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Assaults on belonging: how Dutch youth without 'blue eyes, cheese, and clogs' experience everyday racism in educational contexts

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ABSTRACT

Minoritized students' ethnic backgrounds and racial appearances influence their academic opportunities and belonging experiences, and limit their access to safe and equal learning environments. In the Netherlands, limited research has focused on minoritized students' experiences. In this study, we drew upon a theoretical framework focused on Othering and belonging as well as macro-/micro- connections related to racism to investigate the contemporary educational experiences of students from nondominant backgrounds. Participants experienced everyday racism and Othering in the: continuous centering of Whiteness and marginalization of the non-White Other; persistent obstacles perpetuated by educators that prevented parental participation; and consistent underestimation of students' abilities by teachers and peers. As a step toward more just schooling, participants suggest that educators become more aware of minoritized students' backgrounds and create spaces of belonging.

Recent research focusing on ethnoracially diverse classroom settings in Europe and the US have examined whether all children have access to and receive high quality schooling (Annamma and Morrison 2018; Verkuyten and Thijs 2002a, 2002b). Due to the increased rate in worldwide immigration, classrooms in many countries now contain students with more diverse ethnicities, cultures, and religions (OECD 2010). In such contexts, students from nondominant backgrounds may hold a lesser social position (Hand 2010), resulting in social and academic disadvantages such as not having access to higher educational levels (Van den Bergh et al. 2010).

In previous research, achievement gaps between students from different racial groups have been linked to gaps in opportunities to learn that originate in institutional racism and are perpetuated in everyday practices in classrooms and schools (Boykin and Noguera 2011; Flores 2007). Essed (1991) described everyday racism as the connection between macro level ideologies that fuel discriminatory practices and the micro level enactments of those practices that cause differences in material outcomes between

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groups. Solórzano and Pérez Huber (2020) explained how these micro level practices, called microaggressions, affect students' daily experiences in schools.

Evidence exists of everyday racism and microaggressions in education in the Netherlands, although these phenomena have not been sufficiently examined. In the diversifying Dutch context, students from non-dominant backgrounds are disproportionately placed in the lowest tracks of Dutch secondary education resulting in lower rates of qualification for university entry and an achievement gap between White Dutch students and non-White Dutch students (Central Bureau of Statistics 2019; Van den Bergh et al. 2010). In practice, schools and teachers rarely discuss issues of race or do not understand its complex layers (Boykin and Noguera 2011). In addition, educators' privileges, subjectivity, and biases can influence the decision-making processes involved in deciding students' future options (Starck et al. 2020). Consequently, as educators' implicit biases about ethnic differences and student achievement remain unchecked and unspoken, the achievement gap between dominant and non-dominant students continues to exist (Merolla and Jackson 2019). Such disparities can diminish students' experiences of belonging and negatively influence their academic performance (Çolak et al., 2020; Kennedy and Melfor 2021; Murphy and Zirkel 2015). Research regarding the mechanisms involved in the creation of disparities in Dutch schools can provide a necessary foundation for creating an inclusive school climate and improving non-dominant students' educational opportunities (Bell and Puckett 2020).

In this study, we examine the experiences of non-dominant students in Dutch education in order to better understand the mechanisms at play in racialized disparities in educational outcomes. Students' descriptions of their lived experiences have not received much attention in prior research in the Dutch context and can provide new scholarly insights. We address the following research questions: *How do students from marginalized racial or ethnic backgrounds experience everyday racism in Dutch schools?* and *What do their experiences reveal about macro-micro enactments and impacts of racism and Othering in Dutch institutions, including education?* To address these research questions, we used a conceptual framework that helped us think about connections between macro level contexts and microlevel experiences and conceptualize these connections in relation to Othering and belonging across national contexts.

Othering and belonging: creating an inclusive society

We situated this study in the existing dilemma that Dutch students from non-Western migration backgrounds experience educational inequities while we embraced the value of belonging as an experience that we hope all children have in school. The theoretical concepts of Othering and belonging were therefore the broad and overarching ones that we used to guide our further conceptualizing and methodological decision-making. To quote Jensen's (2011, 65) synthesis of Othering, in which he builds upon ([1978] 1995) and Spivak's (1985) work among others, we understand Othering as a process in which 'subordinate people are offered, and at the same time relegated to, subject positions as Others in discourse'. We understand belonging, then, as the continuous enactment of inclusivity in which there are not identifiable social groups continuously positioned as 'Other' in discourse and practice.

We trace our definition of belonging from Baumeister and Leary's (1995) work on belonging, which they defined as 'form[ing] and maintain[ing] at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships' (Baumeister and Leary 1995, 497). Osterman (2000) reviewed research that applied belongingness to students' experiences in school, asking the question in her literature synthesis about how schools address students' needs for belonging and arguing that potentially unmet belonging needs can negatively impact learning and performance. This foundational scholarship paved the way for more contemporary work connecting belonging to racial and cultural inclusivity and social justice as well as teachers' classroom practices that address belongingness in terms of anti-racist classroom management, curriculum, and instruction. Gray et al., (2018) explored these specific practices that address the belonging needs of Black students during classroom instruction and connected macro level policies and ideologies to opportunities for belonging at the micro level.

In this study, we home in on the ways that students have experienced everyday racism in educational contexts. We position this focus within research on belonging because it offers insights into the ways that students are currently Othered, and thus not experiencing belonging, in schools, and we connect these experiences to macro-level racialized contexts. We draw upon the work of Flint (2018), Guyotte et al. (2021) and Seawright (2018) to expand belongingness from an internal experience and static trait to a social enactment that occurs, resides, or dissipates within interaction rituals performed by racialized bodies. According to these scholars, belonging can be experienced in parallel with Othering and differently by diverse individuals.

Conceptualizing racism: a transnational perspective on macro to micro contexts

A growing base of contemporary US-focused scholarship addresses racial microaggressions and anti-racism in education (Pérez Huber and Solórzano 2015; Pollock 2008). Contemporary European-focused education scholarship addresses inequality among different economic and ethnic groups (Thijs, Westhof, and Koomen 2012; Tielman, Wesselink, and den Brok 2021; Turcatti 2018). We further compare and contrast these foci in subsequent sections. First, we describe Essed's (1991) work that elaborated on the similarities and differences between the racialized experiences of Black women in the US state of California and in the Netherlands. Her study broke critical ground by relating macro- to micro-level sociological processes in critical race studies, and it continues to shape US education scholarship, although it has been largely relegated to the sidelines of the educational sciences in the Netherlands. Essed's study addressed 'the fallacies of "institutional" and "individual" racism' (1991, 36) by problematizing this distinction between the macro and the micro.

Essed (1991) conducted 55 interviews with Black women in the US state of California and in the Netherlands and found that their experiences with everyday racism were distributed across 15 institutions, one of the most commonly discussed being education. She identified three core mechanisms of everyday racism that connected macro and micro level interactions, arguing that these micro level interactions, nested within broader social contexts, created and perpetuated a racialized and racist social context at the macro level. This racist macro-level context enabled racialized interactions in the everyday lives of participants, thereby blurring what she might call false macro-micro

distinctions. She called these mechanisms of everyday racism marginalization, 'a process in which a sense of "otherness" is perpetuated' (112), problematization, 'ideological constructions legitimizing exclusion' (10), and containment, 'a form of repression' (10) that occurs in response to perceived opposition or contestation. Frequent experiences of being marginalized, problematized, and contained connected macro level racism with micro level interactions.

In her US-based work regarding the matrix of domination of Black women, ([1990] 2009) accounted for national context and dominant national discourse in transmitting Othering and shaping an individual's specific experiences with oppression while asserting similarities in the fundamental mechanism of oppression. Essed's (1991) findings can be similarly understood. For the purpose of our own study, we explicate the national differences between the US and Dutch contexts as described by Essed and more recently by 2016. This comparison between the US and Dutch national discourse and racialized processes of Othering clarifies the transnational relevance of both theoretical and empirical work in education.

Perceptions and experiences of racism in the Dutch and US contexts

To frame her own study, Essed (1991, 6) compared and contrasted racism in the Dutch and US contexts. She stated:

> . . . in the Netherlands, more so than in the United States, racism operates as cultural oppression or, more specifically, as 'ethnicism' (Mullard 1986). Ethnicism is an ideology that explicitly proclaims the existence of 'multiethnic' equality but implicitly pre-supposed an ethnic or cultural hierarchical order . . . Dutch racism operates through the discourse of tolerance. The dominant group assumes that Dutch norms and values are superior and not subject to change. This leads to all kinds of strategies to manage the presence of Blacks and other immigrants in society through cultural control. Thus the discourse of tolerance conceals the emptiness of the promise of cultural pluralism.

The Dutch national discourse of equality, tolerance, and pluralism prevents questions from even being articulated regarding institutionalized discrimination from macro to micro levels in Dutch society. 2016 elaborated on how Dutch ideology enables the exact discrimination it purports to exclude. She explained the role of Dutch tolerance in culturally shared self-perceptions as innocent, colorblind supporters of equality. She attributed these qualities to the Dutch cultural archive, the shared discourse about being a good Dutch person. Dutch perceptions of innocence mask an ignorance of racialized social inequities. This ignorance allows for the unfettered and unquestioned benefit of White people in the existing status quo.

In the US, a different ideological narrative produces colorblindness with similar effects (Kennedy, Acosta, and Soutullo 2019). The US also has a cultural archive equivalent in impact to Dutch equality and pluralism called meritocracy, the ideological assertion that individual circumstances directly reflect an individual's effort and prowess (Bonilla-Silva 2014; Crenshaw et al. 1995; Gillborn 2006; Tate 1997). As an ideological assertion, meritocracy aligns with US individualism whereas Dutch equality and pluralism cohere with the Dutch cultural values of interdependence, consensus building, and an appeal to shared normalcy and common sense. In both countries, these ideological discourses perpetuate colorblindness through post-racial denial of the existence of racism. Bonilla-Silva (2014, 25) named this situation the 'new racism', where racism flourishes precisely

because claims of post-racialism lead to the dismissal, negation, or erasure of racialized social critiques. Bonilla-Silva explained how this version of new racism nurtures White supremacy, which dominates both US and Dutch societies.

Essed (1991, 111) encountered the impact of Dutch innocence and cultural tolerance in her research findings that Black Dutch women tended to explain everyday racist acts as 'a problem of misinformation' whereas Black US women discussed racialized power differentials as influential in fueling everyday racism. Black Dutch women also lacked the history of Black activism on Dutch soil in the same way that US women had experienced the Civil Rights Movement, which meant that they had fewer cultural models and less shared vocabulary regarding structural racism and social change. Nevertheless, women in both countries experienced and described dozens of examples of encounters with everyday racism in their respective contexts. While the specific discourses used to describe racialized experiences varied, the participants' experiences were quite similar. Essed found variations in how the mechanisms of racism operated across cultures, but the impacts of racist experiences were shared. We therefore theorize that everyday racism experienced by students in schools may have similar forms and impacts in both the US and the Netherlands, implying that scholarship across contexts could be mutually informative in forming a knowledge base. In this study, we specifically focus on the Dutch context where explicit racism is understudied.

The contemporary Dutch context

In the current Dutch context, several distinct ethnic groups are visibly non-dominant, meaning that they can be identified in a social setting and do not occupy a majority of a society's institutional positions of power (Hand 2010), which positions them to encounter racism. The Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics collects demographic data using the broad categories of person with a 'non-migration background', 'Western migration background', and 'Non-western migration background'. A person with a 'non-migration background' was born to two parents who were both born in the European Netherlands. 'Western migration background' includes anyone who themselves migrated or whose parents migrated from Europe (excluding Turkey), North America, Oceania, Indonesia, and Japan. The Central Bureau of Statistics (2022a) website explains that Indonesia and Japan are counted as Western 'on the basis of their socioeconomic and sociocultural positions [translated from Dutch by the authors]'. A person with a 'non-western migration background' is someone who themselves migrated or whose parents migrated from Africa, Latin America, Asia (excluding Indonesia and Japan) or Turkey (Central Bureau of Statistics 2022a). People born in, or whose parents were born in, former Dutch colonies in the Caribbean (e.g., Suriname, Curaçao) are also counted as persons with a 'non-western migration background' even if they are born in the Carribean Netherlands (i.e., Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba) and have Dutch citizenship. This breakdown shows that categories of migration background are a proxy for race and class since these countries are not all 'Western' and include groups that are legally Dutch. People with a non-western migration background make up over 14% of people living in the Netherlands, with the largest groups having Turkish or Moroccan backgrounds (Central Bureau of Statistics 2022b).

Using these categories, the Central Bureau of Statistics (2022c) has documented inequitable educational outcomes among groups. For example, there is a high-stakes standardized test that children take at the end of primary school that teachers use to determine each student's secondary school track. Students with a western migration background score the same average percentile as students with no migration background (Central Bureau of Statistics 2022c). However, students with a non-western migration background score six or more percentile points fewer than these two groups, depending on which generation of migrants they are. These statistics suggest that there is a racialized component to achievement since 'non-Western' also includes students from former Dutch colonies who speak Dutch as a native language and may have attended Dutch schools prior to immigration. Therefore, despite the lack of focus on race in formal statistics, we focused on race and racism in this study and considered students from a non-western migration background to be potential subjects of racism. We also considered that in the current Dutch context, students perceived to be Muslim also compose a marginalized group (de Koning 2016; Turcatti 2018). We therefore took this additional identifier into account when collecting and analyzing data.

Education as an institutional context for racism

As discussed above, Essed (1991) theorized about the connections between hegemonic ideologies at the macro level of society and individual interactions at the micro level, asserting that everyday racism bridges the macro and micro social contexts and experiences. Participants in Essed's (1991, 295) study identified education as an institutional context in which everyday racism occurred. She stated:

> ... the women pointed out power abuse in education on a massive scale. Many women criticized the detrimental role of school counselors and teachers who consistently downgrade Black students. This was the experience of their parents, it was their own experience, and they find that little has changed for their children. Racism in education is reinforced by racism in other spheres of life. Therefore, it must be examined more generally when and how authorities abuse functional power and how this can be opposed.

Since the publication of Essed's work, a substantial international empirical literature base has demonstrated the existence and impact of educators' racialized behaviors on students' experiences (e.g., Housee 2012; Ndimande 2012; Verkuyten and Thijs 2002a).

In the US, this literature builds upon an activist tradition and directly confronts meritocratic colorblindness through discussions of racism in education. However, in Dutch educational settings, the lack of data about race limits the types of questions that researchers can explore. Nevertheless, Dutch scholars have shone light on racialized social inequalities by shifting focus from race as a construct to ethnicity, immigration status and background, and socioeconomic class, using the categories defined by the Central Bureau of Statistics, as described above, or defining other relevant categories related to country of origin or generation of migration. Using these constructs, Dutch scholars – particularly in the field of sociology – have been contributing to a growing body of scholarship that establishes the existence and impact of racism and racialized experiences of students in Dutch classrooms (e.g., see Turcatti 2018; Verkuyten and Thijs 2002a, 2002b).

Studies about inequality positioned within the Dutch educational sciences have tended to center the experiences that teachers from dominant racial and socioeconomic backgrounds have when teaching students from non-dominant backgrounds (e.g., Tielman, Wesselink, and den Brok 2021). The recent national curricular requirement for schools to teach citizenship education has resulted from increasing attention to social inequality and positions teachers at the forefront of addressing the effects of institutional racism without naming race or ethnicity or addressing equity issues (Merry 2018; Sincer, Severiens, and Volman 2019). It is within this context that we position this study as contributing to literature in the educational sciences that centers student experiences with everyday racism in schools by explicitly addressing race.

Microaggressions in education

We drew upon the construct of racial microaggressions to shape our methodological choices in this study (Sue et al. 2007). Essed's (1991) conceptualization of everyday racist acts provided a foundation for microaggression research in education (Solórzano and Pérez Huber 2020). Pérez Huber and Solórzano, (2015, 298) defined microaggressions as:

> Verbal and non-verbal assaults directed toward People of Color, often carried out in subtle, automatic or unconscious forms; 2) layered assaults, based on race and its intersections with gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent, or surname; 3) cumulative assaults that take a psychological, physiological, and academic toll on People of Color.

US literature describing the existence of microaggressions in school and their impacts on students and teachers provides a critical component of our theoretical framework.

Methodology

To answer our research questions, we relied upon a constructionist epistemology and an interpretive research paradigm (Guba and Lincoln 1994). According to this paradigm, the positionalities of the members of our research team played a role in our data collection and analysis processes (Charmaz 2011). We are a team of three women occupying different dominant and marginalized intersectional social positions. The first author is a White, native English-speaking woman with US citizenship and EU residency living as an immigrant in the Netherlands. The second author is a White native Dutch speaking woman born and living in the Netherlands. The third author is a Black native Dutch and Papiamentu speaking woman born in Curaçao and living in the Netherlands after migrating there as a teenager. From these diverse positionalities, we collaboratively analyzed data, which sensitized us to certain experiences described by our participants (Charmaz 2011). For example, we were able to compare and contrast what it meant to be non-Western or have a migration background across our own experiences as well as those of our participants in order to better understand their perspectives. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, we used the strategies of member checks, consensus coding, and investigating counter examples (Twining et al. 2017). Our positionalities shaped the ways we identified and applied sensitizing concepts, providing

Table 1. Participants.

Participant	Age	Ethnicity
Dounia	26	Moroccan
Erva	22	Moroccan
Filiz	20	Afghan
Jacob	25	Half Curaçaoan, half White Dutch
Latifah	23	Kurdish
Meyra	23	Turkish
Miray	26	Turkish
Nienke	21	Columbian
Nura	26	Bosnian
Phillipa	21	Half Turkish, half Curaçaoan
Rayan	24	Afghan
Selin	20	Turkish
Stephanie	20	Curaçaoan
Tulaya	26	Turkish
Yara	25	Surinamese

material for rich discussion during consensus building and the sensemaking of counter examples.

After obtaining ethics approval from a research university review board, we recruited 15 participants from our networks who identified as visibly non-dominant, according to the definition mentioned previously, and who had attended Dutch primary and secondary schools (see Table 1). Each participant was either studying in tertiary education or had completed a tertiary program or certificate within the previous three years. We asked participants about their experiences with teachers and peers related to race or ethnicity in primary and secondary school as well as in tertiary education.

To identify everyday racism and microaggressions in our data, we used Essed's (1991) three main mechanisms and accompanying list of 68 codes as sensitizing concepts (Blumer 1954). After identifying each microaggression, we employed our theoretical framework to understand how each incident reflected enactments of Othering, and thereby assaults on belonging. We also examined how micro-macro connections were evident. One limitation of this approach is that we had only perspectival data, meaning that participants described microaggressions, but we did not have direct empirical evidence of enactments over space and time. Although observation data could provide stronger support for our conclusions, we argue that the theorization made possible by the data adequately addresses the research questions.

In the next sections, we present our findings. These are organized according to categories inspired by Essed's (1991) study. Similar to Essed's (1991) participants, our participants experienced everyday racism by way of marginalization, problematization, and containment. Within each of these categories, we recount several examples and extrapolate connections between the microaggressions, belonging, and scalar levels of experience (i.e., macro-, meso-, and micro-). We selected what to report based on the experiences that participants expressed as most relevant (Pérez Huber and Solórzano 2015).

The marginalization of non-White others: Whites positioned as the normative group

The most frequent encounter with everyday racism that our participants had was that Whites were positioned as the normative group, a specific form of the marginalization of

those not considered to be White. Essed (1991) explained how her participants experienced education as one of the primary institutions where Whiteness is enforced and reinforced as normative. Our participants provided numerous examples of how they experienced this situation. Nearly every participant explained that they had a segregated primary school experience. They either attended a school with mostly White children where they were one of few non-White children, or else they attended primary schools where nearly all other children were from non-White backgrounds. In both cases, though, participants had almost all White teachers and described how Whiteness was normative in curriculum and instruction.

Miray eats Turkish pastries at the Christmas breakfast

For example, participants explained that their classes celebrated the Dutch holiday of Sinterklaas and they would have to explain to classmates that they did not celebrate that holiday at home. Miray explained that even though her primary school was segregated with only students of color primarily from non-Christian backgrounds, they still celebrated only Christian holidays affiliated with dominant White Dutch culture. She stated:

> We celebrated carnival, there was a Christmas performance, a Christmas breakfast, and an Easter breakfast … For example, at the Christmas breakfast, you had no sandwiches with cheese spread … and jam. No, but then you had Turkish pastries, and Moroccan cookies.

Parents of the children at the school brought food from their own cultural background to the celebrations of holidays that they did not recognize while their own cultural holidays were ignored by educators.

Children and their parents were physically included in the Christmas breakfast and their cultural foods served as representations of inclusivity to teachers even as the event itself had no intrinsic meaning or cultural relevance. Teachers, parents, and children enacted a shared meal that simultaneously Othered the celebrations and holidays that such foods would typically symbolize. Thus, Miray and her classmates encountered an 'enactment of Whiteness' (Ohito 2020, 17) in which symbols of her culture, in this case sweet bread, were contributed by well-meaning parents who supported the required assimilation of their children, and inadvertently co-opted by teachers to reify Christmas as a justifiably school-sanctioned celebration. Curricular materials sanctioned by the national education ministry also covered Sinterklaas and Christmas, topics that were culturally relevant and engaging for the White Dutch majority even in minority-majority schools.

The ignoring of children's backgrounds also occurred in curricular invisibility. Participants repeatedly expressed that there was little to no representation of their parents' countries of origin in the curriculum and that they experienced a predominantly western and colonial perspective on events such as slavery or the 'Dutch Golden Age'. While these topics more explicitly Othered participants, they also experienced more subtle incidents such as in their repeated encounters with curricular references that did not make sense. Miray gave the example in elementary school that, 'You were reading about marshmallows that you had never seen before'. The subtle positioning of knowledge of marshmallows as normative and the teacher's lack of explication indicated to the unknowing child that they did not belong. The lack of

plurality in formal curriculum reflects current assimilationist education policies related to linguistic and ethnic diversity (Vasta 2007).

Filiz speaks for all Muslims

An additional curricular omission related to the religious affiliations of participants. Islam was not explored as a serious topic and was most often ignored except when there was a current event related to Islamic extremism. In those moments, Muslim students were asked to speak for all Muslims and to explain why the event occurred. Filiz explained:

> There was not really any attention to cultures . . . [except] . . . during the . . . Mohammed cartoon and the teacher who was beheaded . . . The class I am in has some Muslims [and] in the end it was a bit Muslims versus non-Muslims. The Muslims. . . said . . . 'It is not good and not part of our faith to behead someone, it is not like that is supposed to happen. You should not think that this belongs to the Islamic faith' and . . . 'I also do not find it okay . . . '

This example also illustrates how Muslim students were positioned as members of an outsider group for which they were all expected to be able to speak. Filiz and her classmates had to step into that role in order to disrupt the centered White position that otherwise might have accepted beheading as a tenet of Islam.

The nature of the class conversation had already Othered Muslims and Filiz's active self-positioning as one of the students counterbalancing the skewed view of Islam again separated her from her White, non-Muslim classmates. The enactment of the class discussion creates a positioning as Other of Filiz and her Muslim classmates whether they are active or passive. This situation occurred during a class in a teacher training program, meaning that Filiz's White classmates had received such limited information about Islam during primary and secondary education that they maintained such mis-perceptions. This microaggressions results from curricular gaps at the national level, reinforced by the hidden curriculum enacted by teachers that such gaps are acceptable (Giroux 2001; Toshalis 2015).

Latifah's classmates are called ridiculous

In some cases, the central position of Whiteness exhibited in teachers' ignoring of other backgrounds became more explicit and confrontational. Latifah recounted this experience:

> . . . during my [last year of primary school, there were only three Dutch students in the class] . . . Miss Helen . . . was reading us . . . a Christmas story and one of the main characters was called Miep . . . and as a class we had some sort of communal joke that we said 'Mep, Mep' to each other. So, when that teacher read Miep, one of the boys called 'Mep, Mep' and she freaked out. She said, 'It's ridiculous. I'm reading a lovely Christmas story here and if the character's name had been Mohammed you wouldn't have interrupted me'. She completely freaked out.

In this example, a classroom management dilemma becomes explicitly racialized, with students not calling out as a normal part of their development but instead because they were 'Other', or not White. The teacher-student interaction revolves around the

curricular positioning of Christmas as inherently meaningful and the teacher's assumption that the children would and should value a Christmas story, again Othering their cultural knowledge and backgrounds and eliciting their resistance (Toshalis 2015).

Meyra is not White enough

In the most explicit example we heard, Meyra recounted the following experience from a high school philosophy class:

> There was a girl who was Surinamese and in that class she was the only girl of color. The teacher wanted to discuss Darwin's evolution theory . . . he said, 'We evolved from apes to men and certain types of people got stuck halfway through that evolution'. So according to him the ultimate end goal was the White male. That is what he said. We did say, 'Sir you cannot say this. This is not okay', and oh what he did then was even worse. He . . . [told] that girl to raise her hand and he said to the rest of the class, 'Look at her palm. It is white'. We were just standing there . . .

Here, Meyra and her classmates were explicitly compared to a White norm through the teacher's comparison of their skin to his, a physical racialization of White and non-white bodies. Interestingly, we also learn in this example that Meyra did not consider herself to be a person of color, but she explained that after this incident, she ended up reflecting on how she was not White enough, or would not be considered White enough by the dominant majority that this teacher represented. Through this incident, Meyra's body became Other than White.

In this example, the teacher is positioned as the authority to determine individuals' statuses as in-group or out-group members in relation to skin color. Participants explained how both peers and teachers expressed a sense of entitlement regarding the judgment of in-group and out-group memberships, even when it related to Islam and the person doing the judging was not Muslim. This situation occurred when the participants whom others perceived as Muslim did not behave in ways that a White peer or teacher expected. In those cases, participants were questioned about their behavior or called 'fake Muslims'. Whiteness as the norm extended even into the entitlement to judge the religious expression of the nondominant group.

Erva does not feel like explaining

Participants expressed the impact of their constant encounters with White ignorance and everyday racism as draining or taxing. We found thirty instances mentioned by nine of our participants who discussed feeling drained or lacking energy to combat these microaggressions. Erva stated, 'It takes a lot of time and energy so I usually do not feel like explaining'. These encounters with the normative centrality of Whiteness, and the ignorance that it enabled, caused stress and exhaustion.

Participants who had been in majority White school environments were glad when they went to a more mixed secondary or tertiary setting. Nienke explained:

> My primary school and secondary school were both very Dutch . . . I always felt less at ease . . . At [vocational tertiary education] that was different because there were lots of

different backgrounds, like Dutch as well as Turkish, Moroccan, [people of the former Antilles] so that was nice because you . . . just didn't feel different anymore.

Participants felt relieved to no longer be the only non-White student and could perhaps rest from the physical toll taken by repeated bodily enactments of racial battle fatigue (Smith et al. 2011).

Counterexamples: participants normalize Whiteness

When conducting our analysis, we were also looking for counterexamples to ensure the trustworthiness of our conclusions. Three of our participants explicitly expressed not feeling bothered by everyday racism in their current lives or by their experiences of Whites as the normative group. Jacob, Rayan, and Stephanie expressed having a racially mixed group of friends and an appreciation of White norms of individualism and hard work. However, Jacob and Stephanie also expressed internalized oppression that reflected the central position of Whiteness in determining their own self-concepts. Stephanie echoed Jacob's sentiment describing herself as 'a bit lazy' which Jacob compared to 'the real Dutch students'. Jacob further described how when he met his Curaçaoan grandfather to whom he had only spoken by phone up until his teenage years, he was surprised by his dark skin color. Jacob stated, 'I always had [pictured him as] a White man in front of me'. Even with these students who did not describe experiencing everyday racism, we see Whiteness positioned as normative.

We noticed that participants repeatedly referred to White people as Dutch and non-White people as some other ethnic designation, as in Nienke's quote above. We found 68 instances across 13 participants. In referring to Dutchness as meaning 'White Dutch', participants excluded themselves from true Dutchness even though they had Dutch nationality. We connected this use of the term Dutch to mean White to the national Dutch discourse of tolerance and White innocence that prevents race from being named and discussed in Dutch society, which is reinforced by the way in which statistics are collected at the national level. This lack of naming race has the impact of reinforcing that to be Dutch can only mean to be White and that if you are not White then you are something other than Dutch. To be Dutch meant to 'have blue eyes, eat cheese, and wear clogs', as Filiz summarized. By repeatedly using the term Dutch to mean White, our participants implicitly reinforced this dichotomy, but none of them explicitly identified it.

The problematization of non-White parents and children

Five participants explained that educators failed to facilitate their equal participation in schooling primarily by not engaging their parents in their educational trajectories. Eight participants gave details of one area in which parents could not intervene that had an important impact on them. That was the transition to secondary education. In the Netherlands, students take a test at the end of primary school called the CITO. Those CITO results, along with the teachers' perceptions of the student's capabilities, determine students' track level for secondary education, which may be university preparation, general college preparation, or vocational education.

Secondary school tracks are leveled across content areas, which means that students must past exams in every content area at the same track level. Diplomas are then required for entry into similarly tracked tertiary options that directly qualify graduates for a specific job, with lower tracks leading to lower paid and lower status jobs.

Rayan did not learn enough at home

Our participants gave examples of how their track assignment had been negatively affected by their teachers' underestimation of their abilities due to their ethnic background. Rayan, who had previously told us that he did not experience microaggressions, recounted:

> During the CITO in primary school…I was eligible for [the university preparation track] but those teachers…didn't give me their permission to go to [that track] … I recall them saying, 'You do not learn as much at home due to your background' so that played a role. Definitely.

On average, students from non-Western migration backgrounds score lower on the CITO than White students (Central Bureau of Statistics 2022c). But even when these students had high scores that demonstrated that they qualified for the highest tracks along with White Dutch peers, teachers still Othered them by judging them as potential failures at higher track levels, which previous studies have also confirmed (Merry and Boterman 2020).

Erva keeps doubting herself, but Philippa just behaves like a Dutch girl

Although it is technically possible to change tracks, there are barriers to doing so and the impact of these primary school teachers' underestimations of students' abilities lasted well into adulthood. Erva explained:

> If your [track] recommendation is not as good as it should have been than it makes you feel insecure … [and] think 'I am not good enough' or 'I will not be able to make it'. No motivation … It stays with you … for instance … when I was not doing that well during my first year [at the university of applied sciences] I immediately thought 'maybe I should be doing [vocational higher education] because that is more fitting to the recommendation I was given … [from primary school]'. So, you go back to that time and start to doubt yourself.

Phillipa explained how she avoided such a situation, which confirmed our understanding of how everyday racism was at play during track assignments. She stated:

> My CITO score [could not be turned into a vocational] track, you know? That just was not possible. So, because my parents were so on top of everything I do not think you would try something like that as a teacher. Teachers will not consciously think 'We will place that Turkish girl in a [low vocational] track' but unconsciously that prejudice is there. We all have it. Yes, I think we do. But I also think that because I am a girl and I behave in a Dutch manner, that … being a girl helps me.

Phillipa was aware that parental involvement and adoption of White Dutch norms were vital in successfully navigating the Dutch education system. Philippa actively and

successfully positioned herself as belonging, using the Dutch discourse of innocence and fairness to her advantage. Her description also provided a counterexample to the parents of the participants who were not able to engage effectively in the school system.

Rayan and Nura's parents should just know

For example, Rayan explained that his parents did not participate in school activities even though he saw that the children of the parents who did received more attention from teachers. When asked why his parents did not participate, he stated, 'Most of the time they didn't even know it was possible to help. They weren't informed. That was the way it was. Towards us anyway. They just didn't inform us'. Rayan's uses of 'us' and 'them' suggests that he experienced this situation as everyday racism because his parents, who were not one of 'them'—members of the dominant racial group – did not receive information. Nura's description of how educators expected parents to know the system without being explicitly told helped us understand how participants experienced this dimension of educators' lack of facilitation. Nura explained:

> [Teachers] knew…during a child's development parents play a big role, especially here in the Netherlands, and the fact that my parents did not know everything about the school system was an issue. I also think that it would have helped me in secondary school if they would have taken that into consideration instead of: 'Oh she is a child of immigrant parents who didn't grow up in the Netherlands so that means she has to improve her Dutch language skills'. In fact, that is actually the only link they … associated with not having your roots here.

She went on to give examples of how she ended up failing a year, at which point her parents realized how critical their intervention was. This situation did not align with their own cultural context, which educators never explicitly bridged. Nura never explicitly learned how to belong and thrive in the Dutch school system.

Containment through Islamophobia: the pervasive experience of not finding an internship

As part of their post-secondary educational trajectories, Dutch students must complete an internship. School programs have internship coordinators, but students must directly apply to companies or organizations for an internship position. For students with names or appearances affiliated with Islam by the dominant culture, this experience regularly results in difficulties and exclusion.

Latifah finds out discrimination does happen in the Netherlands

Latifah recounted how she applied for 25 different internships and was rejected each time. Her White Dutch mentor told her that it was because of her Turkish name, which this student at first did not want to believe. However, she was accidentally cc'd on the company's internal email exchange about her application. She recounted:

> I saw that they literally said to one another 'Can you send him a rejection real quick?' so they didn't even open my CV. They didn't even look at my photo and just immediately said, 'Can

you send him a rejection real quick?' I thought it was so painful to see that they didn't even open my attachments, you know? So, I received an email [that said] something like, 'Your letter is good but unfortunately . . . ' So that was a straight up lie because they never even looked at it . . . If you think I am a he then you never even looked at my CV, you have never looked at my letter. That was another eye opener. Something I had always denied, like, 'Oh no that doesn't happen in the Netherlands' and as it turns out it does happen.

Although the educator in this example is not the one impeding the student's equal participation, this student still faced difficulty due to everyday racism that would impede her educational progress. Difficulties related to obtaining and successfully completing internships due to issues related to visible non-dominance affected six participants.

Nienke added the description of the role that wearing a hijab plays in preventing Muslim women from obtaining internships. Islamophobia is a particular example of cultural denigration that we found in our study. There was one interesting counter-example to having the internship experience be one in which participants experienced discrimination. Miray described a situation in which she met people from non-dominant backgrounds in her internship and that that was a nice development since she was coming from a study program with primarily White peers. This was the only mentioned exception to a process that otherwise proved to be exclusionary. Due to the mandatory requirement of internship completion at an organization outside of school, students were forced to encounter interlocking microaggressions across institutions, reflecting the institutionalized nature of racism.

Discussion

This study addressed the research questions: How do students from marginalized racial or ethnic backgrounds experience everyday racism in Dutch schools? And what do their experiences reveal about macro-micro enactments and impacts of racism and Othering in Dutch institutions, including education? Participants experienced everyday racism in the continuous centering of Whiteness and marginalization of the non-White other. Findings from this study showed that these microaggressions occurred: a) in the explicit curriculum, which focused on European-centered topics and perspectives and Christian holidays; b) in the hidden curriculum (Giroux 2001; Toshalis 2015), such as what parents and students were expected to know and be able to do in relation to the education system; and c) in the explicitly racist behaviors of teachers and peers, who positioned themselves as entitled to display ignorance and demand explanations that cost the participants time, energy, and self-confidence. In line with Essed's theory of everyday racism, the same mechanisms of marginalization, problematization, and containment connected macro level contexts and micro level experiences. Evidence of discourses that centered Whiteness, such as by making race and racism taboo topics, enabled and reinforced practices that centered Whiteness, even in students' own references to 'real Dutchness'.

Implications for using racial categories in the Netherlands

In this study, mechanisms of everyday racism affected participants from various ethnic groups. Whereas the Dutch government omits race as a category that reflects social experience and replaces it instead with categories related to migration and ethnicity, we

found shared similarities related to not being considered White. Racial appearance shaped encounters with microaggressions across ethnic groups, confirming that the racialized Other is anyone who does not fit a contemporary and dominant interpretation of Whiteness (Leonardo 2009; Solórzano and Pérez Huber 2020). Thus, the category of 'Black' as a descriptor associated with experiencing social injustice in schooling has come to include individuals with family backgrounds connected to Morocco and Turkey in the Dutch context, along with those from former Dutch colonies. The additional signifier of visible associations with Islam, such as wearing a hijab, further confirmed this Othered status.

The broadening of the category of Black in a Black/White divide is not without critics who propose that movement toward a society of belonging requires the dismantling, rather than the reinforcing, of categories. However, a number of our participants expressed relief in being able to recount their experiences with racialized discrimination within a national context where such expressions are still seen as taboo. We therefore find value in the further exploration of the existence and impact of racism in Dutch society and in naming Whiteness and Blackness (Simon, 2012). Understanding students' experiences can have particular relevance for educators who may unconsciously enact or allow these microaggressions in everyday school life (Kennedy-Lewis and Murphy 2016). This conclusion is one of several implications for future research based on this study.

Implications for future research

Further studies related to intersectional identities could focus on gender as well as variation across groups of visibly non-dominant students. In our interviews, female participants talked about how their particular positionality as women shaped their educational experiences and how this contrasted to men. Although these experiences went beyond the research questions addressed here, they suggest an area for future investigation. We were able to recruit only two male participants, which is a limitation of the study and is, in and of itself, worthy of further investigation.

In addition to gender and race, ethnicity appeared as relevant and could be explored in studies related to microaggressions and intersectionality. Jacob and Stephanie particularly had self-concepts of being too lazy or disorganized. These two students had Curaçaoan ethnic backgrounds. Curacao still has a tenuous relationship with the Netherlands, holding autonomy while also remaining in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Dutch have done relatively little work in relation to their role in slavery and colonization and now readily blame Curacao for traces of disorganization or economic dependence that can be directly linked to imperialism. Shared national conceptions that laziness and disorganization pervade the former Dutch colonies has seeped into the self-concepts of our participants, again illustrating a micro-macro connection that has implications for the explicit and hidden curriculum of schooling.

The Dutch prime minister's recent apology for slavery and acknowledgement that past discriminatory acts continue to have impacts in the present suggests that this situation may be shifting. Nevertheless, the national dominant ideology of the Dutch as fair, organized, and hard-working continues to fuel doubt on whether such impacts have really been institutionalized. In a recent interview with the Dutch newspaper *NRC*, a Dutch professor emeritus of Caribbean history suggested that the dearth of research

showing connections between slavery and contemporary socioeconomic disparities allows for the dismissal of this connection among the general public (*NRC*, 23 December 2022). Although we have not conducted causal research from a post-positivist paradigm, which tends to be most valued in the Dutch context, this study contributes to a theoretical foundation for this type of research. Findings from this study also bring us forward historically as we can see the footprints of changing migration patterns, the growth of Islamophobia, and the impact of neoliberalism (e.g., school tracking schemes), all of which could be topics for such studies.

Besides our limited sample, we also recognize limitations in our researcher position-alities. Although we are a diverse team, none of us is Muslim, which may limit our interpretations and understandings of many of our participants. Future research with a broader and purposive sample and more diverse research team could address these limitations and further develop our understanding of everyday racism in schooling.

Implications for educators

We have identified several recommendations for educators based on these findings. First, we suggest listening carefully to students (Brown 2007; Kennedy-Lewis and Murphy 2016). Participants repeatedly shared that they felt that educators just weren't aware of their realities. In order to be able to share these, students need to feel safe, that they will be believed, and that appropriate action will be taken when necessary (Kennedy-Lewis and Murphy 2016; Kennedy, Acosta, and Soutullo 2019). For example, in the incident with the teacher who held up the hand of a Black student and said to the class that evolution toward Whiteness was desirable and evidenced by the White palm of her hand, nothing further happened in response to that event. That meant that the impacts of being the secondary target of that microaggression on our participant had full force (Sue et al. 2007). Educators can intervene here. Participants also suggested that educators learn more about them. This suggestion has implications for teacher training programs and programs in educational leadership, which can embed diversity in multiple aspects of their programs (Diem and Welton 2020; Francois and Quartz, 2021; Zygmunt and Clark 2016).

Participants also indicated that parents need to be taken more seriously in school. This finding confirms international literature that shows that visibly nondominant parents are often viewed from a deficit perspective by educators (Gorski 2011; Winton 2013). Making parents explicitly aware of how systems work, and how they can be involved at home and at school, and doing so in the language that the parents speak, could address this situation (Agirdag and Van Houtte 2011; Beard and Thomson 2021).

Finally, we saw the huge impact on students' educational trajectories of teachers' assumptions and low expectations for their future performance. Participants explained the racialized nature of these assumptions and expectations. Educators' low expectations for visibly non-dominant students has been well established (Timmermans, Kuyper, and van der Werf 2015; Wang, Rubie-Davies, and Meissel 2018). Educational leaders' gui-dance related to systematic data use to guide high stakes decision-making and educator professional development could shine a light on where and how these assumptions and expectations go wrong (Datnow, Greene, and Gannon-Slater 2017). Educator actions to intervene in the macro-micro spectrum of everyday racism holds promise for the

creation of spaces of belonging in classrooms and schools (Gray et al. 2018). Attending to the experiences with microaggressions of participants like ours is an important step.

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