Opening the walls of whiteness: A literature study about institutional whiteness and the decolonisation of universities

Master thesis

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"Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter"

- Chinua Achebe

Preface: personal reflections on how my interest was drawn

In 2019 and 2020 I attended two *dialogue afternoons* (dialoogmiddagen) organised at the University for Humanistic studies (UvH). These events aimed to open a discussion about what we believe is important within humanistic studies, and want to improve at the UvH. During these sessions the subjects of *inclusivity* and *diversity* were discussed. A staff member and I voiced that we found it important to critically reflect on our (predominantly) white curriculum, staff and student population. To my astonishment, the majority of those present dismissed these topics (or were silent) and I sensed an unwillingness to discuss these perspectives. Most people responded either defensively or treated the problems around inclusivity and diversity as 'too complex'. At the UvH reflexivity is highly valued, and the humanisation of society is an important endeavour within research and education. I found it remarkable that appreciation of reflexivity seemed selective.

Additionally, I noticed that humanisation/inclusivity is treated as an engagement that is important outside the university and people hesitate to engage with the topic of inclusivity related to practises and theories within the UvH. After the second dialogue afternoon, I felt frustrated to sense again this unwillingness to talk about these topics, and I discovered I was not the only one who had this frustration. With some other students, I started a group to express our critical voice about the curriculum at our university. A few months later, after the killing of George Floyd and the evolution of the Black Lives Matter movement, we got in contact with another group of students who shared our concerns and this is how the collective that we called 'Pluralistiek' started: we call for attention for decolonial and intersectional perspectives in relation to working and learning at the UvH. Later this became a study association with the idea to have more continuation.

In engaging with decoloniality regarding my own university I became aware that there is a 'wall' that protects the university to seriously engage with this topic. I truly value the education I have received in this institution. Subjects that were discussed at the university, such as 'Humanisation', 'Normative Professionality', 'Inclusivity' and 'Reflexivity', have highly influenced my thinking and I am grateful that I have had the opportunity to develop my thinking about these perspectives, although these topics were always discussed in relation to the 'other' or society in general. I discovered that a critical reflection on our own predominantly (white) bodies and university was tactically avoided.

Abstract

Universities increasingly take issues of decolonisation and racism more seriously. Yet an analysis of how whiteness is institutionalised and how this relates to colonialism is often missing when they engage with these matters. In this study the question "*How does the university's self-examination of institutional whiteness aim to contribute to its decolonisation?*" is central. The research is a thematic literature analysis, conducted in line with the paradigm of critical theory. I analysed the overall arguments of decolonial and CRT scholars, by specifically focussing on how institutional whiteness (IW) functions and how critically self-examining IW aims to help moving towards social and epistemic justice in relation to knowledge and knowledge production. A self-examination of IW investigates how universities, and the bodies present within those institutions, can rethink their foundations, objectives and responsibilities regarding the composition of its own staff and student population, physical infrastructure, social/cultural norms and curricula. Based on my analysis of decolonial and CRT scholarship, I argue that self-examining institutional whiteness can contribute to decolonising universities, by increasing awareness about (hidden) norms, grounded in contexts of colonialism, that are structurally engrained within universities.

Inhoud

Chapter 1 - Introduction and problem statement

1.1 The relevance of theory around decolonising the university

In the past few decades, (anti-)racism, diversity and the impact of colonialism on
contemporary society have been put more firmly on the societal agenda. In the summer of
2020, the Black Lives Matter movement protests started and quickly became influential
across the world, including in the Netherlands.

University of Amsterdam professor Gloria Wekker particularly addresses racism in the
Netherlands and argues that 400 years of colonial rule still has enormous consequences for
contemporary Dutch ideas about race (Wekker, 2016, p. 30). According to Wekker (2016,
p.4), problems concerning racism cannot be separated from the history of colonialism and its
effects on today's society. She argues that racism is institutionally embedded. Institutional
racism in social and political domains is increasingly scrutinised in the Netherlands, for
example in the work of Control Alt Delete[1] against ethnic profiling, and in the exposure of

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[1]   See: https://controlealtdelete.nl/over-ons Accessed on 22-11-2021

institutional racism in relation to the benefits affair (*toeslagenaffaire*).[2]

Over the past decade, postcolonial and decolonial theories on racism have gained considerable prominence. They both emphasise the institutionalisation of racism and point at the importance of analysing (contemporary) power structures related to centuries of colonial rule (Bhambra, 2014; Mignolo, 2011; Quijano, 2007; Said, 2003). At the core of their analyses lies their critical inquiry into the global impact of modernity. According to Bhambra (2014, p. 115) "Postcolonial and decolonial arguments have been most successful in their challenge to the insularity of historical narratives and historiographical traditions emanating from Europe". While postcolonial theory mainly focuses on history, decolonial theories focus more on the present, and question how the legacy of colonialism affects contemporary power structures and knowledge production. In this study, following Reiter (2018, p.10), epistemology is considered as a system that regulates "the principles of knowledge". Epistemologies in this definition include and exclude what is knowledge. Decolonial theories draw attention to what they call "subaltern epistemologies", knowledge systems that have long been ignored and made invisible (Lim, 2019, p. 194).As a result, much valuable (non-Western) knowledge is excluded from intellectual discourse and some even speak of "violence against and refusal of non-Western and Indigenous ways of knowing and being" (Fregoso Bailón & De Lissovoy, 2019, p. 356). By excluding such knowledge, Mbembe (2016) argues, universities (as institutions that generate and share knowledge) disqualify other epistemologies and assume that the production of universal knowledge can only be derived from European traditions (Mbembe, 2016, p. 36). An underlying assumption in these Western traditions is that 'objective' knowledge production is possible, and can be generated independently from its context. This stance excludes alternative knowledge traditions from scientific discourse and thus fails to recognise other forms of knowledge production as valuable (Martinez-Vargas, 2020, p. 113). In contrast, decolonial scholars, like academics in social sciences and humanities, argue that knowledge (production) is always situated (Grofoquel, 2006, p. 169) and thus never originates from a neutral position (Descarries, 2014). Grosfoquel states that we need to be careful with claims to universality. For Grosfoquel (2006, p. 169), European knowledge production is not problematic per se, but he

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[2] See: https://www.nporadio1.nl/binnenland/23704-toeslagenaffaire-dit-is-gewoon-racisme-van-de-staat
Accessed on 22-11-2021

thinks that it needs to be explicitly situated within European traditions and recognise that it is leaving other perspectives out. Bhambra, Gebrial and Nişancıoğlu also argue that colonialism has had a great impact on the university and its knowledge production and therefore a decolonial analysis is important to understand how contemporary universities function (Bhambra, Gebrial & Nişancıoğlu, 2018, p. 5).

In the context of the above-mentioned epistemic challenges, decolonisation of the university receives increasing global attention (De Jong et al., 2017; Prinsloo, 2016). A prominent starting point arose at the University of Cape Town in South Africa with the Rhodes Must Fall campaign in 2015 (Dübgen & Skupien, 2018, p. 122). This campaign initially focused on the removal of the Rhodes statue at the university premises, a symbol of colonial power, and subsequently caused many other universities to reconsider the symbolism of colonial era statues on their campuses. More and more universities across the world critically examine the influence of the colonial era on the university and the nature of education itself (Dübgen & Skupien, 2018, p. 123). These developments have also reached the Netherlands. For example, events were organised at Utrecht University, such as "Why Black Lives Matter in Europe" and "Decolonisation within queer communities of colour"[34].

When studying the work of decolonial scholars, different decolonial thinkers have different ideas and goals regarding decolonisation (Jansen, 2019, p. 53). There is a wide range of interpretations, goals and strategies among decolonisation scholars that for instance are linked to different contexts in which decolonisation takes place. Others such as Pappas (2017) are critical of decolonial theory, and argue that decolonial thinkers "regardless of their identity or point of origin, speak for the oppressed in an imposing (colonial) way" (Pappas, 2017, p. 26). Further, Tuck and Yang (2012) state that the language of decolonisation is often hijacked and does not focus on the (what they consider the most important) ultimate political goal of "repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 2). Tuck & Yang (2012) argue that decolonisation is not a metonym for social justice, and thus decolonisation does not lend itself metaphorically for improving education and society. Their critique includes the metaphorical use of decolonisation in relation to education. Even though Bhambra, Gebrial and Nişancıoğlu (2018, p. 5) find it important to take this criticism

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[3]   See: https://www.uu.nl/organisatie/equality-diversity-inclusion/actie/black-lives-matter-uu-creating-change. Accessed on 22-11-2021

[4]   See: https://www.uu.nl/agenda/dekolonisatie-binnen-queer-gemeenschappen-van-kleur Accessed on 22-11-2021

seriously, they argue that the problems of decolonisation extend beyond what Tuck and Yang describe and stress the need to decolonise universities, along with the issue of repatriation of Indigenous land and life.

Decolonial scholars argue that the process of decolonising universities requires critical self-reflection of the coloniality of power on an institutional level (Andreotti, 2011, p. 382). In this context, they identify a particular problem. They find that many of the universities endorsing colonisation do not study whiteness or white supremacy, and, while professing a 'post-race', colour-blind attitude, choose to focus only on increasing their internal diversity (Tate & Bagguley 2016, p. 290). By focusing exclusively or predominantly on increasing diversity, institutional whiteness (IW), a concept which will be thoroughly discussed in 1.5 and chapter 3, often receives little attention in universities. This perpetuates the idea that whiteness does not need to be critically examined, thus becoming the invisible normal (Doharty, Madriaga & Joseph-Salisbury, 2021, p. 9). Tate & Bagguley (2016) believe it is important to explore IW: "How is it produced and reproduced through affect, structures, and processes? How might it be resisted and transformed?" (Tate & Bagguley, 2016, p. 290). Tate and Bagguley (2016, p. 295) point out that when power structures underlying whiteness remain unexplored, the demand for research on whiteness within the university remains a non-issue. They argue that IW needs to be studied to avoid that problems are framed as being problematic mainly for non-white people (Tate & Bagguley, 2016, p. 295). Ahmed (2007) endorses the importance of reflecting on how institutions are shaped by whiteness. "When we describe institutions as 'being' white (institutional whiteness), we are pointing to how institutional spaces are shaped by the proximity of some bodies and not others" (Ahmed, 2007, p. 157). Andreotti's (2014) distinction between reflection and self-reflexivity, marks a difference between reflection on an individual and institutional level. As this study focuses on whiteness on an institutional level, this distinguishment is important.

This research will particularly draw on two academic fields: decolonial theory and critical race theory (CRT). These fields share common theorisation around epistemic justice, a concept I will explain more thoroughly in 2.1.2, yet they have a different focus. I chose to investigate these fields specifically, because I want to investigate if and how these fields can supplement each other in theorising epistemic justice in the context of universities. CRT scholars argue that the impact of whiteness on institutional life at universities deserves more critical examination. While IW is a much used central concept in CRT and studies about anti-racism in universities (such as Tate & Bagguley (2016); Joseph-Salisbury (2019); Ahmed (2012)), it receives little attention within prominent literature about decolonising universities

(such as in Bhambra, Gebrial & Nişancıoğlu (2018); Jansen (2019); Grosfoguel, Hernandez & Velásquez (2016)). How coloniality is manifesting in universities is often addressed in decolonial studies. Yet these studies generally do not focus on how IW specifically could play a role within universities and how examining IW can contribute to decolonising the university. CRT scholars argue that institutional whiteness is an important dimension to understand how epistemic injustice prevails. IW can therefore be seen as potentially connecting these academic fields. It is in this light that I choose to investigate if and how CRT scholarship around IW can contribute to theories about the decolonisation of the university. The connection and differences between (de)coloniality and IW, and how these are conceptualised respectively by decolonial and CRT scholars is central in this study. This research aims to improve our understanding of how the fields of decoloniality and CRT relate to each other and what these fields could offer each other. More specifically, I will focus on how self-examination of IW aims to contribute to the decolonisation of the university.

1.2 Research Questions

Main research question: How does the university's self-examination of institutional whiteness aim to contribute to its decolonisation?

With the following sub-questions:
1. What does the decolonisation of the university mean?
2. What is whiteness and institutional whiteness?
3. What does a process of self-examination of institutional whiteness in the context of the university entail?
4. How can self-examination of institutional whiteness contribute to a process of decolonisation of the university?

1.3 Research objectives and relevance

The main purpose of the research is to gain more in-depth knowledge about the decolonisation of universities with a focus on the role of IW. As such this study addresses a gap in contemporary decolonial literature with regard to IW and its (potential) role in decolonising universities. This study specifically aims to explore what critical examination on

whiteness in universities would entail and what it seeks to redress.

Its academic and humanistic relevance lies in its focus on (systemic) mechanisms of in and exclusion. The UvH research program states: "*As social inequality has risen over the past decades, contacts between unequally positioned social groups have withered*, and formulates the following questions: *How do people experience these pervasive inequalities? What supports or hinders people in regaining dignity?*"[5] This research aims to provide more insight in how decolonial and CRT scholarship analyses how universities function regarding mechanisms of in and exclusion and how universities could pursue epistemic justice within their own institutions.

1.4 Methodological approach

This research is conducted in line with the paradigm of critical theory (CT), which takes a political stance on contemporary society, and aims to reveal and challenge certain power structures (Felluga, 2015, p. xxiv). This study investigates the main arguments developed in decolonial and CRT scholarship, how IW functions and how a critical self-examination of IW aims to enhance epistemic justice in universities.

I will answer my research questions on the basis of a semi-systematic literature review, and I will reflect on the relation between the meanings of different concepts. Following Snyder (2019), a semi-systematic review maps different research fields and explores what they can contribute to each other. I chose to do a semi-systematic review because the purpose of this study is to compare and challenge different conceptualisations and to identify gaps between scholarly fields, rather than create an all-encompassing review of texts within the field of research. As Snyder (2019, p. 335) describes, I will do a thematic analysis of the texts in which "identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns in the form of themes" is central. I will select which texts I will use in this study, and following Snyder (2019), I will thematise these texts on the basis of their relevance to the different topics within this study. I will then code the different concepts that are used in these texts in order to analyse if and how these texts are complementary and/or how they have different emphases.

For this purpose I will select from the work of prominent decolonial and CRT scholars in the fields of social theory and political philosophy. I will incorporate a broad

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[5]   See: https://www.uvh.nl/uvh.nl/up/ZwgujtjKsiI_Research_Program_UHS__1_.pdf Accessed on 22-11-2021

range of literature around the topic of (de)coloniality and sketch the problem around (de)coloniality within universities to outline the main relevant debates and arguments around decolonising the university.

1.4.1 Positioning/methodology of critical theory

This research has a social constructivist perspective, in which knowledge is not considered neutral. Instead, it is seen as a reflection from the viewpoint of "the knower" (Delanty & Strydom, 2003, p. 371). Within CT "there is no such thing as a non-theoretical interpretation" (Tyson, 2014, p. 4) and thus acknowledges a normative stance towards the data, and epistemological questions are related to their impact on politics and society (Marinopoulou, 2019, p.137). This study follows the proposition that interpretation always starts from a normative position and therefore is consequently biassed. Conscious of this inescapable bias, it is imperative to be transparent about one's normativity as a researcher.

1.4.2 Normativity

The main research question assumes that decolonisation of the universities is in some way important. As fitting within CT and previously explained in 1.4.1, this research departs with a political stance, in this case one that assumes that universities need decolonisation. As Haraway (1988) describes: rather than an objective view from nowhere, partiality rather than objectivity is central within this research. Instead of assuming universal, objective interpretations of concepts and ideas to understand the world, within this research I aim to continuously reflect on how my own position is affecting the knowledge production within this research. As Bourke (2014) describes, I do this by checking, explicating and questioning my assumptions about different topics and texts. Further, as Corlett and Mavin (2018) describe, I will critically reflect on what I take for granted.

This research will mostly draw from decolonial and critical race theories. These theories can function as a tool to understand power dynamics. Both fields have a normative component, aimed at raising awareness about global responsibilities (Dunford, 2017). These global responsibilities flow from the idea that universities, by producing and sharing knowledge, affect different contexts across the globe in various ways. Universities should therefore also critically analyse if and how they carry responsibility for the impact of knowledge in different social contexts . In this study it is important to take into account that

the academic fields I study do not consider themselves to be neutral. The reason why I chose to investigate them is also not impartial. I chose to analyse them more in depth because I believe that these theories have much to offer in thinking about and developing practises of epistemic justice within universities. With Dunford (2017), I believe research can function as a tool to deepen discussions and dialogues about politics and morality. In this case, I believe that research about decolonising the university can open up space to think about the complexities within this field.

In line with Haraway (1988), complexity rather than simplicity of meanings is the starting point of this research. The meanings of the concepts that are being analysed are plural, not singular, and depend on the context it is applied to or is coming from. In answering my research questions my goal is not to give clear-cut answers, but rather to sketch how different ideas can supplement and contrast each other. I will show how these ideas are to be seen in their context and how they can be meaningful in relation within the scope of this research. As Simandan (2019) argues, each theory or concept is founded in a specific context and its epistemic value or weakness should therefore carefully be thought through. Therefore it is important in this research to analyse how theories are limited and how they contribute in the scope of this research.

1.4.3 Positionality: Critical Theory

Within CT, research and knowledge is always situated in social or political contexts and can never be totally value-neutral (Kobayashi, 1994). As Allen (2016) argues, for CT to be used in a decolonial way, the concept of 'unlearning' is important. Unlearning in this context means to "break free from the thinking programs imposed on us by education, culture, and social environment, always marked by the Western imperial reason" (Tiostanova & Mignolo, 2012, p. 7). Decolonial theory not only helps to understand (historical) power dynamics that are at play in contemporary society but also helps (myself as a researcher) to unlearn certain customs and norms regarding the validation of knowledge.

Further, because the political and social context of the researcher has an impact on the production of knowledge, it is important to take this context into account (Harding, 2016). Since CT departs with the idea that knowledge is situated, it is important to take the situatedness of the research(er) into account: by which body and in which context it is produced. 'Body', in this context, is not used to reduce humans to their physical appearance

or presence. Rather this word is used to describe that certain (perceived) body characteristics affect one's life in many different ways. Awareness of this context and positionality is thus beneficial for the research process and contributes to a critical reflection on the researcher's own projects (Nicholls, 2009).

The concept of intersectionality, coined by Crenshaw (1989), helps to understand how different bodies are differently privileged or oppressed (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality is a framework to understand how persons, or groups of people are disadvantaged/advantaged by multiple sources of prejudice/power and discrimination, due to their uniquely overlapping structured identities and experiences such as race, class, gender, age, sexuality, disabilities, migration status and geopolitical location. "Instead of merely summarizing the effects of one, two or three oppressive categories, adherents to the concept of intersectionality stress the interwoven nature of these categories and how they can mutually strengthen or weaken each other" (Winker & Degele, 2011). Yet, as Dhawan and Varela (2016, p. 27) argue, it is useful to not take those categories (for example race) within an intersectional analysis for granted but rather interrogate the categories in order to understand identity (markers) as 'multicausal, multidirectional and liminal'.

1.4.4 My own positionality as researcher

As Corlett and Mavin (2018, p. 379) describe "knowing the researcher's positioning in relation to others gives context to the researcher's voice, to their perception of the research problem or dilemma, and enables the audience's understanding of the findings". In my case, it is important to mention that I am white, but also that I am cis[6] male, abled, twenty eight years old, heterosexual and have a Dutch passport. These are mere examples of personal identifiers, and do not refer to any 'true self' within me, rather I believe that these identifiers are social constructs and subjective. This does not mean that these constructs do not have meaning, but rather that these identifiers are dependent on social agreements that define what fits in certain categories. Despite its constructive character, these identifiers have a big impact on my life and the way I experience privilege/oppression. As a researcher researching (epistemic) oppression, I believe it is important to realise how these identifiers have real effects in my daily life and therefore should be mentioned in order to have a better understanding of my

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[6]   Cisgender refers to people whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth.

own positionality. These identity markers are influencing my understanding of oppression and privilege, which are important themes within decolonial theory. Privilege based on my skin colour, rather than oppression, is something that I do experience.

Since (institutional) whiteness has a central role in this research, my own functioning as a white body within predominantly white institutions is especially relevant to take into account the situatedness of the researcher. Because I am white, experiential understanding how IW harms will always be based on accounts of others, rather than based on my own experiences. Therefore my situatedness affects how I relate to such accounts. Other personal identity markers obviously also influence this research, yet I will not discuss these in depth because of this study's limited scope. Nevertheless I want to be conscious of them and reflect on them and their intersection.

As a white person growing up in The Netherlands in a predominantly white neighbourhood and enjoying predominantly education, in which almost all teachers and authors within the curriculum were white, whiteness was something that was rarely spoken about. Talking about race or ethnicity was always about the 'other'. I was not conscious about how whiteness affected my life, before I read and heard about it. I was not aware about the ways that (my) whiteness operates within myself and in the institutions around me. In contrast to non-white people as Ahmed (2012) describes, I did not feel like 'the other' in term of race, and my skin colour was never an issue within those institutions. To research (institutional) whiteness, as a white person studying at a predominant white institute, I should not avoid my own (historical) context and in line with Nicholls (2009) it is beneficial for my research to be aware of my context and reflect on how IW is influencing this research. My positionality, as someone who is interested and involved in decolonising universities, influences this study, as I chose to focus on theories that do not challenge, but rather deepened the notion why universities need decolonisation.

Further, a dimension worth mentioning is that part of my father's family was involved in the trade of colonial products, which I strongly disapprove of. This made me wonder how they profited from colonialism and how they potentially contributed to the oppression that went along with practises of colonialism. At the same time part of my mother's family has roots in Suriname, a former Dutch colony, and ultimately descends from enslaved people. I realised that my family has been impacted by colonialism, yet in opposing ways: some profited, others suffered. This made me wonder how we can acknowledge the cruel practises of our ancestors and change the way contemporary society functions in the backdrop of this history and additionally recover forgotten histories and knowledge of our oppressed

ancestors. Rather than viewing colonialism as something that is 'over', I believe it is important to investigate the role of colonialism in contemporary society. Therefore this thesis, which can also be seen as a project to understand the effects of colonialism in that sense, is not a neutral topic to me, but rather is an investigation to understand the complex and different relations that different people and institutions have to colonialism.

Further, regarding neutrality, it is important to mention that I appreciate the work of many decolonial scholars, and I am involved in decolonial projects myself. In writing this research, I want to contribute to thinking about how universities can enhance epistemic justice. Acknowledging my own partiality is important, yet it is also important that I stay critical about decolonial theory and CRT to see their limitations and potential.

1.4.5 Justification for choice of literature

Concerning literature about (institutional) whiteness and self-examination, I purposefully select the work of decolonial scholars on IW in the context of universities, after drawing from and examining a broad range of literature around the conceptualisation of (institutional) whiteness.

Following the technique of a semi-systematic review (Snyder, 2019), I will scan a great number of articles and books and select them based on their relevance to the topic of this study. I will use different keywords to search for academic texts such as: 'coloniality', 'decoloniality', 'whiteness' and 'institutional whiteness' in combination with keywords such as 'university' and 'higher education' to find texts that specifically focus on universities. Texts that do not contain such keywords will be excluded from this study. I will engage with the texts, guided by my subsidiary research questions and make notes for each article/book and save citations for later use. I will identify themes, debates and dilemmas in these sources and draw on them when I answer my research questions. The selection of literature is based on my key concepts, while at the same time reading about the topic of decoloniality has generated these key concepts. In the search for literature and relevant concepts I used the snowball technique to collect literature as Ridley (2012) describes. I read different articles about decoloniality and by using their bibliography I found more articles that were relevant to my topic. In these articles I also found concepts which were of key importance to my research questions. There was thus an interplay between my key concepts and the literature I was reading, in which through a snowball effect both key concepts as search terms and the bibliography of the literature helped me find literature important to my research questions.

This study will include different perspectives from academics from the Global South

and -North and therefore the background of the authors is taken into account in the selection process. Another criteria for including texts is the international prominence of certain scholars within CRT and decolonial scholarship. These are key authors which feature prominently in the literature and serve as international reference points.

In line with critical social theory (Leonardo, 2009), this research starts from the idea that oppression (in this case epistemic oppression) is real, and thus does not question the existence of such oppression. Rather than justifying why epistemic oppression is real, this research focuses on how this oppression takes form in different ways and how CRT and decolonial scholars think this can be countered. This means I take into account discussions, debates and critical notes around decoloniality, but not those which do not acknowledge epistemic injustice in universities. I deliberately chose to focus on discussions within CRT and decolonial scholarship, and not on external critique of these fields. In this study I investigate, analyse and describe what CRT and decolonial thinkers themselves have contributed in thinking about this topic. This study specifically explores their ideas and conceptualisations. The texts were not selected with the purpose to gather empirical evidence to prove for example that coloniality is present within universities. Rather, this study investigates the arguments of decolonial and CRT scholars who already assume that racism and coloniality indeed play a harmful role within universities.

The key concepts in this study will be introduced in 1.5. In line with CT, I do not aim to give singular or universal definitions, but rather discuss how these concepts are of importance and how they helped in searching for literature. By unfolding these concepts I aim to get a better understanding of the field of decoloniality and CRT to answer my research questions.

1.5 Brief introduction of the main concepts

This study is grounded in how CRT and decolonial scholars understand the main concepts. I do not compare my own preconceptions with their definitions, but rather investigate how their conceptualisations relate to each other and how they possibly supplement or challenge each other. Their conceptualisations will be thoroughly explored throughout this thesis. The following section merely introduces five main concepts which appear in the academic work which was central in this study, and briefly explains how these concepts are meaningful in the context of this research.

1.5.1 Coloniality

The concept of coloniality plays a central role in this research. In the context of this study 'coloniality' exposes how colonialism still impacts the epistemological foundation of universities and therefor continues to influence contemporary knowledge production. Quijano's concept of coloniality and the colonial matrix of power (CMP) will be a starting point, but I will also discuss decolonial scholarship that build on this concept, such as Mignolo and Walsh (2018), Maldonado-Torres (2016) and Icaza & Vázquez (2018). Since I focus on IW and the decolonisation of the university, literature concerning coloniality of knowledge and knowledge such as the work of Santos (2016) and Le Grange (2019) will be analysed more in depth.

1.5.2 Decoloniality

Decoloniality is a response to coloniality. In the context of this research, it is conceptualised as attempts to undo or unlearn systems of coloniality and additionally aims to develop alternative systems of knowledge production. This study focuses on decoloniality regarding institutional and epistemic power control. The book '*On Decoloniality: Concepts, analytics, praxis*' by Walsh and Mignolo (2018) is of prominent significance since this book is an extensive exploration about how decoloniality can function as a framework to resist (epistemic) coloniality. In this research, this book is especially useful in understanding conceptually and analytically the broader ideas around decoloniality and helps to have an overview of what decoloniality means in different contexts. To go more in depth about what decoloniality means in the context of the university 'Decolonisation in universities' by Jansen (2019) is a key text for this study. This book explores thoroughly what decolonisation means for universities (in South-Africa) and will be used to better understand the theoretical implications of decolonising universities. Additionally, 'Decolonising the university' by Bhambra, Gebrial and Nişancıoğlu will be used, because it pays more attention to the specific context and examples of decolonising practises within the Global North.

1.5.3 Institutional Whiteness

Whiteness in the context of education is a key component of IW. In this study, IW is used as

a concept to investigate how norms and cultures of whiteness, in which white people are seen as the norm, operate on an institutional level within universities. I will draw from Leonardo's (2009) book *Race, whiteness, and education* in order to conceptualise whiteness and get a better understanding of what it means and how it comes into play in practice. This book was chosen given its international prominence in the field. The concept of IW was coined by Sarah Ahmed (2007). In this research I analyse how it can be a useful concept when analysing the decolonisation of universities. The book '*On being included: Racism and diversity in institutional life*' will be used to conceptualise whiteness in institutions. The work of Joseph-Salisbury (2019) and Brunsma, Brown and Placie (2013) will be used to gain a better understanding of how whiteness functions in institutions of higher education.

1.5.4 Self-Reflexivity in context of the university

Self-reflexivity refers to a process of reflection that operates on a systemic, institutional level, rather than an individual level. Such a process aims to reflect on the situatedness of individuals regarding systems of knowledge and power. The work of Andreotti (2011; 2014) and Emirbayer and Desmond (2012) will be used to get a better understanding of what self-reflexivity in universities means regarding its own decolonisation. The article by Arday (2019) "Dismantling power and privilege through reflexivity: negotiating normative Whiteness, the Eurocentric curriculum and racial microaggressions within the Academy." Was selected to get a better understanding how self-reflexivity can work in relation to (institutional) whiteness.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

I will answer my research questions on the basis of a thematic literature analysis, and I will reflect on the relation between the meanings of different concepts. Chapters two, three, four and five are each dedicated to one of the subsidiary research questions. The final chapter provides an answer to the main research question. Chapters two, three and four each start with a story, a vignette which describes an incident, which exemplifies how this issue plays out in real life. These stories are based on real experiences and illustrate how problems around decolonisation manifest in society in general and within universities in particular. They aim to give the reader a better feeling for the context of the sub-questions. Chapters five

and six aim to bring the information of the previous chapters together.

Chapter 2 addresses the first sub-question of my research: 'What does the decolonisation of the university mean?'. It discusses the main concepts that are relevant to understand what decolonisation of the university means. This chapter provides an overview of decolonial thinking and how this can be useful in the context of the university.

Chapter 3 addresses the second sub-question: 'What is institutional whiteness ?'. First I will discuss the broader concept of whiteness and follow with an exploration of IW. I will analyse how IW manifests differently depending on its context to have a better understanding of its complexity.

Chapter 4 addresses the third sub-question 'What does a process of self-examination of IW in the context of the university entail?'. In this chapter I discuss more in detail what and who the university entails and how self-examination is manifested in various ways.

Chapter 5 addresses the fourth sub-question 'How does self-examination of IW aim to redress decolonisation of the university?'. In this chapter I pull together the insights of previous chapters to better understand how a self-examination of IW can contribute to the decolonisation of universities, but also how it is lacking concerning the decolonisation of universities.

Chapter 6 is the concluding chapter. I will summarise the answers to the sub-questions and then will provide an answer to the main research question '*How does the university's self-examination of institutional whiteness aim to contribute to its decolonisation?*'. This section reflects on the limitations of this research and comes with suggestions for follow-up research.

Chapter 2: Decolonising universities

In 2015, the administrative centre of the University of Amsterdam (UvA) 'het Maagdenhuis' was occupied by 300 students. This was part of a protest by university students and staff in reaction to financial cuts by the university.[7]. They demanded justice within the education system of the UvA: against neo-liberalisation and in favour of the democratisation of the UvA.

A group of people noticed that these demands often originated from white bodies and were on behalf of their problems. They claimed that these people did not consider the marginalisation or demands of non-whites and the respective problems that arise with neo-liberalisation/ democratisation of the university. In response to this lack within this movement, the collective 'the University of Colour' (UoC) was established. UoC aimed to decolonise institutions for higher education in Amsterdam. They aimed to create 'a more balanced curriculum that includes non-Eurocentric perspectives' and demanded more diversity within students and

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[7] https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maagdenhuis_(Amsterdam)

workers within universities[8]. Subsequently they express concerns that universities focus too much on diversifying, which distracts from the real problem: the recognition of colonialism in relation to the role of the university and its effects on contemporary society.[9] Despite the (international) media attention about the Maagdenhuis occupation, the UoC's demands and their accomplishments within the UvA rarely got any media attention. It is striking that neo-liberalisation and democratisation did get public attention, while the media was silent about the demands around diversity and decolonisation.

2.1 Introduction: Coloniality and Decoloniality

In this chapter, the first sub-question of this study, 'What does the decolonisation of the university mean?', is discussed. Different concepts that are central in understanding what decolonisation entails in the context of universities are explored**.** To explain what decoloniality or decolonisation mean for the university, one cannot avoid discussing coloniality and colonisation (Le Grange et al., 2020). Therefore, I first discuss coloniality and colonialism in more detail; and also dig deeper into the concept of modernity, which decolonial scholars claim to be constitutive of coloniality. Furthermore, I outline decoloniality theories that aim to counter coloniality. After discussing (de)coloniality in general, I focus on decolonising knowledge and explore how (de)colonial theory is applied in thinking about the university and what demands for the decolonisation of universities look like.

2.1.1 Coloniality

Within decolonial theory, it is important to distinguish between colonialism and coloniality. Colonialism concerns the physical occupation of land and oppression of mainly black and indigenous peoples. Colonialism has had a profound effect on those societies it dominated and has often resulted in the erasure of Indigenous knowledge present in colonised areas (Santos, 2016). Grosfoguel (2007) argues that there is a (functional) myth saying that when colonial administrations were eliminated, the influence of colonisation therefore ended as well. He argues that colonial domination still affects contemporary societies, albeit

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[8] https://www.mamacash.org/en/university-of-colour
[9] http://keepingitrational.blogspot.com/2016/03/fotovan-studenten-in-oxford-laat.html

differently than when physical occupation was prevalent. For Grosfoguel (2007), the world has moved from colonies all over the globe to global coloniality.

In this research coloniality refers to the 'colonial matrix of power', a concept coined by Quijano (2000) and different decolonial scholars proceeded from this conceptualisation. The colonial power matrix, "the inextricable combination of the rhetoric of modernity (progress, development, growth) and the logic of coloniality (poverty, misery, inequality)" (Bhambra, 2014, p. 119), needs to be central in analysing global inequalities. This power matrix aims to make visible (coloniality/modernity) what otherwise has been invisible (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). This matrix of power is based on the continuing effects of colonisation in contemporary systems of knowledge, and culture (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p. 76). The colonial matrix of power describes four interconnected fields of coloniality: "control of economy (land appropriation, exploitation of labour, control of natural resources); control of authority (institution, army); control of gender and sexuality (family, education) and control of subjectivity and knowledge (epistemology, education and formation of subjectivity)" (Mignolo, 2007, p. 156). Quijano and other decolonial scholars thus try to create more awareness about present day asymmetries of global power, and use the concept of coloniality to sketch a global system with a power imbalance.

A number of decolonial scholars claim that modernity and coloniality are interlinked concepts and argue that it is impossible to understand modernity without considering how colonialism constituted modernity (Maldonado-Torres, 2004; Mignolo, 2007; Vasquez, 2009; Escobar, 2007; Quijano, 2007).

The concept of modernity for decolonial scholars is not to be seen as a historical timeframe but rather as a narrative that gained prominence. It "is a discourse that promises happiness and salvation" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 142) and is characterised by a striving for development and modernisation of the world, where also the 'other' (colonised) is considered to be in need of modernisation and development because it is behind (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). As Escobar (2010, p. 9) describes modernity, having multiple interpretations, as a framework with a "coherence and crystallization of forms (discourses, practices, structures, institutions)" in which certain ideas (for example: the legitimation of human domination over nature) and practises became prominent. Modernity constituted ideas in which relationships between colonists and colonised were prescribed (and legitimised), global maps and its borders were decided and people were (racially) described (Maldonado-Torres, 2004). At the same time modern ideas overruled Indigenous cultures (Escobar, 2010). "The worlds and knowledges constructed on the basis of these ontological commitments

became a 'universe'. This universe has acquired certain coherence in socio-natural forms such as capitalism, the state, the individual, industrial agriculture, and so forth" (Escobar, 2010, p. 9). Modernity legitimes itself to be universal by nature and goes along with a monocultural conception of knowledge and knowledge production. Some indigenous cultures had more pluralistic views on knowledge (production), but these perspectives or ways of living were rejected and often destroyed by colonial domination (Escobar, 2010). Coloniality is heavily influenced by modernity and "[t]o end coloniality it is necessary to end the fictions of modernity. You cannot dispense with coloniality and maintain the principles, assumptions, and beliefs laid out in the macro-narratives of modernity" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 109).

According to Mignolo (2007), oppression and exploitation, important features of coloniality, are often hidden within the narrative of modernity. "To marry modernity with coloniality is thus to reveal that there is a darker side of modernity, a destructive logic hidden underneath keywords such as 'salvation', 'development' and 'progress'" (Aman, 2016, p. 101). Yet the concepts of modernity and coloniality are often not linked (Maldonado-Torres, 2004) and modernity is framed as innocent (Aman, 2016). The importance of coloniality and the role that it played in the development of modern ideas are thus often erased in the conceptualisation of modernity. Further, modernity is often not geopolitically contextualised. Viewing it from a modern/colonial perspective, not only the Europeans played a significant role in constituting ideas which we now consider as modern, but also the rest of the world influenced the development of modern ideas. A modern/colonial perspective opens up possibilities to give attention to (subaltern) perspectives of the Global South instead of only centring dominant perspectives. It shows how different people and histories are connected and play an important role within the constitution of modernity (Maldonado-Torres, 2004). Understanding colonialism and its ongoing effects is crucial for understanding the modern world and the knowledge that it has produced, since it is constituted by it (Grosfoguel, 2002, p. 209). These different decolonial scholars claim that modernity is not as innocent as it is often portrayed and that it goes along with a harmful ideology in which other knowledge is treated as inferior. They claim that modernisation would not have been possible without colonisation and this opens up the question how universities, who are constituted by modernity, relate to colonialism. This I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter. First I will discuss how decolonial scholars describe coloniality in the context of knowledge.

According to Icaza and Vázquez coloniality of knowledge leads "to the erasure and discrediting of other knowledges, and to the negation of the epistemic diversity of the world"

(Icaza & Vázquez, 2018 p. 113). For them coloniality within knowledge systems, such as the university, entails a domination by Eurocentric knowledge over marginalised forms of knowledge. Further, they claim that epistemic traditions are destroyed through a system in which 'other' knowledge is viewed as inferior. Coloniality, for Le Grange (2019) entails that dominant, often Eurocentric, knowledge systems are at the centre while at the same time it is to be seen in the background of what Santos (2016, p.153) calls "epistemicide". Epistemicide is "the destruction of knowledge" and "is not an epistemological artefact without consequences. It involves the destruction of the social practises and the disqualification of the social agents that operate according to such knowledges" (Santos, 2016, p.153). Epistemicide not only caused knowledge to be unknown, but also treated other knowledge systems as irrelevant or inferior, and created a hierarchy of knowledge systems in which the European was on top. The effects of epistemicide are still very noticeable in contemporary society and should therefore get more attention (Le Grange, 2019).

Among decolonial scholars there is thus a nuanced difference of focus within their theories about coloniality of knowledge. Whereas some focus more on a lack of diversity within knowledge production, others are putting emphasis on the epistemicide of knowledge. They share a critical attitude towards the contemporary hegemony within (institutions of) knowledge production in which knowledge from the Global north is at the centre and knowledge from the Global South at the periphery.

2.1.2 Decoloniality

Decoloniality is a response to coloniality (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). In general it criticises the idea of universality of Eurocentric knowledge and the related superiority of Western culture with respect to knowledge. It fosters making space for and making visible perspectives and positions that are left out within Eurocentric knowledge systems (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

Mignolo and Walsh (2018, p. 19), consider decoloniality to be "contextual, relational, practice based and lived". Decolonisation is an effort to deal with problems in relation to coloniality, which also has different meanings in different times and different contexts. (Maldonado- Torres, 2011). The concept of decoloniality is useful for "the larger task of the very decolonisation of knowledge, power, and being, including institutions such as the university" (Maldonado-Torres, 2011, p.1).

Within decolonial theory, Global South/North terminology is often used. This terminology draws attention to "interconnected histories of colonialism, neo-imperialism, and

differential economic and social change through which large inequalities in living standards, life expectancy, and access to resources are maintained" (Dados & Connell, 2012, p. 12). Herein, the Global North usually refers to areas in Europe, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. The Global South usually refers to areas in Latin America, Asia, Africa and Oceania, which are at an economic disadvantage in the context of global capitalism (Dados & Connell, 2012). While terms such as developing/developed countries or Third World Countries often imply developmental disadvantage, the concept of Global South/North often aims to expose certain geopolitical power relations (Dados & Connell, 2012). European colonialism, its ongoing effects, and the global power structures that were made possible by it are important in understanding how these Global North/South relationships came into existence (MacDonald & King, 2020). Global South/North terminology thus lends itself to a critical gaze at injustice in the world. Rather than focusing on narratives in which 'developing countries' should be helped by 'developed countries', it aims to better understand how current hegemonic, global power structures and injustices are manifesting.

Decoloniality is a school of thought that tries "to liberate the production of knowledge, reflection, and communication from the pitfalls of European rationality/ modernity" (Quijano, 2007, p.177). It aims to dismiss Eurocentric knowledge as the leading, only valid knowledge in the context of both the Global South and Nord. Eurocentric knowledge is knowledge that privileges certain knowledge with a background from the Global North and also privileges certain memories and histories from a (male) colonists point of view (Grosfoquel, 2012). Decoloniality is "a perspective that allows us to see how the dynamics of power differences, social exclusion and discrimination (along the axes of race, gender and geographical and economic inequality) are connected to the ongoing legacies of our colonial history" (Icaza & Vázquez, 2018 p. 113). Decoloniality is about contextualising knowledge and asking who is producing knowledge, how is it produced and why? (Andreotti, 2011). Decoloniality thus aims to position knowledge within its (geopolitical) context. It demands the acknowledgement and undoing of hierarchies based on gender, sexuality, race, class that are controlling contemporary society that originated from colonialism and are interwoven with capitalism and modernity (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

Rather than universality, plurality is central within decolonial theory (Mbembe, 2019). A pluralistic approach to knowledge is aimed against a Western hegemony of knowledge and aims for epistemologies that are "free from the shackles of supremacy and centricity" (Reiter, 2018, p. 260). Therefore different decolonial thinkers want to create a

'pluriversity' instead of a university, in order to emphasise the importance of epistemic diversity (Reiter, 2018; Boidin, Cohen, & Grosfoguel, 2012; Martinez-Vargas, 2020).

 Decoloniality "does not imply the absence of coloniality but rather the ongoing serpentine movement toward possibilities of other modes of being, thinking, knowing, sensing and living; that is an otherwise in plural" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p.81). Decoloniality in the context of knowledge is aimed at epistemic justice, which entails a" liberation of reason itself from coloniality" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017a, p. 17). It is aimed at the valuation and de-hierarchisation of different knowledge systems in order to create a more complete and diverse range of theories. In conceptualising epistemic (in)justice, Fricker (2007) distinguishes between testimonial and hermeneutical injustice. Testimonial injustice refers to injustice in which certain identities are to be seen as less credible within a collective social imagination (for example that women or black people are inferior in producing knowledge). Hermeneutical injustice refers to the idea that people with more power are advantaged in the creation of collective social meanings and understandings (Fricker, 2007). Fricker's (2007) distinction between these two forms of injustice, are similarly conceptualised by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) and Le Grange (2019), when they argue that knowledge from the global North is presented as the universal knowledge which is imposed in other contexts (hermeneutical injustice) while knowledge from the global South is delegitimised (testimonial injustice). Aims for decolonial epistemic justice involves therefore trying to open up to a plurality of knowledge, rather than excluding them (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017b). For Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017b, p. 51), decolonial epistemic justice, therefore is not to be envisioned as an 'end' state, but rather as an endeavour to include a plurality of knowledges, rather than excluding them.

Thus decoloniality not only focuses on changing the content of knowledge, but also how we consider its validity (Mignolo, 2011). There is no singular definition of decoloniality, and there are different foci within theories about decolonising knowledge. Some decolonial scholars such as Barnes (2018) and Sonn, Stevens and Duncan (2013) focus on thinking about what methodologies around knowledge production would entail, others focus more on the content of (Indigenous) knowledge production (such as Seehawer (2018) and Smith & Wobs (2004). Yet there seems to be a common ground within decolonial scholarship that critiques the dominant position of the Global North in knowledge production and aims to make space for pluralistic perspectives and different ways to produce and validate

knowledge.

In addition to common ground, there is also critical discussion among decolonial scholars. I will first sketch this discussion and then move on to the topic of decolonising the university.

2.2 Discussion within decolonial scholarship

In understanding the potential of decolonial theory, I believe it is also important to discuss criticism within decolonial scholarship. As argued in the methodology section, this research investigates how epistemic oppression manifests in universities and how this can be countered. In this section I will not discuss criticism that counters or undermines the idea of such oppression, but rather pay attention to critical questions within the field of decoloniality. Decolonial scholars discuss different pitfalls within decolonial theory and in the following section I will highlight some of these.

One danger, as Pappas (2017) argues, is that decolonial thinkers tend to explain the modern/colonial problems in a universalistic way, while simultaneously being critical about universal ideas. He argues that decolonial thinkers, in arguing about how colonialism seems to be the root of the problem, use "a grand historical narrative" that "is also in danger of not capturing the historical and concrete particularity (pluralism, complexity, uniqueness) of actual injustices" (Pappas, 2017, p. 7) This focus on viewing problems from a global perspective risks simplifying certain injustices related to colonialism and therefore cannot do justice to the complexity of specific contexts. Le Grange (2019) believes that decoloniality can overcome the problem of universality by avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach. He points out that ideas about decolonising should always take into account local contexts without dismissing the global similarities of colonial domination. Jansen (2019, p. 59) identifies that decolonisation "requires one to be precise with respect to the context of usage 'where', 'when' and 'what' questions are required".

Further Pappas (2017) argues that decolonial theory dichotomises into morally good (the indigenous) and bad (the colonisers). By creating this (false) dichotomy, decolonial theory could suggest that European/modern perspectives are by definition harmful, and Indigenous perspectives, often forgotten, valuable. Pappas (2017) suggests that this dichotomy between what is morally good and false is an oversimplification, and does not do justice to the advantages that modern/European thought has brought. Further it can contribute

to a simplification of Indigenous thought, and then becomes a jeopardy in which decolonial theory does not maintain the complexity, flaws and diversity within Indigenous thought (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). But decolonial theory can move beyond this (false) dichotomy, as Le Grange (2019) argues, and does need to be dismissed for this criticism. For Le Grange, decoloniality is not about exchanging certain (colonial) perspectives for other (indigenous) perspectives. Rather decoloniality/decolonisation "occurs through the decentering/ deterritorialisation of dominant knowledge systems and the creation of new knowledge spaces in which "disparate' knowledge can work together" (Le Grange, 2019, p. 43). In this way of thinking, decolonisation of knowledge does not aim to demolish or disqualify western/modern knowledge, but de-centers it. In line with Grosfoguel (2008, p. 1), decolonial theory potentially opens up spaces for questions such as: "How can we overcome Eurocentric modernity without throwing away the best of modernity as many Third World Fundamentalists do?" Simply replacing Eurocentric knowledge by Indigenous knowledge is undesirable; there is value in both knowledge systems yet this should not make us oblivious about the exclusion of Indigenous knowledge production.

Further, there is a criticism which claims that the term decolonisation is becoming a buzzword and that it is losing its original, more radical meaning. In this way, institutions use the concept of decolonisation to give the impression that decolonisation is a high-level topic, without fully committing to decolonisation (Le Grange et al., 2020). In line with this criticism, Tuck and Yang (2012) argue that institutions can easily use terminology around decolonisation to satisfy contemporary criticism, while overlooking Indigenous people or their struggles. In this sense, decolonisation terminology functions as a quick fix, rather than investigating the underlying problems of coloniality. Le Grange et al. (2020) argue that even though it is hard to set rules for when and by whom decolonisation terminology can be used, it should at least speak about decentering Eurocentric epistemologies. Keet (2019) argues that decolonisation refers to difficult, longstanding processes which require much time and commitment, and therefore 'simple' decolonisation policies will not suffice.

Finally, Mignolo & Walsh (2018, p. 81) argue that decoloniality should not become a condition of 'enlightenment' that some have or will achieve and others not. Mignolo & Walsh (2018) warn that decolonality should not be considered as an attribute that groups or individuals possess. Decoloniality is to be seen as an ongoing endeavour towards an 'otherwise' rather than a yardstick that determines who or what is the most decolonial (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

These critiques within decolonial theory raise important points in thinking about the

potential of decolonising the university. It raises awareness around the difficulties within decoloniality. There are no universal decolonial theories that can be applied to universities, decolonial theories should always be seen in their respective context: some decolonial solutions are suitable for universities in South Africa, but are of less worth in the context of The Netherlands.

Additionally it makes us aware that decolonising the university requires continuous reflection and commitment rather than the implementation of simple diversity policies. We learn from these critiques that decolonial theory cannot be used as a quick tool to fix certain problems, but rather that these theories are to be seen in their complexity.

To understand what decolonisation of universities means, one has to understand how coloniality is present within universities. I will discuss this in more detail in the next section and then go more in depth about theories around decolonising universities.

2.3 What role does coloniality play in the university?

For Quijano, coloniality is a complex phenomenon with different dimensions which directly affect various levels within society. As Colares da Mota Neto and Santana de Lima (2020) describe, the concept of coloniality applied to the university helps to understand certain power patterns that pertain to coloniality within universities. Even though colonial rule ended and postcolonial nation-states were created, colonialism still has an effect on contemporary society, the university and the way we understand the world we live in (Radcliffe, 2017). Through universities (both in colonised countries and countries which have historically colonised other nations), European knowledge was spread and indigenous knowledge dismissed, and often universities were established through funds originating from colonial plunder (Bhambra, Gebrial, & Nişancıoğlu, 2018,p. 12). Further, Bhambra, Gebrial, & Nişancıoğlu, (2018) argue that it is important to realise that in universities theories around race/racism were developed and helped in the (ethical/rational) legitimation of oppression, domination and dispossession by colonisers. Also, symbols such as statues and portraits from colonisers in universities indicate that contemporary universities rather glorify than despise colonial history (Brunsma et al., 2013). Contemporary universities generally do not pay (much) attention to the modern/colonial divide, how it affects their own institutions and how it shapes global epistemic inequality, yet often universities "were founded and financed

through the spoils of colonial plunder, enslavement and dispossession" (Bhambra, Gebrial, & Nişancıoğlu, 2018, p. 12). Additionally, colonial power dynamics are still at play in universities which privileges and acknowledges knowledge from the Global North and simultaneously ignores or disqualifies knowledge production from the Global South (Icaza & Vázquez, 2018). Decolonial scholars argue that we should investigate to what extent universities contribute to the reproduction (through the spread of knowledge in society at large) of coloniality (Colares da Mota Neto & Santana de Lima, 2020).

Coloniality within universities thus seems to play on different levels. There is a historical level which opens up calls to analyse how universities benefited from colonialism and how they contributed to the legitimation of colonial rule. Furthermore, on a historical level the concept of coloniality contributes to ask questions about how universities view the history of colonisation and how is history being educated such as: Which history or herstory[10] in what part of the world is important and which ones are left out? Which perspectives about history are included, and which are left out? Which people are being glorified and which ones are not? The concept of coloniality makes us question how colonial power dynamics are present in universities concerning their curriculum, ways of teaching and methodologies (coloniality of knowledge).

Decolonial scholars argue that decolonisation of universities is an important task in creating justice within universities in specific and society in general (Aman, 2016; Bhambra, Gebrial., & Nişancıoğlu, 2018; Dei, 2016). What the decolonisation of the university entails in more detail will be discussed in the next section.

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[10] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herstory

2.4 Decolonising the university

The decolonisation of universities receives increasing attention across the world (De Jong et al., 2017; Prinsloo, 2016). More and more universities critically examine the influence of the colonial era on the university and the nature of education itself (Dübgen & Skupien , 2018). Gebrial (2018, p. 29) suggests that decolonising universities "is about recognising the roots of contemporary racism in the multiple material, political, social and cultural processes of colonialism and proceeding from this point". Decolonial thinking helps to grasp how the university functions as a modern/colonial institution (Icaza & Vázquez, 2018). "Decolonisation in colonial times meant the removal of the colonial state; in a contemporary world it might mean resistance to being subjugated by global superpowers, the dismantling of systems and symbols of colonialism and neo colonialism, and so forth" (Le Grange, 2019, p. 34). Especially in a context of universities, decolonisation should therefore not be taken literally, but rather describes a movement that wants to expose and overthrow contemporary power and knowledge structures. To overthrow such structures in this context could for example mean radical changes in the curriculum or staff composition. As Le Grange (2019) argues, epistemic justice is a central aim when decolonising universities. This does not mean that all knowledge is equally valid and decolonial scholarship does not promote epistemic relativism. Rather it aims to create spaces for different knowledge systems to coexist, criticise and strengthen each other (Le Grange, 2019).

Icaza and Vazquez (2018) argue that different universities have various political and historical entanglements with colonialism. Decolonising universities is therefore context dependent, and decolonial projects in different parts of the world take on different forms and aims (Jivraj, 2020). For example, to centralise indigenous knowledge in relation to decolonisation of the university has a different priority in a former colony than in a European context. Furthermore, decolonial scholars from Latin American focus more on knowledge and how it is represented as universal and rational, whereas African/South African scholars focus more on the intersection of identity and knowledge and ask "whose knowledge is at the centre'' (Jansen, 2019, p.53).

Icaza and Vazquez (2018, p. 112) speak of "arrogant ignorance" of universities when its epistemology pretends to have universal value yet ignoring different epistemic traditions or systems from all over the world. They claim that universities often ignore the impact of

colonial imperialism on their own pedagogy practises and that Global North perspectives are implicitly treated as a "transcendental views from nowhere, which explores, measures, divides, categorizes, and hierarchizes the entire world as an enclosed site of knowledge exploitation" (Milders Van, 2018, p. 42-43). While one can question whether this is the case for all universities, Icaza and Vazquez (2018) claim that they see this as a prominent pattern within universities. Additionally, Gebrial (2018) claims that universities highlight a specific history (of colonialism) and at the same time hide other stories or perspectives. While calls for the removal of statues at universities are portrayed as an 'erasure of history', the erasure of knowledge (and the role of the university regarding this erasure) in former colonies does not get much attention within universities.

Calls to decolonise the university are diverse in its goals and also are not to be seen as fixed. Some campaigns focus on the university and the removal of colonial iconography (Oyedemi, 2020) and argue that names of buildings and statues present in the university should not glorify prominent colonial actors. Others are more focused on equal student and staff body representation (Gebrial, 2018). Further there are decolonisation campaigns (mostly in Africa) that focus on language (Mbembe, 2016) within universities. Yet what most campaigns have in common is, and what seems to be a fundamental goal, is the decolonisation of the curriculum (Jansen, 2019; Jivraj, 2020; Dei, 2016; Mbembe; Charles, 2019). This aims to expose the positionality of the curriculum. Instead of viewing the processes of creating curricula as natural or rational, it aims to analyse this process on the level of a power struggle (Gebrial, 2018). Icaza & Vazquez (2018) argue that knowledge is always situated, and students within universities should recognise the geopolitical and genealogical location of knowledge systems that is present within (Icaza & Vazquez, 2018). Decolonial scholars argue that a monocultural approach (such as Eurocentrism) to knowledge is considered problematic because it is not acknowledging its own (dominant) position regarding knowledge production (Icaza & Vazquez, 2018). In order to overcome a monocultural approach to knowledge, universities have to acknowledge their own positionality (Icaza & Vazquez, 2018). Learning about and acknowledging positionality means to dismantle the modern idea of knowledge that is presented as an abstraction from a background/position and means to reflect on the place and the body from which the knowledge is produced and put it in perspective (Vazquez, 2015). A decolonial positionality thus raises awareness of the location of knowledge in the modern/colonial order (Vazquez, 2015), and aims for intercultural education which includes multiple positionalities from both the Global South and -North in order to connect and create different knowledge systems (Le

Grange, 2019). Here interculturality is understood in line with Mignolo and Walsh (2018), which means more than just a meeting or relation between different cultures, but rather an opening for a radical other way of thinking about education. It fosters to change the dominant order (of education). "Interculturality, in this sense, suggests a permanent and active process of negotiation and interrelation in which difference does not disappear" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p.59). Intercultural knowledge would entail knowledge that focuses on reflection and practice that connects different local and global knowledges and at the same time, paradoxically, articulates and makes space for difference (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Decolonising the curriculum promotes the idea of an active, open concept of curricula, which do not have predestined images of how education should look like or in what category it should fit. Current academic standards (rooted in Eurocentrism) which approve what research methods are legitimate, prevent different knowledge from being generated and discovered (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017a). Decolonial theory, instead of excluding different knowledge systems, sees difference as an intrinsic value which creates more space for experimentation. "It opens up (not closes) what a body (a concept, a person, an organisation and so on) can do/become" (Le Grange, 2019, p. 40). Central is the construction of an 'ecology of knowledges' (Santos, 2012) in which epistemologies from the Global South are brought into critical conversation with dominant disciplinary traditions. Different knowledge systems are evaluated for their potentiality to solve different kinds of problems. This is to say that knowledge is context relevant, and not to say that all knowledge is of equal value in each context.

Jivraj (2020, p. 561) points out that higher education institutions often do not acknowledge their part in institutional racism. The problem of these institutions should be framed as a problem of "enduring racialized beliefs and practices" (Jivraj, 2020, p. 561) instead of a problem of an attainment gap of Ethnic minorities. Often universities that endorse the importance of decolonising, focus on diversity and choose to adopt a neutral, 'post-race', colour-blind attitude towards their own education/institution and whiteness or white supremacy is often not the object of study (Tate & Bagguley, 2016).

2.5 The University of Colour

The University of Colour (UoC), briefly described at the beginning of this chapter, is an example of a movement trying to decolonise the university. This example can serve as a tool

to understand what aiming for decoloniality within universities in the context of the Netherlands entails through the difficulties the UoC faced.

In response to the Maagdenhuis occupation and the role of the UoC, the UoC was invited to discuss their demands with the University of Amsterdam (UvA), which resulted in the establishment of a diversity committee. In their conversations the UoC noticed the tendency of the university to focus on increasing diversity rather than on coloniality. Even though the newly established committee, chaired by Prof. Wekker, recommended a focus on decolonisation, the UvA rejected this proposal, "because it was perceived as hostile and confrontational" (de Ploeg & de Ploeg, 2017, p.327). The UoC struggle showed that their protest was effective in terms of putting decolonisation on the agenda, but also showed that the UvA was willing to engage with the issues raised by the UoC, but chose to focus on increasing diversity rather than starting a process of decolonisation. According to the UoC, the UvA preferred to avoid confrontation and critical self-examination (de Ploeg & de Ploeg, 2017).

The UoC is an interesting case, since it provides an example of what a campaign for decolonisation might look like and the difficulties it faces along the way. The UoC case shows how striving for decolonisation can collide with diversity policies which a university may prefer. This case confirms universities' preference to engage with diversity rather than with institutional racism or whiteness as observed by Jivraj (2020) and Gebrial (2018). These decolonial scholars underline the importance of adopting new diversity policies in a process of decolonising universities, but emphasise simultaneously that it is important to challenge the foundations and status quo of the university in order to expose the untenability of the current system. Following their argument, diversity policies focus on what lacks within universities, compared to outside the university. Decolonising universities, on the other hand, entails a (self)confrontation with the continuities of colonial history. Yet as the example shows, universities may prefer to avoid such confrontations, leave the systemic foundation of the institution unchanged and rather focus on incorporating more diversity (e.g. in staff and student population) within an otherwise unchanged system. Decolonial scholars therefor argue that universities divert the problem and resist a more fundamental confrontation in order to maintain (some of) the system that decolonial scholars criticise. Decolonial scholars find that many universities are unwilling to fundamentally change in favour of adapting at a more superficial level (Jivraj,2020; Gebrial, 2018). This concern will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

2.6 Conclusion

The sub-question '*What does the decolonisation of the university mean?*' cannot be answered unambiguously. Decolonisation of the university should do justice to the complexity of specific (historical) contexts and therefore it is not desirable to provide one all-encompassing answer. Nevertheless decolonial scholars argue that universities need to decolonise and analyse what they think is needed to decolonise.

Decolonial scholars argue that contemporary society and universities specifically, are still highly influenced by colonialism. Even though physical occupation and domination over colonised subjects mostly does not happen anymore, colonial dynamics are still at play where theories/bodies from the Global North dominate over theories/bodies from the Global South. Decolonial thinkers argue that these power dimensions are also present within universities and cause the exclusion of knowledge. A decolonisation process counters this exclusion. Campaigns which expose the positionality of contemporary universities aim to create spaces for different epistemologies (pluriversity). Decolonising universities does not mean a return to pre-colonial times, but instead focuses on creating new possibilities. Decolonisation aims to critically analyse what effect coloniality still has on contemporary society, find ways to acknowledge that reality and simultaneously search for new ways to deal with the past.

Increasing diversity by increasing representation of 'minorities' often forms the main focus for universities when they contemplate change. Yet self-examination of the continuities of colonialism and concomitant IW, does not get much attention as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3- Institutional Whiteness

In the documentary [11] 'Wit is ook een kleur' (white is also a colour), Sunny Bergman explores what it means to be white and how white people respond to questions about racism and whiteness. Bergman notices that many highly educated, white people (including herself) feel very uncomfortable to talk about racism, white privilege and white supremacy. Her documentary shows how a narrative in the Netherlands portrays the 'extreme' uneducated, lower class people as the perpetrators of racism. In this narrative racism is something 'other' white people do, not the educated class. Sunny Bergman asked people what it means to be white. People either respond very confused or start laughing. Bergman makes clear that white people often don't know what to say about whiteness because they never have to think about their skin colour, unlike non-whites. When asked to talk explicitly about whiteness, many white people are unwilling to explore their role in (institutional) racism and acknowledge that being white provides privileges. Bergman believes that this is so because people want to prevent feeling uncomfortable and clash with their self-image. The documentary aims to create more understanding of the mechanisms of whiteness. Bergman

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[11] https://www.2doc.nl/documentaires/series/2doc/2016/december/wit-is-ook-een-kleur.html
(Accessed on 3-09-2021)

exposes an unwillingness and ignorance, to talk about whiteness and its relation to white supremacy or white privilege. At the same time her documentary shows how people are willing to discuss and legitimise the greatness of European culture and values, and portray other cultures as backwards. It shows different paradoxes within narratives in contemporary society: the idea that everyone is equal, yet some cultures are uncivilised and others are enlightened; the idea that colour blindness is desirable, yet there is the idea that non-white researchers are too biased to do research about racial profiling; the narrative that colonial cruelties happened a long time ago and we should get 'over it', yet also a narrative in which colonial 'heroes' should be put on a pedestal since they contributed to 'our' contemporary wealth.

3.1 Introduction: Whiteness and Institutional Whiteness

When I examine (institutional) whiteness, I will not search for singular definitions, but rather analyse how different perspectives can contribute to an understanding of the concept. Most importantly, IW is context dependent: it has different meanings or possibilities in different parts of the world. In line with critical theory, as argued in the methodology section, I will focus on literature that investigates how (institutional) whiteness is manifesting, rather than literature that questions the usefulness of the concept of whiteness within academia in the first place. In this chapter, I will answer the sub-question: *What is whiteness and institutional whiteness?*

First, I will discuss literature around the concept of whiteness and explore how this relates to the concepts of white privilege and white supremacy. To conceptualise whiteness, I will turn to CRT scholarship that focuses on what whiteness means in contemporary society. Then, I will investigate how different CRT scholars conceptualise IW. Lastly, I will pay attention to discussions within the studies of whiteness.

3.2 Studying whiteness

Whiteness did not get much attention within academia until the emergence of critical whiteness studies which emerged in the 1980s in the USA and mostly focused on racism, (post-) slavery and white supremacy (Shaw, 2006). Until today, whiteness studies is an academic field which actively investigates, rather than avoids the topic of whiteness. "In whiteness studies, whiteness becomes the centre of critique and transformation. It represents the much-neglected anxiety around race that whiteness scholars, many of whom are white, are now beginning to recognize" (Leonardo, 2009, p. 91). Whiteness studies open up space to question and investigate long ignored historical and contemporary meanings of whiteness. "Whiteness studies examines race as performance, perception, ideological category and social reality, acknowledging that while race is biological fiction, the lived experience of race is shaped by very real existing structural and institutional inequalities." (Herndon, 2002, p. 225). In order to understand whiteness, rather than understanding the essence of white people, scholars in the field of whiteness studies investigate how (implicit) ideas and practises are influenced by an ideology in which there is a (hidden) hierarchy of race.

To understand whiteness one has to understand that whiteness results in white people benefitting on an individual level (white privilege) and on a collective level (white supremacy). This results in situations in which non-white people are disadvantaged on the same levels (Sue, 2006). Scholars in whiteness studies argue that white supremacy, white privilege and whiteness are three intertwined forces that create a racial hegemony and a setting in which white people benefit (Sue, 2006). Therefore, before introducing the concept of whiteness, I will first briefly discuss white privilege and white supremacy.

3.3 White privilege

White privilege is seen as a set of benefits that go along with the skin colour people are perceived to have (Kendall, 2012). Following the concept of intersectionality, as explained in 1.4, this does not mean that all white people are similarly privileged, but rather that privileges are context dependent. The extent to which one benefits from these privileges varies per person and context.

Nonetheless, being white provides a (personal) set of privileges that non-whites do not possess. There are overlapping privileges most white people have, such as: their actions

do most likely not 'represent' their race; white people are less likely to be stopped by the police without committing a crime and that one can be pretty sure to see people in esteemed positions with the same skin colour represented on TV, the news, or any other public platform (McIntosh, 2003). Such privileges, and many more, constitute people's daily experience and greatly affect their possibilities and chances in society. In short, white privilege refers to often unrecognized advantages that white people have over non-white people (Kendall, 2012).

3.4 White supremacy

To understand societies in which white privilege is present, Leonardo (2004) argues that one has to understand white supremacy: the structure of domination that makes white privilege possible. He argues that solely talking about white privilege can distract from acknowledging the underlying system or ideology that constitutes white privilege. It can leave the impression that white privilege is something white people have 'by accident'. He argues that the concept can be used without recognising (historical) processes of domination and that white privilege becomes something individual, separate from a wider system (Leonardo, 2004). Similarly, Bonds and Inwood (2016) argue that while white privilege is a useful analytic tool to analyse the position or social condition of white people, it misses out the collective level on which white supremacy plays. Different CRT scholars point out that the focus is often on white privilege instead of white supremacy and argue that this broader system of white supremacy should get attention in order to understand how whiteness manifests (Leonardo, 2004; Gillborn, 2006; Bonds & Inwood, 2016).

White supremacy usually refers to a system in which racialised ideas and notions that dominate and oppress non-whites (in subtle or more obvious ways) become normalised (Gillborn, 2006). It is considered as a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority; where entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily re-enacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings (Ansley, 1997).
Ansley argues that the concept of white supremacy points to a racialised power system based on an ideology of white racial superiority. CRT scholars argue that we need to critically engage with theories and practises around white supremacy to better understand how systemic racial domination operates on an institutional, rather than only an individual level

(Berg, 2012; Bonds & Inwood; 2016; Goldberg, 2009). Beliso-De Jesús and Pierre (2020) argue that white supremacy nevertheless cannot be defined universally. It is dependent on time and place in conjunction with other systems of oppression or privilege (such as systemic patriarchal subordination). As Leonardo (2004) argues, norms and values in line with white supremacy are often implicit and therefor do not get recognised or acknowledged. Focusing on white supremacy within academia challenges one to go beyond an analysis in which whiteness is seen as 'innocent' and opens up possibilities to investigate responsibilities and ways to counter an, often invisible, racial hegemony.

Contemporary norms and values in relation to white supremacy are often more subtle and hidden as Leonardo (2004) argues, and are not to be seen in isolation of the history in which white supremacy operates. Norms and values in line with white supremacy during colonial times could literally legitimise killing non-whites whereas nowadays similar legitimations are rarely seen. These values and norms in relation to white supremacy are not omnipresent as they used to be, yet as Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017a) argues, these historical ideas are important to understand the legitimation of colonialism and imperialism.

3.5 Whiteness

Whiteness points to the overarching racial discourse which makes white privilege and white supremacy possible (Sue, 2006; Meer, 2019). As Shaw (2006) argues, whiteness is an unstable, context dependent concept or tool to analyse racial power dynamics. A strict demarcation that outlines what whiteness is and where it operates is therefore not useful. This study goes along with the claim that whiteness is useful as a concept that is "temporally and spatially contingent and fluid" (Bonnett, 1996, p. 97). Whiteness, within CRT, is thus not used "in the way of an essentialized identity that all white people have internalized, but as widely circulating discursive forms that contribute to, but do not constitute, people's identities and experiences in society and its institution" (Hytten & Adkins, 2001, p. 435). It is therefore important to distinguish between whiteness and white people (Leonardo, 2009). Whiteness refers to a discourse of race and the term 'white people' refers to an assigned identity that is supposed to signify one's skin colour. What is common in the conceptualisation of whiteness by different scholars, is that it is seen as a hidden, unnamed, invisible set of norms practises or ideologies (Flagg, 2005; Shaw, 2006; Leonardo; 2009; Ansley,1997; Ahmed, 2007; Brunsma, Brown & Placier, 2013; Bonds & Inwood, 2016). As Ahmed (2007, p. 156) describes:

"White bodies are habitual insofar as they 'trail behind' actions: they do not get 'stressed' in their encounters with objects or others, as their whiteness 'goes unnoticed'. Whiteness would be what lags behind; white bodies do not have to face their whiteness; they are not orientated 'towards' it, and this 'not' is what allows whiteness to cohere, as that which bodies are orientated around."

As Ahmed describes, within whiteness, white people are seen as the norm, and non-whites are the ones that deviate from this norm. Based on this idea, it is never special to be white, it is considered the default mode of humans. Whiteness then racialises non-whites, and at the same it 'de-ethicises' whites and implicitly treats whiteness as the zero point, the norm, where 'others' differ from (Ahmed, 2007). Similarly, Leonardo (2009) argues that whiteness often functions in such a way that it reinforces essentialist ideas around the 'other' race, while avoiding such an essentialisation about those being white. In this line of thought, whiteness makes everyone else, but itself visible.

Castagno (2014) argues that whiteness in this context is not just about white people, and white people are not the only ones involved in whiteness: non-white people can also be engaged in ideological and IW (Castagno, 2014). Furthermore, non-white institutions can be highly influenced by whiteness. Even though white people generally have a prominent role within maintaining, or preaching whiteness, Castagno (2014) claims that it is often so deeply embedded that non-whites are also part of it. Whiteness is considered not just as a trait of white people, rather as a way to describe a system which is highly influenced by, but not exclusively by white people. It is "not just attached to white individuals; whiteness is an umbrella system that organises and coordinates multiple and various sites of power and dominance. What is essential to this system of whiteness is that dominance becomes normal, expected, and rationalized" (Castagno, 2014, p. 8).

Additionally Castogno (2014, p. 8) argues that whiteness often goes hand in hand with a 'social amnesia'. This refers to the memory (loss) about how white people were involved in the cruelties of colonisation and how whiteness plays a dominant role in upholding a system of racial privilege and oppression.

In light of this, the concept of whiteness is used by CTR scholars to draw attention to its own normalised and invisible character. Instead of taking whiteness for granted, whiteness studies aim to explore whiteness and reflect on how it shapes society.

3.6 The Institutional character of Whiteness

As Di'Angelo (2018) and Eddo-Lodge (2020) point out, in institutions there is often an unwillingness to talk about and reflect on whiteness. Sarah Ahmed (2007) coined the term 'Institutional Whiteness' to describe how a culture of whiteness is omnipresent within institutions. For Ahmed, IW entails a worldview within institutions in which whiteness is the standard and it is taken for granted (Ahmed, 2012). These habits are often not foregrounded, but rather in the background and "are not revealed unless you come up against them" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 26). In her words:

> "Spaces are orientated 'around' whiteness, insofar as whiteness is not seen. We do not face whiteness; it 'trails behind' bodies, as what is assumed to be given. The effect of this 'around whiteness' is the institutionalization of a certain 'likeness', which makes non-white bodies feel uncomfortable, exposed, visible, different, when they take up this space" (Ahmed, 2007, p. 157).

On the one hand, Ahmed describes that IW functions as an unquestioned norm that excludes or alienates non-whites from institutions. On the other hand, it comforts and privileges whites within those institutions. Further she describes it as a system with implicit norms and values which are purposefully not under investigation. Similarly Brunsma, Brown and Placier (2013, p. 14) speak of the "walls of whiteness", which invisibly protects individuals or institutions from talking about whiteness to uphold a system in which whites are advantaged and non-whites disadvantaged. Talking about whiteness in this line of thought is seen as a threat to expose current power dynamics or to change the system which upholds whiteness.

Ahmed (2012) claims that institutions tend to avoid a confrontation with its own role in racism and the effects on themselves. She argues that IW consists of a worldview in which racism is seen as an attribute of the individual 'other' and therefore issues around racism

within those institutions often disappear from sight (Ahmed, 2012). There is a culture in which perpetrators of racism are framed as 'extremists', rather than a common problem in which 'ordinary' people take part.

> "The reduction of racism to the figure of ''the racist'' allows structural or institutional forms of racism to recede from view, by projecting racism onto a figure that is easily discarded (not only as someone who is ''not me'' but also as someone who is ''not us,'' who does not represent a cultural or institutional norm)" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 150)

This contributes to a situation in which racism within institutions is not acknowledged, since it would involve the institution to identify as 'extreme'. Hence, racism is seen as an individual problem of the 'other', rather than a systemic, everyday problem, also within institutions. Ahmed claims that institutions thus often protect themselves from being under critical investigation.

3.7 The example of diversity policies

Policies to increase diversity can circumvent the issue of racism (Dhawan & Varela, 2016). As Ahmed (2012) argues, a focus on diversity often "becomes something that is added to organizations". Within this line of thinking, diversity policies rather confirm whiteness because it treats whiteness as the 'norm' and the rest as 'diverse' (Ahmed, 2012, p. 33). Further, she argues that diversity policies function to protect whiteness rather than counter inequality within institutions. Ahmed claims diversity policies can be used as a tool to keep everyone "happy" and so avoid conflict and reflection on "unhappy" events or histories. "The promise of diversity is the promise of happiness: as if in becoming happy or in wanting "just happiness" we can put racism behind us" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 165). Ahmed argues that diversity policies can thus protect whiteness since fundamental problems around race are evaded. Making diversity policies the main issue therefore reconfigures the problem of whiteness into a focus on the non-white 'diverse' other. Following her argument, diversity policies can help to frame solutions in a positive, 'happy' way which allows people to avoid critical reflection on institutionalised whiteness.

Similarly Castagno (2014) argues that to focus on diversity rather than whiteness is seen as a character of whiteness itself. She frames whiteness as an attitude of niceness, that aims to avoid conflict and rather finds 'comfortable' ways. "Niceness compels us to reframe

potentially disruptive or uncomfortable things in ways that are more soothing, pleasant, and comfortable" (Castagno, 2014, p. 9).

In conclusion, CRT scholars argue that whiteness may not be a conscious ideology to oppress others, but often has oppressive and excluding effects within institutions. Various conceptualisations of (institutional) whiteness clarify that they facilitate a worldview in which white people are seen as 'standard' and non-whites as different from that standard. IW, as a concept, can thus be used as a framework to understand how deeply ingrained a culture of whiteness is present within institutions.

Furthermore, following the arguments of Ahmed and Castagno about the institutionalised aspect of whiteness, one important characteristic is that the topic of whiteness is often left unquestioned as a way to avoid confrontation and uncomfortableness. They argue that the act or performance of institutions to engage with topics around racism/decolonisation yet unquestioning whiteness itself upholds rather than dismantles IW.

3.8 Different approaches to the study of whiteness

Even though different scholars agree on the importance of examining whiteness, they approach the topic differently. I will now discuss studies which highlight the constraints within researching this issue, to better present and outline both the potential and limitations of the study of whiteness.

Within studies of whiteness, mechanisms of racism are mostly at the centre of their analysis, yet as Shaw (2006) argues, the examination of the contribution of colonialism to the othering of non-whites is often absent within whiteness studies. This critique of whiteness studies emphasises the importance to consider colonial history and the ways it is constitutive of whiteness and race. Shaw argues that this could help to understand how norms and values within whiteness developed.

Bonnett (2016) points out that 'the West' and 'whiteness' are often not linked in CRT literature. He claims that these two concepts should be examined in their relation and not as separate, independent concepts. He argues that the narratives around the 'West' and 'Western supremacy' are widely spread and also not problematised: "people want to live Western lives; they seek the freedoms of the West" (Bonnett, 2016, p.17-18). In this narrative (Western) civilisation, rather than race, is used in a similar way to justify white supremacy. "[N]either

'whiteness' nor 'the West' are discrete identities with their own history and geography: they must be engaged and examined in relation to each other and other geopolitical ideologies" (Bonnett, 2016, p. 27).

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that studies of whiteness often focus on the context of the USA or on other countries with a history of settler colonialism (Shaw, 2006). The understanding of whiteness, and how this relates to indigeneity and slavery for example, is very different in a USA context compared to a European one. Simply said, the study of whiteness differs in Europe, South America or the USA because of the differently situated history and politics around racism and colonialism in these regions (Ponzanesi & Blaagaard, 2011).

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the second sub-question of this study, namely: What is whiteness and institutional whiteness? As explained, IW functions as institutionalised, yet (often) hidden, mechanisms that privilege whites by oppressing and excluding non-whites. The concept of whiteness is used and conceptualised for different purposes by different CRT scholars. Whereas some authors, such as Sue (2006) , Brunsma (2011), Kendall (2012), use the concept of whiteness to analyse power structures within contemporary societies in general, others (e.g., Ahmed, 2007, 2012; Leonardo, 2004, 2009, Castagno, 2014) critically question certain mechanisms within institutions (of education). Analysing mechanisms of white privilege and white supremacy help to understand how whiteness is present within institutions. As argued by Ahmed and Castagno, these topics get little attention in self-reflexive ways on an institutional level.

Bergman's documentary tries to show how whiteness operates within society and how this benefits and disadvantages some people. Academics such as Ahmed, Leonardo Gillborn and Herndon argue that whiteness consists of 'hidden', 'unspoken' norms. In Bergman's documentary one can spot a similar outlook, in which white people seem simply ignorant about what it means to be white and how whiteness is related to power structures in society. What both academics and Bergman emphasise is that whiteness is not often the object of study within institutions and that more studies into whiteness are needed in order to understand how they contribute to manifestations of inequality in the first place. Similar to

Ahmed, who argues that whiteness is accepted as the 'standard', the underlying narrative that Bergman tries to expose, is one in which skin colour is only relevant when one is non-white. Some examples in the documentary about racial profiling research characterise this 'standard': the non-white researcher in this case, is seen as biased because of his skin colour and therefore problematic to conduct research about racial profiling. This shows how white is seen as neutral, unbiased and skin-colourless, that is not of relevance in research in which race is of central meaning. This assumed neutrality is also clear in the documentary with the use of the word 'blank' which means plain, and is a more common word to use in Dutch, instead of 'wit', which means white. The title of the documentary 'Wit is ook een kleur' emphasises that white is also a colour and that the topic of whiteness is something that also needs investigation rather than avoidance.

Furthermore, the documentary shows an unwillingness to talk about white supremacy which often goes along with worshipping colonial figures. In this way the documentary can be seen as an opening to pay more attention to the link between coloniality and whiteness, similar to the claims of Shaw (2006), Ponzanesi and Blaagaard (2011). Finally, it shows that narratives of 'Western' supremacy are explicitly present among white people, while white supremacy is a commonly rejected concept. In line with Bonnett (2016), the documentary can be interpreted as a call to conduct more research on how narratives around the 'West' are of importance in the conceptualisation of whiteness.

Altogether, this chapter examined whiteness studies and how the concept of whiteness can be useful to examine mechanisms of oppression and privilege within institutions. In this chapter I aimed to answer the question what whiteness is and what IW is. I mainly drew from the conceptualisations of CRT scholars to get a deeper understanding of how whiteness and IW plays a role in contemporary society. This entails understandings in which whiteness and the way it affects daily life, is to be seen as an institutional rather than an individual issue.

CTR scholars want to put whiteness on the academic agenda, not to valorise it, but to understand how whiteness affects contemporary society and to uncover power dynamics related to whiteness. IW, as coined by Ahmed, is a concept to describe how a culture of whiteness is ingrained within institutions. It describes an institutionalised, underlying worldview in which white is seen as the default and the non-white as the deviation.

In relation to the topic of decolonising universities, it is especially useful to understand how whiteness operates as a mechanism of 'unspoken', 'hidden' norms within the institution of the university. In this context, I depart from the idea that a reflection on (institutional) whiteness can unpack "some of the broader historical contexts of neo-

colonialism within which more recent, location-specific, processes of whiteness have operated" (Shaw, 2006, p.865). In the next chapter I will discuss what a process of self-examination could look like.

Chapter 4: Self-examination of IW in the context of the university

#DTMH (short for Dismantle The Master's House) is a collective of people who aim to uncover, understand and undo racialised hierarchies within academia.[12] The famous quote and title of the book by Audre Lorde (2018) "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" was used as an inspiration for their campaign, in which they claimed that a curriculum that is deeply rooted in whiteness is not able to dismantle white supremacy within the university. By organising public events and speaking about this topic through scholarly comment and social media, #DTMH asks attention to reflect on whiteness within academia. One of their campaigns was the 'Why is my curriculum white' campaign, started in 2015 at UCL (University College London) and was a response to the current state of affairs at UCL regarding whiteness, but the campaign later got more chapters focussed on the London School of Economics and the universities of York, Warwick, Nottingham and Kent.[13] It claimed that the curriculum present at those universities was mostly filled with 'white' ideas and white authors. They emphasised that the university should acknowledge and reflect on their complicity with a culture of white supremacy. [14][15] The campaign aimed to challenge the lack of cultural representation within the curriculum and the student and staff population (Peters, 2014).

4.1 Introduction: Institutional whiteness in universities

This chapter focuses on the third sub-question of this study, namely: *'What does a process of self-examination of IW in the context of the university entail?'* As discussed in the previous chapter, a culture of IW is an active discourse, despite it's often invisible character. Decolonial scholars and CRT scholars see IW as a background norm or standard that

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[12]https://www.ligali.org/article.php?id=2431 (Accessed on 22-11-2021)

[13]https://www.theguardian.com/education/commentisfree/2015/mar/23/philosophy-white-men-university-courses (Accessed on 22-11-2021)

[14]http://www.dtmh.ucl.ac.uk/ (Accessed on 22-11-2021)

[15]https://theoccupiedtimes.org/?p=14056
(Accessed on 22-11-2021)

influences the way institutions function. Ahmed (2012) argues that the way institutions are shaped and function are the result of decisions, and decisions thus constitute the future of what becomes the background or the norm. Ahmed (2012) claims that we should not just accept the way institutions are and reproduce their norms, but rather investigate what these norms are in order to be able to challenge them if needed. Since whiteness is embedded into a culture that consists of a taken for granted and unquestioned set of actions, it is argued that this needs to be reflected on in order to become visible in the first place. (Ahmed, 2012; Chandler & Wibord, 2020; Shaw, 2006; Herndon, 2002; Leonardo, 2009). IW and its oppressive effects are also present within universities. Often academics that inhabit those institutions fail to acknowledge both their individual role and the role of the institution regarding white privilege and supremacy (Arday, 2019; Brunsma, Brown & Placier, 2013; Joseph-Salisbury, 2019).

In order to investigate how a self-examination of IW aims to contribute to the decolonisation of the university, a better understanding of what a process of self-reflection of IW in the context of the university entails, is necessary. Self-reflection is vital in the process of self-examination, and most literature I consulted is about (self) reflection or reflexivity. Yet, an examination refers to more than a reflection and also involves an inventory of how whiteness is at play within institutions (Frankenberg et al., 1997). As discussed in the previous chapter, (institutional) whiteness is not a universally stable practice or norm. Therefore how such examination would take place cannot be universally specified for all universities, but is rather shaped in specific contexts. This chapter should therefore not be seen as a guide on how to conduct a self-examination, but rather explores how CRT and decolonial scholars envision such an examination and analyse its complexities.

In this chapter I focus on the why, how, where and who of such examinations. Firstly, I will discuss the aim of such an examination to better understand the reasons why it is important and what it aims to achieve. Secondly, I will pay attention to the difference between reflection and reflexivity in the light of a self-examination of IW. Thirdly, to get a better idea of what such an examination may entail, I will pay attention to the 'Why is my curriculum white' campaign and its relevance for this research. Fourthly, I will focus on the dimensions of such examinations to investigate what such examinations are oriented to. Finally, I will discuss the question 'who is examining?', and aim to explore from whom such an examination may be expected in universities.

4.2 Examining Institutional Whiteness

CRT scholars specifically emphasise that reflecting on whiteness is necessary in order to counter the normalisation and standardisation of IW within universities (Joseph-Salisbury, 2019; Ahmed, 2012). Whereas universities often adopt a post-racial attitude, CRT scholars claim that such attitude bypasses a reflection on whiteness (Joseph-Salisbury, 2019). Rather than a post-racial attitude, Shaw (2006, p. 856) argues that whiteness needs to be investigated because "(the study of) whiteness has provided the capacity to encapsulate sets of context-specific processes and performances of particular, and often very subtle, forms of racialization". To understand how whiteness functions within institutions, reflecting on IW is relevant and provides a basis to understand how power dynamics relating to whiteness are present within institutions (Shaw, 2006). Shaw argues that an investigation into whiteness is not aimed at shaming white people, but rather investigates what often is left out. Shaw thus argues that reflecting on IW does not aim to disqualify white people, but rather opens up conversations that have long been ignored.

Similarly, Herndon (2002) argues that it is important to go beyond an attitude in which whiteness is seen as either persistently racist or harmless. She argues that people should feel the need to investigate whiteness out of a 'sense of solidarity' (Herndon, 2002, p. 236) that exposes historical dominance by whiteness, yet does not paralyse white people in their guilt or anxiety. Herndon (2002) proposes that whiteness is taken seriously as a topic of investigation in order to get a nuanced understanding of the role of whiteness in society.

Leonardo argues that practises of racism are trivialised. For example, the idea of colour-blindness is used as an excuse for not critically investigating race and racism (Leonardo, 2004, p. 79). Similarly, in a Dutch context, Wekker (2016) argues that white innocence refers to an self-image in which white people do not know, but also do not want to know how racism operates and how they might contribute to it or benefit from it. Portraying oneself as innocent, Wekker argues, helps to maintain a culture in which white people do not have to acknowledge and take up responsibilities regarding practises of (institutional) racism. It enforces a view in which how white people position themselves in the world as morally just and therefore impossible to take part in practises such as racism.

Leonardo claims that an analysis aimed at opening up possibilities to investigate responsibilities and ways to counter an, often invisible, racial hegemony is necessary. In his idea, a rearticulation of whiteness is needed in which the complexity of whiteness gets attention. Leonardo advocates to overcome a dichotomy in which whites are either seen as

pure heroes, saviours and the ones bringing enlightenment or as pure malicious, privileged, racist oppressors. Leonardo (2009, p. 173) speaks of an 'pedagogy of amnesia' in which so-called 'founding fathers' are glorified, while being complicit in colonial crimes. Leonardo proposes a rearticulation of histories around these leading figures (such as presidents that functioned during colonial times) in which both their contributions to society and their complicity with colonialism is exposed. "Their [white people's] history is not determined by the originary sin of racism but rather a complex web of contradictions that make up what it means to be white in any given context" (Leonardo, 2009, p.95). For Leonardo, white people are thus not to be positioned universally, as if all whites play or have played an equal role within oppression. Instead education should aim to recognise different positions that white people take and have taken concerning racial (in)justice (Leonardo, 2009).

Despite Leonardo's aim to nuance the positionality of white people, he claims that there is a globalised form of whiteness, in which whiteness is linked to "global processes of (neo)colonization". In this claim Leonardo points to white nations which share common histories of domination over non-white peoples (Leonardo, 2009, p. 171). His concept of whiteness does not include predominantly white nations that have historically never been involved nor benefited from colonialism in his analysis, which is the case for many (for example Eastern European) countries. In contrast to countries with a history of colonising others, those countries do not take national pride in colonialism (phrased in another way such as the 'golden age' for example). This does not mean that systems of whiteness, white supremacy, racism, colonial glorification and white privilege are not present in those countries, but rather that they manifest in different ways. Self-examining whiteness in a context of a country that has colonised others, may differ from countries that did not colonise others.

In short, Shaw, Leonardo and Herndon argue that whiteness should be seen in a nuanced way in order to understand its complexity and productively reflect on it. Instead of what we currently often refer to as a "cancel-culture" approach, they propose to reflect on whiteness in order to come to a nuanced, yet confronting image of whiteness. Cancel-culture, as explained by Clark (2020), in the context of this research would mean the practice to withdraw attention from certain people (by for example not citing certain authors). Yet, as Shaw, Leonard and Herndon argue, the concept of whiteness is not meant in order to homogenise white people, and subsequently cancel them. Rather they call for a deep reflection on a culture of whiteness.

4.3 Discomfort

Following Clark (2020), Shaw (2006), Herndon (2002) and Leonardo (2009), examining IW should not be seen as a way to make white people feel bad about their (historical) role regarding white supremacy and white privilege, but rather aims to understand systems of power and privilege that are present within those institutions in order to take responsibility to counter those systems. It can help to counter an image in which whites are the only ones who oppressed and dominated others, yet emphasising that forms of domination instilled in a culture of whiteness was and is impactful and this narrative cannot be left out if we want to understand contemporary society.

CRT scholars argue that often when IW is brought up within universities, it becomes a 'difficult' topic that brings discomfort (Arday, 2019, Ahmed, 2007; Chandler &Wibord, 2020; Snyman, 2015). Especially for white academics, it can be hard to acknowledge that they benefit from institutionalised forms of whiteness. "[L]earning about race entails learning about 'difficult knowledge', namely knowledge that staff and students find emotionally charged and controversial particularly when exploring how power and privilege maintain normativity and hegemony at the expense of ethnic minorities" (Arday, 2019, p. 4). Further calls to counter whiteness within universities are often met with accusations such as "reverse racism, challenges to free speech, academic freedom, and a general critique of an increasingly oversensitive faculty and student body." (Ash, et al., 2020, p. 23).

In academia, challenging whiteness, and the traditionally valued system of education that it goes along with, as Arday (2019) and Ash et al. (2020) argue, often meets with resistance rather than a willingness to reflect. Self-examining IW within universities often

also involves dealing with resistance and discomfort. Similarly, Ahmed (2007, p. 163) argues that "Discomfort, in other words, allows things to move by bringing what is in the background, what gets overlooked as furniture, back to life". Following Ahmed, discomfort is needed in order to see what is institutionalised and has the potential to create reflection, and create space to think beyond IW. Likewise, Chandler and Wibord (2020) argue that it is important to engage and investigate what feelings of comfort of whiteness, and discomfort around a confrontation with whiteness mean:

> "accepting this discomfort is part of critically examining the Whiteness norm of comfort. Feelings of safety perpetuate a legacy of refusal to address race and racism; and such behaviours recycle the privilege that Whites accomplish by sidestepping contentions with Whiteness norms. Identifying and analysing existing Whiteness norms with the goal of identifying and implementing inclusive norms to replace them is a critical Whiteness project that can be used in any area of education not as a panacea, but as one component of the labours required as an organization moves toward creating and maintaining equitable educational spaces." (Chandler & Wibord, 2020, p. 719).

Rather than aiming to paralyse white people, reflecting on IW aims to engage white people to investigate whiteness in everyone's interest. Snyman (2015) argues that when a reflection on whiteness functions to solely shame white people, it will rather function as a way to create feelings of exile, unworthiness and deficiency rather than an opening for reflection. Snyman (2015) argues that reflection in this case does not end when some facts about whiteness are exposed, but rather involves a continuous reflection on the influence of norms and standards (of whiteness). The question then is, what does such reflection look like, when it goes beyond the shaming of white people, yet does not avoid discomfort?

The concept of epistemic vulnerability, such as is present in the work of Snyman (2015), Dei (2020), Icaza (2017) and Johnson (2020) is insightful regarding this question. Dei (2020) argues that within education, we need to face discomfort and instead acknowledge "our vulnerabilities through critical inquiry and regarding critical inquiry to both prepare and strengthen our capacity to "enter the unfamiliar territory" that such inquiry opens up and to endure the risks of this entry". Dei (2020, p. 34) argues that vulnerability of knowledge entails a certain consciousness and feeling of responsibility about knowledge that strives to engage with "discomfort, dissonance, disorganisation and disturbance". Yet this engagement

with difficultness or pain is aimed at transformation rather than paralysation.

Similarly, Snyman (2015 argues that on the one hand acknowledging the effects of whiteness is needed, yet should not lead to accusations in which white people are silenced or cancelled. Therefore an attitude of epistemic vulnerability is proposed in which

> "one creates openness to acknowledge a lack of knowledge, a discomfort yet an affirmation to being touched by the vulnerability of others and becoming affected in relation to others. Epistemic vulnerability is evident when one reconsiders the own epistemic roots with which one constructs reality" (Snyman, 2015, p. 287).

The concept of epistemic vulnerability, according to Snyman (2015), is useful in thinking about how to deal with attitudes of shame. Instead of shame, in which one is often tempted to hide oneself, Snyman argues that an attitude of vulnerability does not include this tendency and rather aims to expose and tries to find ways of how to take responsibility. Instead of an attitude of epistemic superiority, which may seem to guarantee epistemic 'safety', epistemic vulnerability opens up spaces for positions of interdependence, in which it is more normalised that processes of knowledge production are vulnerable (Icaza, 2017; Johnson, 2020).

Epistemic vulnerability could be seen as a useful concept when conducting an self-examination of IW. Instead of an attitude of defensiveness, or guilt, it can be considered as a possibility towards a proactive attitude of openness. A reflection on IW then aims to create possibilities for individuals and institutions to move beyond an all-knowing, protective attitude towards an attitude of vulnerability.

4.4 Layers of reflection

Since whiteness plays a role both on individual – as well as institutional levels, it is important to question how reflecting on whiteness can manifest on both these levels.

Andreotti (2014) distinguishes reflection from self-reflexivity as a way to engage with reflection within education. Self-reflection aims to reflect on an individual level. In the case of whiteness, this would entail a reflection on one's individual privileges, assumptions, decisions etc. regarding whiteness. Self-reflexivity, on the other hand, is to be seen as reflecting on a collective level. Self-reflexivity is a form of reflection that tries to understand the situatedness of individuals regarding systems of knowledge and power in which they (un)consciously take part in or benefit from. Reflexivity differs from individual reflection, in

that it tries to trace back "individual assumptions to collective socially, culturally and historically situated 'stories' with specific ontological and epistemological assumptions that define what is real, ideal and knowable (i.e. 'root narratives')" (Andreotti, 2014, p. 15). Reflexivity thus tries to understand root narratives that are underlying within institutional life and goes beyond a reflection on individual decisions, assumptions etc.

Similarly, Emirbayer and Desmond (2012) argue that reflexivity refers to a way of reflecting that not only tries to understand one's position as an individual, but also reflects on structures that facilitate norms and standards. They argue that reflexivity within universities is about "engaging in rigorous institutional analysis of the social and historical structures that condition one's thinking and inner experience" (Emirbayer & Desmond, 2012, p. 591)

Following Andreotti, Emirbayer and Desmond, a reflection on the individual role by those that take part in the university (students, staff, policy makers etc.) is not sufficient to examine what IW means in the context of the university. Even though such an individual reflection can contribute to understandings of how they are affected or are maintaining norms of whiteness, it does not address institutional practises of whiteness. Therefore it does not analyse the structures of how these norms of whiteness became present in the first place.

In order to reflect on institutionalised practises and norms of whiteness, Ahmed (2012) describes that reflection needs to happen beyond the individual level. Engaging with reflexivity can help to go beyond this individual level of reflection and rather can be used as a way of reflecting that seeks to understand the link between the individual and the institutional. As Ahmed (2012) argues, institutions need to be confronted with their own (visible and hidden) norms and habits, and for that to happen, engagement with reflexivity can be meaningful in understanding what such a reflection entails. In the next section I will turn to an actual example of reflexivity at institutional level by describing what happened in the Why is My Curriculum White *(WIMCW)* campaign.

4.5 Reflexivity and institutional whiteness , the example of the 'Why is My Curriculum White *(WIMCW)'* campaign.

The WIMCW campaign is an example of a process of reflexivity about IW within universities. The campaigners highlighted that at UCL the curriculum and staff almost

exclusively consisted of white people and critically questioned this composition. By sharing experiences of students and staff regarding whiteness, the campaigners aimed to start a critical conversation, to stimulate critical reflection on the status quo. The campaign shows that a self-examination of IW can start with questioning the content as well as the bodies which are present (or represented) within university curricula. Their self-examination process was two folded: firstly it focused on the 'who' is present within the curriculum and questioned whether certain bodies are excluded from taking part of it. Secondly it focused on the content or narratives of race in the curriculum. The WIMCW-question did not really search for an answer that could possibly legitimise why the curriculum was white (and in that sense not an 'open' question) , yet it made people within the university think about the issue of (institutional) whiteness in relation to the university.

Because of the WIMCW campaign, whiteness became a topic of conversation both in the university itself, as well as outside the university through media attention. The campaigners claimed that the university's curriculum perspectives almost exclusively focus on white people and white people's perspectives were dominating and all-permeating. The campaign demanded critical reflection on the complicity with white supremacy within universities in the United Kingdom.[16] As Peters (2015) argues, racism rarely is a topic within the ethics of education of universities. Even though the WIMCW campaign was received differently, it can be seen as a booster to open up a reflection about the ethics of university education (Peters, 2015). The campaign can be seen as a call to reflect on the curriculum by both students and staff. It focused both on the racial background of authors who were represented in the curriculum, as well as its content. Furthermore the campaign paid attention to stories of students and faculty members in which they shared their personal experiences on how they are affected by a curriculum grounded in whiteness. The campaign got a lot of media attention and different chapters of the campaign began to emerge in different universities across the United Kingdom[17]. In this sense one could argue that the campaign was successful, at least to the extent that it generated a situation in which critical voices were being heard and nationwide debates were held (Khuda, & Kamruzzaman, 2021). Yet as Hartland and Larkai (2020) explain, the campaign also received very defensive responses as well as (online) aggression. In this sense the campaign illustrates that when topics of

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[16]https://theoccupiedtimes.org/?p=14056 (Accessed on 24-06-2021)
[17] https://www.theguardian.com/education/commentisfree/2015/mar/23/philosophy-white-men-university-courses ((Accessed on 24-06-2021)

whiteness or racism are brought up in the university, this can result in responses that try to defend the status quo, in line with what Arday (2019) and Ash et al. (2020) describe. The case of WIMCW confirms the ideas by Arday that despite positive responses, a demand for an investigation on IW also goes along with responses of defensiveness and feelings of discomfort among students and staff. The case shows how an attitude of innocence, as earlier described by Wekker and Leonardo, could also be ascribed to the university in this context. This defensive attitude present within universities, characterises how people see themselves incapable of taking part in practises of (institutional) racism and therefore rather defend themselves than take calls such as that of the WIMCW campaign seriously.

4.6 Dimensions of self-examination

Corces-Zimmerman, Thomas, and Cabrera (2021) distinguish four different areas or dimensions that require a self-examination of IW : racial composition, physical infrastructure, social/cultural norms and curricula. These four dimensions can help to understand which domains need to be examined in such a self-examination and therefore I will discuss these more thoroughly in this section. The four dimensions are useful to understand where we can locate IW , beyond an individual level, within the university and therefore where self-examination should concentrate. This does not mean that IW solely manifests within those four dimensions or areas, rather Corces-Zimmerman, Thomas, and Cabrera's (2021) dimensions can be seen as examples that can help develop theories about self-examining IW.

Firstly: a self-examination of racial composition entails, as Aced and Schwab (2016) argue, opening up spaces to discuss who is present in universities and who is excluded and why. Further it can be about questioning representation of the university: who do we see in brochures, and who not? As Ahmed (2012) argues, it is also important to question whether tokenism is present within institutions . Tokenism is the "the practice or policy of admitting an extremely small number of members of racial (e.g. African American), ethnic (e.g. Latino) or gender (i.e. women) groups to give the impression of being inclusive, when in actuality these groups are not welcomed" (Riccucci, 2008, p. 132).

Secondly: a self-examination of physical infrastructure entails an interrogation on how race is experienced in universities. As Corces-Zimmerman, Thomas, and Cabrera (2021) argue, people such as slaveholders and white supremacists, who are honoured in universities through, for example, names of buildings or statues, can facilitate a culture of IW. A

reflection on those people who are honoured in this context then does not only mean reflection on their race, but also a reflection on their ideas about race. It is about reflecting on the stories that universities tell themselves and which stories or people universities consider worth honouring. This does not have to lead to a cancel-culture in which white people are 'cancelled', but rather aims to critically examine who and what is being honoured, instead of taking those honoured people for granted. Further, a self-examination of physical infrastructure could mean, as Ahmed (2012) argues, questioning whether and why some bodies are never or almost exclusively represented.

Thirdly, another area of self-examination entails an interrogation of cultures and norms that are present within universities. Explicit norms or cultures, when present, are then objects of study. For example, the normativity of a colour-blindness approach that universities often adopt. In addition to explicit ones, there are also implicit norms and cultures such as the implicit bias present within universities that for example assume the white body as the normative starting point and e.g. the 'Black' or the 'Muslim' as deviant from that standard (Bonnett, 1997). Even though norms of whiteness are often hard to detect and always changing, this does not mean that norms or cultures of white supremacy are absent within universities and therefore deserve attention (Corces-Zimmerman, Thomas, and Cabrera, 2021, Ash et al., 2020).

The WIMCW campaign also teaches us about the fourth area of self-examination, the curricula, as an important field which is in need of reflection. As Corces-Zimmerman, Thomas, and Cabrera (2021) argue a self-examination of the curriculum would entail a gaze at how history is told within courses and how, for example, cultures of white supremacy are (not) told. Furthermore it would concern a gaze at the content of the courses: which implicit values about race are present and to what extent is the subject of whiteness discussed? Additionally it would look into what bodies are present within the curriculum and who are presented as role models. "If all of the academic voices one hears are white, then it is logical to assume these authors are the most meritorious" (Corces-Zimmerman, Thomas & Cabrera, 2021, p. 15)

4.6 Who is examining?

Since a self-examination needs to happen on an individual and institutional level in order to map and counter IW, it would involve reflexivity involving all those present within the university: students, staff, policy makers, board members etc (Corces-Zimmerman, Thomas & Cabrera, 2021). Because an initiative such as WIMCW was taken as a collective consisting of students and staff, it can be seen as an example of how students and staff can unite to address problems around whiteness. Yet without other, additional staff, policy makers, board members etc. taking part in such critical investigation of IW, change is more unlikely to happen. As Ash et al. (2020) point out, it is especially important for white leaders within universities to become aware of how whiteness consciously and unconsciously affects their decisions.

> "Whites in positions of influence or power must understand not only how whiteness has systematically privileged them, but also, they must develop an awareness of how whiteness has shaped their conscious and unconscious thinking processes related to race. Without this self-examination and exploration, Whites will not be able to be fully aware of systemic racism." (Ash et al., 2020, p. 21).

As Ahmed (2012) argues, there is the danger that when, for example, only one committee is made responsible to engage with, in this case diversity, then the ones outside those committees often do not consider 'diversity' their job anymore. A similar argument could be made in the case when a committee or a selected group within the university is devoted to the examination of IW. As Ahmed (2012) argues, this does not mean that such committees should not be formed and she warns about policies that call for 'everyone' to take up such issues, as often this results in no-one feeling responsible.

Ahmed (2012) argues that an institutional drive is needed to put such ideas on the agenda, because otherwise it risks to be dropped from the agenda. Therefore, in the case of reflection on IW, the topic needs to be recognised institutionally in order to make a reflection happen on a continuous and large scale within universities. This does not mean that within institutions of universities, diversity committees cannot play a meaningful role in furthering a reflection on IW. Yet, by exclusively making diversity committees responsible for such reflections, there is the risk that they are expected to do everyone's job. Here a tension is visible in which universities: on the one hand they need to make people and/or committees responsible to address the topic, while on the other hand they need to be vigilant that these

people or committees are not seen as the proof that 'the work' is already taken on.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the sub-question *'What does a process of self-examination of IW in the context of the university entail?* In order to answer this question I analysed how CRT scholars conceptualise a process of self-examination of IW in the context of universities. Different CRT scholars argue that such examination is needed to reveal dominant, but often hidden norms and cultures of whiteness that often stay unnoticed and unchanged if they are not scrutinised. Such examinations aim to contribute to understanding how whiteness impacts education within universities. In the process they articulate that, rather than shaming white people, such examinations should aim to open up the question of why and how universities can take responsibility regarding acknowledging and redressing IW .

In this context, the WIMCW campaign provided a good example of a movement that was able to create starting points for universities in the United Kingdom to critically reflect on their own IW. The campaign also illustrated that in response to such (demands for) examinations of IW, one may expect resistance in the form of defensiveness and discomfort. Ahmed, Arday, Chandler and Wibord argue that such discomfort is an essential part of such a self-examination and therefore should not be avoided. As they say in Dutch "Zonder Wrijving geen Glans" (Without friction, no shine). A self-examination of IW consequently means that one enters into a process in which discomfort deserves attention. Rather than a 'cancel culture' towards universities, an attitude of epistemic vulnerability adopted by agents within universities, can create possibilities for universities to investigate their responsibilities and possibilities towards redressing norms and cultures of whiteness. What characterises IW, as Arday (2019) and Ash et al. (2020) argue, and we can also learn from the WIMCW campaign, is that once such investigations on IW are carried out, responses of unwillingness, defensiveness, and innocence seem to be typical.

CRT scholars argue that reflecting on IW within universities needs to go beyond reflection on an individual level. A reflection on an individual level would try to understand how people are personally affected by or are benefiting from whiteness. Even though it is argued that such reflections are useful and necessary in order to understand whiteness, it does not aim to understand institutional dimensions of whiteness. As argued by Andreotti (2014), Emirbayer and Desmond (2012) reflexivity, on the other hand, focuses on how structures and norms regarding whiteness are institutionally manifested and therefore can be seen as more

appropriate to conduct such a critical investigation on IW. To differentiate between reflection and reflexivity, according to Andreotti (2014), Emirbayer and Desmond (2012), is thus useful for investigations that try to understand how certain institutional, underlying norms play out. As discussed in the previous chapter, IW is a concept that describes how norms of whiteness are ingrained within universities. To investigate how whiteness operates institutionally, therefore a process of reflexivity rather than solely reflection by individuals seems to be appropriate. This does not mean that individual reflections on whiteness are not helpful in understanding how whiteness plays out in institutional life in universities. Rather this means such reflection alone is not sufficient. If universities want to engage in an investigation on how whiteness operates institutionally, this means an engagement in researching how certain norms and cultures are present and emerged in the first place.

Corces-Zimmerman, Thomas, and Cabrera's four dimensions of self-examination of IW (racial composition, physical infrastructure, social/cultural norms and curricula) help to understand what such reflection should focus on. Even though these four dimensions may not be all-encompassing, they can give direction in a process in which IW is critically considered.

Finally, this chapter dealt with the question of who, according to CRT scholars, should be responsible to initiate and lead such a reflective process within universities. Ahmed (2012), concluded that within universities there need to be specific people or committees to continuously address and/or support such self-examinations of IW, while not making them exclusively responsible to conduct such examinations.

Chapter Five: Self-examination of institutional whiteness and the process of decolonisation of the university

5.1 Introduction

"How does self-examination of institutional whiteness contribute to a process of decolonisation of the university?" is the sub-question addressed in this chapter. I will analyse how self-examining institutional whiteness can help to pursue the decolonisation of universities. In 5.2, I will first recap and summarise the meaning of 'decolonisation of universities' and 'coloniality of knowledge', as discussed earlier in this thesis. From there on I will extend the discussion by focussing on the meaning of 'de-westernisation of knowledge' and 'decoloniality of knowledge', since these two concepts are central when one wants to understand what decolonising universities entails (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). For this I will dive deeper into the work of prominent decolonial scholars who were introduced in chapter two. Subsequently, I will briefly return in 5.3 to recap what institutional whiteness entails according to prominent CRT scholars whose work was discussed in chapter three and four, in

order to get a better understanding of processes of self-examination on institutional whiteness.

Based on literature from both the Decoloniality and CRT fields, I will analyse in 5.4 how whiteness and coloniality are linked and in 5.5 I will investigate how the scholarly work in these combined fields can help us to understand how self-examination of institutional whiteness can contribute to the decolonisation of universities. In 5.6 I will explore some of the tensions within theories about the decolonisation of universities that are specifically relevant regarding this research topic. Finally, in 5.7, in order to get a better understanding of how Decolonial – and CRT scholarship address epistemic justice in universities, I discuss how their work is related and can be considered complementary.

5.2 Recap on the decolonisation of universities

As discussed in chapter two, different decolonial scholars argue that the aim of decolonising universities is to expose and overthrow contemporary power and knowledge structures present within the institution of the university (Le Grange, 2019). In general, decolonisation in the context of the university aims to pursue epistemic justice (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017b; Le Grange, 2019).

Nevertheless, decolonial scholars prioritise different strategies or goals in the pursuit of such justices. In most instances it means that universities either set out to focus on de-westernisation or pluralisation of knowledge, or they choose an approach aimed at decoloniality of knowledge (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Gebrial, 2018). While decolonial scholars such as Mignolo and Walsh (2018) emphasise the importance of de-westernisation, they also highlight its limitations:

> "Dewesternization, by contrast, disputes the content of the conversation. It aims to change the puppets and the content of their conversation, not the terms. It disputes the place of the puppeteer not to replace it but to coexist next to the existing puppeteer." (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 145)

A focus on de-westernisation does not automatically entail a self-examination of how a 'westernised university' came about in the first place, and the "tricks and designs of the puppeteer" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 145) are not necessarily questioned within this focus. Aiming to de-westernise universities can notwithstanding mean that institutions avoid an

engagement or confrontation with their own positionality and coloniality. De-westernisation, while being an important aim in decolonising universities, may therefor also function as a tactic of diversion (Jivraj, 2020; Gebrial, 2018). On a similar note, Ahmed (2012) argues that a focus on increasing diversity can possibly function as a manoeuvre to seemingly keep everyone happy, instead of acknowledging the 'unhappy' practises, events or histories that are/were present in universities. Based on the selected literature, it becomes clear that both decolonial – and CRT scholars argue that a focus on de-westernisation, while being an important dimension in a process of decolonising the university, holds a danger of functioning as a symbolic, distracting policy.

Dei (2016) argues that universities need to confront their positionality in order to understand their own roots in coloniality. Decolonial scholars, such as Mignolo & Walsh (2018), Dei (2016), Gebrial (2018) argue that universities need to focus on decoloniality of knowledge so that the roots of the problems are addressed. While for example Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017b) emphasises a plurality of knowledge, Mignolo and Walsh (2018, p. 149) argue:

> "It is not enough to change the content of the conversation (the domains, the enunciated); on the contrary, it is of the essence to change the terms (regulations, assumptions, principles managed at the level of the enunciation) of the conversation".

They maintain that in order to change these terms of the conversation, a first step could be to become aware of what the terms of the conversation are. What is clear from the selected literature, is that investigating the roots of coloniality of knowledge is needed in order to challenge the ways in which universities function nowadays. Coloniality in this context, as introduced in chapter two, describes how colonialism still impacts postcolonial contexts. Coloniality of knowledge specifically, refers to knowledge systems that have been influenced by (the effects of) colonialism (Maldonado-Torres, 2016).

5.3 Recap on a self-examination of institutional whiteness

As argued in chapter three, CRT scholars conceptualise whiteness as an overarching racial discourse that facilitates a culture of white privilege and white supremacy. Further, CRT scholars argue that whiteness entails a culture in which the 'invisible' norm is white while

non-whites thus deviate from this norm (Flagg, 2005; Shaw, 2006; Leonardo; 2009; Ansley,1997; Ahmed, 2007; Brunsma, Brown & Placier, 2013; Bonds & Inwood, 2016). In the context of universities this has resulted mostly in that white authors, white students, white staff, white people's histories, and ideas about white people and with a white audience in mind are foregrounded and the people and ideas outside these categories are considered as the 'others' (Bonett, 1997).

Self-examination of institutional whiteness, as argued in chapter four, entails an inventory and reflection on racial composition, physical infrastructure, social/cultural norms and curricula. CRT scholars argue that a self-examination of IW potentially exposes which theories/bodies are at the centre and which are left out, and what this means regarding academic standards, practises and norms (Corces-Zimmerman, Thomas, and Cabrera, 2021). As discussed in paragraph 4.3, CRT scholars call for collective reflexivity, rather than only individual reflection, on whiteness. They find it important to make a distinction between reflection on whiteness, which they consider as an individual process on for example personal privileges and blind spots, and reflexivity on whiteness, that aims to reveal dominant, but often hidden norms and cultures of whiteness that are present within universities (Andreotti, 2014; Emirbayer & Desmond, 2012). Further it is argued that these institutionalised forms of whiteness often stay unnoticed and unchanged if they are not investigated. A prominent characteristic of institutionalised whiteness is that it is left unquestioned in order to avoid confrontation and discomfort (Ahmed, 2007; Castagno, 2014). CRT scholars contend that these institutionalised forms of whiteness are present within universities and therefore deserve attention (Arday; 2019, Ahmed 2007; Corces-Zimmerman, Thomas, & Cabrera 2021).

5.4 Linking whiteness to coloniality

In answering the sub-question "How does self-examination of institutional whiteness contribute to a process of decolonisation of the university?", it is important to mention that coloniality (of knowledge) and (institutional) whiteness are different concepts that help to understand how colonial norms or ideas and white supremacy are present within institutions. An investigation into coloniality of knowledge is not the same as an investigation on institutional whiteness, yet whiteness and coloniality are linked concepts as Shaw (2006), Ponzanesi and Blaagaard (2011) argue.

Shaw (2006) claims that CRT scholarship often omits to focus on how coloniality operates and influences (institutional) whiteness, while at the same time institutional whiteness does not get much attention within Decolonial scholarship. To better understand the link between coloniality and race (and subsequently whiteness), the work of Mbembe (2015), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) and Maldonado-Torres (2016) is useful. Mbembe (2015, p. 88) argues that at the start of colonialism, race began to take a prominent function in political policies by classifying and differentiating people (with both mental and physical characteristics). Race functioned as a categorisation that described the non-white as backwards, barbaric or uncivilised and the white as superior, which then in turn provided legitimation to bureaucratic practises in which non-whites could be dominated (Mbembe, 2015). Similarly, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) argues that norms and values of white supremacy went hand in hand with historical ideas that legitimised colonialism and imperialism in the first place. In line with this argument, Maldonado-Torres (2016) argues that the development of ideas around race and whiteness partly continue to influence how coloniality of knowledge is at play today. To understand colonialism and how it affects contemporary society then means (yet not exclusively) to understand how ideas and norms around race are manifest in what is done and taught in universities (Maldonado-Torres, 2016).

Mbembe, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Maldonado-Torres conclude that ideas about race and whiteness thus have certain roots in colonialism. In this context, investigating whiteness can help to understand how contemporary norms and values about race are rooted in colonial ideas and norms around whiteness and still influence universities.

5.5 How does self-examination pursue decolonisation?

Decolonial scholars argue that coloniality is more than a manifestation of racism, and decolonising universities is more than ending racist practises within their institutions (Bhambra, Gebrial & Nişancıoğlu, 2018; Boidin, Cohen, & Grosfoguel, 2012). Yet, as argued in the previous section (5.3) race and racism played a leading role in the functioning and legitimation of colonialism and still affects contemporary norms and ideas which are present within universities.

According to CRT scholars, self-examination of institutional whiteness potentially opens up the conversation about how whiteness influences practises and theories within the university (Corces-Zimmerman, Thomas, and Cabrera, 2021; Andreotti, 2014; Emirbayer &

Desmond, 2012). Further, it can be seen as an investigation on positionality, which as Dei (2016) argues is of importance in the decolonisation of universities. Self-examination of racial composition, physical infrastructure, social/cultural norms and curricula as conceptualised by CRT scholars can be seen as a beginning to create awareness about positionality and the 'terms of the conversation' which help to understand what needs to be decolonised in the first place. Creating such awareness, decolonial scholars argue, can be a starting point to problematize the pursuit of epistemic justice in the context of universities. (Vazquez, 2015; Dei, 2016; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018)

A self-examination of institutional whiteness, as conceptualised in CRT literature, is important in order to become aware of how power structures, which are highly influenced by (theories) of race, are at play within universities. This knowledge is needed in order to rethink and challenge the existing situation. As argued in 5.3, whiteness and coloniality are considered to be linked concepts, and it is therefore important to understand how (theories about) race in general and whiteness are specifically manifested in universities and how they can help us to comprehend how universities are influenced by coloniality. In this context, the work of CRT and decolonial scholars are considered to be complimentary.

5.6 Tensions within theories about the decolonisation of universities

In the process of the decolonisation of the university, as Moore (2012) argues, tensions can become apparent between centralising white knowledge frames (which become apparent through self-examination of institutional whiteness) and other knowledge frames which push to decentralise those white knowledge frames (such as oppressed or underrepresented forms of knowledge). Following Moore's argument, when an examination of institutional whiteness is prioritised, it means that white knowledge frames (instead of other ones) again occupy the centre within academia. Moore thus questions to what extent universities should focus on understanding how systems of whiteness have been working, and to what extent universities should focus on alternative knowledge that replace existing, and considered to be oppressive knowledge systems. Moore (2012) emphasises that universities should be careful in prioritising centralising white knowledge frames because it can distract from projects that decentralise this knowledge.

How an examination of institutional whiteness contributes to a process of decolonisation of universities also depends on the context of universities. In universities in countries that have historically colonised other nations, other priorities may be expected than in countries that have been historically colonised (Jansen, 2019; Maldonado- Torres, 2011). Universities that are located in countries in which Indigenous knowledge has been excluded and destroyed along with colonial oppression, may for example experience a greater need to bring back these forms of knowledge (production) (Jansen, 2019; Le Grange, 2019). Other universities that historically have been involved in colonialism or the development of certain racist theories may for example prioritise a reflection on coloniality or institutional whiteness. As Moore (2012) acknowledges, these two foci do not exclude each other and can be pursued simultaneously. What can be learnt from Moore's critique, is that universities should question what they want to prioritise in their attempts to decolonise. They should investigate to what extent they want to understand how universities and knowledge function and have been functioning in an oppressive way (decoloniality of knowledge), and to what extent they want to move beyond and engage with alternative forms of knowledge (de-westernisation of knowledge).

Nonetheless, because there are important similarities in how colonisation has affected different countries, the decolonisation of universities also requires understanding of global similarities in the effects of colonial domination (Jansen, 2019; Le Grange, 2019). Jansen and Le Grange emphasise that universities cannot follow universal guidelines or goals, but rather requires contemplation on context-specific needs and goals. They argue that similarities of how colonisation has affected universities should not be overseen, yet they stress that the ways to counter coloniality are context-specific: "Though we might be facing the same storm, we are not all in the same boat, and that makes all the difference" (Dhawan, 2013, p. 145).

Further, Jansen (2019, p. 65) argues that categories such as Western/Indigenous should not become "essentialising binaries". While Jansen stresses that such concepts are useful within decolonial theory, he warns about the danger that these become binaries "that carry within them the very structure of colonial thinking that spawned the criticism in the first place" (Jansen, 2019, p. 65). Following Jansen's (2019) critique, an examination of institutional whiteness is also susceptible to create such binary classifications within universities. A basic classification of white/non-white within knowledge systems that simplifies, rather than nuances reality does not do justice to the complexity of how cultures within university

function, which does not mean that the marking of whiteness is useless at all. Jansen (2019) argues that we need to acknowledge the complexity in which power and authority have played a role in shaping universities and therefore an analysis that centralises only institutional whiteness for example will not be sufficient. He argues, referring to what he calls the 'centre-periphery framing', that slipping into simplifications of the problem should be avoided. He argues that universities should avoid taking the issue of decolonisation as a simple task as if they can simply replace Western (centre) knowledge with African knowledge (periphery). Jansen (2019) argues that decolonisation is not so much about reaching certain numbers in diversity, or about reaching specific goals because such tactics barely unsettle fundamentals of institutionalised coloniality within universities. Whereas Jansen acknowledges the problem of epistemic injustices, he wants to emphasise decolonisation is not to be seen as a simple reverse of the current hegemony within knowledge production. The end of epistemic injustice, for Jansen cannot be simply conceptualised, rather he claims that aims for epistemic justice should involve a continuous reflection on how knowledge is produced and legitimised.

Following Jansen (2019) and Le Grange's (2019) arguments, for a self-examination of institutional whiteness to successfully contribute to the decolonisation of universities, it needs to be conducted in ways that take into account the different contexts and complexities of institutional whiteness. To contribute to the decolonisation of universities, self-examinations of institutional whiteness are to be conducted correspondingly with their contexts. Such an examination is not simply marking white (knowledge/perspectives etc.) as problematic/colonial and non-white as progressive/ decolonial. Rather, such an examination is taking into account the coloniality of whiteness while acknowledging the complexity of how these concepts relate.

5.7 CRT and decolonial theory

In this thesis I study the work of both decolonial scholars and CRT scholars. It includes an investigation into how these two academic fields are both different as well as complementary and how their combined scholarship could help us to understand what the pursuit of epistemic justice within universities entails. Both CRT and decolonial scholars provide theories in which changing an institution's culture is central. Whereas these two fields take on different

directions and approaches, I believe they can potentially supplement and enrich each other. In the context of epistemic justice regarding universities, decolonial scholars focus on how universities are connected to and influenced by coloniality. Further, they advocate the pursuit (generating and sharing) of more plural knowledge, or to aim for what they call 'pluriversity'. CRT scholars focus rather on how the issue of race and racism is relevant within universities. They argue that white privilege and white supremacy are prevalent in the context of universities and therefore they focus on how forms of whiteness are present within these institutions.

As argued in paragraph 3.7, studies of whiteness can be enriched by analysing them from a (de)colonial point of view. The work of decolonial scholars and CRT scholars have the potential to enrich each other while studying how whiteness and coloniality are linked and what this means in the context of universities. Yet, as argued in paragraph 4.2, cultures of (institutional) whiteness can also be present in contexts that have not colonised or been colonised. This does not necessarily mean that these forms of whiteness do not relate to colonialism, but rather that whiteness is not to be analysed as if it entails a culture or norm that is similarly tied to colonialism. To have a more complete understanding of how coloniality and whiteness relate to each other, the work of CRT can be enriched by a (de)colonial perspective (Shaw, 2006; Ponzanesi & Blaagaard, 2011). Similarly decolonial theory can be enriched by CRT in taking into account such understanding of whiteness in theorising about decoloniality. Both types of scholarship assume that in order to theorise (counter-) coloniality within universities, one cannot avoid the topic of whiteness. Similarly, in theorising whiteness, one cannot but pay attention to coloniality.

5.8 Conclusion

To conclude: the sub-question which was addressed in this chapter, namely '*How can self-examination of institutional whiteness contribute to a process of decolonisation of the university?'* can be answered as follows: On the one hand a self-examination of institutional whiteness helps to create awareness about the positionality of universities and therefore contribute to understanding what needs to be decolonised. In this sense, it potentially contributes to the decoloniality of knowledge. Therefore the intersection of CRT and decolonial theory is of special interest since this study focuses on how the scholarship of

institutional whiteness and decoloniality relate to each other and what they combinedly can offer for theories of the decolonisation of universities.

On the other hand, de-westernisation or pluralisation of knowledge is also important in the decolonisation of universities, and if self-examination of institutional whiteness is at the centre, it means that white knowledge frames instead of different ones are again centralised.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and discussion

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will summarise the answers to the subsidiary research questions as discussed in the previous chapters in order to answer the main research question of this thesis: *"How does the university's self-examination of institutional whiteness aim to contribute to its decolonisation?".* After that I will discuss the limitations of this research, reflect on potential follow up research and discuss my own positionality within this research. Lastly I will discuss the humanistic relevance of this study.

6.2 Summary of answers to subsidiary research questions

6.2.1 What does the decolonisation of the university mean?'

The first subsidiary question of this study was: *What does the decolonisation of the university mean?* To answer this question I studied the work of prominent decolonial scholars such as Icaza & Vázquez (2018), Aman (2016) and Santos (2016) who argue that decolonising universities involves a process in which forgotten, excluded and oppressed forms of knowledge are taken seriously. Furthermore, they argue that the centralised (ways of) knowledge production/producers in universities need to be addressed, examined and challenged (Mignolo, 2011;Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Maldonado-Torres, 2011). In order to do so, decolonial scholars argue that it is important to challenge the long-taken for granted norms and practises that are present within universities and that have their roots in colonialism (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Gebrial, 2018; Dei, 2020). In general, decolonial scholars argue that to decolonise universities means to expose and challenge the positionality and coloniality within universities while also emphasising that universities need to include alternative, oppressed forms of knowledge that long have been ignored or delegitimised.

6.2.2 What is Whiteness and Institutional Whiteness?

The second subsidiary question of this study was: *What is whiteness and institutional whiteness?* To answer this question I studied prominent work within CRT scholarship. Whiteness, CRT scholars argue, is an invisible norm, practice or ideology and is a useful concept to understand how white privilege and white supremacy manifest (Shaw, 2006;

Leonardo, 2004; Gillborn, 2006; Bonds & Inwood, 2016). IW is a concept that CRT scholars particularly use to expose how whiteness is present and how it affects institutions with regard to their curriculum, policies, population, exemplary figures, iconography etc. In their research, CRT scholars argue that when universities are confronted with critique regarding IW, their response is mostly to downplay, divert or ignore these critiques (Ahmed, 2012; Castagno, 2014). They conclude that the unwillingness to examine whiteness is therefore part of a university culture in which comfort, rather than discomfort is central.

6.2.3 What does a process of self-examination of institutional whiteness in the context of the university entail?

The third subsidiary question of this study was: *What does a process of self-examination on institutional whiteness in the context of the university entail?* To answer this question I studied the work of CRT scholars regarding self-examination, reflection and reflexivity. Self-examining IW often entails the engagement with discomfort and confrontation. One of the aims of such examinations is to investigate and create awareness of how universities and the bodies present within those institutions can take responsibility in terms of rethinking the existing population, physical infrastructure, social/cultural norms and curricula. What IW concretely means in individual universities depends on the specific (historical) context of the university. Rather than adopting a colour-blind or 'post-race' approach that often is present within universities (Tate & Bagguley, 2016), CRT scholars argue that critically examining IW requires the acknowledgement of how race and racism affects universities and its curriculum, research (methods) and staff composition (Corces-Zimmerman, Thomas & Cabrera, 2021; Ahmed 2012; Leonardo, 2004; Herndon, 2002).

6.2.4 How does self-examination of institutional whiteness contribute to a process of decolonisation of the university?

The fourth and final subsidiary question of this study was: *How does self-examination of institutional whiteness contribute to a process of decolonisation of the university?* To answer this question I studied and compared the work of CRT and decolonial scholars. Conceptualised in CRT literature, the self-examination of IW aims to create awareness about power structures which are manifested in racial composition, physical infrastructure, social/cultural norms and curricula are present within universities. Awareness about such positionality can help to understand how coloniality (still) influences universities and as such

can therefore be a first step towards challenging coloniality within universities. This can also form a basis to map and address IW. In this light, the work of both CRT and decolonial scholars is useful to be linked, so that coloniality and IW and their link are taken into account in theorising about both decolonisation and/or racial justice.

However, when universities aim to engage in a process of decolonisation, the self-examination of their own IW alone is not sufficient. Decolonising universities demands also to engage with de-westernisation or pluralisation of knowledge. A self-examination of IW for example does not directly contribute to the implementation of different perspectives within the curriculum. Yet such examination can contribute indirectly to the possibility of pluriversal ideas and practises to emerge within universities because without such a self-examination a realisation may not be gained about what is at the centre, what is outside and in what ways the centre functions and influences academia.

6.3 Institutional whiteness and its contribution to the decolonisation of universities

Having summarised the answers to the subsidiary questions, I can now answer the main research question of this study, namely: *How does the university's self-examination of institutional whiteness aim to contribute to its decolonisation?* In my research I chose to study decolonial – and CRT scholarship as my literary sources. My answer to the main research question is thus based on their perspectives. This study includes a focus on tensions within these fields of scholarship, but did not consult literature outside this scope. Based on the sources I studied, I conclude that a self-examination of IW can indeed potentially contribute to the decolonisation of the university and in this section I will focus on how this is so. While such self-examination alone is not sufficient in a decolonising process, it can increase awareness of coloniality and how coloniality is related to race and racism. Additional steps in a decolonising process would for example entail the inclusion of often excluded forms of knowledge or knowledge producers, which campaigns such as the UoC and WIMCW foregrounded.

As argued in chapter five, race/racism and colonialism are entangled concepts and when one aims to understand how colonialism functioned and still functions, and what a process of decolonisation entails, it is important to enhance one's understanding of the role of race and racism in society at large and in universities in particular. Focussing on IW

addresses the need to include a focus on race and racism. A self-examination of IW potentially renders visible racist practises and norms which are present within universities, but are often ignored or overseen.

CRT scholars find that by engaging with decolonial critique, many universities choose to look for solutions in which increasing diversity rather than challenging coloniality is their central concern. By framing the problem as simply one of lack of diversity and representation, universities seem to avoid confrontation with their own IW and thus leave out a core dimension of decolonisation.

By adding previously underrepresented knowledge and/or bodies, universities seem to assume that most of their 'usual business' can continue to exist. According to decolonial scholars such as Jansen (2019), Mignolo and Walsh (2018), Dei (2016) and Gebrial (2018), these universities wrongly assume that decolonising their institutions is solely a matter of adding different authors, staff and students. As argued in chapter two and five, scholars such as Mignolo and Walsh (2018) and Dei (2016) argue that decoloniality demands much more than just widening representation. Instead, they argue that the fundamentals of knowledge should be challenged in processes of decolonisation: for instance in the ways in which knowledge is produced and how it is validated. For decolonial scholars epistemic justice involves critically investigating the fundamentals of knowledge within contemporary universities. They argue that simply including additional knowledge to the system, without first thoroughly investigating the knowledge that they produce and share, does not redress the epistemic (in)justice question that is at the heart of the matter.

What is also clear from this study is that decolonial scholars argue that decolonisation of universities is a context-specific process. It is important to take into account global histories of colonialism and its continued impact on the university (Jansen, 2019; Le Grange, 2019). This means that processes of decolonisation are shaped and formed depend on many factors, including its geopolitical location and its (colonial) history. There are major differences between and within countries in which these universities are situated and therefor influenced by colonialism (Jansen, 2019; Le Grange, 2019). This means for example that universities in the Global North face different challenges than universities in the Global South. But even within countries universities may differ in how their colonial past influenced their identity and knowledge bases. Decolonial scholars do therefor not propose a straightforward and "one size fits all" step-by-step plan for universities to decolonise, but

point out that there are certain steps and/or dimensions which are often avoided, but require attention.

Based on this study, I conclude that one of those steps or dimensions is to make room for a critical self-examination of a university's own IW. This dimension is particularly researched by CRT scholars who put IW squarely on the agenda by pointing out what is left out of the process if IW is not (self)-examined. CRT scholars criticise the fact universities often do not pay attention to their own 'taken-for-granted' presumptions (such as whiteness being the 'standard') which underpin their own normativity regarding race and racism. How universities are influenced by norms of whiteness is often a non-topic which escapes critical investigation (Ahmed, 2007; Castagno, 2014). Not paying attention to how whiteness plays a significant role, and how it is institutionally manifested in a university, means that universities disregard the influence of race and racism and this has major consequences for what, why and how universities teach and do research. By mapping and understanding what IW means in the context of their own university, universities can question, challenge and rethink how they believe that issues of race and racism should be redressed.

A self-examination of IW should however not be seen as a way to simply remove white bodies out of the curriculum or the university, but rather should be considered to be a project that tries to unravel unquestioned assumptions and norms about race and racism which are present in universities. Such an examination usually entails the engagement with discomfort and critically confronts what universities often regard as their own 'usual business'. It aims to investigate how universities, and the bodies present within those institutions, can rethink their objectives and responsibilities regarding the composition of its own staff and student population, physical infrastructure, social/cultural norms and curricula. It should be noted that such reflection cannot be substantial if it is only done by separate individuals within an institution. Rather it needs to take place on an institutional level and involves a process of reflexivity as explained in paragraph 4.3. (Andreotti; 2014, Emirbayer & Desmond, 2012). The distinction between reflection and reflexivity deepens the understanding of what self-examination of IW could look like. A self-examination in this context means that both reflection and reflexivity are needed to become aware of how whiteness is manifested within universities. Reflection encompasses that for example staff and students reflect on their individual role regarding a culture of whiteness. Reflexivity in

this context would for example entail critical scrutiny of how iconography functions within universities.

In line with Mignolo and Walsh (2018), decoloniality is not about reaching a state of enlightenment, but rather a continuous endeavour towards an 'otherwise'. An 'otherwise' is considered important in order to overcome a monocultural approach to knowledge. This otherwise means to consider, for example, different methodologies and epistemologies in the design of university education. This is considered important by Mignolo and Walsh, because it has the potential to transcend monocultural approaches of research and instead can bring pluralist approaches to research in contact with each other. In their endeavour towards contemplating an 'otherwise', universities become more aware about what is normalised, in order to be able to subsequently deconstruct these norms.

Across the world, more and more universities have become aware about the urgency to decolonise their institutions. Campaigns such as the UoC campaign or the WIMCW campaign draw attention to this urgency. As these campaigns show, notwithstanding the pressure to decolonise, universities still often choose to focus on only changing the puppets of the conversation" as Mignolo and Walsh (2018) say, instead of diving into the (colonial) roots of why these (former) puppets are there in the first place.

Since whiteness has certain roots in colonialism (Mbembe, 2015; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Maldonado-Torres, 2016), IW in universities should not be seen separate from a colonial past. Therefore the entanglement of coloniality and whiteness should be taken into account. It is therefore somewhat surprising that dimensions of IW which are at the centre of critical race theories, are rarely theorised in decolonial scholarship which address decolonisation of universities.

Self-examining IW can be seen as one dimension in a process of pursuing decolonial epistemic justice. At this point, CRT and decolonial scholarship overlap. Pursuing decolonial epistemic justice in the context of universities means to understand how coloniality is institutionally manifested and investigate how it can be countered. Self-examining IW can help to map colonial roots of whiteness which are entangled with (histories) of race and racism. By examining these roots, universities can better understand how and why whiteness became the norm and in this sense, self-examining IW can therefore contribute to

understanding how coloniality manifests within universities. This awareness can help in processes of countering coloniality.

6.4 Limitations and suggestions for follow up research

This study's main focus is on IW, and foregrounds dimensions of race and racism in processes of decolonisation. However, the research clarifies that race and racism are not the only important dimensions to analyse in the context of decoloniality in universities. As Dei (2016) argues, other identity markers, such as gender, are also important to understand how colonialism influenced/influences practises and theories in contemporary society and by extension in universities. Grosfoquel, Hernandez and Velásquez (2016) argue that it is important to situate knowledge not only in its racial historiography, but also emphasise the importance of researching how knowledge production and practises within universities are influenced by ideas about sexuality, gender, class, religion and ability which were tied to colonialism. Similarly, Maldonado-Torres, Vizcaíno and Wallace (2018, p. 82) argue that "serious consideration of the complex, non-binary interrelations between subject positions (e.g. race, gender, sexuality, ability) and their entanglement in modernity/coloniality" are needed in order to understand what needs to be decolonised and how we can proceed from there. As Lugones (2007, 2008) argues, categories of sexuality and gender also need to be investigated to understand how these categories have historically developed in relation to colonisation. This research only paid limited attention to these other identity categories. Further research into how these categories are significant regarding coloniality in universities can contribute to a deeper understanding of how they are influenced by colonialism and how they in – and exclude certain epistemologies or bodies.

The neo-liberalisation of the university is another topic in relation to decolonising universities that deserves more attention, but was only briefly mentioned in chapter two. As Dei (2016) and we have seen in the UoC case, decolonising universities is also linked to the funding of universities and the market in which it operates. Universities in neoliberal societies cannot escape the 'free-market' and therefore questions around the decolonisation of universities are also related to if and how decolonial ideas can coexist with neoliberal values. As Dei (2016, p. 53) argues "Indigenizing the curriculum interferes with the neoliberal momentum and the corporate trajectory. Consequently they are not considered for investment and because of this are at best devalued and at worst obliterated". The tension between

neoliberal policies and decolonial ideals (such as indigenising the curriculum) did not get much attention in this research, but can open up new perspectives that can enrich decolonial thinking in the context of universities. To what extent can universities decolonise while functioning as a neoliberal institution, is something of relevance in theories around the decolonisation of universities and therefore further research can contribute within this field.

Another limitation is that this study is based on sources that are written in Western languages only. This thesis is not directly influenced by ideas, concepts or frameworks that are written in other languages, while these ideas also contribute to understanding and practising decoloniality. Furthermore, not only languages matter in this context but also the choice of voices within these languages. Research which would include 'unheard' voices, for example through interviews, could also further contribute to understanding decoloniality in the context of universities. Furthermore, empirical research into case studies of education systems that have a decolonial focus could contribute to a greater understanding of decoloniality.

Furthermore, this study's focus was limited to decolonial and CRT scholarship and did not include the work of scholars who reject the (theoretical) basis of CRT and/or decolonial theory. Research that would focus on scholarship that (principally) disagrees with CRT and decolonial suppositions would yield different insights, tensions and arguments regarding decoloniality and IW.

Additionally, it is important to mention that the decolonial theories which were studied in this thesis are academic theories. Yet, decolonial theory includes ideas that criticise the root and the methodologies in which contemporary academia is grounded. Decolonial theory criticises the 'academic standards' that facilitate as gateways through which knowledge is included/excluded. Decolonial academic knowledge (including in this thesis) does not fall outside these standards. This is not to say that decolonial thinkers believe that the current academic standards are to be rejected, but rather that the current academic standards limit researchers to think outside their academic framework. Here the title of Lorde's (2018) book "the master's tool will never dismantle the master's house" becomes relevant. As decolonial theory aims to dismantle the 'house', in this case universities, Lorde argues that different tools should be developed from 'outside' universities (which could be considered the master's tool in this case). Similarly, Mignolo and Walsh (2018, p. 74-75) ask: "How can an outside and against position and perspective operate simultaneously with

an inside reality? (...) we can ask whether it is possible to be simultaneously insiders, outsiders and other-siders." These questions challenge academia's role in decolonial thinking, and I believe these are very relevant questions and critiques in the light of this thesis. Decolonial thinking is not limited to academia, and therefore in practising decolonial theory in an academic context, one has to be aware how this context is limiting and wonder how we can transcend traditional academia in order to open up to other knowledge systems. How universities should decolonise should not be a question which only concerns academics, but rather one that would include different perspectives from various (including non-academic) backgrounds.

6.5 Positionality

My own positionality as researcher is important to take into consideration regarding the results of this study. As a white person, studying at a predominantly white university, I noticed that I prioritised investigating whiteness in order to benefit personally from it because this gave me an opportunity to investigate cultures and norms that surround me. I also wanted to understand how whiteness and white supremacy affects my own thoughts and actions, in order to use these insights in the work I do for Pluralistiek. The research influenced my own position as researcher in that I became more aware about my positionality as researcher and it challenged me to overcome to view myself as a 'neutral' observer. While investigating this topic, I became aware about certain blind spots that I had before, such as how power structures work within universities. Before this study, I did not think much about such structures, and therefore was unaware how these are influential. Simultaneously, working for Pluralistiek, I saw how such structures manifest in practice. This raised questions in me. I became more critical and alert regarding power relations on an institutional level. There was an interplay between the knowledge I gained during this study and the experiences I had working for Pluralistiek. This contributed to becoming more critical about how universities (want to) deal with decolonisation and IW on an institutional level.

What I investigated gave me ingredients to conduct personal and institutional change. In this sense, this study became an investigation that also tried to contribute to how theories of epistemic justice can be brought into practice. Working as a member of Pluralistiek, I applied theoretical concepts that I got to know through this research. At the same time, the experiences I gained in my work for Pluralistiek made me investigate topics (such as

epistemic vulnerability) more in depth in order to investigate how this could be relevant within this research.

What further needs to be mentioned is that because of my own positionality, I am also susceptible to oversee certain dimensions of oppression (of whiteness), because I am often advantaged rather than disadvantaged by systemic or individual forms of oppression/ exclusion. This may have resulted in selecting certain literature that took these dimensions into account.

6.6 Humanistic relevance

As decolonial critiques also apply to the field of humanism and humanistic studies, this research aligns with humanism-critique such as that of Pinn (2017) or Hutchinson (2013) who criticise humanism, yet still value it as a rich framework of meaning and purpose. Decolonial critique in this light should not be seen as a way to nullify humanism or humanistic studies in general. Instead decolonial critique can be seen as an invitation to reflect on how to develop a more inclusive and justice oriented humanism.

Humanistic values that pretend to be 'universal' as Pinn (2017) argues, work counter-inclusive, because these values often have a Eurocentric foundation and as such do not do justice to different epistemologically contexts or bodies across the world. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) argues decolonial humanism would rather aim for pluriversality than universality. Furthermore he argues that within humanism a critical reflection and acknowledgment of how modernity, colonialism and imperialism influenced its worldview is necessary in order to strive for a decolonial humanism.

Similarly, Hutchinson (2013) argues that within humanism it is important to value and include difference and that understanding how privilege and power structures function can contribute to the inclusion of 'other' voices. When taking humanistic values seriously, such as "redistribution, recognition and representation" as mentioned in the UvH research programme[18], the concepts of coloniality and IW can contribute to the pursuit of research that takes into account citizens' history and positionality. Decolonial and CRT theories can potentially draw attention to often overseen histories or forms of oppression. In this sense they can contribute to the development of humanistic values and practises that aim to enhance

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[18] https://www.uvh.nl/onderzoek/onderzoek-aan-de-uvh/onderzoeksprogramma

"a just and caring society"[19].

Furthermore, since both vulnerability and the role of institutions are core topic within the UvH research programme[20], a self-examination with CRT and decolonial lenses can help to develop new theories and practises about how the UvH as an institution itself can 'contribute to and/or undermine social justice?'[21]

Within humanism in general and humanistic studies specifically, a critical reflection on how modernity and coloniality have played a role, and continue to play a role, has the potential to enrich humanistic research regarding social justice. Furthermore, a focus on decolonial – and CRT scholarship could also help to reflect on who are considered to be exemplary figures within humanist traditions and which bodies from which contexts are absent.

In short: rather than considering decolonial theory as anti-humanism, I believe humanism can be enriched by such critical theories in order to represent and understand different contexts, bodies and perspectives and thus help to create a world in which all people can live meaningful lives in just and caring societies.

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[19] https://www.uvh.nl/onderzoek/onderzoek-aan-de-uvh/onderzoeksprogramma
[20] https://www.uvh.nl/onderzoek/onderzoek-aan-de-uvh/onderzoeksprogramma
[21] https://www.uvh.nl/onderzoek/onderzoek-aan-de-uvh/onderzoeksprogramma

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