

‘Who am I to teach about racism?’

*Experiences of white teachers teaching about racism in ‘Black’ and white primary
schools in the Netherlands*

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Abstract

This study explores how white primary school teachers in the Netherlands experience teaching about racism in 'Black' and white primary schools and whether these experiences differ. Based on ten semi-structured interviews, two significant differences have been found. Teachers in Black schools felt a stronger responsibility and importance to address racism and were more aware of their own racial identity. Overall, teachers' experiences reflected broader color-blind frames and the Dutch self-image, often, minimizing or avoiding racism and using the cultural rhetorics in order to deny its presence in school. Improving education for children begins with white teachers understanding and critically examining their own whiteness.

Keywords: Dutch primary education, Dutch racism, color-blindness, whiteness, innocence

Dutch racism is a paradoxical, complex and challenging phenomenon that comes from its colonial history (Essed & Hoving, 2014). The racial hierarchies established during these times privileged the white Dutch ‘masters’ while oppressing and exploiting enslaved Africans, thus making the ‘whites’ supreme. This concept of racial inferiority was constructed to legitimize unequal treatment (DiAngelo, 2018). White supremacy continues to exist in modern Western societies (DiAngelo, 2018; Essed & Hoving, 2014; Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019). However, many believe that race and therefore racism does not exist in the Netherlands (Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019). Because of that, racial inequalities will be harder to recognize and address, allowing it to continue unnoticed (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

School is an important place where views and ideas about race and racism can be discussed. It also plays a big part in children’s socialization (Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019). Children are exposed to stereotypes and ideas about social hierarchies, which influence how they see themselves and others (Boutte et al., 2011; Essed & Hoving, 2014; Priest et al., 2016; Weiner, 2014). Schools should therefore not be seen as neutral places free from racism, but as institutions that actively shape children’s thinking (Boutte et al., 2011). If schools fail to help children question their understandings, they may develop racist thinking themselves (Boutte et al., 2011).

Although social issues like racism are often perceived as irrelevant in primary education, schools have the greatest influence on socialization during those years (Dijkstra et al., 2014). Children start to notice differences among people between the ages of three and five (Boutte et al., 2011; Sieben-Aduful et al., 2025). To reduce prejudices and racism, it is important to teach children about these topics early on (Priest et al., 2016).

Teachers are the main socializers in schools and play an important part in helping children understand race and racism (Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019; Wekker, 2016). The way in which teachers discuss racism, the time spent on the topic, and the comfort level they

experience talking about this sensitive topic, depends on the teacher's racial positioning and the school population (Wekker, 2016). Teachers in the Netherlands primarily come from middle class white families (Weiner, 2014) and thus, for them, whiteness is the norm and racism outdated (Wekker, 2016). When white teachers are unaware of their own identities, personal biases, values, and internalized beliefs, they may unintentionally reproduce societal ideas about racial structures (Garlough & Savitz, 2022).

Research has shown that, despite efforts, white teachers often take a color-blind position when teaching about racism. They fail to recognize race as a factor in inequality and primarily talk about cultural diversity and ethnicity instead of race (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Sieben-Adufu et al., 2025). In doing so, colonial racial structures are downplayed or ignored (Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019). White teachers may defend their white supremacy and identity through emotions such as anger, fear and guilt that can manifest in behaviours like argumentation, silence or withdrawal (DiAngelo, 2018). Discussing racism in the classroom can confront teachers with different perspectives and their own white identity (Solomona et al., 2005), making them reluctant to address the topic of racism (Sue et al., 2009). When open discussions about race and racism are avoided, it will be harder for students to develop critical thinking about social structures (Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019).

Multiple Dutch scholars (Essed & Hoving, 2014; Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019; Wekker, 2016) have stressed that more research concerning race and racism is needed. The widespread belief that racism does not exist in the Netherlands is reflected in Dutch academia and its choice of terminology. While 'ethnicity' is a well-studied subject, topics such as race and racism are largely absent from Dutch academic research (Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019). This reveals how a color-blind discourse, that avoids mentioning race, also shapes the way research is conducted and framed (Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019).

Research conducted on ‘teaching about racism’ in the US and the Netherlands mostly focusses on secondary education even though the socialization of racialized ideas begins when children enter primary education (Boutte et al., 2011; Sieben-Aduful et al., 2025). Sincer et al. (2020) found differing approaches between teachers at white and Black schools¹. Teachers in Black schools perceive teaching about racism as more urgent, more important and feel a stronger need to prepare students for participation in society (Sincer et al., 2020).

To understand how children form ideas about the social structures of the world around them, it is necessary to know how teachers address these topics in primary schools and whether their teaching experiences differ in white and Black schools. Therefore this study aims to explore the following question: *How do white primary school teachers experience teaching about racism in ‘Black’ and white primary schools in the Netherlands?*

Theoretical framework

Context

Overview

Before moving on to the sensitizing concepts it is useful to know more about the Dutch primary education system. In the Netherlands, school is compulsory between ages five and sixteen (Leerrecht, n.d.) Primary education takes eight years to complete. There are three main types of government-funded primary schools, making education free: public, faith-based, and schools with a specific educational philosophies (e.g., Montessori, Waldorf, Dalton, Jenaplan). Public schools are open to all and are non-religious. Parents are free to choose the type of education they feel is suitable for their children, though often choose a school close to home (Government of the Netherlands, n.d.). Each year group in Dutch primary school has its own teacher, or two parttime teachers who cover all subjects except for

¹ Even though the term, ‘Black school’, is not something I admire to reproduce, it is a term that is often used in Dutch educational settings to indicate primary schools where more than 60% of students, are students of color (Vedder, 2006, Koster, 2023). I have therefore chosen, for clarity reasons, to still use the term in this research.

physical education. Some schools hire specialized teachers for music, drama or religion (Government of the Netherlands, n.d.). Teachers are trained to educate children in all areas of the curriculum, usually without subject specialization (Government of the Netherlands, n.d.).

Black and white schools

In the 1970's the term 'Black schools' entered Dutch society. The term it is not officially acknowledged and lacks a precise definition (Koster, 2023; Vedder, 2006). It usually refers to primary schools where more than 60% of students are students of color (Koster, 2023). Racial segregation in neighbourhoods and the way educational freedom is structured in the Netherlands is often given as a reason schools are highly segregated by race (Araújo, 2014; Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019, Vedder, 2006).

Black schools are often labelled by media and politicians as a 'concern' and of 'insufficient quality' (Overmaat & Ledoux, 2001), therefore white parents usually favor white schools. They justify their preference by raising concerns that the perceived 'language deficit' among students of color might negatively impact their own children's education (Koster, 2023). Araújo (2014) however, argues that the process of 'white flight', in which white families move their children to the suburbs to avoid integrated schooling, constitutes direct discrimination. These actions represent both individual acts and institutional practices rooted in racism and xenophobia (Araújo, 2014, p 11). Although race is not explicitly mentioned, the perceived 'language deficit' in Dutch Black schools is frequently given as a reason for non-enrolment, reflecting a color-blind approach that conceals underlying racial biases.

Segregation within schools, increases separation between racial groups. When children mostly interact with classmates from their own racial group, this can have an effect on the attitudes and prejudice they have about others (Koster, 2023). Research shows that students in more heterogeneous schools, have more positive attitudes, feelings and thoughts towards differences and race-related issues (Sincer et al., 2021). However, they also found that

this does not necessarily mean that children have more knowledge on the topic (Sincer et al., 2021). Therefore teaching about racism is important in *all* schools.

Color-blind racism

Openly racist ideas from the past are no longer accepted within societies (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). however, internalized beliefs about racial hierarchies, are far from gone. A powerful ideology has emerged to defend the racial order in society in a more subtle way; the ideology of color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Color-blind racism as described by Bonilla-Silva (2018) in the US context, has four central frames; abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism and minimization of racism. The first frame of abstract liberalism includes political and economic liberalism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). One example is ‘equal opportunity’. Even though white people claim to support equal chances, no matter someone’s race or background, they do not support government policies to reduce inequalities (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Instead they believe problems should be solved naturally by promoting individualism, an idea linked to economic liberalism. The meritocratic idea that each individual, through their own efforts is responsible for success, ignores the unequal conditions people of color face in society (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). The second frame presented by Bonilla-Silva (2018), is naturalization. This frame allows white people to explain racial phenomena, such as segregation, as natural occurrences (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Cultural racism assigns the difficulties people of color face in society by pointing to their beliefs or cultural habits (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Essed & Hoving, 2014). Lastly, minimization is a frame that suggests racism is no longer a central factor in the life of people of color and can therefore be denied (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

According to Schelvis-Sijpenhof (2019) color-blind racism is the dominant racial ideology in Western countries and is more widespread in Europe than in the US. An important difference is that the US government acknowledges systemic racism while

struggling with the contradiction of Black people's individual success and the challenging conditions many still face. However, European governments behave as if race and racism are foreign concepts and deny that racial inequalities are part of their colonial past (Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019).

The refusal to acknowledge racism can be seen as an indirect and color-blind form of racism (Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019). In educational contexts, Schelvis-Sijpenhof (2019) found that color-blind discourses are still present among teachers in Dutch secondary schools. However, no such studies have explored this in Dutch primary schools. The current study, therefore explores whether these patterns also exist in Dutch primary education.

Dutch racism and self-image

The Netherlands is seen as an ideal state by the Dutch. According to Wekker (2016) the Dutch self-image is based on being a tolerant, small, and ethical nation that is color-blind and free of racism. Furthermore the Dutch see themselves as progressive. This idea is based on the nation's history of being known for its liberal values, such as LGBTQ+ rights and multiculturalism. However, within this Dutch self-image they ignore the Nation's colonial past.

This selective forgetting is tied to the dominant part of the self-image of innocent victim of German occupation during World War II (Wekker, 2016). The memory of the Holocaust is seen as the worst and most important example of racism in Europe. Colonial violence and racism are erased from collective memory (Wekker, 2016). 'Trying to insert memories often meets with hostility and rejection' (Wekker, 2016, p3). Interestingly, even though 'race' finds its origin in Europe, it is still treated as a foreign concept (Wekker, 2016). As Essed & Hoving (2014) state, it is 'as if colonialism had no racial, let alone racist, resonance.' (Essed & Hoving, 2014, p.410).

This part of the Dutch self-image is described by Wekker (2016) as ‘white innocence’. White innocence describes part of a dominant Dutch way of being in the world. It reflects a white supremacist worldview that divides humanity (Wekker, 2016). ‘Being Dutch’ means ‘being white’. In Dutch culture whiteness is seen as ordinary and ‘race-free’ thus the racial positioning can be ignored (Wekker, 2016). Similarly, Essed & Hoving (2014) argue that color-blindness is a key feature in Dutch culture. They describe the main characteristic of Dutch racism as the ‘intimate relation between ignorance and denial’ (Essed & Hoving, 2014, p.11). This does not refer to a nation that ‘does not know’ about racism, but rather a nation that ‘does not want to know’ about racism. (Essen & Hoving, 2014).

The denial of race and racism is also reflected in the terminology used in the Netherlands. Since World War II, ‘race’ is a term rarely used and is a sensitive, if not taboo, word (Essed & Trienekens, 2008; Wekker, 2016). The Dutch often replace the word ‘race’ with ‘ethnicity’ when indicating ethnic differences between people. This term describes the origin, appearance, culture, language and religion (Wekker, 2016).

Even though ‘ethnicity’ and ‘culture’ are seen as neutral terms, the words are used in a way that still separates people based on skin-color or background (Wekker, 2016). According to Wekker (2016) the words ‘culture’ and ‘race’ became interchangeable in Dutch society (Wekker, 2018). For example, commonly used terms in the Dutch language that have been criticised for reinforcing a divide between whites and ‘others’ are; ‘autochtoon’ (white Dutch) and ‘allochtoon’ (foreigner) (Wekker, 2016). Wekker argues that ‘Within the category of ‘autochtoon’ there are many, whose ancestors came from elsewhere, but who manage, through a white appearance, to make a successful claim to Dutchness’ (Wekker, 2016, p.23). This shows, that even though ‘race’ is never mentioned, there is still a clear distinction between whites and people of color (Wekker, 2019). The avoidance of racial terminology and

the color-blind framing of it, reveal ignorance of how everyday racism is built into the Dutch language (Essed & Trienekens, 2008)

Altogether, this reveals how Dutch society maintains a self-image of innocence and progressiveness, while colonial legacies still influence systemic racism, (hidden) social relations and language. Racism still shapes the lives of many people in the Netherlands (Essed & Hoving, 2014; Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019).

Teaching about racism

Content

Various educational studies demonstrate that race and racism are often not part of the discourse within schools in the Netherlands (Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019, Sieben-Aduful et al., 2025; Weiner, 2016;). History class remains the only place colonialism and slavery are covered. Yet, in 1997 the history curriculum featured a general lack of factual knowledge and has, according to Weiner (2016) and Schelvis-Sijpenhof (2019), not evolved since. Textbooks reveal the neoliberal foundation underlying Dutch society and continue to reproduce internalized racial bias (Weiner, 2016).

Since 2021, primary schools are required to include citizenship education, following a new Dutch law (SCP, 2024). The law states that schools must focus on ‘differences in religion, beliefs, political views, origin, gender, disability, or sexual orientation, as well as the value of equal treatment for equal cases’ (SCP). In line with the Dutch consensus, race or racism is nowhere mentioned in the law. The raceless terminology used in policy also reflects in learning materials that shape children’s education (Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019).

In recent years more accurate learning materials about discrimination and racism have become available (Felten et al., 2021). Schools, however, express there is no extra money for materials or guest lecturers, and do not prioritise teaching about racism (Felten et al., 2021).

As a result, educating children about racism mainly relies on the teacher rather than the curriculum (Wekker, 2016).

Reluctance and avoidance

Considering other parts of the world, research conducted in Australia has shown that anxiety was the most common feeling experienced by white teachers in the classroom (Sue et al., 2009). More specifically, they shared ‘a fear of losing control in the classroom, fear of being perceived as incompetent, and fear of being seen as biased by others’ (Sue et al., 2009, p.7). These feelings can lead to avoidance and reluctance to address racism (Sue, 2009). However, the absence of open and honest dialogue about race and racism can result in misunderstandings or racial offenses that remain unacknowledged (Sue et al., 2009). Scholars from both the U.S and the Netherlands found that reluctance to teach about racism reflects a subtle form of color-blindness, where avoidance and minimization are favored over direct engagement (Priest et al., 2016). Multiple scholars (Perez, 2022; Sieben-Aduful et al., 2015, Sue et al., 2009) have noted that teaching about race and racism can have an emotional toll on teachers, leading to complex emotional responses.

However, through the complexity, a clear pattern can be found among white teachers in the Netherlands. Schelvis-Sijpenhof (2019) found that Dutch teachers in secondary education often avoid the topic of racism reflecting the broader color-blind discourse in society. Research in Dutch primary- and secondary schools shows that teachers explain inequalities without mentioning race. They talk about cultural diversity and ethnicity rather than explicitly mentioning race (Sieben-Aduful et al., 2025). Teachers focused on cultural awareness and knowledge about different cultures by referring to the idea that the current Dutch society has become more multicultural (Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019). By taking a ‘color-blind’ position, teachers move from a reluctance to talk about race toward an insistent denial that race matters (Priest et al., 2014). Pollock (2004), a scholar based in the US, describes the

purposeful silencing of race-words as ‘color-mute’. She argues that deleting race words can actually ‘help make race matter more’ (Pollock, 2004, p.3). When talking to students about race, she suggests teachers must talk about racial categorization itself so children understand ‘race’ is human made (Pollock, 2004).

That said, there is not always a clear awareness among Dutch teachers about the biological notions of race that have been deeply embedded in their daily interactions and language. Without realizing it, teachers’ lessons about diversity can lead to the perpetuation of stereotypical and racist beliefs among pupils (Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019).

Whiteness of teachers

Most white Dutch teachers generally do not consider themselves as being influenced by race or playing a role in racial dynamics. The idea that ‘being white’ has a meaning, triggers, according to DiAngelo (2018), a range of defensive responses and emotions such as guilt, fear and anger. It can further include behaviours of silence, withdrawal and argumentation. These responses are a defence mechanism used to maintain existing racial hierarchies and are defined by DiAngelo (2018) as ‘white fragility’. According to DiAngelo (2018) ‘white people consider a challenge to their racial worldview, a challenge to their identity’(DiAngelo, 2018, p.20).

In Dutch secondary schools, where whiteness is the norm, Schelvis-Sijpenhof (2019) found three common ways in which whiteness is expressed by teachers. First, teachers’ explanations of inequality do not include racial dynamics. Second, whiteness is seen as the norm, while people of color are labelled as ‘other’. Lastly, colonial racial structures are downplayed or ignored. All of these aspects closely relate to the way Dutch racism and the Dutch self-image are shaped.

Other scholars found similar results in US teachers. Picower (2009) found three different tools used by White teachers to ‘protect’ their identity and uphold structures of

white supremacy: emotional, ideological, and performative. In response to learning materials about racism, teachers often use emotional defences such as: ‘I never owned a slave’ or ‘stop trying to make me feel guilty’. By these reactions, teachers position themselves as victims and disconnect themselves from their role within the dominant group. These emotional reactions were also found while teaching. When teachers struggle to accept different perspectives of racism, they often focus on their own feelings of suffering, guilt and unfair treatment (Solomona et al., 2005). These forms of emotional responses expressed by teachers closely resonate with the Dutch self-image of ‘innocence’ described by Wekker (2016).

A more ideological tool expressed by teachers is: ‘I just want to help’ when talking about wanting to work in schools that are primarily black. While teachers believe they are helping students, they actually maintain the hierarchical power balance in society where white people position themselves as ‘higher and wealthier’ (Picower, 2009). On the other hand, teachers position themselves as liberal and individualistic, enhancing the idea that ‘everyone is equal’. This reinforces color-blind and meritocracy views, which can demotivate students of color (Solomona et al., 2005; Wekker, 2016).

Data & Methods

Sampling and recruitment

For this research I focused on a specific group of educators. Inclusion criteria were white Dutch teachers who work in Dutch primary schools. According to Traag (2018) only one in ten teachers in Dutch primary education have a migration background, and of those, just 44% come from non-Western backgrounds, such as Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese or Antillean. This shows that the teacher population is almost entirely white (Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019). According to Schelvis-Sijpenhof (2019) ‘this may reinforce their racial denial, feelings of race-less-ness (perceiving themselves as non-racial actors) , considerations

of whiteness as the norm, and permits them to avoid personal accountability' (Schelvis-Sijpenhof, p.112). In the Netherlands schools are highly segregated, but because of the high number of white teachers, whiteness is present in all primary schools, regardless of student population (Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019). The experiences of white teachers discussing racism in the classroom can be a first step to understand the barriers that may hinder them and help to investigate if experiences are different in white or Black primary schools.

For this study I have interviewed ten white Dutch teachers. Two of them identified as male and eight as female. The age of participants varied between the ages of 25-55. Five of the ten selected teachers work at white primary schools and five teachers work at Black primary schools (Table 1). In the Netherlands there is no data available concerning race or ethnicity for primary schools (Sieben-Aduful et al., 2025). Thus, in the selection of teachers, I have taken the geographical location and the diversity of the population into account in order to separate 'white' and 'black' schools. I found this information online on the 'central bureau voor statistiek' (CBS) website. I did not exclude teachers based on the age group they teach, meaning participants work with children between the ages of four to twelve.

Table 1.

Participant characteristics

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	School type	Teaching grade
Guus	Male	35	white	6 th grade
Anouk	Female	34	white	5 th /6 th grade
Thijs	Male	55	white	3 rd grade
Emma	Female	36	white/Black	5 th grade
Marie	Female	36	white	6 th grade
Marjolein	Female	37	Black	Kindergarten
Leonie	Female	35	Black	4 th /5 th grade

Aniek	Female	25	Black	Kindergarten
Sophie	Female	30	Black	1 st – 6 th grade
Agnes	Female	45	Black	6 th grade

Due to time constraints and my extensive network within the educational sector, I approached and recruited teachers via my personal network. I first contacted them via WhatsApp, Instagram or through personal conversation. Through snowball sampling I made use of natural social networks to approach other teachers to participate. Due to the limitations of my sample, I classify this work as a pilot study. After teachers expressed willingness to participate, they received an email with further information about the research, including an informed consent form. The informed consent informed participants throughout the research process. Before the interview started I asked participants for consent to record the interview. After the thesis is submitted they will receive the finished product via e-mail. Participants were able to withdraw their participation at any time during the research process.

Data collection

For primary schools, Dutch law sets attainment targets for each compulsory subject, including history and citizenship education. Schools are free to decide how subjects are taught and choose teaching materials suitable to their school philosophy (Government of the Netherlands, n.d.). Due to the enormous variation in materials and time limits, I chose not to analyse teaching materials. This choice is further supported by scholars who have done earlier research on ‘teaching about racism’. Teaching about racism is often reactive and relies heavily on teachers’ personal and professional capability (Priest et al., 2014; Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019; Sieben-Aduful, 2025; Wekker, 2016; Yared et al., 2020).

To understand how racism is taught in Dutch primary schools, it is important to get insight into the experiences of white primary school teachers and find the patterns within. By using an inductive approach I managed to gather more in-depth and current data. Qualitative

research methods, such as interviews, are especially needed in finding information on racial socialisation, since they can identify and interpret patterns or themes in data (Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2019). Therefore I collected data for this study only through in-person interviews.

Ten white Dutch primary schoolteachers participated in in-person interviews in April-May of 2025. Each interview lasted between 45 and 75 minutes and took place at a location of the participant's choice. The interviews were semi-structured leaving room for the participants to speak openly about their experiences. This also gave me the opportunity to guide the line of questioning and remain flexible with the order in which topics were discussed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I used an interview guide containing topic areas and starting questions that needed to be covered during the questioning. The interview topics and questions were based on the sensitizing concepts that guide this research. Interviews were conducted in Dutch. I translated data included in this thesis to English.

Data analysis

This study does not list hypotheses but rather aims to develop insights from teachers perspectives to contribute to existing theory (Bowen, 2006). This allowed for themes, categories and patterns to emerge from the collected data without limitations of existing literature (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I audio recorded all interviews on a personal device and transcribed them timely. To help me understand the meaning of teachers' lived experience I used phenomenological analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) which led to new insights into the different experiences of teachers working in Black and white schools. I coded and analysed the data by hand. First, I collected my general thoughts by creating a mindmap as my initial coding. I organised the data to find broad patterns through axial coding by using participants perspectives and quotations to provide specific evidence (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). From there I built additional layers onto categories and found interconnected themes within the data provided by teachers on white and Black schools as the final coding step.

After the coding process, I returned to the literature to explain patterns in the data. Most themes that emerged connected to my sensitized concepts (Colour blind racism, Dutch racism and the Dutch self-image) which helped me to guide and shape my findings and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Positionality

I am a white Dutch woman with fourteen years of teaching experience. In 2011, I obtained a Bachelor's degree in Primary Education. Since then, I have gained diverse experience across various educational settings, including five years in primary education, four years in secondary special education, and two years as a primary teaching advisor in Rwanda. Over the past three years, I have taught at Inholland University of Applied Sciences, where I am involved in the Associate Degree program in Pedagogical Educational Professional (Ad-Pep) studies. I develop lessons, teach and assess teaching assistants and care workers to help deepen their knowledge. My experience gives me familiarity with teaching jargon and issues participants face in teaching. I have a personal connection to some of the teachers I interviewed, but I have never worked with them in a primary school setting. Only one of the teachers I interviewed has been my direct colleague in secondary special education. Other participants were found through snowball sampling. I had no prior relationship with them.

I expect that my racial identity and existing relationships with some of the participants, helped white participants feel more open and comfortable sharing their experiences. According to Schelvis-Sijpenhof (2018) 'white people mostly share their unfiltered racial beliefs in the 'backstage' with only other white people present instead of being more politically correct in the 'frontstage' with a more diverse audience' (Schelvis-Sijpenhof, 2018). Schelvis-Sijpenhof (2018) also noted that, by choosing 'race' as a research topic, people had a preconceived idea about the researcher's racial ideologies. This idea

might be even stronger in my case due to the personal relationship with some of the participants. However, I am trained in communication skills and certified to conduct assessments. These skills and techniques support my focus on the research question.

Findings & Analysis

The findings indicate that, overall, teachers consistently speak about their students with positivity and respect and are not indifferent regarding teaching about racism. In what follows I report the most significant findings, organised into three themes. (1) importance and minimization, (2) whiteness and (3) curiosity. Within each theme, I will explain how experiences of teachers working in white schools differ from those in Black schools. Additionally, I analyse how the frames of color-blind racism manifest and discuss how whiteness and the Dutch Self-Image are integrated throughout the discussion of these frames.

Importance and minimization

Importance

As Wekker (2016) and Schelvis-Sijpenhof (2019) also concluded, educating about racism mainly relies on the teacher and not the curriculum. When it comes to teaching curricula in primary schools, multiple teachers in this study expressed that racism is only specifically mentioned when discussing certain historical topics, like the second world war or the VOC. Most curricula, like socio-emotional content, religion, and citizenship, approach racism indirectly. In line with earlier research done by Schelvis-Sijpenhof (2019), Sieben-Aduful et al. (2025) and Wekker (2016) this study also illustrates that teaching curricula usually discuss cultural diversity and ethnicity instead of explicitly addressing race. This clearly reflects the color-blind frame of abstract liberalism as defined by Bonilla-Silva (2018). Rather than confronting race, methods focus on tolerance, respect and understanding. By doing so, racism is presented as a matter of misunderstanding or lack of cultural

knowledge instead of acknowledging the structural power imbalance (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Since teaching curricula primarily focus on cultural differences, whether racism is addressed depends significantly on the teacher's willingness to engage explicitly with race and racism. All interviewed teachers consistently acknowledged the lack of curricula on the topic of racism. However, not all teachers, especially those working in white schools, felt a change in curriculum was needed.

“I think the curriculum is fine the way it is, I think that is because it is also not very relevant in our school” (Guus, white school).

“I think a lot of people in school think that it is not relevant in our school, because we have a white student population” (Emma, white/Black school).

“I do think it is enough right now, but I do think that when it is needed, there should be time and space to talk about it. So I don't think it needs a more prominent place in the curriculum. It just depends on what happens in the classroom, maybe in the world, or on the playground, if we talk about it” (Marie, white school).

These statements suggest that participants find the current curricula sufficient and do not consider the topic important enough. They overlook the relevance of teaching white students about racism, showing a belief that racism does not exist in white places.

Not only do these statements treat whiteness as raceless (DiAngelo, 2018), but it also reflects the color-blind frame that minimizes the importance of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). By denying the need to educate white students about racism, educators maintain systemic racial hierarchies (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Jones et al., 2023). This way of thinking could be problematic according to Sincer et al. (2020) ‘as the need for teaching about racism may be just as, or even more relevant in less non-diverse contexts’ (Sincer et al., 2020, p 23.). Given their surroundings and personal experiences, students in Black schools are more likely to

have more real-life experiences and knowledge about racism. Whereas students in white spaces do not get as many chances to learn about racism (Sincer et al., 2020). Therefore it might be even more important for teachers in white schools to have a clear understanding of their students' needs and have a plan to actively teach about racism (Sincer et al., 2020). In contrast to teachers in white schools, those in Black schools perceive teaching about racism as both more urgent and more important. Teachers feel a stronger need to prepare students for participation in society (Sincer et al., 2020).

“I think it is more important in our school since they [the students] deal with this a lot”(Leonie, Black school).

“You know they will come across it, so you didn't prepare them for it, or talked about how unfair it can be and how they.. how to handle that. So I think it is pretty naïve to not do it, because then you will not prepare them for something that will most likely occur” (Aniek, Black school).

“We [the school] do feel we need to pay more attention to this [racism] to prepare children, because they are in their own bubble in this school where they are no minority, they have no idea what it is like to interact with white Dutch people in society. It should be a bigger topic, because they will need it later. We do talk about it now, but not enough and not structural” (Sophie, Black school).

Initially, preparing students may seem to be a positive occurrence. These teachers clearly recognize racial realities in Dutch society and understand difficulties students will face in ‘the real world’. Therefore this perspective challenges the color-blind discourse that race does not matter (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). But, at the same time it reinforces the idea that race only becomes relevant when students of color are present. If teachers only consider

addressing racism in Black schools, they act as if racism only appears in the presence of students of color. This unintentionally normalises whiteness and ignores white racial identity and privilege (DiAngelo, 2018; Wekker, 2016).

Minimization of racist bullying

One answer given by every teacher when asked if they have ever noticed instances of racism in their school concerned racist bullying,

“There has been some incidents that children were called names because of their skin color.. but it were just incidents”(Marie, white school).

“Among the children, yes. But I wonder if that is really racism or more like bullying” (Aniek, Black school).

“When children are in a fight such expressions emerge, all of a sudden they mention someone’s appearance or background” (Sophie, Black school).

According to Verkuyten & Thijs (2002) 38 % of pupils with a Turkish, Moroccan or Surinamese background have experienced racist bullying in primary school. Even though this phenomenon clearly exists, most teachers believed students are unaware of their racist expressions and ‘do not understand what they are saying’. The way in which teachers diminish the role of race in the bullying remarks towards children to ‘an incident’ is a clear manifestation of the color-blind frame of minimization. Minimization allows white people to acknowledge racism exists, but diminishes the role race plays in everyday life (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Jones et al, 2023). To give an example, Thijs told me a story about a student who reported to be called the N-word by her classmates. After asking how he handles a situation like this, he responded ,

“ first ... using big words, but I talk to the victim. And, I do notice about myself that a first time, I let it slide, but a second time I have a conversation about it. It could be

an incident, which does not make it right, but then I feel like.. you shouldn't make it a big thing" (Thijs, white school).

Thijs struggles to recognize the student as victim by saying 'using big words' followed by calling the girl the 'victim'. This response minimizes the emotional impact of the comment and the racist nature. Secondly, reducing the comment to an incident, seemingly fails to recognise how the word reinforces power structures between white students and students of color, maintaining systemic racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Lastly, by 'not making it a big thing' Thijs minimizes the comment and makes it seem like the norm rather than making it something that needs attention.

Notably, Thijs later on explained that 'making it a big thing' means discussing this in the classroom. 'These words have no place in the schoolyard or in my classroom, so it needs to be discussed plenary'. He believes it is important to make the student feel heard. He then emphasizes the importance of educating the class about the origins of words like the N-word, including the slavery past and the history behind them. He also spoke to the class about how such words reflect and reinforce harmful social structures, where children of color are seen as inferior to white children. As he put it, 'in order for children to understand why they cannot use this word, you have to give them context'. According to the literature, making the student feel heard (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002) and explaining racial structures are helpful ways to educate children (Utt & Tochluck, 2016).

Thijs presents an interesting contradiction. Even though his initial explanation of the 'incident' reflects the minimization frame of color-blind racism, his actions of dealing with it demonstrate a higher level of racial awareness. However, the fact that classroom discussions only occur after repeated incidents ('a first time, I let it slide') supports the border pattern of color-blind discourse in which racism is only acknowledged when it becomes unavoidable (Bonilla-Silva, 2018)

Whiteness

Racial identity

The way in which racism is discussed and the time spent on the topic depends not only on the student population but also on the racial positioning of the teacher (Wekker, 2016). The findings in this study showed that, even though the racial positioning of teachers is the same, there is a difference in knowledge about their own racial identity among teachers who work in white and Black schools. Strikingly, throughout the conversation all teachers would acknowledge the white power structures in society and the fact that structural and institutional racism exists in the Netherlands. However, they had trouble to translate this dynamic to their workplace.

As Schelvis-Sijpenhof (2019) also found, teachers have a lot of difficulty to describe their own racial identity. Wekker (2016) claims that not acknowledging your own racial identity is central to the illusion of innocence. Whiteness is consistently seen as the norm and is therefore invisibilized (Wekker, 2016). What stands out is that teachers who work in white schools had a lot more trouble explaining their own racial identity and could not clearly explain their place in society.

“I actually never.. [thought about it] I’m just a Dutch girl” (Marie, white school)

“Dutch, yes.. I think that is the best answer I can give” (Anouk, white school)

“Well, this is the first time I think about my place in society.. do I have to think about that? .. Just live and let live” (Guus, white school)

In contrast, teachers who work in Black schools seem to have a bigger awareness of their whiteness and the privileges that entails. As Leonie explained “as white, hetero woman I do not experience real..[discrimination] I never felt left out anywhere. It is a very privileged place to be” or Agnes “I became more aware of my own white identity”.

All interviewees from white schools describe their teaching team as white, while those in Black schools refer to their team as ‘diverse’. Four out of five teachers in Black schools grew up in predominantly white neighbourhoods, were educated in white institutions, and still have mostly white social circles. But, they interact daily with both students and colleagues from diverse racial backgrounds. The difference in exposure may partly explain levels of awareness of their own racial identity. Working together with colleagues from marginalized groups can help to reduce prejudice and bias and experienced a shift in mind-set (Johnson, 2002). They gain access to an alternative standpoint about race and are exposed to insiders’ perspectives of racism (Johnson, 2002). As Leonie (white school) explained, ‘‘you are exposed to all kinds of things, from the news, from the kids, the situations they are in...they tell me when they were exposed to discrimination’’. Although immersion experiences alone may not increase racial awareness, it offers a chance to reflect and develop a more nuanced perspective (Johnson, 2002). That said, we need to remember it is not the responsibility of people of color to educate white people about white supremacy (Garlough & Savitz, 2022).

Besides being seemingly more aware of their white identity, the way teaching about racism is approached is still very similar to that of teachers teaching in a white school. As explained earlier, the main focus still lies on cultural diversity and ethnicity rather than race. This shows the persistent influence of color-blind discourse within our behaviour. It also supports Wekker’s (2016) argument that being aware, does not always lead to change. Instead it can lead to feelings of guilt and discomfort which might even lead to new forms of racist and defensive behaviour (Wekker, 2016).

White identity as a challenge

Through the process of socialisation, we develop our racial understandings via interactions and representations of people from ‘other’ races. These understandings contain

internalized beliefs and assumptions about the way society is structured and how race operates within (Picower, 2009). These racial ideologies reproduce misconceptions about people of color and justify the behaviour of white people (Picower, 2009).

Claiming reverse racism. The emotional responses that white people express are a tool for protection of their own hegemonic beliefs (Picower, 2009). White people often feel guilt when they learn about the role whites have played in perpetuating inequality (Picower, 2009). However, instead of pleading guilty, people often plead to be ‘not guilty’ when they recognise that feeling guilty would be an admission of responsibility (Picower, 2009). Therefore they deny this emotion to ‘protect their own innocence in the cycle of racism’ (Picower, 2009, p.205). Anouk (white school), for example, asserted, ‘when we talk about the second world war, I always tell the children: I’m blond and have blue eyes...I can’t help that, you know.. it’s just that my parents fell in love and they had me ‘. By using this emotional defence, she is actually protecting her own image as a white person with blond hair and blue eyes. Also, by taking world war II as an example, she quite literally shows that she has internalized the dominant Dutch self-image of being the innocent victim of German occupation during World War II (Wekker, 2016). On the other hand, Marjolein (Black school) showed the victimized white in a less literal example,

‘I experienced that once with a parent, who was.. I think from Curacao, she said: ‘That’s just because I am black’ when I tried to talk about her child not doing well... of course, it sucks.. actually it feels like discrimination towards me. Because I’m white, I immediately discriminate against you, you know. Like reverse discrimination”.

Marjolein uses the emotional tool in an attempt to show that *she* was the victim in this particular conversation instead of the Black mother. By claiming to be the victim of reversed

discrimination, Marjolein asserts she endures unjust suffering which can be interpreted as a sign of being a good and morally aware person; a conscious white person (Hughey, 2014). Ironically, the people who don't take on the role of victims may not seem as conscious since they do not 'suffer' for the cause and will not fit the ideal of hegemonic whiteness (Hughey, 2014).

Guus (white school), showed a similar manifestation of the emotional tool of victimhood when talking about 'Purple Friday', a day dedicated to showing solidarity with the LGBTQIA+ community. He was displeased that, especially Islamic families, would not participate in this particular day by keeping their kids at home.

'If you look at racism or discrimination, you should look both ways, you know. I have no doubt that sometimes we unconsciously discriminate. If you ask someone with a different background or someone with 'een kleurtje' they will most definitely say yes. But nothing human is strange to us, so it also happens the other way around''.

Guus is not only protecting the 'white' part of the Dutch self-image, but also the liberal values that come with it (Wekker, 2016). According to Essed & Hoving (2014) migrants are seen as the ones who need to adopt to the new culture. By blaming the Muslim families for not showing up for the liberal values celebrated, Guus insinuates that he sees 'not showing up' as a threat to Dutch liberalism. In his comment, we see a double standard. 'It is OK for the "native Dutch" to feel defensive and to protect their culture, but migrants are criticized for defending theirs' (Essed & Hoving, 2014, p 103). This also shows a broader color-blind frame of cultural racism. By blaming the victim, they argue that the standpoint of minorities is 'a product of their lack of effort, loose family organization, and inappropriate values' (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, p.67).

Avoidance. Another response used by teachers is that of avoidance. Anouk (white school) gave a clear example of this when talking about a family in school that they had ‘trouble’ with.

A: ‘The oldest girl has 4 brothers and sisters, she is in high school now. She has to take care of her younger brothers and sisters... I cannot imagine that my parents would have done or said that: ‘listen, we have chosen to have another 4 children, you are the oldest.. Help with everything’. But that is something that happens there.’

Q: ‘Why do you think that is?’

A: ‘That is partly just their culture... How it is in their family, It is probably normal for them, but from our point of view it is not normal... and of course it will not go smoothly in school if your parents don’t really speak Dutch, they can’t help you with your homework or something, it makes sense. You just wish some stereotypes not to be true.’

She recognized the hardship this family was in; fleeing from war, traumatization and lack of language. However, instead of focussing on the inequalities in society, she blamed the position of the family on ‘culture’. By avoiding racial terminology, she reflects the color-blind frame of cultural racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018), maintaining the power structures of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ while also protecting the Dutch self-image of being tolerant and liberal (Wekker, 2016).

The biggest challenge mentioned among teachers in white schools was the shared feeling of responsibility and awareness about bringing their own bias into class. Guus (white school) shared, ‘The biggest challenge is leaving out your own opinion. So if someone has a very different view than me...leaving that out can be difficult’ just as Anouk (white school) mentioned, ‘I believe that you cannot give your opinion about that [politics], children should not, by looking at your facial expression, know how you feel about it’. They express to

experience difficulty when dealing with different perspectives. Therefore, they do not always choose to engage in conversation.

‘Especially with a topic I am not fully comfortable with... I will stay careful, and yes also a little hesitant’ (Anouk, white school)

‘Well, you will not find a solution. If we, as grown-ups, cannot even find a way to fix things or live together peacefully, how will I explain to a boy who is 10/11, who maybe heard very different things at home: it is like this and this.. Maybe it is better to avoid the discussion at that time, but I won’t say I avoid all discussions when it becomes difficult’ (Guus, white school)

You can see a clear contradiction between wanting to provide room for students to engage, but on the other hand, at times, avoiding conversation. Interestingly, all these examples given, were about students of color. So, while it is understandable that teachers also have to continue with their day, it once again, exposes the existence of the frame of cultural racism. It is clear that values of students of color are seen as inappropriate (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). They are expected to distance themselves from their ‘backward’ culture (Essed & Hoving, 2014). By not engaging in conversation, these teachers are protecting the Dutch innocence and clearly reflect a nation that ‘does not want to know’ about racism (Essed & Hoving, 2014.)

Inadequacy and fear. For teachers working in Black schools the biggest challenge seemed to be the struggle with their own white identity. The first reaction of these teachers is that ‘they cannot relate’. This is an ideological tool to hide the underlying emotions of fear of students of color and urban communities (Picower, 2009). This tool allows teachers to seem noble instead of cowardly and racist in their choice to not teach about racism (Picower, 2009). However, as mentioned before, all these teachers are racially aware, made a choice to teach in Urban settings and are not scared to teach about racism. They seem more concerned

about their responsibility to their students and their ability to teach about something they have not lived.

‘I do not have any experience with being discriminated, so I find that very difficult... I cannot feel what they feel of course.... I really hope I don’t brush it [their feelings and experiences] away too soon. And then I think, here I am as white teacher, I can tell you all kinds of things, but they experience it...’ (Leonie, Black school).

‘well, this is my personal struggle, because I will never know what it feels like to experience racism, and.. so I hope that I can create some awareness’(Emma, white/Black school)

‘I do find this a challenge for myself.. that I, I am obviously a white women. So I do not want to take on the white point of view too much’(Agnes, Black school).

‘We have to prepare children to be part of Dutch society, we do prepare them in certain areas, but not in others’ (Sophie, Black school)

Clearly, these teachers are invested in listening to students of color. At the same time, they are also very aware that they are learners themselves. This can lead to anxiety, self-doubt and the belief of being ‘an imposter’ (Smith et al., 2017). The topic of racism is, in their classroom, intimately connected to their students’ lives. However, historically seen, the white teacher is on the wrong side (Smith et al., 2017). The feeling of inevitability when it comes to making mistakes can be paralyzing, even if teachers understand their own bias (Smith et al., 2017). Underlying the white teachers imposter syndrome is the fear of not understanding their own whiteness. When teaching about racism, they hold a fear that their deficit will be exposed (Smith et al., 2017).

Curiosity

Teacher development

Throughout the interview, all teachers showed a curiosity to educate themselves on race and racism. This was missing in their studies, leaving them unprepared to discuss difficult topics. They shared the opinion it should be included in the teacher training curriculum or staff development.

‘Well, thinking about it, yes maybe it should be good to talk about this in our team, to see where everyone stands and how they think about it and what we want to share with the children in our school, what do we want to teach them?’ (Leonie, Black school).

‘Well, now that we are talking about it, I think it would add value to the teacher training curriculum’ (Marjolein, Black school).

Interestingly, when they were asked who they would like to educate them, they would all point to people of color.

‘Maybe just some guest lectures or something... from people of color...who are teachers themselves and also talk from their own experience... just tell me what my place is in all this, educate me, because I have a hard time to decide this for myself’ (Emma, white/Black school).

‘It can also be a colleague who has experienced this before, It doesn’t have to be external, but preferably a person who has experienced this. So someone who really... has felt the negative sides of having a black skin... or someone who studied this, but I do think it would add more meaningful content and insights when someone has really lived it.’ (Aniek, Black school).

These findings show a similar display of whiteness as when teachers talked about the challenge with their own white identity. There seems to be a strong belief that teachers, whether it is them or others, who have never experienced racism, ‘cannot relate’ (Picower, 2019). They redirect the attention and responsibility for issues of race and racism onto people of color (Matias & Zembylas, 2014). It is not the responsibility of people of color, who constantly navigate white spaces, to educate white people (Garlough & Savitz, 2022). Therefore, white people should learn from other white people (Garlough & Savitz, 2022). The transformative work that is necessary to understand and acknowledge differences and experiences can happen in a dialogue with shared perspectives (Garlough & Savitz, 2022). This will help to critically reflect on identity, bias, values and origins (Garlough & Savitz, 2022). Additionally, a white teacher could model the unpacking of their own assumptions and behaviours when examining racism and white privilege. The teachers’ own, anxious, self-discovery can be educational for all (Smith et al., 2017).

Becoming responsible

Some teachers showed that they were learning and critically reviewing their own answers throughout the conversation. Initially, most teachers only referred to cases of racist bullying, but later reconsidered or questioned earlier responses. Aniek (Black school) shared a story about her school hiring a new colleague.

A: “we got a new colleague this year.. she is from the Antilles, from Aruba and she had to teach a test-lesson because they wanted to see if her accent was understandable and all that. But I know that colleagues who come from the Netherlands [that are white] never have to give a test-lesson, you know...”

Q: “If you give an example like this, would you call it racism? Or would you label it differently?”

A: “well, it rubs against it, because there are certain reasons she had to do this.

Maybe it was because.. she was going to teach in first grade, so it is very important you can pronounce the phonemes correctly, but ...she also finished her teaching degree, so you could trust that it’s alright, you know? So it is a bit remarkable. ”

Q: “so what does this rub against?”

A: “against racism”

Q: “Yes, so why do you say: ‘it rubs against’ and not name it specifically?”

A: “Because.. yes, I don’t know, because they had not yet seen the color of her skin for example? But then again, it was based on her background. Yes, that might just be racism.”

It is very clear that Aniek had trouble to state that this occurrence was indeed, racist. Since her colleague is not specifically excluded because of her skin-color, but because of her background, reflecting the Cultural Racism frame (Bonilla-Silva, 2018), Aniek does not immediately recognize it as racism. Essed & Hoving (2014) emphasize how the role of physical (racial) traits still are very important in recognizing racism in the Netherlands. Racism is only truly acknowledged when it is expressed with the clear intention to hurt people on the base of their race (Essed & Hoving, 2014). Denying race makes it is easier to avoid responsibility, which is the norm in Dutch society (Wekker, 2016). It is obvious that it takes a lot of questioning before Aniek really ‘dares’ to mention this occurrence was an example of racism. This clear denial of racism is a fine example of ‘ignorance’ as described by Essen & Hoving (2014) and as ‘innocence’ described by Wekker (2014). The dominant Dutch way of being is ‘a failure and a refusal to know’ (Essed & Hoving, 2014, p 411). Leonie (Black school) had a similar learning experience while telling me a story about the conversations in the teacher room,

‘Sometimes people say that the [African] community, they are very close. And some of them can be a bit ‘behind your back’.. that is something that is said sometimes. But that is a certain stereotype of course. that does not apply to everybody’.... ‘we didn’t really say anything mean or something, but actually, it is... but everybody seems to be ok with it.. nobody said anything about it.. when I think about it now, it is not really right’

In this example, teachers manifest the frame of cultural racism (Bonilla-Silva) by talking about an entire group of people in a very stereotypical way. However, since they mention certain ‘behavioural traits’ rather than mentioning race, nobody seems to even notice the racism that occurs. Even though, at the end of her story Leonie is acknowledging how ‘it is not right’ to look at this community as a whole, she still feels the need to mention they ‘didn’t really say anything mean’. According to Wekker (2016) this type of reaction is a mechanism to defend the innocent Dutch self-image. ‘This defence mechanism serves to preserve this ideal image of ourselves as deeply color-blind and antiracist’ (Wekker, 2016, p.79).

While many white teacher shy away from the needed dialog (Garlough & Savitz, 2022), all teachers have shown that they are willing, and at times, made a first step to look beyond their own color-blindness and ignorance. ‘White teachers need to understand what it means to be white, their privileges because of being white, and an understanding of how the dominant culture oppresses others’ (Garlough & Savitz, 2022).

Discussion and conclusion

In this study I aimed to explore how white primary school teachers experience teaching about racism in the Netherlands. I have found two significant differences between teachers working in Black and white schools. First, teachers in Black schools felt a strong responsibility and importance to address racism in the classroom, whereas teachers in white schools did not see the relevance. Second, teachers in Black schools were more aware of their

own racial identity. They expressed their biggest challenge was feeling like they ‘can’t relate’ to their students of color and it is therefore ‘not their place’ to teach about racism. Teachers in white schools did not connect their challenges to their own identity, but focused more on staying neutral and sometimes avoided difficult conversations. Because this study was limited to exploring experiences, I cannot explain why these differences emerge. This is recommended for future research.

The experiences of teachers in both Black and white schools reflected broader color-blind frames as described by Bonilla-Silva (2018). They defend liberal ideas, minimize racism and use cultural racism in order to deny racism in school. Teachers also showed expressions of whiteness by seeing ‘white’ as ‘normal’, by stepping away from responsibility and by explaining inequalities to factors that exclude racism.

Since conducting this research was limited in time, I interviewed ten people from a similar age, who emerged through my personal network. This may have affected the answers teachers provided, which could make this study less generalizable.

Ultimately, the findings showed that teachers have not received any education on teaching about racism. Since most interviewees graduated a while ago, it would be interesting for future research to see if and how the topic of racism is included in today’s teacher training. All teachers expressed a curiosity in learning about racism. The first step into creating better education for the children, would be for white teachers to understand and critically analyse their own whiteness. This will help them to feel more confident talking about racism. Instead of asking, ‘Who am I to teach this class?’ they could ask themselves ‘why not me?!’

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Appendix I

Ethics and privacy checklist



CHECKLIST ETHICAL AND PRIVACY ASPECTS OF RESEARCH

INSTRUCTION

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

This checklist is a mandatory part of the empirical master's thesis and 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: Teaching about racism in Dutch primary education

Name, email of student: Maaïke Klompmaker: maaïkeelizabeth@gmail.com

Name, email of supervisor: Bonnie French

Start date and duration: 13/1/2015 – 22/6/2025

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 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 research will explore experiences of teachers when teaching about racism in primary schools and how their own identity might influence their experiences. In order to collect sufficient data, talking about race and participants own identity is inevitable.*

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

- *Firstly, teachers will be informed about the topic of research before committing to participate and sign a consent form that ensures their anonymity, data protection and data storage. Secondly, participants will be asked for consent to record the interview. Participants have the agency to stop the interview at any point. They will receive the finished research paper via e-mail and are able to withdraw their participation at any time during the research process. The researcher will check in with participants in the weeks after the interview to see how they are doing.*

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.

- *Research about racism can bring up strong emotions or feelings of guilt and shame, but also positive feelings. Therefore, as mentioned above, the researcher will check in with participants in the weeks following the interview to see how they are doing. No further unintended circumstances are anticipated in this research.*

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?

- *The data will be collected through in person interviews with primary school teachers. The place of meeting can be of the participants choice (e.g. at their workplace, at home, in a public space).*

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

- *Anticipated number of teachers that will be interviewed is 12.*

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

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

- *154.000 (CBS, 2018)*

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?

- *Recordings of the conducted interviews, transcriptions and personal data of participants will be stored on a personal device with password protection. Data will be transferred to the device as soon as the interview is conducted.*

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?

- *Student conducting research: Maaïke Klompmaker*

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

-

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

- *The interview transcripts will be anonymized by changing names of participants to pseudonyms. Secondly, the name of schools and the area's schools are located will not be mentioned in this research.*

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:
Maaïke Klompmaker

Name (EUR) supervisor:
Bonnie French

Date:

Date: 20-03-2025

