



Philanthropy for queer rights: Western funding into the Global South through a decolonial lens

Master's Thesis

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Abstract

In the last few decades institutional philanthropy for queer rights has been on the rise, especially Western grantmaking in the Global South. While this can be a positive development, Western philanthropic foundations have been guilty of subconsciously perpetuating colonial power dynamics due to the manner in which coloniality, queerness and philanthrocapitalism are represented in their missions and methods. This thesis therefore conducted a case study on the Arcus Foundation, a U.S. based philanthropic foundation that frequently donates to the Global South. Using critical discourse analysis, 56 blog posts and 9 annual reports were analyzed with decolonial theory as the overarching framework. Findings showed that coloniality is presented in the discourse through concepts such as Western knowledge, Western exceptionalism and Othering. Decolonial theory revealed that queerness in Arcus' discourse is characterized by religion, hetero/homonormativity and homonationalism. Finally, the analysis on philanthrocapitalism exposed White saviorism as a pitfall for Western philanthropic foundations and the debate on using neoliberal methods in philanthropic giving.

Key words: *Coloniality, Global South, Philanthrocapitalism, Queerness, the West*

1. Introduction

In the last few decades, institutional philanthropy has become more popularized to advance queer rights (Meyer, Dale & Willis, 2022). Institutional philanthropy in this case is defined as philanthropic foundations contributing to the public good by showing financial support to charitable causes and promoting social justice through the process of grantmaking (Cunningham, 2015; Mediavilla & Garcia-Arias, 2019). Here, the focus is on institutional philanthropy as opposed to individual philanthropy, which distinguishes itself from institutional philanthropy by centering individual donors who operate separately from a foundation (Barman, 2017). As institutional philanthropy for queer rights has been on the rise in recent years, philanthropic foundations from the West frequently fund lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) activists in the Global South (Meyer et al., 2022). Presently, 'queer' is generally used as an umbrella term for LGBTQ, consequently queerness is the expression of the queer identity (Jones, 2009).

While the employment of Western institutional philanthropy for queer rights is an arguably positive development for the queer rights movement in the Global South, it also presents what Moreau and Currier (2018) deemed a 'queer dilemma'. This dilemma essentially presents a paradox, in which queer liberation is prioritized in the Global South through Western funding of LGBTQ organizations in an attempt to decolonize the heteronormative discourse; however, this has simultaneously been found to immobilize these organizations by reinforcing colonial power structures (Moreau & Currier, 2018). These power dynamics rooted in colonialism originated from the Euro-centered domination over its colonies, which is what is meant here by colonialism (Quijano, 2007). The colonial power structures which are seemingly reinforced by Western funding into the Global South is exactly what makes the focus on the Global South so interesting. Here, the West includes Western-Europe and Euro-North America as the descendant of those European dominators (Quijano, 2007).

Additionally, coloniality has affected the language used to establish the ideal queer identity in the West. That is to say, the Western portrayal of queerness might not exactly compute with queer identities in the Global South, due to the influence of colonialism on knowledge production of the queer identity. Western concepts of queerness and homonormativity have been pushed onto the Global South's LGBTQ agenda before, partly as a consequence of Western philanthropy (Moreau & Currier, 2018). Thus, the power dynamics between Western funder and fundee from the Global South have been shaped by a longstanding history of colonialism, as attitudes toward queerness in the West have shifted parallel to Western societies' morality politics (Gosine, 2018).

Institutional philanthropy for queer rights, henceforth defined as queer philanthropy, is not exclusively subjected to criticism, as philanthropy as a whole can be analyzed through a critical decolonial lens. Philanthrocapitalism plays an important role here, as conceptualized by Bishop and Green (2008). Philanthrocapitalism is a relatively new concept that has seen an increase in the last couple of years, where philanthropy calls for "the growing role for private sector actors in addressing the biggest social and environmental challenges facing the planet" (Bishop & Green, 2015, p. 541). As the term philanthrocapitalism suggests, the concept values a capitalist approach to philanthropic giving. In the context of queer philanthropy this can serve as an argument for critical decolonial theory, which would argue this establishes the wealth and power distribution more explicitly through the employment of neoliberal efforts and colonial ideals of the queer identity (Haydon, Jung & Russell, 2021; Mediavilla & Garcia-Arias, 2019).

In international philanthropy this can become visible through the weight of Western funding into the Global South, which simultaneously grows the foundations' own social, cultural and economic capital (Moreau & Currier, 2018). However, advocates might state that philanthrocapitalism can be used as an opportunity to efficiently increase social justice in a proportional way by taking from the richest and giving back to those who need it most (Bishop

& Green, 2008; Mediavilla & Garcia-Arias, 2019). The nuances of philanthrocapitalism are interesting to consider within the context of colonialism, as both sides regard colonial ideals in a different manner. Additionally, queer philanthropy provides a topical edge, as attitudes toward ‘queerness’ have historically been influenced by colonialism.

This thesis seeks to add to the existing literature by researching institutional philanthropy dedicated to queer rights specifically in the context of philanthrocapitalism and its implications for (neo)colonial power structures. There is a gap in existing research of platforming queer case studies, in addition to decolonial efforts being under-researched, which is what makes this thesis scientifically relevant. The societal relevance of this thesis becomes clear through the effects that philanthropy can have on queer activists or organizations in the Global South, when colonial language and ideals are brought over from Western funders. By critically analyzing philanthropic foundations’ missions and methods for advancing queer rights through a decolonial lens, those same foundations might be more mindful in the future of potential harm they are doing to queer communities. Thus, this thesis will employ a single case study of the Arcus Foundation, a philanthropic foundation in the West that donates to queer rights organizations in the Global South, in an attempt to answer the following research question: *“How do Western philanthropic foundations, dedicated to queer rights in the Global South, support or counter dynamics of coloniality, queerness and philanthrocapitalism in their discourse?”*

The introduction of this thesis is followed by a theoretical framework, which seeks to bind the research to the ongoing, existing literary debate and to ground the research in critical (de)colonial theory. Then a methodology section will follow, in which the research methods and design will be defined and clarified. Furthermore, the results of this research will be analyzed. To conclude this thesis, the discussion and conclusion will seek to answer the research question, additionally giving attention to limitations and suggestions for possible future research.

2. Theoretical framework

To lay the groundwork for this thesis, first (post)colonialism and decolonial theory will be discussed separately. Next, a section on queerness will follow and this will then be brought into relation with coloniality. Furthermore, the origins of philanthropy and the nuanced debate on philanthrocapitalism will be shown, and simultaneously discussed within the context of coloniality. Lastly, coloniality, queerness and philanthrocapitalism will all be connected.

2.1. Post/De/Colonialism

Colonialism, specifically the Euro-centered colonialism, at its core is ‘‘a relation of direct, political, social and cultural domination [...] established by the Europeans over the conquered of all continents’’ (Quijano, 2007, p. 168). This colonial domination of Western-Europe over other societies is written to have lasted from around the 15th century up to the 20th century (Macqueen, 2007b). However, the colonial power structures of that era have produced systems of knowledge and power that are still in effect to this day, which includes the creation of social discriminations based on Western-made social identities (Quijano, 2007). This becomes evident through the West’s treatment of the previously colonized as inferior and the cultural repression done to colonized communities. Quijano (2007) therefore theorized coloniality, as the successor of explicit political colonialism, which operates in the legacy of this colonial domination.

Coloniality has consequently influenced the production of knowledge, which resulted in the treatment of colonized knowledge as objective, scientific and universally true. Postcolonial scholars countered this objectivity by challenging the historical context in which knowledge was produced and pushed into the world (Bhabra, 2014). This is where Said’s (1998) Orientalism originated. He theorized the Orientalist thought as an imagined division of the world into two parts, where the Orient represented a ‘different’, unknown, backward part of the world set against the modern Occident or the West (Said, 1998). He showed the treatment of the Orient as the ‘Other’ in the West, which laid the groundwork for decolonial theorists.

Said's (1998) Orientalism is closely related to the ideology of Western exceptionalism. Namely, Western exceptionalism is best defined as the "idea that the West is, somehow, superior to the Rest, which means that it has privileges that countries of the Rest should not or could not have" (Moosa, 2023, p. 45). Here, the 'Rest' is synonymously used with the Other that Said (1998) conceptualized. Western exceptionalism is important to acknowledge within the framework of coloniality, as it can be a harmful ideology to operate from. Namely, it excuses the West to treat the Other as inferior, because it believes itself exceptional (Moosa, 2023). Decolonial theory exposes this phenomenon and counters this self-appointed exceptionalism of the West.

The decolonial approach emphasizes the longstanding history of changing infrastructures of knowledge to exclude that what is considered non-Western. In short, decolonial theory aims to decenter Western systems of knowledge on a personal, institutional and cultural level (Bhambra, 2014; Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2007). Essentially, postcolonialism is the academic study that preceded the decolonial school of thought, which can be seen as the political and social movement as a continuation of postcolonialism (Bhambra, 2014). This thesis will therefore employ decolonial theory, but may use concepts that originated from postcolonialism such as Orientalism or 'Othering', as the two employ similar approaches to decolonizing knowledge. However, it recognizes that the two are not interchangeable.

2.2. Queerness in the World

The term 'queer' is generally used in reference to the LGBTQ community. This acronym stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning respectively. The queer identity is ideally used as an umbrella term that is a fluid and unfixed identity for people within the community, who do not necessarily prescribe the fixed sexual identities to themselves (Jones, 2009). Queerness is then the expression of the queer identity, which is similarly used to the more widely known term 'homosexuality'. Arguably, the existence of the queer community and homosexuality have most potently been countered by homophobic sounds since the arrival of

religion, Christianity in particular (Sullivan, 2004; Van der Meer, 2004). Contemporarily, Christian values are most often at the basis for homophobia. Decolonial theory shows that this is rooted in colonialism, as Christianity is a Western-made religion that was brought over and pushed onto the Global South during the political Euro-centered domination (Gerbner, 2015). Colonialism and queerness have been closely related as history suggests. To gain a better understanding of the relationship between both concepts, Gosine (2014) explains the shifting of attitudes towards homosexuality as from the perspective of colonial Europe. Christianity has highly influenced the morality politics of the West, which mainly shifted these perspectives.

In the colonial era, Europe regarded homosexuality as deviant behavior, because this period marked a sexually repressive time for Europe in which Europeans did not wish to challenge hegemonic heterosexuality (Gosine, 2014). Thus, simultaneously colonized communities were being punished, for their expression of sexuality was too liberated per Western morality politics. Additionally, colonizers used the sexual liberation of the colonized as evidence that these communities were not fit to be independent as ‘‘disciplined sexuality was a key component of civility’’ (Gosine, 2014, p. 198). This is a clear example of ‘Othering’ done by the West that compares the backward and uncivilized Orient against the modern and progressive Occident/West, theorized by decolonial scholars (Bhabra, 2014; Said, 1998). A new era, marked by political decolonization from the 20th century onwards, caused the once colonized communities to gain sovereignty (Macqueen, 2007a). These former colonies then became obliged to advance to the ‘modernity’ of Western societies, which they partly accomplished by internalizing heteronormativity (Gosine, 2014). However, as the West has recently attempted to decolonize sexuality politics, it is now the restrictive sexual outlooks of the Orient that are seen as uncivilized and backward. Thus, the narrative of queerness as deviant or uncivilized has shifted through a colonial framework in Western societies.

The longstanding history of treating queerness as a sexual minority has resulted in the

reign of heteronormativity. This is defined by the structural treatment of heterosexuality as natural and superior within a society (Robinson, 2016). A society that is built on heteronormativity inherently feeds into homophobia, as it institutionally discriminates against the queer community through law, education, media, etc. On the other hand, homonormativity is cut from this same cloth. Homonormativity is characterized by applying heteronormative ideals onto queer identities, in an attempt to assimilate the queer community to a heteronormative society (Robinson, 2016). In this way, ‘sexually marginalized individuals can stake a claim for their rights through asserting that gay and lesbian individuals are just like their heterosexual counterparts, except for their same-sex attractions and partnerships’ (Robinson, 2016, p. 1). It is a tactic used to fit sexual minority communities into the heteronormative landscape under the pretense of being equal, while in actuality this reinforces the superiority of heterosexuality. This expresses itself through the legalization of same-sex marriage, or the allowance for queer people into the military, which is closely related to ‘homonationalism’.

Another phenomenon that followed the colonial history of queerness is ‘homonationalism’, defined by Puar (2007). She describes homonationalism as a Western (political) tactic to individualize queer issues, by including and affording certain heteropatriarchal rights, such as gay marriage, to idealized queer identities that fit the Western mold. This is a highly racialized phenomenon, as the ideal queer identity is a white gay man (Puar, 2007). This homonormativity then creates the illusion of inclusion, based on choice politics, while purposefully ignoring the larger institutional inequalities faced by queer people. Similarly, homonationalism is used in the West to expose the Orient, in Puar’s case Muslims, as backward, ‘whereby homonormative and queer gay men can enact forms of national, racial, or other belongings by contributing to a collective vilification of Muslims’ (Puar, 2007, p. 21). This homonormativity from the West is used against communities in the Global South in

general, not just Muslims. Homonationalism as a strategy, places those with underdeveloped queer rights as the regressive Other.

2.3. Philanthropy and Capitalism

Philanthropy, as a phenomenon, originated in the West from Christian values (Cunningham, 2015). This, combined with the colonial power dynamics still at play between the West and the Orient, highly influenced the actors who participated in philanthropic giving. The consequences of this are visible through prominent Western philanthropic giving to the Orient, presently redefined as the Global South. Consecutively, decolonial theory can be applied to the system of philanthropy. Here, critics might say that international philanthropy as a system runs the risk of perpetuating ‘White saviorism’, a term broadly described as the performative humanitarianism of white people in a pursuit of self-fulfillment and show of good-will, while lacking the necessary skill and knowledge (Blackwell & Naylor, 2024; Jefferess, 2021). Evidently, when capitalist values started to fuel philanthropic giving, as large sums of monetary investments started to define philanthropy, philanthropic giving faced criticism for its patronizing nature (Cunningham, 2015). The colonized production of knowledge has also influenced the missions and methods of philanthropic organizations in the West.

The Global South’s receiving organizations can therefore find themselves in a double bind, where these organizations receive financial support but not without certain conditions set by the funder (Moreau & Currier, 2018). This is partly due to the necessary monetary funding which presents a relational power dynamic between funder and fundee. This simultaneously exemplifies an argument against philanthrocapitalism. Philanthrocapitalism, as defined by Bishop and Green (2008), is when philanthropy calls for rich private actors to invest into causes that benefit social and economic justice. Proponents have stated that this method of philanthropy is the most efficient way of dealing with the growing social and economic inequalities societies face, by utilizing the resources of the ultra-rich (Bishop and Green, 2008).

However, critics of philanthrocapitalism have argued that private sector actors in philanthropy negatively influence agenda-setting and policymaking by prioritizing “organizational performance over social objectives” (Haydon et al., 2021, p. 359). Edwards (2008) posed that the rise of philanthrocapitalism causes the charity sector to deal with social issues through market methods. This critique can be applied to the rise of Western philanthropy in the Global South, as it becomes visible that Western funding influences the agenda-setting and policymaking in the Global South. This happens for example when activists in the Global South internalize the organizational structure and priorities of the international donors to become more mainstream and attractive for future funding (Moreau & Currier, 2018).

Argued further from the decolonial perspective, philanthrocapitalism in the Global South can be regarded as a perpetuation of colonial power structures, as the dynamic between giver and receiver is reminiscent of those same power structures (Chuang, 2015). Decolonial thought theorizes that private sector actors further establish their place in the world as wealthy and powerful by employing neoliberal methods (Mediavilla & Garcia-Arias, 2019). Neoliberal methods in philanthropy call for the application of market logic in solving social justice issues. Furthermore, neoliberal ideology believes that performance should be measured by economic success (Eikenberry & Mirabella, 2018). The neoliberal ideology is susceptible to undermining philanthropy, as it prioritizes the advancement of an individual’s motivation as opposed to the public good’s. Additionally, this colonizes the agenda-setting and policymaking of specific philanthropic organizations, but also the field of philanthropy inherently, as the private sector actors from the West are products of colonized knowledge and now influence which issues are at the forefront of the philanthropic sector (Haydon et al., 2021).

2.4.Coloniality, queerness and philanthrocaptialism

Western philanthropy for queer rights in the Global South is arguably at the intersection of coloniality, queerness and philanthrocapitalism. Namely, Western philanthropic foundations

have been criticized for the manner in which these foundations attempt to address social inequalities in the Global South, as it “tend[s] to reflect Western values, frameworks, and understandings of identity” (Cheong, Johns & Byron, 2023, p. 2439). When it comes to queer philanthropy specifically, the missions of these Western funders may not be directly translatable to communities in the Global South due to the coloniality of their knowledge on the queer identity (Moreau & Currier, 2018). Homonormativity often goes hand in hand with this occurrence. That is to say, heteronormative ideals are then incorporated in the agenda of the organizations and pushed onto the queer community by these Western foundations (Robinson, 2016).

The emphasis on Western philanthropy for queer rights in the Global South could further be placed in the framework of Western exceptionalism, as it perpetuates the notion that the West is exceptional in its freedom for queer people and that the Global South should be liberated symmetrical to the West (Moosa, 2023). It can simultaneously be construed as Othering, because it places the exceptional West against the Other who is still regressive in the process for queer liberation. Massad (2007) even theorized that Western imperialism itself is persisted when LGBTQ organizations emphasize their efforts into the Global South. He argued that the West’s focus on queer issues in the Global South is merely a tool to push imperialist values onto those same communities. This exemplifies the continuation of coloniality through queer liberation. In this way, Western philanthropy for queer rights in the Global South can be viewed as a tool used to maintain this. Philanthropic foundations in the West might subconsciously perpetuate colonial ideals of the queer identity/queerness in the Global South and consequently bolster colonial power dynamics. That is what this thesis seeks to research.

3. Methodology

3.1. Case Study

This thesis employs a single case study of the Arcus Foundation. It offers an extensive analysis of data from a private grantmaking foundation dedicated to queer rights. A case study allows for in-depth analyses of a specific case, which can be an event, activity, process, individual or a group of people (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Case studies are typically not generalizable as the research employs such a deep exploration of a particular case. However, this is not a reason to not employ a case study, as it still adds to the collective process of knowledge accumulation albeit for a more specific field which can be just as valuable (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In this case, the specific field includes (de)colonial research on queer philanthropy.

After careful consideration, the Arcus Foundation was chosen for this case study. This foundation was chosen based on its participation in the 2030 Agenda List on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) from the SDG Funders website (Kalfagianni, 2022). This list comprised of multiple foundations recognized by the United Nations as contributing to the 2030 Agenda through philanthropic investments. The reason for choosing from this specific list is because the foundations included are important players in tackling environmental and social issues at a global level. Furthermore, the Arcus Foundation was selected based on the following additional criteria: the foundation had to be founded in the West but prominently donate to projects in the Global South, the foundation had to be primarily dedicated to LGBTQ rights and the foundation had to be managed as a nonprofit association. Additionally, in light of the scope of this research enough data had to be available and publicly accessible. The Arcus Foundation was the only particular case out of 43 other philanthropic foundations that was satisfactory based on the beforementioned prerequisites. As a footnote, the chosen foundation also donates in the U.S., as the foundation is U.S. based, but primarily focuses its efforts in the Global South (Arcus Foundation, 2025).

3.2. Critical Discourse Analysis

This research employs critical discourse analysis (CDA). It aims to not merely regard the ontology of the language used, but to connect the analyzed data to the larger systems at hand (Gee, 2014). In other words, CDA attempts to make visible “the implicit relationships between discourse, power, and ideology” (Wodak, 2014, p. 304). This thesis seeks to analyze the constructions of coloniality, queerness and philanthrocapitalism in Arcus’ discourse, while simultaneously connecting these constructions to a decolonial framework. CDA is therefore the most appropriate research method for this study, as it aims to reveal how certain issues are constructed in a discourse and how this relates to certain ideologies, which can uncover hidden power relations (Wodak, 2014). Discourse analysis covers data that ranges from policy documents, illustrations, speeches, social media content, (personal) narratives in the form of text, talk or videos (Wodak, 2014). For the case of the Arcus Foundation the data consists of documents found on their public website from the span of the last ten years that mention LGBTQ rights such as blog posts, annual reports, and any contextual information about the foundations (e.g. board member information or origins of the foundation). In total 9 annual reports and 56 blog posts were collected (Arcus Foundation 2025). The annual reports range from 2014 up to 2023, as this is the last recently published report. The blog posts were collected from 2014 up to 2024, all blog posts included focused on queer philanthropy or at least mentioned queer rights or the community in the post itself. The blog posts feature articles written by columnists and authors who are affiliated with Arcus.

This thesis employs Wodak’s Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), this is a type of CDA (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). “Discourse historical approach considers intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between texts, genres and discourses, as well as sociological variables, and situational frames” (Jahedi, Abdullah & Mukundan, 2014, p. 31). This is therefore well suited for this type of research as it places the data from the foundations in the

larger framework of coloniality, shaped by historical and socio-political discourse (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). The historic aspect of the approach makes it attractive for this thesis specifically, because it allows the research to connect the discourse of Western philanthropic foundations to decolonial theory. Additionally, the DHA is an interdisciplinary approach that applies a principle of triangulation, which is beneficial for validity and minimizing research biases (Jahedi et al., 2014; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).

For the DHA the researcher constantly has to switch between the field and theory. It is therefore appropriate to begin the analysis with concepts derived from theory. Thus, a coding scheme has been made to aid in the data analysis, presented in table 1. It consists of three established coding categories, namely: colonialism, queerness and philanthrocapitalism. Each coding category has its own concepts to concretize the main theory in which they are placed and to recognize these coding categories more easily in the discourse. Additionally, the research was open to findings that came up during the analysis outside of the established coding categories. This was coded amid the analysis (See Appendix I). This analysis can therefore be described as an abductive approach, as it employs deductive data collection, but was still open to findings that emerged in the field during the research. For the analysis the program Atlas.TI was used to code and organize the data.

Table 1. Coding scheme

Coding category	Definition in relation to decolonial theory	Concepts
<i>Coloniality</i>	The foundation centers Western knowledge and implies the West is exceptional; placement of the Global South's communities as the Other in the discourse.	Western knowledge (e.g. Western sources, pure scientific knowledge); Western exceptionalism (e.g. superiority of the West); Othering (e.g. painting the Global South as regressive)
<i>Queerness</i>	The foundation centers the portrayal of queer people through a hetero/homonormative lens; supposed advancement of queer rights by affording specific rights only to limited groups within the community in the discourse.	Religion (e.g. faith, Christianity, Islam); Homonormativity (e.g. assimilation of queerness to heteronormative roles); Heteronormativity (e.g. heterosexuality as the standard); Homonationalism (e.g. emphasis on homophobia in the Global South for advancement of xenophobia)
<i>Philanthrocapitalism</i>	The foundation centers philanthropic stories in the Global South as a means of self-fulfillment; grantmaking/investment in philanthropic organizations by focusing on profit and market opportunities in the discourse.	White saviorism (e.g. White benevolence, self-fulfillment, removal receiver's agency); Neoliberal methods (e.g. focus on profit, market methods, efficiency)

3.3. Positionality

As in any research, the positionality of the researcher is important to acknowledge within the academic framework, but especially in CDA which calls for critical self-reflection (Wodak, 2014). This researcher recognizes that there should be a sensitivity in handling matters of

coloniality of power and queerness, especially because this thesis will be done in the West. This thesis seeks to be sensitive of the language that is used throughout this body of work, as it does not mean to patronize or silence communities and organizations from the Global South. It merely attempts to be critical of existing literature and data on queer philanthropy.

As a woman of color raised in the Netherlands I became aware and critical of institutionalized inequalities from a young age. Consequently, I sought out theory that could explain these inequalities. The decolonial approach is a theory that resonated with me instantly, which played an important role in specifying the focus of this thesis. I recognize that my privileged educational background influences the way I approach the research and that privilege has allowed me to gain the tools and education necessary to be critical of my personal situation as well as other marginalized communities in the first place. Additionally, my own experiences with finding my place within the queer community and my overall allyship inspired me to try to shed more light onto the queer community in the academic world. However, I do not wish to treat the community as a monolith and do not want to speak for them, especially because I focus my efforts in the Global South in which I have not gained my experiences. I seek to approach this research with humility, while being upfront about the personal motivations that are driving this research.

4. Results

4.1. The Arcus Foundation and Annual Reports

The Arcus Foundation is a private grantmaking institution that is partially based in the U.S. (Arcus Foundation, 2025). The Arcus Foundation was founded in 2000 by Jon Stryker, an American billionaire, who has personally funded the organization with more than 500 million USD since its establishment (Forbes, 2025). The two main missions of the Arcus Foundation have always been the advancement of LGBTQ human rights and the conservation of great apes (Arcus Foundation, 2025). Arcus chooses to use the term LGBTQ over queer, therefore in the analysis the terms are used synonymously. Above all else, the foundation operates under the following motto: “Arcus believes that respect for diversity among peoples and in nature is essential to a positive future for our planet and all its inhabitants” (Arcus Foundation, 2025). The foundation has a Social Justice Program set up, which prioritizes grantmaking for organizations that support LGBTQ human rights in twelve chosen countries in the Americas and Africa. The four objectives central within the Social Justice Program are increased safety, increased social inclusion, increased protections and strong movements.

The Arcus Foundation specifically focuses its LGBTQ grantmaking in East- and Southern Africa, The Caribbean, South- and Central America, and Mexico for their international portfolio (Arcus Foundation, 2025). The Arcus Foundation officially added these focus areas as part of Arcus’ big restructure of its Social Justice Program in 2018. Before the restructure Arcus already donated to the Global South, but it was not 50/50 to the U.S. The restructure not only made an impact on the focus areas, but also on the methods for strategic grantmaking. This meant that Arcus put more weight on listening to communities closer to the ground, as part of the ‘learning and listening’ strategy for Arcus’ grantmaking. In the annual reports there is not a specific reason given for the restructure, only this brief statement from the 2018 annual report: “We work in regions where we believe we can have the greatest impact with our finite

resources” (Arcus Foundation, 2018, p. 4). Lastly, the restructure also had an effect on the discourse from Arcus itself, which will play a part in the following analysis.

4.2. Coloniality

The analysis depicts that the Arcus Foundation’s discourse is not exempt from the consequences of coloniality, albeit unwittingly. First of all, the analysis reveals that the discourse on coloniality was certainly affected by the restructure of the Social Justice Program. Namely, the data shows that the Arcus Foundation used to prioritize Western knowledge production over consulting the communities in the Global South, until the restructure of 2018. An example of this can be found in this quote:

In an effort to gain an even greater understanding of the pressing needs found among transgender communities, Arcus kicked off its discovery process in 2013 by organizing a two-day convening that involved more than 70 transgender activists and organization leaders from across the country. Over the following two years, we further informed our approach by attending a series of conferences, such as Gender Odyssey and the Philly Transgender Health Conference; hosting smaller-scale feedback sessions to sharpen or refine our learning; and taking part in a number of meetings with transgender activists from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and Europe. (Arcus Foundation, 2016b, p. 5)

The quote mentions Arcus’ extensive research done in the U.S. by American transgender activists and organizations, which is the nation meant here. Then, it is briefly mentioned that Arcus attended meetings with transgender activists from the Global South in the following two years. Nevertheless, this does not match up to the amount of knowledge that was extracted from the West. Likely because Arcus had not decidedly added the Global South to its priority areas until the restructure of 2018. However, Arcus did already make donations to the Global South

by then, it just was not explicitly established in their Social Justice Program. As mentioned before, from 2019 onwards there is a shift in Arcus' strategy and this is also visible in the discourse regarding coloniality. For example in this quote, Arcus makes it clear where its funding priorities lie:

In the Social Justice Program, we center communities most pushed to the margins, typically LGBTQ communities of color, transgender people, and, most recently, Indigenous queer communities like the *muxe* in Oaxaca, Mexico. As our grantmaking in social justice transitioned in 2019 to priority states in the U.S. and priority countries in international regions, funding those closest to the ground became a greater priority. (Arcus Foundation, 2021, p. 5)

Additionally, Arcus seems more aware of the importance of listening to the most marginalized communities they speak of. The following quote illustrates this: "Arcus has always tried to fund organizations engaged in social-change work on behalf of those communities most pushed to the margins. And we are increasingly looking to work with organizations that have been founded by, and are operated by and for, those communities" (Arcus Foundation, 2022a, p. 6). Here, listening to and learning from the community itself is emphasized. This approach was significantly more emphasized from the year of Arcus' transition in the Social Justice Program.

Moreover, the discourse shows the implicit legacy of the colonial production of knowledge by indirect displays of Western exceptionalism. This is best explained as the self-arrogance of the West who regards itself superior to the Rest (Moosa, 2023). The Arcus Foundation is guilty of unknowingly perpetuating this sentiment in some of its blog posts. For example, the discourse depicts the concept of Western exceptionalism in the following quote:

After Gambia's President Yahya Jammeh in October 2014 signed into law a bill that punishes certain homosexual activities with life imprisonment, the U.S. government suspended its special trade arrangement with the country in protest at the legislation.

Against this backdrop, both the Geneva-based U.N. Human Rights Council (HRC), which includes 13 countries from Africa, and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights took historic steps against anti-LGBT persecution during 2014. (Arcus Foundation, 2015a, p. 5)

This quote portrays the U.S. government as the protagonist for the advancement of queer rights in Gambia, thereby undermining the agency of African organizations. It paints the U.S. in a morally superior way to the African country, by accentuating the suspension in trade as a protest against the Gambian president's judgement, which is further suggested to have influenced the U.N. and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights. This is a covert example of Western exceptionalism, more specifically the American exceptionalism. An ideology that believes "the US is unique among nations with respect to its ideas of democracy and personal freedom" (Moosa, 2023, p.27). The quote from Arcus encapsulates American exceptionalism by enhancing the role of the U.S. in the fight for queer rights in Africa. It also implies the superior personal freedom in the U.S. which Gambia should take steps to achieve in order to collaborate further with the U.S. Additionally, this is reminiscent of Othering. Western exceptionalism often goes hand in hand with Othering, because the treatment of the Other logically stems from the belief that the West is exceptional.

Othering is not a new phenomenon in Western discourse. The Arcus Foundation implicitly contributes to Othering language, as it often compares the progress of queer rights in the Global South to that of the West. Arguably, words such as 'progress' and 'long way to go' inherently suggest a need to 'catch up' with the development of the West. An example of this is illustrated through this quote:

Major steps forward for legal recognition of gender diversity in parts of Latin America have resulted from recommendations made by the region's top human rights court seven years ago, but there is still a long way to go in a region affected by complex political

contexts, loud and sometimes influential opposition movements, and the rise of an increasingly populist cross-border movement seeking to define gender in exclusively binary terms, according to a report published by the Arcus Foundation in May 2024. (Arcus Foundation, 2024, p. 1)

In this quote, Latin America is painted as the Other. The discourse states that Latin America is behind on legal recognition of gender diversity, exemplified by phrases ‘major steps forward’ and ‘long way to go’. It is never explicitly mentioned compared to whom Latin America is behind, but due to the context in which this article was produced it strongly implies the West. The advancement of queer rights is undoubtedly something to strive for, but it can still contribute to the perpetuation of colonial language when it is placed in the framework of the modern West versus the backward Other. Furthermore, the description of Latin America in the quote contains the negative connotation that the region is unique in its mentioned attributes (complex political contexts, etc.), as though this is not an occurrence in the West, when in reality all the mentioned descriptors could similarly be ascribed to places in the West.

Another form of Othering language that the Arcus Foundation’s discourse uses, is the word ‘acceptance’ pertaining to queer people or queerness. This is a subtle form of Othering as it suggests that queerness is not a natural occurrence, but something that needs to be accepted by a superior in order for it to be in existence. For example in these quotes: “Catholic laypersons’ acceptance of LGBT equality” (Arcus Foundation, 2016c, p.4), “acceptance of same-sex marriage” (Arcus Foundation, 2016c, p.4), and “the potential for a greater level of acceptance, [...] among the church’s more than one million members” (Arcus Foundation, 2019, p. 5). It implies there is a separate entity with superiority who gets to decide what to accept and what not to accept in any given social context, over the people in the sexual minority community it pertains to.

Furthermore, Arcus seldomly mentions political colonialism. It is briefly mentioned in

reference to the British colonization of Africa, but the consequences are more often implied than explicitly stated. The codes show that the ‘British colonial era’ is only mentioned a total of five times in the 56 documents that were analyzed.

4.3. Queerness

During the analysis on queerness it became clear that religion, or faith as Arcus more often refers to it, plays an important role in the discourse, but not necessarily how theory would suggest. Arcus chooses the term ‘faith’ over religion to refer to any system of religious belief, therefore ‘faith’ will be used as an umbrella term for different religions in this analysis. To start, the data shows that the Arcus Foundation is heavily involved with faith-based collaboration. This seems like a contradiction, because historically homophobia has been driven by religious values (Sullivan, 2004; Van der Meer, 2004). However, one of Arcus’ explicit goals in 2015 and 2016 was “supporting faith leaders who advocate for inclusion of LGBTQ people in their religious communities” (Arcus Foundation, 2015b, p. 4), thereby prioritizing faith-based collaborations. This sentiment has been a constant throughout the last ten years of Arcus’ grantmaking, even after their restructure in 2019, as seen through this quote: “For over a decade, Arcus has been supporting faith-based LGBTQ organizations globally to build local leadership, advocate at regional and international fora, and provide inclusive resources, messaging, and literature that speak to the needs of local communities and cultures” (Arcus Foundation, 2022b, p. 7). In general, Arcus features a high number of blog posts with faith-based philanthropy for queer rights as the overarching theme.

While this can be important in countries of the Global South where religious leaders influence the social climate for the queer community, it can also be interpreted as a perpetuation of homonormativity. This is because Christianity and Islam, the most-featured religions in Arcus’ blog posts, center the relationship between a woman and a man. The religions are therefore inherently heteronormative, as they do not make space for any other relations outside

that of a man and woman. Homonormativity seeps in when these organizations try to make the multitudes of queerness fit into the rigid framework of heteronormativity that is wielded in Christianity or Islam. This is illustrated through the following quote:

The report additionally highlights the most effective strategies to-date for building inclusion and acceptance in faith communities. Opportunities have been found working with non-mainstream denominations who have autonomous decision-making power, using peer faith leader outreach, and approaching younger generation faith leaders, who are more open and receptive than their elders. (Arcus Foundation, 2022b, p. 3)

The quote demonstrates the need to make queer rights and ‘acceptance’ fit into the faith communities. Additionally, it highlights the hoops that queer rights organizations have to jump through in order to advance inclusion for the LGBTQ community in relation to faith-based collaboration. Namely, the conditions for collaboration already include working with ‘non-mainstream denominations’ and ‘younger generation faith leaders’.

Moreover, the presence of heteronormativity in most faith communities in the Global South puts a strain on the community itself to advocate for its own rights. This is emphasized by the Arcus Foundation in the discourse:

Human experience studies show that the #1 factor impacting behavior change is to have direct contact with people. So the more that LGBTQ people can be themselves in their interactions with families, school, work, and elsewhere, the more people who have certain prejudices will have to test those beliefs: “Is she/he/they the way I ‘know’?” If you meet one LGBTQ person who doesn’t fit your prejudice, you can dismiss them as being the exception. But if you meet 20 LGBTQ people and they test your assumptions, then your rule will not stand. Unfortunately, this puts a burden on our shoulders as LGBTQ people, but that is the most efficient way. (Arcus Foundation, 2020a, p. 6)

The quote exemplifies the consequences of a heteronormative approach to the advancement of queer inclusion. It puts responsibility onto the queer community to rid the mainstream community of their prejudices towards queer people, which the Arcus Foundation does acknowledge but does not necessarily discourage. Furthermore, it implies the need to convince heterosexual people that queer people “are just like their heterosexual counterparts, except for their same-sex attractions and partnerships” (Robinson, 2016, p. 1). This sentiment furthers the heteronormative discourse, because it suggests that heteronormative values are the standard that queer people should strive for in their relationships.

This ties into homonationalism which is used to leverage certain rights to the queer community, under the condition the community assimilates to heteronormative roles and values (Puar, 2007). Additionally, homonationalism is used to advance xenophobia by suggesting the Global South is regressive or Other due to ‘outdated’ views on homosexuality. In Arcus’ discourse this is covertly expressed, for example:

While LGBT-supportive Muslim groups, such as South Africa-based The Inner Circle and Muslims for Progressive Values in the United States, are growing and thriving, in some of the world’s 49 Muslim-majority countries—particularly those in the Middle East—conditions are worsening, according to the Organization for Refuge, Asylum & Migration (ORAM). ORAM’s helpline received record numbers of calls and emails in 2016 and early 2017, mostly made by gay men from Pakistan to Egypt to Morocco. (Arcus Foundation, 2017, p. 3)

In this quote the emphasis is on conditions worsening for the queer community in countries that have Islam as the dominated religion. This can be construed as an example of homonationalism, as it accentuates the progressive Muslim organization that is based in the U.S. against the backdrop of the regressive Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East. It particularly paints the Middle East in a backward and outdated light, which is not a new phenomenon in U.S.-

based media ever since the September 11th attacks in 2001 (Kellner, 2004). In this way, Arcus is guilty of subconsciously furthering xenophobic rhetoric by employing homonationalism in its discourse.

Lastly, it seems the restructure of the Arcus Foundation's Social Justice Program did not affect the discourse on queerness as much as the discourse on coloniality. In relation to queerness, the discourse does not change too much in the way it addresses the complexity of queer issues and the LGBTQ community. For example, Arcus has always been aware of the importance of intersectionality when it comes to addressing queer issues:

How are we going to solve problems like homelessness and poor educational outcomes if we are not willing to address why some populations are faring more poorly than others? If you do not address the over-representation of so-called "insignificant" populations within larger, systemic issues, you're less likely to make a significant dent in solving them. (Arcus Foundation, 2016d, p. 3)

On the other hand, Arcus does become more critical of the approaches used to solve these issues and the data available on queer communities after the restructure. For example, codes such as 'inclusive data' and 'critical lens' pertaining to queerness exclusively appear from 2020 onwards (See Appendix I). This is also connected to the coloniality conversation, because community voices are prioritized over Western knowledge production. Thus, Arcus' discourse seems to be most affected by the restructure when it comes to incorporating knowledge from the communities with lived experiences.

4.4. Philanthrocapitalism

The analysis on philanthrocapitalism in Arcus' discourse confirms the inherent patronizing nature of philanthropic foundations in certain ways. What is meant by this, is that philanthropic giving can be seen and felt as condescending, especially in the case of Western grantmaking in

the Global South. For example, Arcus posts about the importance of philanthropy for the most vulnerable communities in the Global South: “Philanthropy may not be able to solve every problem in society, but we can make a significant difference for some of the most vulnerable. Let’s put these communities at the center of our work, so all of us benefit” (Arcus Foundation, 2016d, p.4). This quote emphasizes the need for and significance of philanthropy for those communities specifically.

The underlying implication of this dynamic is the concept of White saviorism. White saviorism is the liberation or rescue of people of color, preferably in ‘underdeveloped countries’, at the hands of a White person (Blackwell & Naylor, 2024; Jefferess, 2021). This removes agency from the people of color and turns them into mere receivers of White benevolence. Arcus does not decisively show explicit signs of White saviorism in regard to the Global South. One of the reasons for this is the difficulty to draw a definitive line on whether Arcus’ promotion of its own success starts to venture into White saviorism territory. For example, in this case:

Arcus’ early support of IDAHOBIT [International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia] helped provide it with staffing and online infrastructure that strengthened its organizers’ ability to promote and make the day more visible. Several of our grantees continue to support IDAHOBIT outreach. (Arcus Foundation, 2020a, p. 2)

This quote emphasizes Arcus’ accomplishment of promoting visibility for IDAHOBIT, which in turn stresses the impact Arcus had on the staying power of the International Day. While this can be seen as a show of White benevolence, it is simultaneously an opportunity for Arcus to advertise its own successes in the fight for queer rights. Arcus is therefore an example of the reason why it is hard to draw a definitive line on whether something is or is not considered White saviorism.

On the other hand, Arcus does also highlight success stories of individuals that accentuate the role played by philanthropic organizations, which can be construed as implicit White saviorism as it attributes an individual's success to the philanthropic giving of the organizations. The use of individuals' success stories can further be seen as questionable, when this is the footnote for these blog posts:

Stories of impact aim to show the transformative effects of Arcus grantee partners on the individuals, organizations, and communities that they serve or support in strategic areas of focus around the world. Those featured in this story do not necessarily receive support directly from Arcus. (Arcus Foundation, 2020b, p. 7)

This footnote was used for four blog posts in total, which all featured success stories of an individual or an organization. The use of this footnote as a disclaimer, can be interpreted as the exploitation of a personal success story for the gain of legitimacy for Arcus. Namely, the stories with this footnote, were all about successfully advancing the queer agenda in the Global South and the U.S., which was highly alluded to being due to Arcus. However, this is not directly the case as this footnote suggests. Thus, Arcus does seem to exhibit implicit signs of White saviorism at times, but there is acknowledgement for the nuanced debate on the nature of philanthropic giving.

Furthermore, the analysis shows that Arcus has mostly employed neoliberal methods in relation to grantmaking, when it comes to convincing other philanthropic foundations to start putting queer issues on the agenda. For example:

But now is a perfect time for more foundations to integrate LGBT issues into their grantmaking strategies. With LGBT communities facing an array of problems that intersect with a range of funding priorities, funders have an opportunity for both leadership and impact—and several foundations are already stepping up. (Arcus Foundation, 2016a, p. 5)

This quote illustrates the way Arcus uses the values of the neoliberal ideology to its advantage. The neoliberal ideology prioritizes economic efficiency, market methods and profit (Eikenberry & Mirabella, 2018). In the discourse, Arcus tries to convince other foundations to invest in queer issues on account of the convenience that funding priorities coincide with queer issues. It exemplifies a neoliberal reasoning to start including the queer community in grantmaking strategies, due to the focus on economic efficiency and the call on an organization's personal motivation for philanthropy for queer rights.

Moreover, Arcus generally only displays neoliberal values in the discourse when it comes to quoting external actors who have asked or made statements to Arcus, which Arcus then tries to refute or appease. For instance, in this case where Arcus is replying to a frequently asked question regarding the reason for funding 'insignificant' populations:

When we entered the Q&A portion, someone in the audience stood up and asked, "Given that LGBT people are a small minority and Native Americans are an even smaller one, isn't the population of LGBT Native Americans statistically insignificant?"

The attendee then added, "Why would you say to a foundation that they should fund statistically insignificant populations when they want their funding to have a big impact?" (Arcus Foundation, 2016d, p. 1)

The Arcus Foundation then replies that the questioner misses the point of philanthropy as a whole and refutes the question with three arguments for funding queer issues. Here, Arcus uses the questions with neoliberal connotations that the foundation often gets asked to counter doubt and to lessen the prominence of neoliberal methods in its grantmaking strategies.

Additionally, as Arcus' listening and learning policy became more rigorously implemented over the years, people from within Arcus' grantee networks would discourage neoliberal methods in the grantmaking practices as well. These grantees would wish for Arcus to focus less on profit and efficiency, and more on impact and accessibility:

[The grantees] want us to devote more of our resources to grantmaking instead of adhering inflexibly to the 5% legal payout requirement. And they want our proposal and reporting processes to be less cumbersome and more relevant to their realities. When taken together, these voices are telling those of us in philanthropy that traditional methods of philanthropic practice do not help them advance social change and instead often hinder it by imposing upon already busy grantees unnecessary proposal and reporting requirements, and narrow project funding that limits their ability to adapt and respond to change. (Arcus Foundation, 2021, p. 2)

Thus, it seems Arcus has been aware of the nuances of using neoliberal methods in philanthropic giving since 2016, as shown before, but was not always able to avoid using these methods.

Lastly, Arcus' restructure in 2018 does not seem to affect the discourse on philanthrocapitalism too much. As mentioned in previous sections, the restructure mostly affected the discourse on coloniality. This is still true after the analysis on philanthrocapitalism. However, the covert White saviorism does seem to let up more after 2020 according to the codes. This does not seem to directly correlate to the restructure, but paired with the more critical approaches of Arcus since 2019, it might have affected Arcus to write about its accomplishments in a more considerable way.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

This thesis asked the following research question: *“How do Western philanthropic foundations, dedicated to queer rights in the Global South, support or counter dynamics of coloniality, queerness and philanthrocapitalism in their discourse?”* In an attempt to answer this question, a case study on the Arcus Foundation was done. Through a critical discourse analysis of 56 blog posts and 9 annual reports from the Arcus Foundation’s website, results were presented. A number of conclusions can be drawn from these results. The findings show that coloniality, queerness and philanthrocapitalism all behave differently in Arcus’ discourse. One surprising discovery that appeared, was the restructure of Arcus’ Social Justice Program in 2018. This was an unexpected finding that affected the three themes in different ways, most significantly the discourse on coloniality. Namely, the prioritization of Western knowledge in Arcus’ strategic grantmaking decreased after the restructure. This occurrence makes sense with the decolonial theory on Western knowledge production, as the restructure included a shift in centering areas in the Global South while simultaneously consulting with the most marginalized communities in those areas. A decolonial approach to knowledge production includes listening and prioritizing knowledge given by affected communities, which Arcus applies more significantly after its restructure. Furthermore, the analysis on coloniality showed that Arcus’ discourse acts in line with the conclusions drawn from decolonial theory on consequences of colonialism. That is to say, Arcus exhibited signs of Western exceptionalism and Othering in the blog posts, albeit implicitly. However, both phenomena bear nuance as certain Western countries factually differ from the Global South when it comes to queer rights, but this thesis theorizes that the manner in which Arcus chooses to present these differences does fit into the given critique of decolonial theory on modern coloniality. The use of phrases such as ‘acceptance’ and ‘behind’ exemplify this.

The analysis on queerness revealed religion as a prominent factor in the discourse

surrounding queer issues. This finding agrees with the theory on queerness, as it is found that homophobia and anti-LGBTQ sentiment most frequently stems from religious values. In the discourse, Arcus uses ‘faith’ as an umbrella term for any system of religious belief, as to not distinguish between religions. However, Arcus most often features stories that involve either Christianity or Islam, because the areas of focus are countries with these religions as majority. Arcus prioritized faith-based collaboration with queer activists in the discourse, also after the restructure. The analysis found that the emphasis on faith-based collaboration can lead to a perpetuation of homo- and heteronormativity. This argument derived from decolonial theory on queerness. Namely, both Christianity and Islam are heteronormative in nature. Arcus’ pledge for involvement of religion in the advancement of queer rights can therefore teeter on the edge of homonormativity, as it suggests that queerness is solely different from heterosexuality because of the same-sex attraction aspect. This ignores the multifaceted inequities that queer people face, as well as perpetuates heteronormative roles. Moreover, reasoned from decolonial thought Christianity specifically is a religion that was brought over into parts of the Global South during the colonial era, which Arcus does not significantly mention. Additionally, Arcus displayed implicit signs of homonationalism in the discourse, on par with the expectations from decolonial theory. In the blog posts this was mostly visible through the Othering of Muslim-majority countries. Lastly, it was found that the restructure mostly influenced Arcus to become more critical and inclusive regarding the data available on queer people in the discourse.

Philanthrocapitalism was the third theme analyzed in this study. Philanthrocapitalism in the discourse behaved similarly to the expectations according to decolonial theory. Namely, the analysis showed that the philanthropic giving of Arcus is not immune to White saviorism in its discourse. This was primarily illustrated through the personal success stories Arcus published, whereby the role of Arcus’ philanthropic giving was emphasized. These stories often placed people of color in a passive position to the philanthropy of Arcus itself or its grantee partners.

However, as mentioned before there is a difficulty in drawing a definitive line when it comes to White saviorism. This is because Arcus logically wants to promote its own successes in aiding queer people of color, unfortunately the manner in which Arcus presents these successes could easily be construed as patronizing in nature. Decolonial theory might argue this is because philanthropy as a whole inherently bears some form of patronization, specifically when it comes to Western grantmaking in the Global South. The use of personal success stories on Arcus' blog post slightly decreased after the restructure and with it some of the implicit White saviorism in the discourse. Furthermore, the analysis uncovered the critics' side of the debate on philanthrocapitalism. In other words, the role of neoliberal methods in philanthropic giving under philanthrocapitalism became visible in the discourse, though surprisingly from a self-aware standpoint from Arcus. The data showed Arcus' criticism of the neoliberal ideology in grantmaking since 2015. Arcus was critical of using neoliberal methods in philanthropic giving from 2015, but it was not until 2021 that Arcus stated to actively avoid using these types of methods in its grantmaking practices. This is theorized to be indirectly caused by the restructure, as listening to the affected communities was emphasized for the cause of a decrease in neoliberal methods.

This thesis used decolonial theory to analyze the discourse of a Western philanthropic foundation dedicated to queer rights in the Global South, in an attempt to fill a gap in existing research. Namely, queerness and queer issues in relation to decoloniality are heavily under-researched, especially in the context of philanthrocapitalism. Therefore, this thesis' scientific implications come from the specific application of decolonial theory on queer issues in institutional philanthropy. Moreover, coloniality is not frequently mentioned in conversations surrounding philanthropic giving, while both concepts are indeed closely related as this thesis has revealed. The dynamic between coloniality, queerness and institutional philanthropy accentuates the importance of including decolonial efforts in philanthropic giving. This is what

makes this thesis societally relevant. That is to say, critical discourse analysis is an effective method to show how discourse can be laden with hidden meanings, especially unknowingly. Thus the results of this thesis hope to encourage Western philanthropic foundations to comprehend the way discourse can be a powerful tool in either perpetuating or actively avoiding colonial power dynamics, when it comes to philanthropy in the Global South.

Finally, while this thesis sought to research the discourse of a Western philanthropic foundation for dynamics of coloniality, queerness and philanthrocapitalism, there are limitations worth mentioning within this research. For instance, due to the small scale and short period in which this research was conducted, publications of the Arcus Foundation were excluded from the data. The publications available on Arcus' website were too large in volume to properly analyze within the allotted time. For future research, it might be interesting to include these publications in the analysis of Arcus' discourse. Additionally, the case study of the Arcus Foundation offers an in-depth analysis on the discourse of Arcus specifically. However, it might be impactful to study and compare other Western philanthropic foundations, and even more so foundations established in the Global South, as comparing might add valuable new information to learn and grow from. Moreover, future research could look further into the physical power dynamics between Western granter and grantee from the Global South, focusing on impact and influence. This could reveal the effects of underlying mechanics of coloniality, which in turn can aid in decolonizing philanthropic giving further, which is definitely something to strive for.

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7. Appendix

Appendix I. Inductive coding scheme

Table 2. Inductive coding scheme

Code	Definition
<i>"Acceptance"</i>	Explicit mention of "acceptance" construed as implicit Othering
<i>Accessibility</i>	Attention for the accessibility of Arcus' website and their application process for grants
<i>Agency</i>	Emphasis on the agency of Arcus' grantees
<i>Attention for power dynamics</i>	Acknowledgement of power dynamics between Arcus and its grantees
<i>Budgeting transparency</i>	Arcus is transparent about their budgeting process
<i>Colonialism explicitly mentioned</i>	Explicit mention of colonization and consequences for former colonies
<i>Critical lens</i>	Arcus critically analyzes multilayered issues, recognizes no hierarchy of oppression and applies intersectional theory
<i>Diversity in grantmaking</i>	Attention for diverse grantmaking needs across different communities
<i>Failed legal system</i>	Recognition of flawed legal protections/system for the queer community
<i>Implied consequences of coloniality</i>	Mention of inequalities caused by colonialism without explicitly stating it is due to colonialism
<i>Inclusive data/Inclusion</i>	Emphasis on the importance of inclusion and inclusive data in Arcus' strategic grantmaking
<i>Intersectionality</i>	Explicit acknowledgement of concept of intersectionality/application of intersectionality in discourse
<i>Knowledge/collaboration from the community</i>	The incorporation of knowledge gained from the communities and an active collaboration with the communities
<i>Listening and learning</i>	Emphasis on listening to the communities and learning/growing from the feedback
<i>Oppressor's language</i>	Use of language that was established by previous colonizers
<i>Political influence</i>	Mention of the influence politics have on the agenda of philanthropic
<i>Sustainability</i>	Emphasis on the sustainability and longevity of Arcus' philanthropy for the receiving organizations

Appendix II. 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: Philanthropy for queer rights: Western funding into the Global South through a decolonial lens

Name, email of student: Naomi van Elswijk, 576094ne@eur.nl

Name, email of supervisor: Agni Kalfagianni, kalfagianni@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration: 24-03-2025 to 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 V: Data storage and backup

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

The data will be stored on my personal laptop for coding purposes. The program ATLAS.ti will be used for the coding process, which will also be stored on my personal laptop.

Note: indicate for separate data sources, for instance for paper-and pencil test data, and for digital data files.

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

Myself (Naomi van Elswijk)

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

I will frequently make a back-up copy of the research data to ensure safe and updated data. This will be stored on a physical USB stick.

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

I won't be collecting personal data. All the data that will be used, will be collected from public websites of the chosen philanthropic foundations.

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.

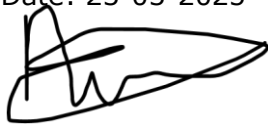
Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

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: Naomi van Elswijk

Name(EUR) supervisor: Agni Kalfagianni

Date: 23-03-2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Naomi van Elswijk', written over a horizontal line.

Date: 04-04-2025

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