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"Race" versus "ethnicity"? Critical race essentialism and the exclusion and oppression of migrants in the Netherlands

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ABSTRACT
Howard Winant subordinates "ethnicity" to "race" as the central structuring principle in society. By contrast, Andreas Wimmer takes racism as a particular form of ethnic boundary making. Their debate in this journal (vol. 38, no. 13, 2015) mainly concentrates on the US. This article brings the critical race (CR) literature on migrants' exclusion and oppression in the Netherlands to this debate. It discusses several essentialist shortcomings of this literature. First, CR authors do not contextualize "race" and racism, which repeatedly results in misreadings of the Dutch context. Second, their imposed totalizing notions of racism undermine the explanatory value of the concept. Third, the evidence for their claims remains inconclusive. Fourth, their contributions to the struggle against migrants' exclusion and oppression are limited. To avoid these shortcomings, I argue for a differentiation between "race"/racism and "ethnicity"/ethnicism as two separate concepts that need to be applied and understood in a non-essentialist way.

Introduction

In their debate in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (vol. 38, no. 13, 2015), Howard Winant and Andreas Wimmer have given new impetus to the reflection on the relationship between "race" and racism on the one hand and "ethnicity" and ethnic boundary making on the other hand. Winant (2015a, 2015b) argues for the centrality of "race" and racism in structuring social relations in the US and elsewhere and sees "ethnicity" as part of "race" and ethnicization as a form of racism. He voices the critique, often heard in the US, that the use of "ethnicity" stems from a political agenda to de-politicize "race"

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(Meer 2014). He criticizes Wimmer's (2013) book *Ethnic Boundary Making* for adhering to a nomothetic, replicable, falsifiable, Popperian paradigm of science that would be complicit in raciology and racial oppression (2015a, 2177, 2188).

Wimmer (2015) questions such race-centrism. Based on a critical review of key critical race (CR) publications, he partially deconstructs the central tenets of this work, specifically its claim that "race" is the primary principle of social stratification, driven by racism of the "white" majority and/or state institutions and that would have transformed but not lessened over the years. He also criticizes race-centrism's reification of "racial" groups as collective actors and its claim that "race" would play a structuring role around the world, similar to the US (2015, 2186). He points to the voids in empirical evidence to sustain these race-centrist claims and argues for the centrality of "ethnicity", more precisely ethnic boundary making. He takes racism as a particular form of ethnic boundary construction.

This relationship between "race"/racism and "ethnicity"/ethnic boundary constructions is not only an important conceptual issue, it also affects our understanding of concrete cases of exclusion and oppression of specific groups. The Winant–Wimmer debate focuses mainly on the US, but has global implications. In particular, the question whether "race" and racism play a global role in structuring social relations is at stake. The editorial to the debate (vol. 38, no. 13, 2015, 2175) calls for contributions from other societies than the US. This article brings the case of the oppression and exclusion of migrants in the Netherlands to the debate, more particularly, the CR literature on it. This Dutch case is especially interesting since the concepts of "race" and "ethnicity" have gone very separate ways here, at least in an emic sense (see below).

The article reviews the CR literature that applies the concepts of "race" and racism to this Dutch case in line with Howard Winant's position. It shows that the essentialism reflected in this literature, *a priori* subordinating "ethnicity" to "race", seriously hampers our understanding of and struggle against the oppression and exclusion of migrants in the Netherlands. The authors involved refrain from contextualizing their main concepts nor do they consider the voices of those they criticize. They impose totalizing notions of racism on the Dutch context and lack conclusive evidence for their claims. CR approaches are often counterproductive in the struggle against exclusion and oppression.

Consequently, I argue that efforts that *a priori* prioritize "race" over "ethnicity" – or the other way around[1] – miss the point. Whether "race" or "ethnicity" is at stake in a particular case can only be established empirically, but to be able to tell we need a clear conceptual differentiation between racism and ethnicism as heuristic tools next to each other.

Racism in context

The elaboration of a framework from which to look at the CR literature on the Netherlands may start with the shock that many people like me, born and raised after the Second World War in the Netherlands, experienced when we had to fill in our "race" on the immigration form in the plane just before landing on a US airport. When that happened to me for the first time in 1987, I had to tick "Caucasian" since otherwise my entrance to the US would be blocked. I did so with great repulsion and thought that, apparently, racial categories are commonly used in the US.

Indeed, the Chicago School and subsequent scholars have studied the "race relations" between different groups categorized as "races" (Meer 2014, 120). *Racial formations* appears without brackets in the title of Michael Omi and Howard Winant's classical book (1986). Likewise, the UK saw the introduction of a 'Race Relations Act' in 1965 and scholars like Banton (1967, 1987) write about the various ways in which social and cultural relations develop between "races". Miles (1993) points to the racialization of groups as if they were "races". Particularly – but not exclusively – in the US and UK, this work has pushed the further development of an abundance of CR studies – see comprehensive overviews by Back and Solomos (2009), Essed and Goldberg (2002), Hill Collins and Solomos (2010), the special issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies* vol. 36, no. 6, 2013, etc.

Thus, racial categories tend to be used more easily in the US and UK than in the Netherlands. That remains shocking from a Dutch perspective, rooted in the Holocaust trauma in this part of Europe. The Netherlands was among the countries with the highest "success rates" of Nazi persecution of especially Jews, supported by a collaborative Dutch bureaucracy and justified in overtly racist terms. This trauma's impact on post-war Dutch public opinion and politics can hardly be overestimated. It has been among the most prominent topics in Dutch literature, arts, cinema, theatre, etc. For decades, any hint that someone might have collaborated with the Germans was enough to excommunicate him or her from public life. Anti-racism has strongly marked the Dutch legislation. In Dutch public discourses, any use of the term 'race' is inevitably understood as a justification of racism and triggers Holocaust associations. 'Race Relations Act' as a name of a bill is unthinkable here. Anti-racism is among the prominent orthodoxies in Dutch post-war public discourses and institutions.

These are the denotations and indexicality (Blommaert 2005) of the terms "race" and racism in the Dutch context. The experience of shock while reading US immigration forms just before entering the US indicates that these denotations and indexicalities may differ very much between one context or time-frame and another. I am not suggesting that racism would be more or less salient in the US or UK than in the Netherlands. I argue that the terms

"race" and racism mean different things in different places and times, and that their salience may be variable (Bourdieu and Wacqant 1999).

From this recognition of contextuality and variability, several requirements follow for the ways to understand and use the concepts of "race" and racism. First, we need to contextualize them to render them meaningful in a particular case or society. Their denotations and indexicalities in this context must be taken on board in their operationalization. If not, we simply impose them from other contexts. Second, for these terms to have explanatory value, their operationalization needs to avoid adopting totalizing proportions. If they are defined in such a way that they become valid everywhere and all the time, they no longer differentiate and become useless for analytical purposes. The possibility that they do not apply in particular cases must remain open. Third, we need data, evidence and unambiguous argumentation. Winant's (2015a) call for an idiographic and radical pragmatist orientation cannot mean that we can dispose of non-biased data collection and consistent ways of linking evidence to concepts. Fourth, that does not discard pragmatist considerations. Recommendations derived from our analyses should sustain the struggle against exclusion and oppression. If they do not, a critical scrutiny of our analyses is called for.

Ignoring these four requirements fosters essentialism: making ahistorical and universal claims devoid of time and place, using concepts that embrace almost everything, downplaying the need for evidence and feeding exclusion and oppression. Racism itself is an example of essentialism. It universally (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991) and a-historically maps the world into a hierarchy of different "races", which reduces all kinds of complexities to one single defining characteristic, which identifies everyone as representing their "race" without giving voice to them or asking for evidence and that legitimizes the exclusion and oppression of assumedly inferior "races".

Racist essentialism may be the *object* of our study. However, essentialism may also be involved in the way we ourselves study racism. When making claims devoid of time and place about racism's presence, defining it in a totalizing way, downplaying the need for evidence and accusing or silencing others, our own *approach* to "race" and racism becomes essentialist. I argue for an approach to racist essentialism that stays free from such essentialist traits and ways of deploying the concept of racism. We can only be successful in identifying, analysing and deconstructing racism when adopting a non-essentialist approach to it.

Exclusion and oppression of migrants in the Netherlands

Contemporary discussions about racism in the Netherlands focus primarily on the societal position of migrants with the so-called "non-Western" backgrounds and their children.[2] In total, 21.69 per cent of the Dutch population

has a first- or second-generation migration background, 12.06 per cent have their origins in officially called "non-Western" parts of the world: Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East and Asia except for Japan and Indonesia (statline.cbs.nl, 26 November 2015). These figures do not include unregistered migrants.

Inspired by radical right voices (Rydgren 2007) like Frits Bolkestein, Paul Scheffer, Pim Fortuyn, Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Geert Wilders, Dutch governments have pursued ethno-nationalist policies towards "non-Western" migrants fomenting exclusion and oppression (Siebers and Dennissen 2015). Since the *Vreemdelingenwet* (Aliens Act) of 2000, policies have focused on trying to close the country to newcomers, putting up obstacles for their entrance, discouraging them to come and deporting as many as possible. Over the last 15 years, all major international human rights agencies and institutions have denounced the Dutch government for violating their human rights (Mutsaers, Siebers, and de Ruijter 2014).

Since the *Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers* (Civic Integration Newcomers Act) of 1998, resident migrants are oppressed, forced to assimilate into Dutch culture and to speak Dutch (VROM 2007a, 2007b). In theory, civic integration programmes help migrants to cross the boundaries towards Dutch society, but in practice they legitimize the idea of cultural boundaries that need to be crossed in the first place as well as notions of incompatible norms and values that would hamper migrants' participation in society (Schinkel 2013). These programmes imply a hierarchization of citizenship into first- and second-class citizenship depending on the degree of cultural assimilation (Hurenkamp, Tonkens, and Duyvendak 2012; Siebers 2009a).

Migrants' exclusion has become a serious problem in Dutch society, like the labour market (Andriessen et al. 2012), focusing particularly – but not exclusively – on Muslims. Van der Valk (2015) found that almost two in three secondary school teachers have witnessed cases of Muslim discrimination in their classes. Of the 475 Dutch mosques, 39 per cent have been the target of aggression over the last decade.

Dutch government policies fuel such discrimination in society. They legitimize the use of classificatory distinctions between non-migrants and migrants and associate the latter with the need to "integrate" and adopt Dutch culture. Such classifications and negative associations are taken over by non-migrants in their interactions with migrants and encourage non-migrants to hold – especially Muslim – migrants responsible for what other members of the assumedly same ethnic or religious categories have committed or said. That fuels conflicts, anxiety and insecurity among migrants at work (Siebers 2009b, 2010, 2015; Siebers and Dennissen 2015).

Dutch CR approaches

How do CR studies approach this exclusion and oppression of migrants? To answer this question, I studied work of authors that can be classified as representing a CR approach to the Netherlands. I took those books and articles that reflect strong intertextuality with other key CR authors and/or that bring their work on racism in the Netherlands in line with these authors. The appearance in 2014 of the volume edited by Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving, *Dutch Racism* (Essed and Hoving 2014a), was helpful. Its 22 chapters as well as (other) work by Essed (1990, 1991, 2002), Essed and Nimako (2006), Essed and Trienekens (2008), van Dijk (1993a, 1993b, 2002), Vasta (2007), Weiner (2014, 2015) and Yanow and van der Haar (2013) were chosen as the main texts representing this CR approach to the Netherlands. It is not easy to discuss this rich literature and pay due attention to nuances and differences between the authors, but I believe I have deduced the main ways in which this literature relates to the four requirements discussed above. These requirements stipulate how to avoid essentialism in our approach to racism and to migrants' exclusion and oppression.

CR approaches and migrants' exclusion and oppression in the Netherlands

In line with the CR argument of the structural embeddedness of exclusion and oppression, CR texts on the Netherlands discuss migrants' everyday experiences related to political, media and institutional factors. Jones (2014), van Dijk (1993b, 2002), Vasta (2007) and Yanow and van der Haar (2013) discuss political discourses and others focus on institutions: Essed (2002), van den Broek (2014) and Vasta (2007) on the labour market, Wekker (2014) on the police and media, Trienekens and Bos (2014) on the arts and culture sector and Weiner (2015) on education.

No contextualization

Several authors (e.g. van den Broek 2014; Yanow and van der Haar 2013) acknowledge the specific Dutch denotations and indexicality of the terms "race" and racism. They represent "the ultimate unimaginable crime" (de Leeuw and van Wichelen 2014, 348), inextricably intertwined with the "unspeakably evil Nazi crimes against Jews" (Essed and Hoving 2014b, 21). "Racism is defined … in terms of biological differences" (Vasta 2007, 727) and a strong anti-racism has become the norm after the war (Hondius 2014, 275).

Nevertheless, CR authors further ignore these – what anthropologists call *emic* – understandings of "race" and racism and exclusively operationalize

these terms in an *etic* way. Dutch definitions are dismissed as "narrow" (Vasta 2007) and as inadequate aberrations of assumedly universal definitions. Instead, the Dutch are taken to dismiss and deny racism. This Dutch dismissal and denial of racism is one of the main theses of *Dutch Racism* (e.g. Essed and Hoving 2014b; Ghorashi 2014; Goldberg 2014; Smith 2014; Wekker 2014) and other CR texts (van Dijk 1993a; Vasta 2007; Weiner 2014). Essed and Hoving (2014b, 10) write: "One of the key features of Dutch racism is its denial." This is a clear case of inversion: CR authors deny the Dutch the right to develop their own contextual and emic understanding of racism stemming from the Holocaust trauma, and subsequently accuse the Dutch of denying racism as defined in an etic and assumedly universal way by the authors themselves.

This inversion feeds a number of analytical mystifications. Just a few examples. First, it leads CR authors to overlook the elephant in the room: racism is called a taboo, something that cannot be talked about or is denied and dismissed (Ghorashi 2014), while racism – as defined in an emic and contextual way – is a main topic in Dutch post-war public opinion, theatre, literature, cinema, etc. (see above).

Second, it breeds tautology: whether the Dutch confirm or deny racism, both cases are taken to confirm the salience of racism. Essed and Hoving's (2014b) argument that racism is contested in the Netherlands puts someone who contests the presence of racism into a difficult position: such a contestation may be seen as a confirmation of its presence. CR arguments repeatedly become very slippery and ambiguous.[3]

Third, there is indeed a disposition in Dutch society to reject connections between migrants' position in society and racism. However, they may be right, an option simply not considered by CR scholars. There is no evidence or indication that the current exclusion and oppression of migrants would be connected in any way to the Holocaust. So, from a Dutch emic point of view, racism is indeed not relevant here.

The dismissal of the option that the Dutch may be right in this respect aligns with the fact that hardly any CR writer gives voice to "the Dutch". In her ethnography of an Amsterdam class, Weiner (2015) states that the teacher transmits a whiteness discourse to his pupils, but presents no viewpoints of the teacher himself. Likewise, Wekker (2014) claims to carry out an "ethnography" of the "white Dutch psyche", but did not interview any of the people she takes as its voices. Van den Broek (2014) is among the few authors to represent statements by her "Dutch" respondents. They denied being involved in racism, but so did her Moroccan and Turkish respondents, the assumed victims of racism.

Overall, "the Dutch" are silenced in CR texts, but so are migrant respondents who fail to understand themselves as objects of racism. Van den Broek's (2014) argument that her respondents with Turkish and Moroccan

backgrounds were mistaken when they denied having suffered from racism is reminiscent of Philomena Essed's earlier work (1990, 1991). There she criticizes her respondents, women migrants to the Netherlands, for not understanding their situation as produced by racism, which they should have done just like the Afro-Americans she interviewed in California, she argues. The latter appear as the standards for assessing her Dutch respondents (cf. Banks 1994; Prins 1997).

Such arguments raise the question about the sources and conditions of construction of the etic notions of racism CR writers deploy. Ellie Vasta argues that racism is deeply rooted in the history, culture and traditions of modernity (2007, 727), in line with the argument by Goldberg (1993) and Winant (2015a) that racism is central to modern societies. It incites CR writers (e.g. van den Broek 2014; Weiner 2014, 2015) to reason that what has been found in the US must also be valid for the Netherlands since both are modern societies. They make statements about the Netherlands based on research carried out in the US.

CR authors hardly discuss the contexts in and from which they developed their analytical and normative frameworks, thus suggesting that their frameworks have a universal and decontextual validity. As an exception, Yanow and van der Haar (2013) explicitly recognize the origin of their normativity. They write:

> North American audiences hearing this research presented have found it puzzling that we find it necessary to go to the lengths we do to establish the racial character of the [Dutch – ed.] allochtoon/autochtoon discourse. For them, it is self-evident. We take this as indicative of how much more self-aware and reflective contemporary North American public and policy discourse is … . (250–251)

Apparently, the self-awareness and reflectiveness of contemporary North American public and policy discourse serve as the standard for assessing Dutch views and understandings. So, North American particular understandings are taken to dismiss Dutch particular understandings. However, such a dismissal can only be based on the assumption that those North American ones have a universal validity, which ignores their particularity. Bourdieu and Wacqant (1999) qualify similar attempts to impose North American understandings of racism on Brazil as imperialism. Such unsound reasoning cannot sustain CR authors' failure to contextualize.

Totalization

CR authors, nevertheless, try to do so by conceptualizing racism as central to the long-term and virtually universal rise of modernity. In practice, that boils down to an understanding of racism as devoid of time and place. Thus, one is tempted to look for evidence of racism everywhere over long periods. Weiner

(2015, 360) writes about whiteness as "existing globally and reinvented locally". She (2014) jumps up and down centuries of Dutch history, searching for evidence for racism's continuity.

Like several other CR authors, Kwame Nimako, Amy Abdou and Glenn Willemsen criticize "the Dutch" for ignoring the continuities between their historical involvement in slavery and their current treatment of migrants. They argue (2014, 48): " … there is enough material to interrogate the continuity and discontinuity between slavery, abolition, remembrance, commemoration, and contemporary racism". However, they only discuss continuity and disregard discontinuities, and do not present any of such "enough material" that would indicate such continuity. No CR author presents any evidence for such assumed continuity.

Making unsubstantiated claims of almost timeless and global presence of racism (see Winant 2015a) can only be done by stretching the concept of racism to such an extent that it incorporates all sorts of grounds on which people may be excluded or oppressed. These grounds include not only "race" in a strict sense (Grillo 2003) but also ethnicity, religion, culture, nationality, Islamophobia, etc. (Essed and Hoving 2014b; van Dijk 1993b; Vasta 2007). Efforts to press the variability in processes of exclusion and oppression over such large periods with global dimensions into one single concept of racism result in blowing it up disproportionally. For example, the concept of cultural racism acknowledges the fact that currently, at least in Europe, such processes are primarily justified in a language of culture and ethnicity rather than based on assumed biological inferiority (e.g. Essed and Trienekens 2008; Jones 2014; de Leeuw and van Wichelen 2014; see Balibar and Wallerstein 1991). Whether cultural or biological, however, it still remains racism in CR views.

The question is unavoidable whether such conceptual conflation of different historical forms of racism and other factors of exclusion and oppression results in analytical inflation (Omi and Winant 2002; Wacquant 1997). I believe it does so for two reasons, one conceptual and another empirical. First, by stretching a concept to such an extent that it adopts totalizing proportions, outmanoeuvring other potential explanations by subduing them (like ethnicizing discourses, cultural fundamentalism or nationalism or Islamophobia or …) into a container concept of racism and ruling out the possibility that it would not apply, it no longer explains anything. By ruling out alternative independent factors that may also explain the exclusion and oppression of migrants as the dependent factor and by imploding the independent factor into the dependent factor, the term racism loses its explanatory value. That is what CR authors, in line with Howard Winant, actually do: they take the above-mentioned evidence of migrants' exclusion and oppression in the Netherlands as indicating racism. They equate one with the other and thus render the concept of racism meaningless as an explanation.

Second, such conflation leads CR writers to turn a blind eye on the vital differences between "ethnicity" and "race" in the Dutch context. Siebers and Dennissen (2015) found that not only in political discourses, expressed both in governmental documents and by leading radical right voices, but also in exclusion and oppression in everyday interactions in the Dutch labour market, there is no trace of assumed biological superiority. "Race", invoking assumed biological hierarchies, plays no role whatsoever in politically triggered exclusion and oppression of migrants at work (see Siebers 2010, 2015). Instead, such exclusion and oppression are sparked by assumptions of incompatibility between assumed migrants' cultures and assumed Dutch culture (Siebers 2010, 2015). This notion of cultural incompatibility emerged after the turn of the century on the basis of the previous cultural essentialization of migrants (Grillo 2003; Siebers 2009a) in multiculturalist discourses.

Crucial here is that the government deliberately framed migrants as "ethnic minorities" and "allochthones" in the 1980s and 1990s in this cultural essentializing way to prevent their racialization. Inspired by the strong post-war anti-racism, migrants became the object of cultural essentialization that laid the groundwork for the subsequent emergence of cultural fundamentalism since 2000 (Siebers and Dennissen 2015; see van Reekum 2012; van Reekum and Duyvendak 2012; Schinkel 2013) that feeds current exclusion and oppression of migrants. Thus, this exclusion and oppression are rooted in anti-racism, not in racism. A clear conceptual distinction between "race" and "ethnicity" is indispensable for understanding post-war Dutch history. CR authors ignore that "race" and "ethnicity" have gone separate ways in the Netherlands and throw both concepts into the same container concepts of "race" and racism. Thus, Yanow and van der Haar's (2013) claim that the Dutch concepts of autochthony and allochthony would be surrogates for a race discourse misses the point.

Deploying a totalizing notion of racism, CR authors are unable to differentiate between racism and other possible sources of exclusion and oppression. This holds true for van Dijk's (1993a, 1993b, 2002) otherwise excellent discourse analysis, drawing on solid data on political texts. Likewise, Hondius (2014) guided a project of 72 carefully conducted interviews with "Afro-Dutch of Surinamese, Antillean and African background", resulting in accounts of serious discrimination. However, although she acknowledges that exact wordings matter very much in the Netherlands (2014, 275), her questions did not differentiate between "race" and "ethnicity".

Inconclusive evidence

CR authors do not always acknowledge the need for evidence. Essed and Hoving (2014b, 13) write: "Thus, in the twenty-first century, racism in its

many forms still shapes the lives of a large number of people in the Netherlands. Simultaneously, research illuminates that exact, systemic, and reliable data are often missing." So, if those data are often missing, how can we be so sure about the current persistence of racism? There are several such ambiguous statements regarding (the need for) evidence in their book. Its main data source is the various editions of the Racism and Extremism Monitor of the Anne Frank Foundation, but the monitor applies a similar totalizing notion of racism (Essed and Hoving 2014b, 26). According to Weiner (2014), the Netherlands drove minority people out long before the country even existed. Countervailing evidence is ignored. Jones (2014) discusses the assumed persistence of racism in the Dutch government's treatment of immigrants from the former Dutch colonies, but the highly successful 1,000 jobs programme, issued by the Dutch government in the 1980s to integrate Moluccans into the labour market, simply contradicts his argument.

The racism argument also melts into thin air in the studies on Dutch institutions. By failing to discuss the ways in which these institutions work, CR authors rule out the possibility that the problems they write about may have been produced by practices and procedures that have nothing to do with racism (see Wimmer 2013, 2015). Van den Broek (2014) discusses two journalists, with Turkish and Moroccan backgrounds, who had to leave their team because they had insufficient work experience. She treats this as proof of racism. However, if these two journalists did, in fact, have insufficient work experience to do their job well, the argument for discontinuing work relations is valid, not racist. She does not consider that option. Vasta (2014) draws quite heavily on my work, but my work does not demonstrate racism. Essed (2002) points to cloning processes in Dutch work settings, but why are these racist?

Wekker (2014) reports about Dutch police officers in the Amsterdam metro treating her unpleasantly after she violated the Dutch law twice within a few minutes. According to her own account, these officers went by the book and did what they are supposed to do in such cases. Her account contains no indication that racism guided their actions, as she claims. Trienekens and Bos (2014) argue that racism is operational in the Dutch public arts sector, since the so-called "non-Western" arts are marginalized in Dutch subsidy procedures. However, they apply an essentialist notion of art by not discussing whether migrants are underrepresented in the so-called "Western" arts.

In her Amsterdam classroom study, Weiner (2015) discusses the teacher emphasizing time, cleanliness, work ethic, order and global class inequalities, and argues that these norms represent a "whiteness" discourse. To justify why these norms would be "white", she points to US sources and to similar attitudes of missionaries elsewhere. She argues that cleanliness is a typical Dutch virtue since the sixteenth century and she refers to minority

members being overrepresented in the Dutch cleaning industry. These are her only, that is, totally unconvincing, arguments.

In short, evidence provided by CR scholars tends to be inconclusive. They frequently provide no evidence at all for their claims and tend to leave out countervailing evidence. Moreover, due to their container concept of racism, one cannot tell whether the exclusion and oppression of migrants is produced by racism strictly defined (Grillo 2003) or by another factor like nationalism. They rule out alternative explanations. I agree with Winant's (2015a) critique on positivism, but there is no excuse for not providing conclusive evidence for one's claims.

Pragmatics

Such a totalizing container concept of racism may be problematic analytically, but what about its usefulness to counter the exclusion and oppression of migrants in the Netherlands?

Dutch law recognizes various forbidden grounds of exclusion and oppression, like "race" and religion. Nevertheless, the Holocaust trauma has left the legal system ill-equipped to counter exclusion and oppression that are not based on assumed biological hierarchy but exclusively on grounds of assumed cultural incompatibility. Thus, although radical right leader Geert Wilders obviously incites hate and discrimination (Siebers and Dennissen 2015), the court case against him in 2011 had to fail. Even the prosecutor had to plea for not guilty, since Wilders, like other radical right voices, does not make claims of biological superiority. He disconnects body and culture/religion by calling upon Muslims to shake off Islam after which they are welcome (Wilders 2012). Likewise, civic integration programmes promise migrants "bodily" admittance once cleansed from incompatible norms and values. The strong association of discrimination with racism and of racism with Nazi notions of biological hierarchy have made the Dutch legal system "teethless" in the face of exclusion and oppression driven by assumed cultural incompatibility.

Thus, a clear conceptual *and* legal differentiation between "race" and "ethnicity" is not only necessary analytically, but also to effectively counter exclusion and oppression. Legal instruments are needed to specifically condemn exclusion and oppression based on "ethnicity" and culture.[4] The same argument holds true for politics. I argue that the anti-discrimination struggle that Aouragh (2014) accounts of would have attracted much more political and popular support if the activists would have used appropriate terms without invoking notions of racism.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination reporting on the Netherlands on 28 August 2015 (CERD 2015) condemns the discrimination of migrants, but deploys a similar totalizing concept of racism. Consequently,

the report repeats a number of typical CR mistakes discussed above. It calls upon the Dutch government to increase sensitivity for multiculturalism, whereas the multiculturalist cultural essentialization of migrants has nourished their current discrimination. It pleas for more attention in Dutch education for the Dutch historical involvement in colonialism and slavery, whereas any indication of the relevance of that history for current discrimination of migrants is lacking. The report also reproduces the CR mistake that the Dutch would downplay racism.

The committee has a blind eye for the cultural fundamentalist causes of discrimination. It calls upon the Dutch government to remove obstacles that keep migrants from taking civic integration exams and thus fails to criticize these exams' role in legitimizing the idea of cultural contradictions between migrants and Dutch society (cf. de Leeuw and van Wichelen 2014, Schinkel 2013). The committee ignores discriminatory policies infused by cultural fundamentalism.

The committee also reproduces the CR critique on Black Pete, a carnivalesque figure at the side of Saint Nicholas. Their joyful feast is traditionally celebrated at 6 December, the main occasion when children receive presents like elsewhere at Christmas. CR inspired voices (see Brienen (2014) Jordan (2014) and Smith (2014)) have initiated a public critique on Black Pete, saying that he is racist since his face is painted black, he is dressed up exotically and is subordinated to the "white" Saint Nicholas.

Space does not allow me to discuss this case in sufficient detail, but two issues stand out. First, there is no contemporary evidence that the figure of Black Pete would instigate any racist meanings or behaviour by those who celebrate his feast. Second, critique on this popular figure feeds radical rights claims about cultural incompatibilities between "foreigners" and "the Dutch". It allows them to say that here we have a critique initiated from abroad (see Smith 2014) that attacks one of "our" cherished cultural traditions. Thus, CR authors run the risk of feeding what they intend to counter, that is, the exclusion and oppression of migrants.

Racializing "the Dutch"

CR scholars agree that "race" is a myth but that the consequences of this myth can be very real. Therefore, we need to treat this myth as a reality in order to criticize these consequences. Meer (2014, 117) writes: "So, the paradox is that we need to recognise race to challenge it". However, there is a thin line between such recognition and actually legitimizing racialized (Miles 1993) language, thus contributing to the very racialization we want to criticize.

Several CR authors have crossed that line. Contributors to the *Dutch Racism* book and others (e.g. Weiner 2014, 2015) feel entitled to racialize the Dutch by calling them "white" without brackets. They write about "the Dutch" as an

agency with reflective and coordinating faculties, about a "Dutch nation" that has a "strategy" (Essed and Hoving 2014b, 10). See Gilroy (1998) and Wimmer (2015) for a critique on such reifications of "race".

Wekker (2014) writes about a "white Dutch psyche" driving Dutch individuals towards racism. Such collective metaphysics are reminiscent of German romantic and Nazi attributions of a similar metaphysical status to the German nation (see Wimmer 2013 for a critique). They underscored *Blut und Boden* and *Heim ins Reich* slogans. Notions of a "Dutch white psyche" assume there is something like "the Dutch" who are "white" and are represented by colonial officers in Surinam centuries ago, contemporary police officers in the Amsterdam metro and television producers, those maintaining "white" supremacy on Aruba and Curaçao (Sharpe 2014), those who installed apartheid in South Africa (Steyn 2014), etc. Such metaphysical notions have guided the selection of chapters of the *Dutch Racism* book.

Moreover, several authors apparently feel entitled to derail into fact-free accusations. Jordan (2014) labels "the Dutch" as "*das Herrenvolk*". Such use of precisely Nazi labels to depict the Dutch comes close to "the ultimate unimaginable insult", to paraphrase de Leeuw and van Wichelen (2014, 348). It does not get much better in Goldberg's (2014) closing chapter of *Dutch Racism*. Here "the Dutch" stand on trial (see Bourdieu and Wacqant 1999; Wacquant 1997). What professional purpose is served here? I believe, CR scholars are tempted here to produce the same kind of essentialist thinking they claim to criticize.

Conclusions

This review discussed the CR literature applied to the Netherlands only and its conclusions refer to that particular CR literature only. The appreciation for context and time in the work by authors who write about other countries, like Gilroy (1998) and Miles (1993), must be recognized. The same applies to some appreciation for context and time in CR articles on the Netherlands, like de Leeuw and van Wichelen (2014), Hondius (2014) and Ghorashi (2014).

Nevertheless, CR approaches are not very helpful to analyse and counter current exclusion and oppression of migrants in the Netherlands. Analytically, they are handicapped by their refusal to contextualize their concepts and to consider the voices of those they criticize, by the totalizing notions of racism they impose on the Dutch context and by their failure to present conclusive evidence for their claims. The effectiveness of CR approaches to support the struggle against this exclusion and oppression is doubtful, if not counterproductive.

I argue that the essentialism in these approaches is the result of wanting to promote and propagate a concept instead of trying to analyse and understand a problem, that is, migrants' oppression and exclusion in the

Netherlands. It leads to imposing a concept borrowed from one context onto another context instead of contextualizing the concept itself. It prompts the overstretching of the concept to let it cover a wide variety of – oftentimes disconnected – issues spread over time and place instead of sharpening various concepts to use as heuristic tools for analysing the problem. It breeds lots of mistakes and depreciates the need for conclusive evidence for one's statements. It leads one astray when trying to provide input for effectively countering the problem.

In addition, it undermines CR literature's own aims to actually show that there is racism in Dutch society. It may very well be there, but based on this literature we cannot tell. It cannot be ruled out that racism does play an important role in particular Dutch contexts, but the CR container notion of it makes it ineffective to actually show or demonstrate that it is the case. The study of racism in the Dutch context requires a sharpening of the concept of racism, to be used next to other concepts that may be more or less valid given the case under study.

Consequently, I do not follow Howard Winant nor Andreas Wimmer regarding the relationship between "race"/racism and "ethnicity"/ethnicism. Their proposals to *a priori* subordinate one concept to the other is not helpful to study the Dutch case. I propose to understand these concepts as different concepts next to each other with different meanings, different ways of becoming operational and different consequences. Which one is dominant in a particular case is an empirical question instead of a theoretical one. Its answers may differ from one case to the other.

The heuristic value of these concepts requires a clear distinction. For the Dutch case, it makes sense to define ethnicist exclusion and oppression as primarily based on arguments of cultural boundaries and incompatibilities, and racism as such processes primarily driven by assumptions of biological hierarchy. In-between concepts like cultural racism are not useful in the Dutch case since there are no articulations between cultural and biological arguments (Siebers and Dennissen 2015). A clear distinction between these two concepts is vital to understand the case of oppression and exclusion of migrants in the Netherlands. Whether that also holds true for studies in other contexts is something that future studies need to tell.

Notes

1. A similar review of the literature on this exclusion and oppression that takes an exclusive view from "ethnicity" and ethnicization would be welcome. Space does not allow me to do both here.
2. In the following text, the term "migrants" refers to those who actually migrated to the Netherlands as well as their children, especially those classified as "non-Western".

3. Likewise, CR authors argue that currently racism is cloaked as culture, hidden behind arguments of cultural difference (e.g. Wikan 1999). Should we treat the lack of evidence of racism in the Netherlands (see Siebers and Dennissen 2015) then as a proof of its hidden existence? See Wimmer (2015) for similarly ambiguous CR arguments.
4. Article one of the Dutch constitution condemns discrimination on various grounds, but does not mention "ethnicity".

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