



Between Black and White: The Experiences of Identity Development and Colourism Among
Black-white Biracial Individuals in the Netherlands

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Abstract

This study explored how Black-white biracial individuals, living in the Netherlands developed their identity and experienced colourism. Through ten semi-structured interviews, Black-white participants provided an insight into their experiences. Findings highlight that biracial individuals have a heightened awareness of how they are perceived by others. Their identity development is a fluid process, which changes over time. Most participants firstly developed a Dutch identity, while later on in their life they discovered their Blackness. Being raised in a white environment and having a lighter skin colour, made most participants unaware of their relative privileges regarding colourism. However Black-white biracial individuals also faced exclusion from a Black community, since their Blackness was questioned. As well did they experience verbal assault due to their proximity to whiteness.

Keywords: Blackness, Black-white biracial, Colourism, Consciousness, Dutchness, Identity

Introduction

What does it mean to be biracial in a country that claims not to see race? In the Netherlands, no official statistics exist on the number of biracial individuals. Not because they are absent in Dutch society, but because the Netherlands presents itself as a colourblind society (Wekker, 2016). Therefore it avoids collecting racial data and largely refrains from explicit discussions of race in public discourse and policy (Wekker, 2016; Jones & de Hart, 2020). Following World War II, the Dutch state abandoned racial classification, as it had been instrumental in the deportation of Jews, Roma, Sinti, and Black people (Wekker, 2016). Although, before this tragedy, race was a very common category in the Netherlands (Essed & Trienekens, 2008). So while the term race is largely disregarded in Dutch policymaking, mainstream academic research, and dominant discourse, racialized frameworks have historically shaped Dutch colonial territories and continue to influence contemporary Dutch society (Jones & de Hart, 2020).

Historically, race was created through the logic of racism. During colonial times, European powers developed racial categories to position themselves as inherently superior to colonised populations, framing these populations as the racialised “Other” (Lentin, 2008). They used this distinction to justify their terror and oppression, through slavery and colonialism, on the “Other”. Race is often thought of as a fixed concept, however it is more accurately understood as a fluid and always changing construct, shaped by social meanings and political struggle (Omi & Winant, 2011). Race is defined as: “the concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies” (Omi & Winant, 2011, p.223). It functions as a construct to categorize or distinguish groups of people based on their physical characteristics (Wahab et al., 2020). Race is based on perceived phenotypical differences, however, it lacks biological grounding (Omi & Winant, 2011).

Spanning Du Bois (1903) colour line, Black-white Biracial individuals hold a unique position within and between monoracial groups, challenging the dominant notion of a fixed race. Scholars have argued that their within and between position of biracial individuals, shapes their identity development (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001). However this in-between position may cause internal struggle and create a sense of non-belonging (Norman et al., 2023).

In addition, to the identity development of biracial individuals, they also navigate the effects of colourism. Colourism entails preferential treatment for people with lighter skin tones, often manifesting itself within racial groups (Walker, 1993; Strmic-Pawl et al., 2021). For biracial individuals, particularly those of Black and white descent, colourism presents unique

challenges and experiences. Due to their mixed phenotype, biracial individuals often occupy an intermediate position in the spectrum of skin tones, lighter than monoracial Black individuals but darker than monoracial white individuals. The preferential treatment is showcased by better outcomes for biracial and lighter-skinned Black people (Strmic-Pawl et al., 2021). However, lighter-skinned Black people may also experience negative effects of colourism (Long, 2024).

While the Dutch may avoid explicit discussions of race, the legacy of colourism continues to shape social hierarchies, beauty standards, and opportunities for individuals with varying skin tones. Since race is not discussed, there is little information on the experiences of biracial individuals in the Netherlands. In the US multiple studies have discussed the biracial identity development and their experiences (Harris & Khanna, 2010; Franco et al., 2016; Franco & Holmes, 2017). However, on a macro level, factors such as the nation-state, culture and sociopolitical context intersect to shape how racial identities are formed and how biracial individuals navigate their place within society (Rockquemore et al., 2009). Therefore it is important to understand the Dutch context for biracial individuals. Additionally, most studies on colourism emphasize inter- and intra-colourism, expecting individuals to fit within a racial group (Strmic-Pawl et al., 2021). This monoracial framework, however, fails to account for those who identify as biracial (Strmic-Pawl et al., 2021). Consequently, current studies overlook how colourism may affect biracial individuals negatively. This highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of colourism for biracial individuals.

Therefore this study asks: “How do Black-white biracial individuals develop their identity and perceive and experience colourism in the Netherlands?”

Theoretical framework

This research examines the experiences of colourism for Black-white biracial individuals in the Netherlands. Thus, it is essential to establish a strong understanding of both whiteness and Blackness beforehand.

Whiteness

Whiteness emerged as a system of power, to grant privileges to white people and to justify slavery, colonialism and racial hierarchies. Whiteness has to be emulated culturally, ideologically, economically, and even aesthetically (Hunter, 2007). At the end of the nineteenth century, the Dutch national identity had been constructed around whiteness and Christianity, reinforcing who is included as truly ‘Dutch’ and who is seen as an outsider (Wekker, 2016). Dutch travellers and colonizers were prone to comment on skin colour, “Othering” people in the

colonies, justifying their privileges (Wekker, 2016). This whiteness is obtained through the physical and emotional violence directed at the Other (Owen, 2007). It is a social construct which functions mostly as an exclusive category, whereas boundaries are maintained through purity rules (Stam, 2021). However, whiteness has historically also been flexible and expandable (Withers, 2017). It expands when it helps to maintain the racial hierarchy.

Whiteness is perceived as the neutral and unmarked norm, unlike other racialized identities which are marked and perceived as problematic (Wekker, 2016; Stam, 2021). Enhancing the default of whiteness showcases that it is invisible for whites, although it is highly visible for people of colour (Owen, 2007). Owen (2007) argues that the difference in visibility signifies the cultural domination and hegemony of whiteness. Despite presenting itself as a colour blind society whiteness remains central to Dutch identity and national belonging (Wekker, 2016). Dutch policies reinforce whiteness as the norm, with categories such as Western vs non-Western migration background serving as racialized distinctions that determine who is accepted as Dutch (Wekker, 2016). Dutchness is thus not just about citizenship but about cultural and racial conformity, which makes it impossible to be considered "Dutch" if phenotypically you are not white. Although whiteness is distinguished merely from skin colour, it remains embodied, emphasizing that certain physical appearances reinforce racialization (Owen, 2007).

In the Netherlands, whiteness generates advantageous positions for those who belong to this racialized group (Wekker, 2016). It creates economic, political, social and cultural advantages for those racialized as white (Owen, 2007). The persistence of this racialized national identity makes it difficult for individuals of colour, including biracial people, to be fully accepted as Dutch, despite their cultural assimilation or legal citizenship (Essed & Trienekens, 2008; Wekker, 2016).

Blackness

Blackness like whiteness is a social construct designed to uphold racial hierarchies, which emerged from colonialism and slavery (Fishkin, 1995). Blackness is constructed as the Other, defined in opposition to whiteness, who dictate what is considered Black (Nguyen & Anthony, 2014). While whiteness is perceived as invisible and not seen as an identity, but rather as the norm. Blackness is framed as a social identity and a lived experience (Khoza, 2021). Those who are racialized as Black are shaped by racism, identity struggles and belonging. In the American context, the Black individual is caught between being both Black and American in a society that sees these identities as oppositional. According to Du Bois (1903), Black people are

constantly aware of how they see themselves and how they are seen through the eyes of white society. This dual awareness leads to a sense of “two-ness”. A similar dynamic can be seen in the Dutch context, where the dominant perception of Dutchness is often equated with whiteness

In the Dutch context and for this study, blackness includes people of afro-Surinamese, Black-Antillean and sub-Sahara African backgrounds. This shared categorization is shaped by the history of slavery and colonialism, through which approximately 12.5 million African people were forcibly enslaved and brought to colonies such as Suriname and the Antilles overseas (Slaves Voyage, nd). An African background connotes people from sub-Saharan Africa. Since people from for example Morrocco do not (self)-identify as African, which reveals the strong conflation of African actually meaning sub-Saharan Africa equalling Black (Witte, 2019). While the history of Suriname, Antilles and Africa are partly linked, the perception of African identity has transformed (Witte, 2019). In the past many Afro-Surinamese and Black-Antillean people distanced themselves from African peers, due to cultural differences. However, nowadays there has been a rise of people who now claim their African identity (Witte, 2019).

As discussed earlier, to be perceived as fully Dutch, one needs to have a white skin colour. So despite differences in self-identification and background, Dutch society racializes all people with a Black phenotype as Black (Witte, 2019). Due to their shared experiences of racism, the Blackness creates a shared identity that unites them. However, their cultural, historical and socio-economic realities differ which shapes how they experience their identity, racism and social mobility in the Netherlands (Witte, 2019). Underpinning, that Black should not be seen as a monolithic group (Harris & Khanna, 2010). Additionally, intra-Black racism exists, as racial hierarchies persist within Black communities. For example, Witte (2019) describes how Ghanaian Dutch youth face racism from Surinamese peers, who use derogatory slurs towards them.

Black-white Biracial

This study will interview Black-white biracial individuals who live in the Netherlands. However, there are no Dutch studies discussing Black-white biracial individuals in this context. Therefore the current section draws information from studies of the U.S. and UK.

To identify as a Black-white biracial individual, this study uses the definition of Franco and Holmes (2017): “individuals who identify as such and are of Black and White racial heritage” (p. 436). The present study therefore requires individuals to have one parent who is racialized as white and the other parent to be racialized as Black. The term "Biracial" instead of

"Multiracial" is used to provide increased specificity regarding racial heritage (Franco & Holmes, 2017).

Black-white biracial individuals, who live in a predominantly white society, are often racialized as Black, due to their skin colour (Franco & Holmes, 2017). However, biracial people are known to have a variety of racial identities and experience different racial dynamics depending on their environment (Rockquemore et al., 2009; Spratt, 2024). Additionally, biracial individuals may shift their racial identity multiple times during their life. They are four times more likely to shift their racial identification than monoracial individuals (Wilton et al., 2013). The racial identification of biracial individuals is influenced by physical appearance, societal perception, experiences of discrimination and acceptance of racial ingroup (Wilton et al., 2013). Black-white biracial people have to navigate both their racial backgrounds and adapt their identities to public and private settings (Harris & Khanna, 2010). Demonstrating that racial identification is not a static process, but rather fluid and affected by situational factors (Wilton et al., 2013).

Racial invalidation has been found to be a very stressful racial experience for biracial people (Franco et al., 2016). This invalidation occurs when a person is placed in a racial category that does not align with their self-identification. Black-white biracial individuals are more often misidentified than other racial heritages, due to societal perceptions, which pressure them to align with their Black identity and reinforce racial hierarchies (Franco et al., 2016). This closely parallels the historical remnants of slavery, where individuals' identities were often treated as possessions or commodities (Williams & Ware, 2019). Du Bois's (1903) concept of double consciousness emphasizes the internal struggle of holding multiple identities that are difficult to reconcile. While it discusses Black people living in a white-dominant environment, it may have implications for people with a biracial identity. Black-white biracial individuals may also experience a form of double consciousness, navigating between two identities in a society that questions their belonging.

Black-white biracial individuals may experience rejection from monoracial Blacks due to their ambiguous appearance, their behaviour, cultural practices or when they identify with their white racial group (Franco & Holmes, 2017). Therefore the allegiances of Black-white biracial individuals towards the black community is questioned when they notice white privilege. On the contrary Black-white biracial people are often racialized as Black in a white society. This positioning may contribute to a sense of non-belonging, as they belong to multiple groups while simultaneously are being perceived as not a true member of the racial group (Norman et al.,

2023). Their unique position places them in a grey area, viewed as too Black according to monoracial whites, and too white according to monoracial Blacks (Harris & Khana, 2010; Williams & Ware, 2019).

While the Netherlands does not produce data on mixed or biracial individuals, it does track interracial marriages, they are seen as an indicator of the successful integration of ‘non-Dutch’ people into Dutch society (Jones & de Hart, 2020). A relatively high percentage of Surinamese and Antillean individuals marry a white Dutch partner (Jones & de Hart, 2020). Miscegenation has increasingly been accepted, which makes it likely that there will be an increase in biracial children in the Netherlands (Essed & Trienekens, 2008; Farley, 2018). However, due to the Dutch reluctance to deal with race, it seems unlikely that in the near future, a “biracial” distinction will be accepted. Especially since a country such as the U.S., which has acknowledged race for a long time. But only allowed multiple races to be selected on their official census, since the year 2000 (Ingram et al., 2003). Through the perception of Dutchness, most Black-white biracial individuals are racialized as Black and thus therefore put in stressful situations. They often have to prove their belonging in white Dutch society since they are framed as not really Dutch (Witte, 2019; Jones & de Hart, 2020).

Colourism

Race has been known to influence a person’s outcomes in social domains. Besides race, skin colour plays a significant role in these outcomes (Long, 2024). The role someone's skin colour can play is referred to as colourism, it focuses on the colour of the skin more specifically than racial or ethnic identity (Hunter, 2007). Colourism can be described as an extension of racism creating hierarchies within a racial group, it used to be defined as: “the prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their colour” (Walker, 1983, p.3).

However, contemporary understandings of colourism extend beyond skin colour to include physical features, behaviour, and cultural performance (Hunter, 2007; Dixon & Telles, 2017). Although colourism originally emerged from colonial systems and slavery, which explicitly privileged lighter skin over darker skin, scholars have increasingly demonstrated that it also operates through broader indicators of proximity to whiteness. This includes the valorisation of Eurocentric beauty standards (e.g. straight hair, light eyes and narrow nose) (Hunter, 2007). Moreover, individuals who embody whiteness not only aesthetically, but also culturally, ideologically, and economically, often receive greater social acceptance and access to resources (Hunter, 2007). In this instance, colourism functions as a system that rewards those

who emulate whiteness across multiple domains. Importantly, colourism operates both within racialized groups and between racialized groups (Strmic-Pawl et al., 2021).

Historical origins of colourism

The modern application of colourism solidified during slavery and colonial times, when the notion of whiteness spread globally, associating lighter skin with a higher social, political and economic status, as well as the opportunity for upward mobility (Strmic-Pawl et al., 2021). Slaveholders distinguished among enslaved Black people based on skin colour: darker-skinned Black individuals were assigned hard physical labour on the plantation, while lighter-skinned Black people worked around the house, which was perceived as lighter work (Hunter, 2012). This distinction created a hierarchical system between enslaved people (Hunter, 2012). However, the privileges were not without cost, lighter-skinned enslaved people were seen as commodities, perceived as more attractive which let them often to be the victim of sexual terror (Long, 2024).

The sexual exploitation of all Black women by white men resulted in a lot of biracial children with a lighter skin colour. These biracial children at times received some preferential treatment, such as the opportunity to attain education and access to personal and material belongings, although, they were still racialized as Black (Perry, 2014; Mathews & Johnson, 2015; Spratt, 2024). This showed interracial colourism, where whites prioritize biracial people with a lighter skin colour, who are still racialized as Black (Strmic-Pawl et al., 2021). Such dynamics were also evident in Suriname, a former Dutch colony, where 0.5% of the Black population was free compared to 57% of the multiracial population (Jones & de Hart, 2020). The duality of privilege and exploitation shapes how biracial individuals perceive their place within colour-based hierarchies.

Once slavery officially ended in 1865 in the US, the formal status distinction between enslaved and free Black individuals disappeared (Dixon & Telles, 2017). However, lighter-skinned Black people attempted to maintain their relative privileges through social closure practices such as colour homogamy, the blue vein or the paper bag test, which controlled access to social spaces, churches, business organizations and schools (Dixon & Telles, 2017). Despite these internal privileges, light-skinned Black individuals who could not pass as white still faced segregation and systemic discrimination under Jim Crow laws due to the one-drop rule (Dixon & Telles, 2017). The legacy of colourism within American Black communities survives to this day, as will be described in the following section.

Intra-colourism

Intra-colourism entails preferential treatment within the Black community for lighter-skinned people (Strmic-Pawl et al., 2021). Intra-colourism has been observed within families, among peers and in romantic relationships. Families have been found to play a crucial role in colour socialization and perpetuating colourism in other generations through their behaviours and remarks (Phoenix & Craddock, 2025). Family members modelled colourist practices by denigrating darker skin and using skin-lightening products. Especially maternal colourism affects the perception of beauty and romantic relationship choices. Therefore Black-white biracial individuals, who usually have lighter skin, are privileged.

Contemporary iterations have shown that people with lighter skin have better outcomes in areas such as education, income, health and criminal justice (Dixon & Telles, 2017; Strmic-Pawl et al., 2021). This is in line with Hunter (2007) emphasizing that lighter-skinned Black people earn more money, live in better neighbourhoods, complete more years of education and marry higher-status people than darker-skinned Black people. However, these outcomes portray colourism as only a disadvantage for darker-skinned people, by minimizing the experience of colourism for lighter-skinned or biracial people (Long, 2024).

Both Black-white biracial men and women are perceived as more attractive than Black monoracial individuals since they have some Eurocentric phenotypical features (Dixon & Telles, 2017). However, this perceived attractiveness often leads to fetishization, as they are seen as ‘exotic’ (Newman, 2019). Black-white biracial women are perceived as more feminine compared to Black women, while Black-white biracial men often struggle with their masculinity (Newman, 2019). The struggle of Black-white biracial men entails: “the juxtaposition of a superior civilised, rational, intelligent white male masculinity against an inferior, primitive and impulsive lack male masculinity”, which puts them in a precarious position (Newman, 2019, p. 108).

Most studies emphasize the privileges lighter-skinned Black individuals obtain from inter- and intra-colourist practices. However, studies on intra-racial colourism fail to consider the challenging experiences for lighter-skinned Black people. Long (2024) emphasized that light-skin privilege is more noticeable in spaces where white people systematically hold power. However, in a predominantly Black environment, the power dynamics can shift in ways that disadvantage lighter-skinned Black people. This study found that light-skinned Black women experienced intra-colourism through blatant and covered forms of aggression. In this case a lighter skin, made them targets for violence or verbal assault, as well did they experience intra-

racial exclusion (Long, 2024). Besides lighter Black-skinned people, studies lack insights on individuals who identify as biracial and belong to multiple groups, while also overlooking the complexities of defining what constitutes being 'within' a racial group (Strmic-Pawl et al., 2021).

Methods

Participants and recruitment

This study explored the identity development of Black-white individuals, living in the Netherlands, and their experiences and perception of colourism. The study conducted 10 semi-structured interviews, each of which took approximately 60 minutes. The participants were between 21 and 28 years old, 8 participants identified as female and 2 participants identified as male (Table 1). All participants identified as Black-white biracial, since they had one Black parent and one white parent. The participants were recruited through a convenience sample, drawn from the researcher's personal network, using WhatsApp or Instagram. Subsequent participants were recruited through snowball sampling, where initial interviewees were asked to refer others who meet the criteria (i.e. identifying as Black-white biracial). All participants received the informed consent form beforehand, outlining the purpose, procedure and ethical considerations of the study and emphasising that they were able to withdraw from the study without any consequences.

The semi-structured interviews balanced flexibility and structure, which allowed participants to describe their experiences in their own words and emphasizing what they find important while ensuring certain topics such as whiteness, blackness, inter- and intra-colourism or exclusion were addressed (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Additionally, the approach helped to understand the social environment of the participants, which influenced their development as well as their experiences and perceptions of colourism (Rockquemore et al., 2009; Harris, 2018). Due to time restrictions and personal preferences of the participants four interviews were conducted in person, while six other interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams. The interviewee was asked for consent to record their voice during the interview. It was recorded via the Dictaphone app on the researcher's iPhone or via Microsoft Teams.

Table 1***Participant Demographic Characteristics***

Pseudonym	Gender	Race Mother	Race Father	Raised by	Self-identified skin colour	Raised in ... environment
Terrance	Male	White-Dutch	Black-African ¹	Both parents	Light-skin	White
Zoë	Female	White-Dutch	Black-Surinamese	Both parents	Light/Brown-skin	White
Lola	Female	Black-Surinamese	White-Dutch	Both parents	Light-skin	White
Maan	Female	White-Dutch	Black-African	Both parents	Light skin	White
Naomi	Female	White-Dutch	Black-Surinamese	Mother	Brown-skin	White
Tess	Female	Black-Antillean	White-Antillean	Father	Brown-skin	White
Malou	Female	White-Dutch	Black-African	Both parents	Brown-skin	Mixed
Bas	Male	Black-African	White-Dutch	Both parents	Light-skin	White
Elodie	Female	Black-African	White-Dutch	Both parents	Brown-skin	White
Sara	Female	White-Dutch	Black-African	Mother	Light-skin	White

Analysis

The transcriptions of the interviews were analysed in NVivo, using a phenomenological and thematic approach. The phenomenological approach helped to examine the essence of lived experiences, which is particularly necessary to understand the identity development of biracial individuals. As well, did it create a greater understanding of participants experiences with colourism (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). This approach was inherently inductive, meaning that the analysis was shaped by the participants' accounts rather than pre-existing theories or frameworks. An inductive method was important because existing research on colourism has predominantly focused on monoracial groups, often overlooking the unique experiences of biracial individuals (Strmic-Pawl et al., 2021). Moreover, since the identity development of biracial individuals in the Netherlands has not yet been studied,

¹ Due to the Netherlands' colonial history, a significant portion of the population has a Surinamese or Antillean identity. As such, using these descriptors still allows for sufficient anonymity of participants from these backgrounds. However, for participants of African descent, a broader label, 'African', is used to protect their anonymity. While it is important to acknowledge that the African continent is highly diverse and cannot be treated as a monolith, this generalisation is used solely for confidentiality purposes within the context of this study.

allowing themes to emerge from the data itself was essential to capture these underexplored perspectives. This ensured that the findings remained grounded in the perspectives and experiences of Black-white biracial participants, rather than being constrained by existing frameworks that may not reflect their realities. The thematic analysis provided a descriptive method, that allowed for the identification of overarching themes in how biracial individuals discuss their identity development and experiences with colourism (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). This approach enabled a bottom-up process, building themes and categories which emerged directly from the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

To identify the overarching themes and experiences, the data was first subjected to open coding. The transcripts were examined to identify key concepts, patterns, and recurring ideas. In the first round of coding, the codes stuck closely to the data, to capture what happened in those segments (Belgrave & Seide, 2019). This ensured that participants' perspectives were represented authentically and that their voices were not overshadowed by the researcher's interpretations. The second phase entailed axial coding, in which relationships between initial codes were examined and grouped into broader (sub)categories. This allowed for a structured understanding of how different concepts were connected and contributed to larger patterns (Belgrave & Seide, 2019). Lastly, selective coding was used to identify the main themes that emerged from the data. They highlighted the shared experiences and meaning that emerged across participants' narratives.

Positionality

Recognizing that qualitative research is a collaborative process between researchers and participants, it is essential to address the researchers' positionality to ensure transparency and enhance the interpretation of findings (Phoenix & Craddock, 2025). The author of this study identifies as a woman with a Black-white biracial identity, who was raised in the Netherlands, in a predominantly white environment. This shared identity provided a cultural insight and contextual sensitivity, which allowed to build rapport with participants and better understand the nuanced experiences being described. The insider perspective offered a unique lens through which to interpret the complexities of identity development and colourism. The researcher acknowledges that her biracial identity and personal experiences may shape the interpretation and analysis of the data. To mitigate this, the author practiced reflexivity by writing memos to continuously reflect on her positionality and its potential impact (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Findings

To understand how Black-white biracial individuals navigate their racial identity, participants were asked about their perceptions of whiteness and Blackness. These perceptions varied, ranging from seeing it merely as a skin colour to understanding it as a set of cultural norms and social behaviour:

I think it has a lot to do with culture. But also with norms and values. (Tess)

Yes, white is just a skin colour. (Elodie)

It's a bit of both, I think. You still have, for example, if you have a culture, there are still certain things you do or don't do. So I do think that if you are white that... you kind of behave white. (Zoë)

This demonstrates that Black-white biracial individuals have a diverse and complex understanding of whiteness and Blackness, which also influences their own racial identity.

Whiteness as the norm

Whiteness was consistently described as the dominant norm within Dutch society. Lola described whiteness as the norm of Dutch society: “I think being white really still is the norm, but that we are kind of slowly growing more towards [more mixed society]. But I definitely think that white is still the norm.” This aligns with several studies emphasizing whiteness as the unmarked norm and invisible standard in Dutch society (Wekker, 2016; Stam, 2021). The fact that participants recognized whiteness as the societal norm illustrates that whiteness is visible to people of colour. This visibility reflects the dominance and cultural hegemony of whiteness within Dutch society (Owen, 2007). This domination and unmarked norm was clearly visible, while describing a Dutch person. Nine out of ten participants described a Dutch person as white. So did Zoë describe a Dutch person as: “If I’m talking about a Dutch person, I’m thinking of... I mean just a white person with blond hair.” or “Yes, just blond and blue or brown eyes, and just white.” (Bas). However, these descriptions contradicts interviewees’ answers when discussing their own identity. The participants all describe themselves as Dutch:

I would call myself just Dutch, you know ... I don’t know, I do not feel a [African] person necessarily. (Elodie)

But I was raised so Dutch (...), I can't imagine being different than Dutch. (Maan)

Because I know so much about the Dutch culture and since I’m so Dutch, you know. Who I am as a person, I see myself just like that [Dutch]. (Naomi).

This contradiction highlights the tension of Black-white biracial individuals, where they struggle to belong to a racial group, whereas at the same time it accentuates again the unconditional norm of being white in the Netherlands (Norman et al., 2023; Wekker, 2016). Importantly, the Dutch language offers limited terms to describe ethnicity or racial categories. Therefore, when participants refer to being “Dutch” it may function as a stand-in for both whiteness and nationality.

Blackness as lived experiences

Blackness is constructed as a social identity and shaped by lived experience such as racism, sense of belonging and identity struggles (Khoza, 2021). Eight of the participants described racist experiences they encountered, often starting at primary or high school.

They called me the N-word the whole day. (Sara)

I got bullied solely because of my skin colour. (Bas)

Yeah, just things as racism, often being stopped by the police or not allowed to enter a club. Just the basic things. (Terrance)

Terrance describing his experiences as ‘basic’ confirms that Black-white biracial individuals living in the Netherlands experience racism often and are racialised as Black. According to Witte (2019) do these shared experiences create a sense of unity among people racialized as Black. This was supported by multiple participants describing a sense of connection with other Black people:

I think cause they just know how life is. (Tess)

Then I think, oh fun! And I do notice immediately that you have a kind of bond with someone. Because in one way or another you do have similarities and things that you both experience. (Maan)

This sense of connection arises from shared experiences of racism, which often requires no explanation, as they are commonly understood and mutually recognized within the Black community.

Biracial consciousness

Du Bois’ (1903) concept of double consciousness, is an important lens to understand the Black-white biracial experience. This framework highlights the internal conflict Black-white individuals have, who view themselves through multiple lenses: their own, that of the white

majority and that of the Black community. People with a Black-white identity are uniquely aware of how they straddle on the colour line, navigating between two (or more) racial worlds (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001).

White majority lens

Rather than being seen as both, Black and white, which is how participants identified themselves, they described being perceived primarily through a lens of Blackness in the Netherlands. As Tess remarked: “I think In the eyes of white People I'm just black” or “I am not seen as mixed by the white Dutch people, they just see a black person in front of them” (Malou). These accounts illustrate the dynamics of double consciousness, wherein biracial individuals become acutely aware of how they are perceived through the eyes of the white majority. Despite their dual identity, they are racialised as monoracially Black. This reflects the underlying assumption that whiteness is equated with Dutchness (Wekker, 2016). This binary perception reinforces the notion that anyone who is not white is automatically categorized as Black, leaving no space for mixed or nuanced identities.

Black community lens

The second dimension of this concept explores the views of Black-white biracial people through the eyes of black communities. Participants recalled being perceived as white, when visiting an African country:

I was always called white, you have a curse word there for white, so I did experience that all the time. (Bas)

My dad is from an African country and everyone there is black, like dark, not very dark, but real dark and I'm métis, so a half-blood. So you can see that I'm lighter, so there I'm not black. There they are more likely to call me white. (Terrance).

This shows that Black-white biracial individuals are also perceived as not Black in a more Black environment. However, in many Latin American and African countries, mixed raced categories such as métis are socially recognised (Telles & Paschel, 2014). Which is in contrast to the hypodescent rule of the U.S. arguing that everyone with just one drop of Black ‘in them’ is Black, which seems to be also evident in the Netherlands (Telles & Paschel, 2014; Witte, 2019).

Self-identification

All participants identified as being Black-white biracial, acknowledging to have one white parent and one Black parent. However, they had different ‘degrees’ of biracialness, so did

Elodie say: “So, I wouldn’t call myself fully biracial. But for me it is... for example I would say I’m at least 1/8th biracial.”. While Sara on the other hand does not like to talk in parts, she mentions: “I never say half-half... I don’t know, that just doesn't sit very well, because half-half, no you are both, you’re not half.” These quotes describe the variety of identification possibilities, emphasizing that everyone identifies differently, which is often the result of racial experiences and social environment (Rockquemore et al., 2009; Spratt, 2024). Elodie for example, reported never having experienced any racism or discrimination: “I Think that we are actually very lucky that we just never had, at least that we just never suffered from the fact that... that we would be discriminated against or that there would be racism.” Which is contrary to Saras experience who did experience racism, as quoted above: “Yes a lot of people called me the N-word the whole day.” or where she had an experience with a teacher who made it clear that he did not like foreigners, while she was the only person of colour in the class. These contrasting experiences illustrate how racial identification is shaped. Biracial people can identify more towards Blackness, if they experience more racism and discrimination (Clayton, 2020). Saras exposure to racism reinforced her awareness of being seen as different by white Dutch society, aligning with the concept of double consciousness. Elodie, on the other hand, did not report these experiences, which might influence her racial self-perception. Without the lived experience of exclusion, her sense of “difference” from the white majority is diminished, potentially reducing the internal tension that characterizes double consciousness (Harris, 2018).

However participants argue that their biracial identity has lately been more validated. This growing recognition appears common among those living in a white social context, which is in line with the social environment of the participants (Franco et al., 2016). At least five participants noticed that their biracial identity was accepted, Bas said: “Lately, I notice that more people accept my answer [being biracial]”, which is in line with Naomi’s view: “I think that people got used or at least are getting used to the idea of, you can be mixed with everything on this earth.” These reflections indicate a cultural shift in the Netherlands, where biracial identities are gradually becoming more normalised. This resonates with a broader global shift in the U.S. for example where people were allowed to identify with multiple races on their census as of 2000 (Ingram et al., 2003).

Identity development

Developing a Dutch identity

The gradual recognition of a biracial identity provides important context for understanding how individuals begin to shape their own sense of self. All participants identified

themselves as Dutch, since they were raised in the Netherlands. Csizmadia & White (2019) found that Black-white biracial youth, growing up in a predominantly white neighbourhood are more likely to identify towards whiteness. In this study, 90% of the participants grew up in a white dominated environment, they described their environment as:

Normal, yes well um not necessarily normal. I grew up in [hometown] and it was pretty um... the people around me, well a white environment. (Zoë)

It's a white environment. Yes, it's [city] of course, which is known for the white environment. And I also went to quite a white school, with high educated parents. (Tess).

Although most participants grew up in similar environments, they differed in how much they related to their Black or white identity. As Clayton (2020) argues, the extent of identification towards whiteness and Blackness depends on social factors such as: region, neighbourhood, gender, socioeconomic status, family socialization, experiences with racism, and reflected appraisal.

Language emerged as a significant factor in participants' sense of belonging to Dutchness. Eid and Parker (2023) emphasize that for biracial individuals, language plays an important role in shaping identity and facilitating social inclusion. This is in line with the findings from the interviews. Participants argued that they spoke 'correctly' Dutch. Using participants own words, 'correctly' meant General Civilised Dutch (i.e. white Dutch). Being able to speak 'correctly' Dutch, helped them to be perceived as Dutch or at least their biracial status was acknowledged.

Once I start talking people think: 'oh you can speak Dutch'. So they won't think you must be a foreigner or something. (Elodie)

I think I am perceived as Dutch due to the way I behave. If you grow up in Rotterdam South and you're also super dark and you don't speak very good Dutch. Because you're just born where you don't have the opportunities to go to a very good school for example. Yes, I think that's where the difference is, that I really had the privilege of going to a good school and learn good Dutch. (Tess)

These narratives illustrate how language and behaviour act as markers of cultural belonging, which validates biracial individuals identity towards Dutchness (Wekker, 2016).

Since most participants grew up in a white environment in the Netherlands, they identified more toward whiteness. Still, Their double consciousness made them aware that they were perceived as different. Interestingly, participants did not mention skin colour as the main

marker of difference. Instead, hair emerged as a more salient feature. Harvey et al. (2005) found that students who live in a preliminary white context give lower importance towards their skin tone. Elodie mentioned: “No, I never really dealt with my skin colour being different actually. I think I always have been more concerned with my hair than necessarily with my colour.” Which is in line with six other participants, all female, who recalled adapting their hair in primary or high school, to not stand out by their white peers. Elodie explained how she adapted her hair:

So we used to straighten our hair with relaxer (chemical straightening crème). Our mother just straightened it for a very long time because that's what we wanted. Since we wanted to fit in a little bit. Because everybody had straight hair. So we kept it straight for a long time too.

Sara did not straighten her hair, but adapted differently: “I thought okay, I just brush it out, just like all my [white] girlfriends and everybody else. This way my hair looks the most like theirs.” These forms of adaptation reflect how Black-white biracial women often conform to white standards in order to be accepted or succeed in a predominantly white environment. As bell hooks (1989) argues: “straightened hair is linked historically and currently to a system of racial domination that impresses upon black people, and especially black women, that we are not acceptable as we are, that we are not beautiful.” (p.5). When surrounded with Black people, Black women are less likely to adapt their hair, however when they live in a predominantly white environment, they will adapt towards the white norm (hooks, 1989). This helps to explain why participants modified their hair at a young age to blend in. As they grew older and gained access to social media, they were able to get more information about their hair and see their hair being represented. This exposure helped them to appreciate their natural hair. Maan describes her happiness about her hair: “Now, I’m so happy with my curls! Hallelujah that I don’t have straight hair, like everyone else.” Her reaction is line with all participants who now proudly wear their natural hair, instead of conforming towards white norms. The acceptance of one’s hair later on, emphasizes how identity forms and changes overtime.

Discovering their Blackness

Participants leaning more towards whiteness can also be explained due to parental choices in the racial socialization process. At least six participants were not taught about their Black side, by their parents. The Black parent sometimes had to integrate in the Netherlands, therefore had no time to teach their children about their Black culture. As well, did parents want to protect their children, from discrimination and racism by raising them colour blind. Or the participant was only raised by their white parent. Naomi reflected on growing up with a white

mother: “So I didn’t really get taught anything about Blackness”. Maan shared a similar experience, describing how her Black father prioritized integration over cultural transmission

He was so busy with himself at the time, to become a Dutch citizen, he was also very much into that Dutch culture. So he only talked Dutch with me and [little brother] too and he just adapted so much to everything. So he left that whole [Black] culture, he just left it there. (Maan)

These examples show how family shapes the racial socialization of biracial children, often leading to a weakened sense of connection to their Black identity. The lack of exposure to Black culture and community in early life contributed to a stronger identification with whiteness, at least initially (Clayton, 2020).

However, 80% of all participants wished they had more Blackness ‘in them’. Participants felt that they had a missing part, which they wanted to discover more. So did Bas say: “I’m of course quite Dutch, so I do notice that sometimes I do miss my [Black] identity. The way people behave there and that sort of things.” In response to this sense of absence, participants actively sought ways to reconnect with their Blackness. However, participants mention that the inability to speak the language of their Black parent, hinders their ability to form a meaningful Black identity or feel a sense of belonging (Eid & Parker, 2023). Tess described how she reclaims her Blackness:

Yes, I am also looking for that [Black] part. I am doing a course to learn Papiamentu. So I want to get that part back, because it feels a bit like that part has been taken away from me.

For others, hair emerged as an important factor to discover their Blackness:

Yes I just feel a bit less Dutch or so. Yeah, I feel more international if I have braids. (Elodie)

It might sound crazy, but I have it with hair. Because I think hair, yes that is culture. If I wear braids then I feel more that [Black] side. (Zoë).

As well were food and music found as important contributors to finding ones Black identity, Lola discovered her Blackness by: “Wearing more braids, and cooking Surinamese food, this I really picked up last year.” Or Maan: “Well, I notice that I now really lean more towards afro music and now I’m starting to embrace my roots a bit more.” Food and music are considered as important aspects of the Black identity (Harris & Khanna, 2010). These examples illustrate how biracial individuals navigate the process of discovering their Blackness, and reshaping their

identity over time. This highlights that identity development is not a linear process, but rather a fluid process, shaped by changing contexts and personal agency (Wilton et al., 2013).

Importantly, biracial individuals often begin to explore and identify more strongly with their Blackness later in life, a process that is frequently prompted by increased experiences of racism and exclusion (Clayton, 2020).

Colourism

Unfamiliar with colourism

Participants were asked to self-identify their skin colour. Some described themselves light-skinned, while others identified as more brown-skinned, however, none referred to themselves as dark-skinned. Despite these distinctions, 70% of the participants were not familiar with the term colourism. As well did they not experience or recognize colourism in their personal life. When asked directly about their experiences with colourism they responded:

Oh I don't know if I actually... myself. I don't think so actually. No, I can't remember a moment right now. No, I can't think of a moment where I actually kind of experienced it live. (Bas)

No, I actually haven't really heard of it to be honest. (Zoë)

These responses reflect a dominant societal discourse in the Netherlands, which presents itself as a colourblind country, emphasizing that it does not see colour, and treats everyone equally (Wekker, 2016). However, this ideology makes it difficult to recognize nuanced differences of discrimination (Plaut et al., 2018). Being socialized from a young age, to not see colour, hinders participants' ability to notice colourism. In addition, the lack of developed scholarly discourse on colourism within the Dutch academic context, contributes to its limited visibility and understanding in both public and research domains.

Privilege experiences

The unfamiliarity of colourism may be explained by the relative privileges Black-white biracial people hold compared to darker-skinned people living in the Netherlands. Several studies emphasized better outcomes for lighter-skinned Black people and preferential treatment towards lighter-skin people in a predominantly white environment (Dixon & Telles, 2017; Strmic-Pawl et al., 2021; Long, 2024). As discussed earlier, participants described how their Dutchness was often recognized and validated by white individuals. This form of acceptance may signal to inter-colourist privilege, advantages given within communities of colour based on proximity to whiteness (Strmic-Pawl et al., 2021). However, most participants were unaware of

their privilege, illustrating how innocence is often intertwined with privilege (Wekker, 2016). This lack of awareness helps to explain why colourism has remained largely invisible and unrecognizable for most participants.

Although, after taking some time to reflect, most participants were able to provide examples of colourism. However, their recognition tended to focus on obvious and overt forms of colourism, whereas the subtle forms were often missed. Participants recognized privilege due to their skin colour mostly in predominantly Black countries:

In [African country], the lighter you are, the faster you are being helped. So if you are at the back of the queue, then you are immediately pushed to the front of the queue, it doesn't matter how early or late you arrive. So what my sister [dark-skinned] often did when she had an appointment somewhere, she would always ask me [brown-skinned] to come along. I knew that if I went along, then she would be helped immediately. (Malou)

You're just kind of treated like a patron [boss]. So for example, if you're at the airport, you're helped quicker because they think you're rich. If you go to the market, you are addressed very often because they think you are rich. (Terrance)

These examples demonstrate that although participants may not recognize colourism in their daily life in the Netherlands, their experiences abroad reveal how skin colour shapes their social experiences, which is often linked to whiteness and privilege.

Only Malou, Sara and Tess were familiar with the concept colourism in the Dutch context and able to articulate how it shaped their daily experiences. Interestingly, they surround themselves nowadays with more Black peers. In contrary to the others, who mostly have white friends. This suggests that intragroup dialogue may heighten awareness of how colour-based privilege operates within communities of colour (Twine, 2004). Malou, Sara and Tess were able to give clear examples of their privileges because of their lighter skin colour in the Netherlands:

Yes I notice it especially at parties, when you go out. It's real. It just that people approach you much more often. (Sara)

If I'm in the Netherlands and having a drink, they approach me first to order, instead of my darker-skinned friends. (Malou)

For example, people start talking more quickly to me than to her [dark-skin sibling]. They [white people] make more eye contact with me than her. Or when you go partying, more people dance with me than with her." (Malou).

These subtle examples highlight inter-colourist practices, favouring those with a closer proximity to whiteness in a white society. Colourism is often taught within families, which is in line with Malou's experience, she was made aware from a young age that she received better treatment than her sibling (dark-skinned) due to her lighter skin colour (Phoenix & Craddock, 2025). In contrast, Sara and Tess were not explicitly taught on colourism by their families. Their ability to recognize it, underscores the role of surrounding themselves in Black spaces, suggesting that Black environments influence the awareness of colour-based hierarchies (Twine, 2004).

Negative Intra-colourism experiences

Studies on intra-colourism mostly emphasized the preferential treatment of lighter-skinned people compared to darker-skinned people within the Black community. These intra-colourist practices are clearly visible by the earlier given accounts highlighting the privilege in predominantly Black countries. However, in a predominantly Black environment, having a lighter skin due to a biracial identity, can be a disadvantage, since they experience intra-racial marginalization (Long, 2024). Which is in line with the experiences of participants, who perceived to not fully be accepted by the Black community. At least 5 participants reported being called 'white' in a predominantly Black country because of their skin tone, Bas shared: "I was always called white, you have a curse word there for white, so I did experience that all the time." This highlights the complex nature of colourism. Whereas in a predominantly white environment, a lighter skin confers relative advantages. While at the same time it can lead to exclusion, identity questioning and marginalization in a predominantly Black environment (Eid & Parker, 2023; Long, 2024). This underscores that a Black-white identity is not inherently privileged.

As well, were participants tested on their Blackness by other Black people. They were tested by Black people living in the Netherlands as well as in predominantly Black countries. Sara recalled how she was tested on her Blackness: "I worked in the hospital there [African country] for a month. They tested me at the beginning to see how western I was, I did notice that. Luckily It ended quickly." This experience is in line with Zoë's experience in the Netherlands, tested by a Dutch-Surinamese men:

He asked: 'do you know where [place in Suriname] is'. I didn't know it, because I haven't been involved that much and had never been to Suriname before that. So I said: 'I don't know.' Then he said: you don't even know where that is, you are a fake Surinamese.

People with a lighter skin are often perceived as less racially authentic than darker-skinned Blacks (Hunter, 2007). Biracial individuals ambiguous phenotype, cultural practices and behaviour might align too closely to whiteness (Franco & Holmes, 2017). Therefore people with a Black-white identity are tested on their racial authenticity and subject to suspicion of rejection of the Black community. Such dynamic exposes the complex relationship between colourism and belonging. Black-white biracial people may experience privileges, relative to dark-skinned people, in a white environment, they can experience invalidation and exclusion from Black people in Black spaces.

Called 'verkaast' or a bounty

Black-white biracial individuals can also experience invalidation and exclusion from Black people in predominantly white spaces. Colourism extends beyond skin colour, to include phenotypical features, behaviour and cultural practices are important aspects of this concept (Hunter, 2007; Dixon & Telles, 2017). This extended perspective privileges those who exhibit proximity to whiteness, through language, values or appearance. Participants associated this proximity especially with speaking 'correctly' Dutch and adopting Dutch norms, which often led to being labelled as '*verkaast*' or a '*bounty*'. These terms are used by other people of colour in a derogatory way to question the Black identity of Black-white individuals.

Verkaast (literally means becoming cheese) and a bounty (a chocolate with a Black exterior and a white interior), are terms participants frequently encountered. Within the context of this study, verkaast meant: becoming 'typically' Dutch. These words are used to describe people of colour, who have adapted/assimilated 'correctly' into the Dutch culture. This meant behaving Dutch and speaking 'correctly' Dutch. Tess described herself as a bit verkaast due to her behaviour: "I have the same norms and values as my white friends and also the same behaviour. This probably makes my more verkaast." Bas emphasized language as a contributor to being verkaast: "Often a pretty hard line is drawn, as in oh.. you speak ABN [General Civilised Dutch, i.e. white Dutch], you are verkaast." These examples highlight how Dutchness is expressed through behaviour and speaking Dutch. Which is in line with Wekker (2016) arguing that to be Dutch a person has to speak Dutch and value the Dutch norms. Nine out of ten participants were called verkaast or a bounty themselves, or had witnessed these terms used toward others. Importantly, these labels were used by other people of colour, and often functioned as intra-group critiques of cultural and racial authenticity. The emotional toll of these labels were evident in participants' reflections:

Well, that does hurt me a bit. I know, that I have the Dutch roots in me. But, yeah I also still feel like a Curaçaoan too, only I learned a little bit less of it. Apparently it does hurt me a little. That after all, some part of my identity is pushed away. (Tess)

At high school I did experience it. At some point the guys said, the Moroccan guys, who I hung out with. They said, yes you are too verkaast, so we are going to make you less verkaast. I notice that from that point, I always think I my head, maybe I sound too verkaast. (Bas)

Being called these derogatory words thus not only emphasizes skin colour as the marker of rejection, but also cultural practices, language and behaviour. This is in line with the study of Hunter (2007) and Dixon and Telles (2017), extending colourism to cultural practices and behaviour. These labels signal that the participants appearance and behaviour are too aligned with whiteness, and thus not Black enough. The participants experiences align with the study of Long (2024), who found that lighter-skinned Black people, were often verbally assaulted, because of their colour. Being called verkaast or a fake Surinamese, were painful terms for participants:

It sounds very much like you kind of failed then, so to speak. Because, yes, you are Black and I think you do kind of must know where you come from. And if someone then says, you're not [Surinamese], then it feels like you've kind of failed. You don't know your own background, or you don't know us. (Zoë)

These experiences of being tested on their Blackness or labelled as “fake” or ‘verkaast’ place Black-white individuals in a precarious position. Since their behaviour does not always align with stereotypical expectations of Blackness, their racial identity is often invalidated by others (Franco et al., 2016). This kind of rejection undermines their sense of belonging, as identity invalidation has been shown to negatively impact self-perception, community connection, and overall well-being (Eid & Parker, 2023).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study explored the identity development of Black-white biracial people living in the Netherlands and their experiences and perception of colourism. From an early age, biracial people have developed a consciousness, which creates a unique situation for them, since they have a heightened awareness of how they are perceived by white people and simultaneously by Black people (Du Bois, 1903).

The participants who grew up in a predominantly white environment, tend to firstly develop a stronger identification towards whiteness. This identity is formed through family socialization, social environment and language (Clayton, 2020). Biracial people who grew up in the Netherlands, describe to being mostly raised following the culture of their white parent. Parents tried to protect their biracial children from discrimination and racism, by emphasizing Dutch language and Dutch norms and values and thus suppressing their Black identity. Skin colour was not underscored as the important difference between a white Dutch person and a black-white Dutch person. Hair was found to be of greater significance, therefore biracial people adjusted their hair to white standards. Speaking the Dutch language ‘correctly’ attributed to the participants being perceived as Dutch (Wekker, 2016).

Once people with a Black-white identity became older, their racial awareness increased, often prompted by experiences of racism (Clayton, 2020). Therefore participants started to discover their Blackness by wearing their natural hair, braids or learning the language of their Black parent. Learning the language of the Black parent fosters a sense of belonging to the Black community and supports the development of a Black identity (Eid & Parker, 2023). The different timeframes of discovering ones “Dutchness” and Blackness emphasizes that identity development, for especially biracial people is not a fixed process. However, it is a fluid process which interacts with the social context and personal agency (Wilton et al., 2013).

Secondly, this study analysed the perceptions and experiences of colourism among Black-white biracial people living in the Netherlands. Interestingly, most biracial people were unfamiliar with the term colourism. The lack of awareness may be explained by the colour-blind society they grew up in, minimizing the use of race or skin colour (Wekker, 2016). In this context, both the language and the colour-blind framework hinders people’s ability to notice colourism. As well, are biracial individuals relatively privileged compared to their darker-skinned peers when it comes to colourism, since they have a closer proximity to whiteness. The biracial individuals innocence of colourism accentuates their privilege (Wekker, 2016).

Although Black-white biracial individuals may benefit from colourism through preferential treatment, they also face exclusion from both racial groups. Their lighter skin colour and “Dutch” cultural behaviour often lead to marginalization within the Black community. Biracial individuals are tested on their racial authenticity and are verbally assaulted, due to their lighter skin. Many participants were often called ‘verkaast’ (i.e too Dutch), a term that reflects perceived cultural assimilation and results in painful feelings of identity invalidation. These labels were used by other people of colour, highlighting that intra-colourism is not always

beneficiary for biracial individuals, since it increases the possibility of social exclusion (Long, 2024). At the same time, white individuals may view biracial people as too Black, further undermining their sense of belonging. As a result, biracial individuals frequently find themselves navigating a complex in-between space, struggling to achieve full acceptance from either group (Harris & Khana, 2010; Williams & Ware, 2019).

While this study provides insights into the experiences of Black-white biracial individuals in the Netherlands, it primarily focused on those raised in a predominantly white environment. A limitation of this study is the homogeneity of the participant sample. Due to time restrictions, a convenience sampling method was used, therefore many participants shared similar background characteristics. Participants were relatively young, which means that discovering their Blackness may still be ongoing or is in the early stages. In addition, the majority of participants grew up in predominantly white environments and attended university, which may have influenced both their perceptions of race and the extent to which they had been exposed to Blackness. As a result, the findings may not reflect the broader range of experiences among biracial individuals in the Netherlands, particularly those from different age groups, educational backgrounds, or more racially diverse communities.

Therefore future research should aim for a more heterogenous sample, with a variety of ages and participants raised in a more racially diverse or predominantly Black environment. The current findings suggest that colourism remains mostly unnoticed for biracial individuals due to their privilege but also the white environment they grew up in. Therefore assessing their experiences with colourism in a predominantly Black environment, could provide deeper insight into how context influences awareness of and exposure to colourism, within the Black community. As well, will a wider range of age help to understand the development of a biracial individuals identity and may even identify the identity changes over the years.

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Appendix I



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. Bonnie French, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: The perception and experiences of colourism for black-white biracial individuals

Name, email of student: Elza Nikièma, 740748en@eur.nl Name, email

of supervisor: Bonnie French, french@essb.eur.nl Start date and

duration: 10-02-2025 till 22-06-2025

Is the research study conducted within DPAS

YES - NO

If 'NO': at or for what institute or organization will the study be conducted? (e.g. internship organization)

PART II: HUMAN SUBJECTS

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

If 'NO': skip to part V.

If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research? YES - NO
Research that falls under the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act ([WMO](#)) must first be submitted to [an accredited medical research ethics committee](#) or the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects ([CCMO](#)).

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

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

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

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

PART III: PARTICIPANTS

1. Will information about the nature of the study and about what participants can expect during the study be withheld from them? YES - **NO**
2. Will any of the participants not be asked for verbal or written 'informed consent,' whereby they agree to participate in the study? YES - **NO**
3. Will information about the possibility to discontinue the participation at any time be withheld from participants? YES - **NO**
4. Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants? YES - **NO**
Note: almost all research studies involve some kind of deception of participants. Try to think about what types of deception are ethical or non-ethical (e.g. purpose of the study is not told, coercion is exerted on participants, giving participants the feeling that they harm other people by making certain decisions, etc.).
5. Does the study involve the risk of causing psychological stress or negative emotions beyond those normally encountered by participants? YES - **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** - NO
7. Will the study involve the participation of minors (<18 years old) or other groups that cannot give consent? YES - **NO**
8. Is the health and/or safety of participants at risk during the study? YES - **NO**
9. Can participants be identified by the study results or can the confidentiality of the participants' identity not be ensured? YES - **NO**
10. Are there any other possible ethical issues with regard to this study? YES - **NO**

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

This studies examines the perception and experiences of colourism for black-white biracial individuals. Therefore the racial background of a person needs to be discussed in their experiences on colourism.

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

Beforehand participants will be informed about the topic of this study. Additionally, they are always able to stop the participation when they feel uncomfortable. As well, can they conduct the interviewer for questions that arose after the interview.

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.

An unintended circumstance of this study could be, that participants become more aware of colourism. Or how their biracial identity navigates in the Netherlands.

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?

Data Will be collected through interviewing black-white biracial individuals.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

The sample size aims to be between 10-12 participants

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

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

There is no data available in the Netherlands on black-white biracial individuals, since race is not measured. Therefore the size of the population is unknown.

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?

The recordings will be stored on the personal device of the researcher, with password protection. As well, will a copy be stored on a hard drive. Once the interviews are transcribed, the recordings will be deleted from the personal device.

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?

The student conducting this study, Elza Nikièma, will be responsible.

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

The recordings will be stored on a hard drive immediately after the interview. Only one time a back-up will be made.

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

To anonymize the data, pseudonyms are used instead of the names of the participants.

Additionally, personal characteristics (e.g. age, study, place of residence) are replaced to a general term in the transcription.

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: Elza Nikièma

Name (EUR) supervisor:

Date: 20-03-2025

Date: [20-03-2025](#)

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'M' followed by a horizontal line.

APPENDIX II: Informed Consent Form (if applicable)

Information and consent form

Black-white biracial individuals' experiences and perception of colourism in the Netherlands

Introduction

Hello, I am Elza Nikièma and I am conducting my master thesis at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I am conducting research on the experiences and perception of black-white biracial individuals in the Netherlands.

I will explain the study below. If you have any questions, please ask me. While reading, you can mark parts of the text that are unclear to you.

If you want to participate in the study, you can indicate this at the end of this form.

Why this research?

The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of the lived experiences and the perception of black-white biracial individuals of colourism who live in the Netherlands. The biracial identity is not acknowledged in The Netherlands, since race is officially not discussed or measured. As well does the Dutch society have a colour-blind approach, which does not recognize colourism. Therefore it is important to gain more insight on how colourism manifests itself in The Netherlands.

Why are we asking you to participate?

We ask you to participate because your experiences as a black-white biracial individual is not well studied in The Netherlands. Learning about your experiences and perception would give valuable insights on colourism.

What can you expect?

The study is part of my Master Thesis project at Erasmus University Rotterdam.
If you participate in this study, you will take part in an interview.

The interview:

Each interview will last 1 hour. If you do not want to answer a question during the interview, you are not required to do so.

I will make an audio recording of the conversation.

At the end of the interview, you will have the opportunity to comment on your answers. If you disagree with my notes or if I misunderstood you, you can ask to have parts of them amended or deleted.

You decide whether to participate

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can stop at any time and would not need to provide any explanation.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

There are no external risks to participation. I will be asking about colourism and your biracial identity, which may be difficult to answer, but you never have to answer any question that you do not want to.

What data will I ask you to provide?

I will store your data so that I can be in contact with you. For the study, I will also need other data from you.

During the interview, the following personal data will be collected from you: age, gender, audio recordings, biracial identity, racial identity of your parents, self-reported skin colour, cultural background, ethnic background, and experiences or perceptions of colourism

In addition, it is also possible that you will talk about your religious or philosophical beliefs and those of others, as these may also relate to your experiences with the medical field.

If you would like to see the final results of the study, I also need your email address, to send the results of the study to you.

E-mail address (optional):

Who can see your data?

The recording of your interview will be anonymized as it is transcribed. Some anonymous quotes from your data may be shared with my thesis advisor and thesis group, but your information will be kept strictly confidential in a secure manner.

- I store all your data securely.
- Only persons involved in the research can see the interview data, such as my thesis advisor and thesis group. Only I, the principal investigator, have access to your data such as your name and email address.
- Recordings are transcribed. Your name is replaced with a number/made-up name.
- Data such as your name, recordings and email address will be stored separately from your answers and the transcription.
- I will write a thesis about the results of the study which may be published (publicly share the results) in (academic) journals and/or books. The results will be accessible by anyone.
- We may use your specific answers in the article. Your answers will not be able to be traced to you.

How long will your personal data be stored?

After the thesis is successfully completed, all data will be deleted. I expect this to be before September 2025.

Do you have questions about the study?

If you have any questions about the study or your privacy rights, such as accessing, changing, deleting, or updating your data, please contact me.

Name: Elza Nikièma

Phone number: 0681406983

Email: elzanikiema@gmail.com

Do you have a complaint or concerns about your privacy? Please email the Data Protection Officer (fg@eur.nl) or visit www.autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl. (T: 088 - 1805250)

Do you regret your participation?

You may regret your participation. Please indicate this by contacting me. I will immediately delete all your data if it is not yet anonymized. Deleting your data is no longer possible if the data has been anonymized, making it impossible to trace which data came from you. Anonymizing the data is done within one week after the data was collected.

Declaration of Consent

I have read the information letter. I understand what the study is about and what data will be collected from me. I was able to ask questions as well. My questions were adequately answered. I know that I am allowed to stop at any time.

By signing this form, I

1. consent to participate in this research.
2. consent to the use of my personal data;
3. confirm that I am at least 18 years old².
4. understand that participating in this research is completely voluntary and that I can stop at any time; and
5. understand that my data will be anonymised for publication

Check the boxes below if you consent to this.

Required for research participation,

Data about ethnicity and religious belief

I consent to the researcher's collection, use and retention of the following data:

Biracial identity and colourism

☐

Audio recording

I consent to the interview being audio recorded.

☐

My answers in the Thesis

I give permission for my answers to be used in the Thesis. My name will not be included.

☐

Name of participant:

Participant's signature:

Date:

You will receive a copy of the complete information and consent form.

² GDPR permits 16 years old in the EEA to consent. From an ethics perspective, holding on to the age people become an adult may be preferable. Different countries may handle a different age for becoming an adult.