers who worked on plantations after slavery was abolished and was knowledgeable about *settler colonialism*: “They were able to get a lot of land from the Dutch government and that group is quite rich.” Isaiah said Aruba was the first country to gain independence around 1974 but chose to talk about the totality of the Dutch kingdom: “It is all interrelated”. He exemplified this:

This is also a big conflict right now in Bonaire and the other islands, that they're being neo-colonized ... because during COVID this was very much the case when financial aid

from the Netherlands, which they are obliged to give us because it's in the constitution, they actually decided that they were going to make this financial aid dependent on them having more say within our government decision making, which to many people was kind of like: you're trying to retake power in our countries.

Part 2. Being Other: Experiences in Early Education

Experiences in Early Education of Dutch Students

Six students were born in the Netherlands. Latifa, who grew up in a village, had a traumatic experience in primary school. For a musical, she was assigned the role of a slave trader and had to say the n-word. Latifa cried and insisted she did not want to do it. Her teachers used her ambitions against her. One of her best friends, a black girl, was crying too and said: "Just do it because you know how these white people are". She performed the role crying on stage, making her teacher proud. This experience shows anti-black racism, the lack of critical examination of (neo)colonialism and the cultural insensitivity of the teachers involved. The reaction of her friend further illustrates the normalization of racism and discrimination.

Emir, Khalil, Sayed, and Selena grew up in Rotterdam. Emir attended a school in "a disadvantaged neighborhood" with predominantly students of color. He and his classmates were placed in pre-vocational secondary education (*vmbo tl*), while the only white student went to pre-university education (*vwo/gymnasium*). Emir explained: "Down the road, you had a gymnasium in the district. That's where all the rich kids went, so you saw that inequality from a young age; ... those are all white kids." Emir always had the ambition to pursue higher education: "I could only dream of university." Khalil grew up in a mixed neighborhood and had a pleasant time in his "mixed school". Like Emir, he noticed a gymnasium school nearby was: "a white school". Sayed, who also grew up in the south of Rotterdam, remembered primary school as pleasant, but things changed when he attended high school in "the Bible

Belt”. His friends were “the white outcasts”: he noticed being of color quickly meant you’re an outcast unless you tried to *act white*. Selena was the only participant who attended a *havo/vwo* school. In primary school, she didn’t worry about her ethnicity: “There was everything, so you are not the deviation from the norm.” However, about her high school she said: “It was a very white upper-class to high class school”. She experienced there was a lot of racism and Islamophobia. Later, she did a year of adult education: “That was suddenly more colorful so to speak. That was kind of a shock to me.” She reflected:

I didn't quite know how to navigate within it right away.... You know when you put in that effort and then let go of your body and then you notice that a kind of relief comes out? I think I could let go a little bit. That whole tension of you always have to be on the defensive for something, and that something is literally your right to exist.

These participants’ experiences in Dutch education highlight issues related to ethnic inequalities and racism within the educational system. Their stories illustrate how early on, they became aware of the disparities and discriminatory practices that exist in schools based on their ethnicity. They also emphasize the sense of belonging in diverse environments. Additionally, the lack of diversity among teachers is a recurring theme as they all noticed most teachers were white.

Six participants grew up outside the Netherlands, including Mehdi and Amira who were raised in Europe. Mehdi enjoyed early education in Latvia, UAE, and Belgium. He adapted easily because he was used to moving around: “There's a term for kids who often move around in their childhood. Therefore, they're very good at adapting things, but they don't have a concept of what's home.” When he attended public school in Latvia for one year, he faced bullying: he

was called a terrorist and the cops were called on him. Later, he enrolled in an international school:

I was called ‘sand n-word’ as a joke supposedly. Any time the ball went over the fence, they said: Go hop the fence, monkey. ... It was very normalized, and I was fetishized a lot by people in Latvia ... due to the fact that my father's black, but I'm not that [*sic*] ... Just generally unpleasant behaviors, very racist and homophobic jokes also.

In the UAE, Mehdi attended an international school, but in Belgium, he felt like an outsider: “It was a bit more upper class. It was mainly white Belgian people, which I didn't interact much with.” Mehdi experiences growing up in different European countries shows how racism and identity formation can manifest in different forms.

Amira had an “amazing” experience in her multicultural primary school, which again emphasizes the significance of diverse and inclusive educational environments that foster a sense of belonging. It changed when she moved and attended middle school: “One teacher would always tell me that I would never succeed [and] I would be like everybody else. And I was like: who the fuck is everybody else?” Amira had worse experiences than her family. She would tell her parents about such things; her father would sometimes tell her that it was maybe in her head: “I used to blame him a lot for that. But I came to understand that he just never experienced racism at school because he didn't do school in Italy.” Her mother and brother did not have the same experiences because they “looked more white”. Nonetheless, education was prioritized for Amira:

My mom would tell [my dad]: ‘We didn’t finish our schooling; our parents didn't finish schooling. Why would she have to do all that?’ And my dad was always like: ‘No, if we

didn't get to do this, then our children have to. ... Why would we deprive them of something ... we struggled without?'

This shows that education is seen as a means of empowerment and upward mobility, which is also the case for the four students who attended primary school in non-Western countries. Zeina and Aymen grew up in Egypt and both criticized Egyptian education for its focus on “memorization” rather than understanding. Aymen moved to the Netherlands because his family wanted him to get “better education” which reflects the perception of Western or white-dominated education as superior. Isaiah and Aaliyah both attended Dutch schools, with Isaiah’s parents believing it would benefit his future. His teachers were Dutch, as was the instruction language but outside class, no one spoke Dutch except “the *Makamba*’s”. He remembered one dean trying to enforce a Dutch-only ban. Aaliyah attended a private high school but regretted this decision:

I honestly think that colonial mindset is a lot stronger within that elite bubble. For example, my sister went to public high school for a few years and she could eventually speak Sranantongo. I didn't speak Sranantongo with my friends at school. It was perceived as ghetto.

Part 3. A Western Privilege: Ethnic Diversity of People in Academia

The Western University: Privilege and Internationalization

Three international participants were motivated by their families to study abroad in a Western country. Khalil and Sayed noticed a difference between Dutch students and international students. For Sayed *class consciousness* grew: “You had a lot of people who came

from global South countries who were extremely privileged.” This *privilege* was acknowledged by all participants. Zeina said:

I understand it's a privilege to be able to sit here and critique and talk about the wrongs of academia. It is already a privilege for us to be here and be able to even experience the good, the bad, all of it. ... I'm here talking about all the research and they're talking about water access ... something that's even way further than education that I could think of. And it's messed up.

At the start of their studies, some participants attempted to integrate into the university. Khalil tried to adjust by changing his clothing and speaking more “ABN” (General Civilized Dutch): “We all have a white voice we turn on”. His voice was higher in tone to appear “less intimidating” which is a manifestation of code-switching to fit into a particular social context. Mehdi actively protested “Dutchification”. He said: “I'll very much retain my own personal identity. I might learn the language ... but I do not want to be absorbed within this culture.” This shows his determination to preserve his personal identity and his resistance to the erasure of his cultural background.

Isaiah and Aaliyah encountered *micro-aggressions*. “Many times [I] get told: ‘you’re so smart for this ..., do you have Wi-Fi in Aruba? ... We have infrastructure, we have roads. You colonized us, so we have these things,” said Isaiah. Isaiah and Aaliyah's experiences with micro-aggressions demonstrate the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and ignorance about their cultural backgrounds. The assumptions made about their intelligence based on their ethnicity, along with the disrespectful comments about their home countries, underscore the need for cultural awareness and sensitivity. Zeina was used as a marketing strategy in university and asked to open events or be in photos: “But are you actually doing anything to accommodate

these people? You're not.” This shows the superficiality of diversity initiatives and the tokenizing of individuals without addressing structural barriers. Overall, these experiences highlight the challenges students face in navigating their cultural identities and the complexities of integrating into a predominantly white culture where they face micro-aggressions.

Three international students did their bachelor's at the University of Maastricht and faced negative experiences. In Zeina's first year, while she was eating her breakfast, a woman approached her and said:

‘You don't have to wear that anymore ... Remember, don't marry one of your men, he will beat you. Marry a Dutchman, Dutch men are so good and so handsome, he will take care of you, he will not harm you.’

This incident further demonstrates the persistence of harmful stereotypes and cultural biases in the Netherlands. Isaiah felt if he didn't work twice as hard, he was not going to the same programs as others. When he confided to a girl from his study association, she told him: “What the fuck are you talking about? You think we don't have to work hard?” The next day, she retold the story to everyone making Isaiah feel thrown out. Amira said Maastricht was advertised as an international city, but realized it was just Nordic-European countries. She struggled with that, she wanted to go back to the atmosphere in elementary school. For Aaliyah, it was a big transition to move to the Netherlands:

In Suriname, I was never really aware of the impact your skin color can have on your experience. Here in the Netherlands, I experienced racism for the first time. ... I noticed that I was actually starting to shut myself off from fellow students. I felt very conscious

of my accent... I was often stereotyped. For example, someone made a comment: ‘You talk like Judeska’.

Overall, the additional pressures international students may encounter reveal the importance of truly diverse representations of internationalism. As shown, advertising an international environment, and then failing to deliver on this promise can leave international students feeling isolated and excluded.

Ethnic Diversity in People: Rotterdam and Erasmus University

Five participants attended EUR for its reputation of ethnic diversity and hoped to find a sense of belonging in a multicultural environment. When Isaiah moved to Rotterdam he felt “seen”: “It’s not just: you’re allowed to be a Dutch person, but also: you’re allowed to exist.” Amira said: “I haven’t lived ever in a place that is so diverse, where I could blend in. Not blend in because I’m white. Blend in because I’m not.” However, their experiences revealed a stark contrast between the university’s promises and the actual lived experiences of students from diverse backgrounds as they all expressed being met with disappointment in EUR. Mehdi, Khalil, and Latifa mentioned there was some gender diversity, but all participants said there was *a lack of ethnic diversity in people*: professors, tutors, and students. Emir initially had diverse tutorial groups but later found himself in a class primarily composed of recent high school graduates: “I noticed a real difference between me and my father who works for a healthcare transportation and my mother who is a housewife.” This experience highlights the importance of addressing class diversity alongside ethnic diversity.

For Isaiah it was tough to cope with his predominantly white cohort: “that was quite disappointing ... to engage in topics as decoloniality and racism with white folk, even though they could be as critical or as leftist they wanted to be ... You’re still speaking ... from a very

white lens.” Mehdi chose EUR for its reputation as the most diverse university: “Rotterdam is ... the most diverse of the big cities in the Netherlands. The universities do not represent that It shocks me to my heart every time, because I live in the South and the schools don't look like that.” When Latifa visited the open days in EUR, she was told the student population was “ethnic diverse”: “It became very clear to me, that contrast: we are students of color, but who are standing in front of us?”

Part 4. Coloniality of Knowledge and the Decolonial School

Ethnic Diversity in Knowledge

All participants expressed concerns about *the lack of ethnic diversity in knowledge*: the curriculum. Emir, a former Law and Philosophy student, said: “That Eurocentric view of certain things is permeated with coloniality and that is also reflected in the curriculum”. All philosophers he had to read were white. Mehdi, a History student, also observed “a lot of white Western faces.” When he saw a person of color, this motivated him. Amira studied Arts and Culture in Maastricht and emphasized scholars of color like Edward Said and Stuart Hall were taught without context:

I did a research and I see that this is a black man [Stuart Hall] and that everything he talks about ... is from a black standpoint in a white society, in the United Kingdom. Just acknowledging this completely changes the work. How his work should be interpreted or should be used. ... Their ethnic background plays a big role in what they write. Edward Said, he would have never been able to write *Orientalism* had he not been a Palestinian in the U.S. at that time.

Sayed studied Communication and Media and remembered a class on ethics: “Every source was from some colonizer with slaves or someone who supported it.” He spoke out: “Apart from the fact that we must learn their shit, which I already disagree with, we don't have any critical look at it. ... When it comes to ethics, some people apparently see nothing wrong with colonialism and human subjugation.” Sayed explicated the coloniality of knowledge and race:

I think that the way in which we both produce and distribute knowledge in our society is very colonial. It's classist. If you're poor, and that's becoming worse as we get more neoliberal policies, you just don't have access to knowledge. There is a whole layer of racism in that, because if you are racialized, you are also kept poorer... Basically, the privileged few have access to certain knowledge.

Zeina highlighted the coloniality of knowledge too: “If I sit in front of a man from my culture, I would never be able to check anything out because they're taught differently ... You cannot even diagnose them correctly. So how are you supposed to treat them correctly?”

Three Sociology alumni from EUR criticized the program for lacking diversity. Latifa found the Problem-Based Learning pictures to be “annoying”, particularly one featuring women wearing burqas in a case on “the Muslim woman”. Sometimes she voiced her opinions but was the only person: “You just feel it's no use.” Her experience changed when she got two tutors of color who were “very critical of the texts.” One of the tutors was Khalil who experienced it as a student and a tutor: “Everything was the same because nothing was done with feedback. There were interesting things in the book that we had, but they were just skipped. ... One of the teachers thought it was all too complicated.” Later, Latifa became a tutor herself after she and her friends started to think: “What can we do to raise such topics?”

Her friends joined the education committee and the university council. Selena couldn't connect to the bachelor's focus on public administration and established ESOC with Emir. She also started a sociology committee with other students and organized a lecture:

[The lecture was about] migration and basically death in the Mediterranean. There were several white students who were also on the committee, and said: 'that was so much fun' ... How shocked I was that 'fun' is the first word that comes out, because they were mainly concerned with the fact that it was just great that they could have organized something like this And for students of color, it is 'People who look like me die in the Mediterranean.' I noticed a huge gap there, and you can see the processing of the material ... for white students is very different than for students of color.

Isaiah actively resisted *colorblindness* in a course on cultural psychology: "There was this rhetoric: 'these other countries are less developed, or their views and psychology are outdated. ... they still believe in Freud and psychoanalysis.'" There was little nuance for differences in practicing mental well-being. He recalled a lecture on racial and ethnic IQ differences. The lecturer refused to change the subject matter although students would protest every year; he believed hard science was not racist nor ideological. Isaiah related objectivity to the coloniality of knowledge and power, and exemplified the danger of claiming objectivity in the face of deeply ingrained racist ideologies:

They told people of color, black people, enslaved people: 'You are mentally inferior to white people. And that is just *objective, hard science.*' That is so fucked up. And then to see people nowadays say: 'It's just objective science. Like it's not political, it's just neutral.' ... Just such a dark history behind all of that.

All participants questioned this notion of *objectivity*. “What is objectivity? That doesn’t exist,” said Sayed. “I wanted to do my thesis about YouTube comments under racist and anti-racist videos. ... I couldn’t get it accepted because I didn’t highlight a *neutral* side.” Zeina said: “That hyperfocus on objectivity and no emotions does not allow non-Westerners to join the conversation That's another way you're taking my right to join a conversation about knowledge or my own rights.” Another way in which this notion of objectivity disregards the knowledges of people of colour is through the importance ascribed to written knowledges which six participants mentioned. “The holiness of scripture and the written word excludes many cultures,” said Sayed. He continued:

There was once a TED Talk from some British guy, and he said about the way our system is set up: if you went from elementary school to Ph.D., you gradually change into a floating head. You are very much encouraged to stay here [points at head] and little here [points at heart].

Organizing for Decolonising: Decolonization is Not a Metaphor

“I think we see the university and university education as the solution. Now that I'm in the solution and realize: this is the problem,” said Aaliyah. Participants took a *critical stance* in the classroom, sometimes unasked for. When Aaliyah had a class on development, the class looked at her expectantly. Amira too: “I was always looked at like [Amira] probably knows about that. I did. But why can't the teacher just talk about this, you know, who studied it?” She found herself justifying and defending, for example, the Black Panther Party: “‘The U.S. government said it's a terrorist group It was weaponized, it was just the term that was instrumentalized against them.’ I was always this person that had to bring in the other voice and people expected it.” Amira first fit “greatly” in that role, until she realized people don’t

want their opinion changed. Aymen also had to continuously correct and educate people: “The West view the Middle East as a total warzone ... a little place where there's bombs everywhere. ... I'm from the Middle East and North African and Muslim, ... I have to break down those ideologies.”

Participants discovered *decoloniality* later in their studies, often on their own initiative. Selena and Emir established ESOC around 2017 when little attention was paid to D&I. Emir also noticed little political involvement and awareness among students. He and Selena deliberately chose for the Erasmus School of Color as a shadow faculty. “Where people, students, and employees, could come together to express themselves critically,” explained Emir.

In Maastricht, Isaiah joined an initiative called “Decolonize STEM” (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics). He tried talking to teachers and students: “How can we not just diversify but also decolonize in the curriculum?” In her last year at Maastricht, Zeina and her friends started a “Decolonize Education Group” because most research in medicine and psychology was based on “white male participants from very rich countries”. At EUR, Amira wanted to work up a decolonization group but waited until after her thesis was graded because she thought it would be used against her. The program coordinator was receptive when she spoke to him. She joined a group of all-white tutors:

I had to pull out of that ... they didn't want to decolonize the curriculum. They didn't want to put [in] the work to understand that first of all, ... they would have to give up their job, give up their power. Literally destroy the university and build a new system. ... It just showed me again how this was being compromised, a term that was ... being used like diversity and inclusion.

Like Amira and Latifa, Khalil saw decoloniality “walking the same path as diversity”. In Utrecht, Aaliyah sat outside when someone from D&I came to her: “I was sitting there feeling alone and she wanted to take a picture of me and do an interview.” Latifa shared how she received an e-mail which said: “Do you want to join the decolonial working group?”. It said a group would write an application on how to decolonize step-by-step. She thought:

So, you don't understand what decolonization is, because you just think: we're going to take three steps and we're done; we are decolonized. ... how can you start decolonizing if you haven't [finished] the research on the colonial legacy of the [university]. ... Decolonization is not the new ‘diversity and inclusion’.

This quote shows how decolonization is increasingly used as a metaphor as evidenced by the calls to decolonize the university (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Latifa and Khalil attended the annual Decolonial Summer School on their mentor’s advice. Khalil learned a lot, especially in conversation with fellow students, but expressed: “The unfortunate thing about the summer school itself was that ... the form does not match the content. ... it’s still cast in a Western framework.” Another way in which decolonization becomes a metaphor which remains with the white Western university, is through attempts of the university’s co-optation of the term and the decolonization movements. At the beginning of ESOC, Emir and Selena conversed with the diversity officer. Selena remembered: “A question they asked: ‘How are you there for white students?’ The protection of whiteness ... was very prominent That's what the institute is for. The institute is white and is there to protect whiteness.” The university attempted to co-opt ESOC:

With the Black Lives Matter protest, the university issued a statement, that was mainly a moment of proof: we are doing something. ... instead of reflecting on it. They stated to always be in collaboration with the community and ‘community’ linked to the ESOC website. ... We wrote a statement in Erasmus Magazine ‘This very clearly shows the interests of the university in co-opting such projects, such initiatives at such times. ... We were totally unaware of such a thing, [they] didn't ask permission from us at all’.

Isaiah also experienced Decolonize STEM was co-opted. In Rotterdam, he became a representative of ESOC and helped with the establishment of PSR. Amira is a representative of ESOC and PSR: “What I'm doing is not going to go on my LinkedIn [or] on my CV. This is really something that I'm doing because this is how I feel I can help out or how I can raise awareness in my own surroundings.” Sayed is part of multiple activist organizations, the causes vary: refugees, anti-racism, and Palestine. He also talked about educating people: “You plant seeds and those seeds grow Sometimes people pass by, they water it a little.” Latifa elaborated: “You inform each other of certain ideas, you help each other ... But you also try to change things from the inside, even if they are smaller things. And then you start thinking about doing bigger things.” Zeina also tried educating people who don’t know anything about, for example, Palestine and Syria. She said: “We know the problem. We've heard all about it and we've been trying to do anything about it and speak about it. But we also don't have the power and we know the importance and how loud a *white voice* is compared to us.”

Part 5. Activist in Existence: Ethnic Diversity and Activism

The White Voice: White Activism as a Colonial Construct

Participants noticed activism centered around climate change, but often state this is interrelated with decoloniality. Emir said: “I expect that changes will take place in the coming

years that benefit the planet as a whole.” He believed change starts with international solidarity: “People living in third world countries are victims of Western-driven climate politics.” Khalil also said those who are hit the hardest will be people who live outside the West: “You notice that climate change is currently one of the biggest drivers of global migration.” He continued: “Border regimes also adapt to [climate migration]. Border control and all their violence ... is starting to focus more on climate rhetoric to exclude people from those migration patterns.”

Nonetheless, participants noticed activist movements are predominantly white. Emir said: “In left-wing circles I often saw white people at the forefront, also on topics of racism... That also comes from a certain colonialism of ‘I, as a white person, am going to save these people’.” An activist of OccupyEUR expressed to Aaliyah: “Thank you for supporting us”. She laughingly said: “I thought: no, thank *you* for supporting us!” Isaiah said about this that the position of white activists is different from that of people of color:

We have that perspective of how these issues personally affect us and our loved ones, Even though I don't have loved ones in Palestine or in North Africa, I can see myself so much in the struggle against colonialism because that is also my history being from Aruba. But also, my mother's history being in Latin America, which is colonized by the Spaniards and my dad's history, being half Surinamese as well. So, I can really see myself in that struggle for emancipation and for liberation. For me, that is just intuitive.

He expressed a lot of white activists don't always acknowledge in which way to take up space. Sayed believed in “an activism that meets people where they are” and said:

I think in activism, a change can come ... by learning from cultures. I hope activism gets *more soul*. It is now very much a group of people who ... take the streets. And I also get colonial construct vibes, so to say.

On the other hand, people of color needed to take a position of being *low risk*. Khalil's parents were afraid for his safety: "... Of what the police are going to do to me. And I get that. Especially when they see what is happening in other countries." Mehdi generally stuck to low-risk things although he believed: "the most effective way is through the riots, But those are inherently high-risk situations. At the current time being, I can't put myself in that kind of situation. But also, the question is: when can I though?"

Seven participants occupied EUR in 2023. Amira was glad to see there were a lot of white people because "nothing bad is going to happen." A girl from ESOC came up to her: "Amira, stay back because look around. Who are they going to target if something happens?" She explained the people taken out by force were white: "They did that on purpose because they knew that ... the police wouldn't have been as strong in their approach. ... Acknowledging that is really good and then being at the forefront of that type of action."

Activist in Existence: Parental Education

"What is activism?" five participants questioned. Three participants saw activism in their families. Selena grew up in an activist family and participated in anti-war and anti-imperialist demonstrations: "That was very normal for us, so I thought everyone had that too." When Khalil was around nine years old, he saw his aunt being active in the feminist movement in Morocco: "She was a role model for me as a child. I always thought it was really cool that she would go out on the street and scream like that. And then run from the cops." When Amira was around seven years old, her father brought her to protests. She still has the *keffiyeh* from

that time. They stopped going because they would get violent and dangerous: “his activism would come through in other ways: ... the channels that we would watch, the products that we would buy ... To me that wasn't activism. That was just something that my dad did.” As a child, Amira watched Al Jazeera with him. In school, she was shown graphic videos of the Holocaust: “This is a reality that exists right now. Why are we talking about never forget? We are forgetting.” When she started crying her teachers were confused and called her parents. Teachers told her dad not to let her watch that stuff, but he never stopped: “My dad is really proud of being that person. [He] didn't even finish elementary school. ... Even now, years later, I would go back and look at those historical facts or opinions I'm like whoa, [he] really knows what he's talking about without formal education.” Mehdi's father was also engaged in public issues:

My father is ... not a textbook-like activist. ... He hates the West specifically because of the colonialism. He hates capitalism, but he's never going to use those terms because he's not an educated person, school-wise. ... He does it in a very unaware way of doing it. I feel it's quite inspiring. ... *Existing is activism*. As long as we exist, as people who have been racialized and we flourish and we thrive to any extent, we live and we survive through another day, I believe that to be a tremendous achievement for people who have been tried to been put down for so long. Activism also exists in more passive forms like poetry, arts; of having ourselves be more known.

Participants shared a sentiment of being activists in existence. “I'm just a living activist, even though I never asked about to be in that position,” said Aymen. Amira narrated: “I think being who I am, just my identity or my ethnical background, is this ever-present ghost. Every day I leave the house and I'm aware of who I am. I'm aware of the looks, ... of everything.”

Participants also noted other forms of activism. Zeina delved into literature as an *art of resistance*: “Fiction is a very safe place to talk about a lot of issues. ... you can talk more freely ... than in real life.” Isaiah never saw himself as an activist because it was “too radical”. BLM had awoken something in him, and his attention was also drawn by “people bringing attention to colonial relationships between the islands, Suriname, and the Netherlands.” BLM was also an explicit turning point for Amira. She saw the story unfold on Twitter and it reminded her of when she watched Al Jazeera: “Even though I’m watching it through a screen, it’s happening in my backyard. You know how they say: no injustice somewhere is no justice anywhere. ... Why would it stop it from happening here?”

Erasmus School of Color: Radical Love

“Building a community ... is already a form of activism, because it is a form of coming together within the university and beyond in a way the university is not designed for,” said Selena.

It is also much more focused on the care practices that we miss within the university, without leaving the universities as well. We have called it radical love, learning from many others who use that word. So, loving within a context that always uses violence.

“[Students] have really daily interactions with a teacher who uses the n-word for example in a lecture hall and who survive that, what do you do afterwards?” she said. “So, on the one hand theory, but on the other hand everything you miss ... So, we came together, for example with a reading group or just drinking tea together.” A friend of Selena’s, a Ph.D. student, would not have survived the institute without ESOC “which happens to many students of color and especially Ph.D. students”. She explained that through “radical friendship”, ESOC

refuses and minimizes the process of individualization: “[We] look more in the communal, in the collective. We see what kind of things we can create for each other.”

Eight participants were members of ESOC, ten participants followed ESOC on social media. In the beginning, Mehdi and Isaiah felt welcomed but it was a little intimidating. “I feel like they are higher than me. They're very educated people. They're very bad ass ... I feel like a terrible activist near them,” said Mehdi. He made friends and acquaintances. Amira found community and like-minded people. Isaiah also found *like-mindedness* and felt connected: “Just being around those kind of people always makes me just really joyful, you know?” Isaiah was happy to represent ESOC as it was “a platform to help boost other people of color”.

Mehdi said activism helped him mentally. One thing he learned in class is people have festivals and carnivals to let go of tension: “[In] a lot of people of color’s cultures, festivals are very important right now, especially in colonial places like in the Caribbean. It was inherently linked with their identity: fighting against colonialism.” He remembered ESOC meetings vividly and as “acts of defiance”. Aaliyah recently became part of ESOC. She described activism as a community of “healing and grieving”. She said: “we have this anger, and it is legitimate, but how can we express that anger that is more nurturing for us? Can we inspire each other? I know that’s difficult. Everybody is busy, we all have to work and go to school.”

ESOC has always had a special place at the university. As long as we, children of migrants and of colonized countries exist, ... ESOC will be necessary. But I have to say that diversity, decolonization, those topics, are getting a bit snowed under by topics like climate... So, I think it's time for ESOC to put those topics back on the agenda.

- Emir

Conclusion

The analysis reveals participants encountered numerous obstacles in their educational journey: the coloniality of race and racial classification subjected participants to othering and racialization from early education on. In academia, they encountered a lack of diversity in both people and knowledge, perceiving university attendance as Western privilege. There they attempted to change the curriculum but were compromised through Diversity & Inclusion programs. Their experiences with the Eurocentric coloniality of knowledge and power activated their critical thinking and decolonial thinking. Decolonization took form in activist engagement, with ESOC, a shadow faculty of Erasmus University, serving as both a community of care and a platform for critical engagement. Through their stories, the participants demonstrate the transformative power of student activism. They showcase the impact of collective action and how students of color are asserting their agency to challenge the status quo, demand representation, and bring attention to the coloniality of knowledge and power dynamics within academia. By becoming tutors, joining education committees, establishing student-led initiatives, and organizing lectures, they actively resist the marginalization of their identities and create more inclusive learning environments. Moreover, the participants' narratives emphasize the intersectionality of their identities, showing that decolonization efforts must address not only racial biases but also gender, class, and cultural differences. Their experiences underscore the importance of acknowledging the complexities of their identities and experiences to achieve decolonization.

This study offers valuable insights into the experiences of eleven students who have attended Dutch universities, shedding light on the coloniality of knowledge within academic settings. However, several areas warrant further research to deepen our understanding of this critical issue. Firstly, it is crucial to expand the scope of the research to encompass racialized communities in both Western and non-Western societies. Exploring how the coloniality of

knowledge impacts diverse cultural contexts can provide a more comprehensive understanding of its global implications and the various ways it manifests in different educational systems. Furthermore, exploring how international organizations can incorporate decoloniality in development frameworks is essential for fostering equitable practices on a global scale. Understanding how these organizations can challenge colonial legacies and center marginalized voices in their work can contribute to dismantling systemic inequalities and taking significant steps toward promoting critical and decolonial engagement in academia and beyond.

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Appendix A. Informed Consent Form

Information sheet for research: Decolonising Dutch universities: how the coloniality of power and knowledge in academia enables students of colour to engage in decolonizing activities

Under the supervision of Willem Schinkel, Master student Sociology of the Erasmus University Rotterdam: Chaima Abarkan is doing research to complete the master's thesis. This is affiliated to the Erasmus School of Social and Behavioral Sciences. With the help of your participation, this research can be realized.

Why this research?	With this research, student Chaima Abarkan of Erasmus University Rotterdam wants to find out how the coloniality of power and knowledge in academia enables students of colour to engage in decolonizing activities
Course	<p>You participate in research where we will collect information by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interview you and record the conversation via audio recording. A transcript of the interview will be prepared. <p>You consent to me asking about and processing your data related to your racial or ethnic origin and religious or philosophical beliefs.</p>
Confidentiality	We do everything we can to protect your privacy as well as possible. Apart from the student, only the supervisor will have access to the data provided. No confidential information or personal data of or about you will be disclosed in any way that would allow anyone to recognize you. In the survey you will be referred to by a made-up name or number (pseudonym). You can contact the EUR data protection officer (privacy@eur.nl)
Voluntariness	You always have the right to access your data. You have the right to rectify, erase or restrict the processing of their personal data. You don't have to answer questions you don't want to answer. Your participation is voluntary, and you can stop at any time. If you decide to discontinue your cooperation during the research, the data you have already provided will be used in the research until the moment of withdrawal of consent. Do you want to stop this research? Then contact Chaima Abarkan [510307ca@eur.nl]
Data storage	<p>Anonymous data or pseudonyms will be used in the research. The collected data is stored securely.</p> <p>The research data will be kept for a maximum period of 2 years. The data will be deleted after the expiry of this period at the latest.</p>
Submit a question or complaint	If you have specific questions about how your personal data is handled, you can ask Willem Schinkel [schinkel@essb.eur.nl]. You can also submit a complaint to the Dutch Data Protection Authority if you suspect that your data has been processed incorrectly.

By signing this consent form I acknowledge the following [include only those categories that apply]

- | | YES | NO |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 I have been sufficiently informed about the research. I have read the information sheet and then had the opportunity to ask questions. These questions have been answered satisfactorily and I have had sufficient time to decide whether to participate. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 I voluntarily participate in this research. It is clear to me that I can terminate participation in the study at any time without giving any reason. I don't have to answer a question if I don't want to. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

In order to participate in the research, it is also necessary that you give specific permission for various parts.

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3 I consent to the processing of the data collected about me during this research as explained in the attached information sheet. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 I give permission to make audio recordings during the conversation and to elaborate my answers in a transcript. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 I give permission to use my answers for pseudonymized quotes in the reporting of the research. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 You consent to me asking about and processing your data related to your [list special categories of data]" | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name participant:

Name student:

Signature:

Signature:

Date:

Date: