



Graduate School of Development Studies

**ZWARTE PIET: COLONIAL PAST AND CONTEMPORARY  
RACE RELATIONS:**

**MEANINGS OF ZWARTE PIET FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN IN  
THE HAGUE**

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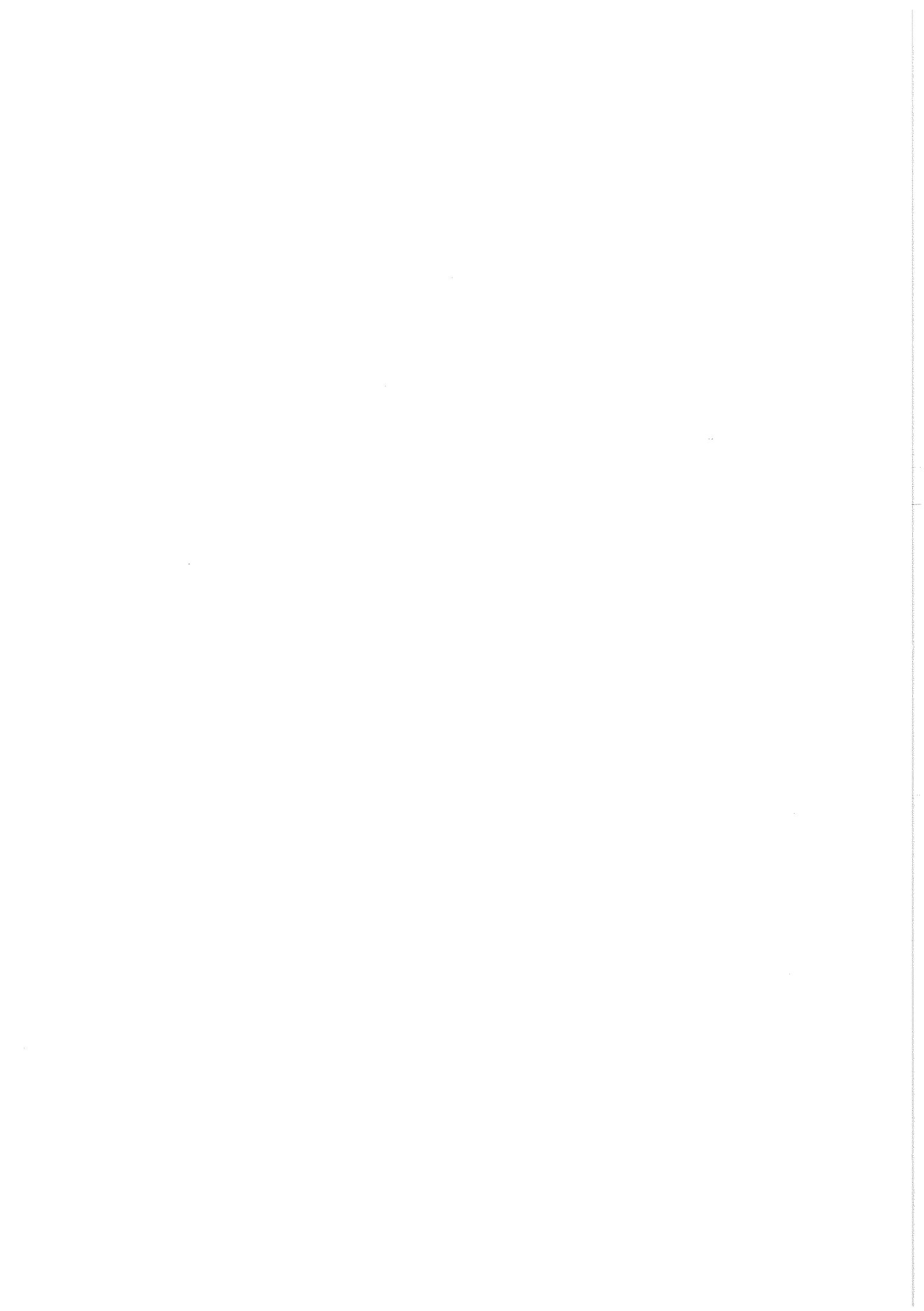
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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this paper to the memory of my Mother: Madeleine Nnomo Assembé Musgrave who taught me so much. Your spirit lives on in your children though we will never stop missing you as we try to find our way through life.

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## Abstract

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This research is concerned with meanings of Zwarte Piet for school children in The Hague, in the context of racist, colonial and multicultural traditions of Dutch society and more specifically, the ways these traditions appear in children's textual and visual narratives of Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet in three schools. The existence of a character such as Zwarte Piet contradicts the Dutch self-perception of tolerance with the denial of racism in its defence symptomatic of a systemic denial of racism within the Netherlands that is reinforced through policy makers and homogenous systems of research dominated by white Dutch males. Thus, racism is reworked as discrimination and everyone that does not fit the necessary criteria of Dutch ness is labelled, in a process of 'other-ing', as being 'allochtoon'. Zwarte Piet in turn appears to be symptomatic of this 'othering' process in which he as a black subordinated character reinforces Sinterklaas's identity as a white Master in the process implying mis recognition of black people within Dutch society that is reinforced through a denial of racism. Children are the focus of this paper because they are responsible for transmitting the tradition from to the next generation and the findings show that the children's parental background influences the meanings that the children derive from the festival. Any progress of the festival requires self-examination from Dutch people rather than a banning of the character so that one day Dutch society may wake up sick of the pain and invent a new tradition that fits the diversity within the society better.

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Statement of research problem.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of December "white" Sinterklaas and his "black" helper, Zwarte Piet, distribute presents to children in the Netherlands. They arrive by boat from Spain<sup>1</sup> each year on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November at Scheveningen harbour in a lavish ceremony that thousands of people attend dressed in the characters clothing (See photos in appendix). The process of creating Zwarte Piet often involves overemphasising his inherent "blackness" through painting faces black ("blackface") and lips red: thus creating an exaggerated/ derogative characterisation of a black person.

Furthermore, the Sinterklaas festival, in which Zwarte Piet plays a prominent role, constitutes one of the most significant dates in Dutch tradition along with Koninginnedag (Queen's day) and Prinsjesdag (Prince's day: the opening of Parliament). Unlike the other two, the Sinterklaas festival is a family festival, focussed on children although I observed a great deal of parents both singing and dancing to celebrate their arrival on the 17<sup>th</sup> November. The

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<sup>1</sup> This is not a literally journey from Spain but rather a fake one to celebrate the supposed original arrival of Sinterklaas.

celebration and the characters could thus be seen as being instrumental to the notions of Dutch identity, and in certain ways transmitting the notions of Dutchness to children.

Expatriates and visiting foreigners, as well as some Dutch nationals, have expressed their offence at this tradition. This has been expressed, for example, in online forums discussing the “moral” implications of the ritual. But this offence has met with resistance by other Dutch people who view it as being a harmless tradition that is very much part of the fabric of Dutch society. A common counter argument in defence of Zwarte Piet’s “blackness” is that “the colour of these helpers has a lot in common with the colour of the chimneys they have to climb down”.<sup>2</sup> This however, does not take into account his distinctly “Afro” hair, which could not be explained by climbing down chimneys.

This research is therefore concerned with meanings of Zwarte Piet for school children, in the context of racist, colonial and multicultural traditions of Dutch society and more specifically, the ways these traditions appear in children’s textual and visual narratives of Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet in three schools in The Hague. The choice of three different schools is intended to best capture a sample of the diversity of children within Dutch society. This will be done in order to investigate whether or not there are different meanings associated with Zwarte Piet depending on the background of the child. The focus of the research will be on the triangular relationship between “Blackness”, “childhood” and History/ Culture within “Dutch” Society.

## **1.2 Ethical and political choices, and personal involvements.**

The subject is of personal concern to me because I have felt uncomfortable to be experiencing a tradition that I perceive to have racist connotations. At the heart of this perception lies the character of Zwarte Piet - a person with either a dark brown or jet black complexion that is created through applying face paint to people’s faces. The fact that the actors are often white and female is itself not the only point of contention concerning the racist implications of the festival but rather this is complemented by the denial that Zwarte Piet is based on a caricature of a black person, with Afro-wigs, lips painted red and, attempts to speak in a Pseudo-Surinamese manner. As Helder (2005: 3) writes:

*Once the transformation is completed, a change in voice and behaviour usually follow. He or she [i.e. actors who play Zwarte Piet] will speak improper Dutch with a low voice and a Surinamese accent. In other words a racial stereotype is reinforced*

<sup>2</sup> Will Sinterklaas turn black? [http://www.expatica.com/actual/article.asp?channel\\_id=1&story\\_id=1749](http://www.expatica.com/actual/article.asp?channel_id=1&story_id=1749)

The dimensions of the character have similarities with stereotypes of black people from other countries. Visually, Zwarte Piet has similar characteristics to the golliwog that was until recently a symbol of *Robinson's jams*: the largest British jam-making company. However, it is not only the visual depiction that illustrates the stereotype but also actions and personality traits. Donald Bogle (1995) in his excellent analysis of Black representation in US films since 1900: *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* manages to categorise all black roles over a 95 year period as being at least partially constitutive of these stereotypes. For the relevance of this research Zwarte Piet has similar characteristics to both a "Tom" and a "Coon" with the latter being especially prevalent during the 1920's and 1930's (Bogle, 1995: 19-56). Stuart Hall (1997) summarises Bogle's description of the two as follows:

*Toms - the Good Negroes, always 'chased, harassed, hounded, flogged, enslaved, and insulted, they keep the faith, ne'er turn against their white massas, and remain hearty, submissive, stoic, generous, selfless and oh-so-kind. Coons-the eye popping picanninnies, the slapstick entertainers, the spinners of tall tales, the 'no-account "niggers", those unreliable, crazy, lazy, subhuman creatures, good for nothing more than eating watermelons, stealing chickens, shooting crap, or butchering the English language (Hall, 1997: 251).*

Though Zwarte Piet does not fit all these descriptions, he is not for example lazy nor is he apparently oh-so kind, he is however submissive to his white 'massa', who in this case is Sinterklaas, and is also known to butcher the native language (Dutch instead of English in this case as can be seen by pseudo-Surinamese accents adopted by actors that Helder refers to). In this sense, I view Zwarte Piet as being a distant cousin of both a Tom and a Coon.

Thus, I find myself positioned against the ritual of Zwarte Piet having been offended greatly by witnessing people in "Black-face" on the streets as well as the army of Zwarte Piets that are visualised through the media and merchandising. It is particularly difficult to tolerate such an occurrence whilst coming from a country (the UK) where such a tradition would be viewed as being socially unacceptable.

Therefore, I am concerned about the effect that Zwarte Piet may have not only on non-white people within society but also on race relations as a whole. Throughout this paper I am seeking to answer the following questions using theory and primary data:

A) Within which tradition(s) is Zwarte Piet given meaning and made acceptable?

B) Are these traditions recognizable in children's texts and drawings about Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet, and do these drawings and texts reflect children's acceptance or rejections of the figure?

C) What are the intersections of race ("blackness" and "whiteness"), Dutch-ness, colonial history, contemporary immigration relations, and gender in the children's textual and visual representations of the Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet?

Question A will be explored throughout Chapter 2 in which the character of Zwarte Piet and the Sinterklaas tradition will be viewed through the contextual lens of history. This will specifically assess the social impact of Dutch colonialism as well as the changing Dutch landscape that was created through subsequent immigration in the twentieth century. Question B will be assessed in Chapter 4 through the narratives that children give in three different schools concerning the meanings that they attach to the characters of Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas and the celebration as a whole. In Chapter 3 I will present a theoretical lens through which I will explore children's narratives. The final question will be assessed in the conclusion, Chapter 5, in light of the previous questions and subsequent recommendations that the author will offer in approaching the subject.

## 2. Race and Racism in the Netherlands

### 2.1 Situating the Problem

It is important to view the figure of Zwarte Piet in the broader context of Dutch racism and colonial history in order to make full sense of both what the character represents and how it has changed through time. As Blakely writes in *Blacks in the Dutch World* (1993: 275): “The inimitable, enduring figure of Zwarte Piet may be the best representation of all of the composite images of blacks which has come down through the centuries”.

This broader spectrum helps to work round the limited range of English language literature available on the subject of Zwarte Piet specifically. It is, after all, not only the character of Zwarte Piet that is particularly important but also the world in which the character is created, altered and ultimately examined, and the presence of this world in the school children’s words and drawings. Works of particular relevance to this broader subject include Jan Nederveen Pieterse’s *White on Black* and also Allison Blakely’s fore-mentioned *Blacks in the Dutch World*. Using theories of colonialism shall provide me with the basis from which multiculturalism will be explored, as one of the debates relevant to the present-day Dutch society. At the heart of my analysis lie the notions of recognition and representation. Charles Taylor’s (1994) *Politics of Recognition* is particularly applicable to this research especially in the context of non-recognition or mis-recognition and the consequences that this may have for certain groups within society. As Taylor writes in his introduction:

*Our Identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the mis-recognition of others, and so a person or a group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion if the people or society around them mirrors back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Non-recognition or mis-recognition can inflict harm or can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted and reduced mode of being. (Taylor et al: 25)*

In the case of Zwarte Piet I view both recognition and mis-recognition as being related to the children’s acceptance or rejection of the Zwarte Piet in the drawings and texts about the character and the festival. In this sense, I am particularly interested in seeing whether or not

the acceptance of the character and the festival implies non/ mis-recognition of Dutch colonialism and slavery, what Hall (2000) might refer to as being a case of historical amnesia. If this is the case then I wonder if rejecting the character and the festival could imply the opposite, namely: recognition of the colonial past and its implications. This shall be explored through looking at the meanings that children in The Hague attach to Zwarte Piet and to the Sinterklaas festival. This notion of Recognition/ Mis-recognition shall therefore provide the theoretical basis in which I shall place the character of Zwarte Piet and the Sinterklaas festival. Furthermore, the character of Zwarte Piet will be approached through Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinities. He defines this in the following way:

Hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations... (Connell, 1995: 76)

Hegemonic masculinity requires the existence of other forms of masculinity to reinforce its position of dominance. This occurs through the relationship between the hegemonic and the subordinated or marginalized masculinities within society. As Connell (1995: 80-81) writes: "Marginalization is always relative to the authorisation of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group".

This is a view that is also shared by Messerschmidt (1998) in exploring white on black lynching in the US from 1865-1900. He defines hegemonic masculinity as being the dominant form of masculinity to which other types are subordinated, not eliminated, providing the primary basis for relationships among men. At the heart of these definitions of hegemonic masculinities lies the notion of power. He continues:

As socially organised power relations among men are constructed historically on the bases of class, race and sexual preference it is important to recognise that some men have greater power than other men (Messerschmidt, 1998: 130).

In the case of Zwarte Piet there is a definite subordinate position of his masculinity vis a vis Sinterklaas, which is made obvious through their age, the roles the characters play and their possessions. My question is: how are these different masculinities touched upon in the children's written descriptions and visual imagery and made explicit through references to Zwarte Piet's relationship with Sinterklaas.

I approach these concepts through the lens of childhood because children are tasked with keeping the tradition alive through the intergenerational transfer of knowledge from parent to child. However, this does not necessarily imply that children will automatically accept the

tradition but rather that they can also possess the agency to gather their own meanings of the character and festival. Thus, this Research Paper views children as being social actors rather than simply incomplete beings learning to become adults (Ansell, 2005: 21) though I recognise that they, like adults, can also be influenced (and manipulated) to behave and think in certain ways.

## **2.2 Colonialism and its legacy.**

Though the starting point of a tradition is difficult to assess there are social and political stages in history in which the re-invention of a tradition can be observed. In the case of the Sinterklaas festival this reinvention occurred in the nineteenth century during a time of high Dutch colonialism in both Africa and South America at which point Zwarte Piet emerged as a black servant of Sinterklaas (Pieterse, 1992: 164). In medieval Christian tradition Zwarte Piet was seen simply as a devil or demon and thus Dutch colonialism provides a starting point in which Zwarte Piet's character is re-situated as well as re-invented.

Both Pieterse (1992) and Blakely (1993) examine colonialism, slavery and racism and their subsequent effects upon racial imagery and European society. Through colonialism, a "Black" segment of the Dutch world was created which had implications for the Dutch image of "Blackness" and "Africa". Without colonialism, it is highly unlikely that a figure like Zwarte Piet would exist or at least not in his current form.

Furthermore, looking at the history of colonialism shows that the majority of the non-European population now in the Netherlands was in fact already part of the Dutch World even though they lived outside the ancient "fortress Europe" and thus were rarely seen or thought of in the Dutch homeland. The colonial concept of core and peripheral relations meant that the periphery (i.e. the colonies) in effect "belonged" to the core (the colonial power) and thus, as Blakely (1998: 477) suggests, their belonging today is just one of the consequences of this colonial past which contributed vitally to Dutch wealth and glory. This does not apply to descendants of either Moroccans or Turks<sup>3</sup> living in the Netherlands today as neither Morocco nor Turkey were colonised by the Dutch. Their presence will be explored in the next section.

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<sup>3</sup> I use the term descendants of Moroccan and Turks not to refer to nationality but to refer to parent's national origin.

In *Blacks in the Dutch World*, Blakely traces the presence of black people in the Netherlands in relation to the Dutch slave trade and the subsequent legacy of colonialism. Of particular relevance here is the movement of Africans to the former Dutch colonies in West Africa, Suriname, Dutch Antilles, East India and Brazil (Blakely, 1993: 18-30), which provide the backdrop for the future black population within the Netherlands. Furthermore, the Dutch colonisation of the Cape of Good Hope (South Africa) and the subsequent transferring of slaves from its Asian operation can be seen as laying the seeds for the future “colour hegemonies” that existed under the system of Apartheid.

Moreover, in Suriname at the beginning of the eighteenth century,<sup>4</sup> a policy of total non-assimilation was created across colour lines due to a fear of the potential threat posed by a 90% slave population. This included slaves being required to wear different clothes and play different music to their masters, undertaking all types of physical labour including filling glasses for drinking but being forbidden to do intellectual work such as reading and writing that might catalyse the revolutionary ardour. Furthermore, obstacles were placed in order to prevent their conversion to Christianity and all other forms of social interaction were discouraged. Despite this segregation, sexual intercourse did occur between owner and slave (most often by force) with the black female slave sometimes acquiring a special status as an intermediary for arbitration with other slaves.

After the emancipation of slavery in 1863 cheap labour was brought in from the Dutch East Indies and British India to replace the loss. Between 1863 and the Second World War, some 40,000 Hindustani and 35,000 Javanese were transferred to fulfil this capacity (Blakely, 1993: 27-29) which explains the ethnic diversity of the nation as well as its future emigrants to the Netherlands after Surinamese independence in the 1970’s.

The Netherlands Antilles was known for a milder treatment of its slave population than Suriname, which can be seen by a natural increase in the slave population compared to even birth and death rates in Suriname. Furthermore, the white population was much smaller and more stable than in Suriname and the number of freedmen was significantly higher. By the end of the eighteenth century Curacao had approximately 5,000 freedmen, equal to the numbers of slaves, and 3,000 whites. In comparison, Suriname had about 3,000 freedmen

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<sup>4</sup> I focus more on the history and experience of both Surinamese and Antillean groups because they are of particular relevance to my paper in light not only of the significant numbers of people with Surinamese and Antillean heritage living in the Netherlands today but also of the significant numbers in one of the schools where I did the research.

with 2,000 whites. Curacao, like Suriname, also had a significant mixed race population commonly referred to as “mulattoes”<sup>5</sup>.

In Suriname, a “mulatto” elite developed in the nineteenth century, which enabled some sons of mixed marriages to go to the Netherlands for education before returning to work for the government in Suriname. This became more frequent after the Amsterdam Stock Crisis of 1773, which led to many planters with families returning to the Netherlands and leaving the white population on the islands predominantly male. However, such an elite did not occur in Curacao due to the presence of more white women, which maintained the legitimacy in the white line. Consequently whereas the Surinamese “mulatto” was closer to Dutch in language and religion, the majority of Curacao’s “mulattoes” were uneducated, spoke the native language and would eventually become Catholic as opposed to the predominantly Protestant religion of the Dutch.

Pieterse offers a vivid account of how images of black people are represented *vis a vis* Western culture. He pays particular attention to the process of this image construction: focussing on Western images of Africa through to images of black people in the West and finally, the wider significance of social representation in general. Of particular relevance to the character of Zwarte Piet is the association between black people and entertainment that occurred in the nineteenth century. A notable example is the Amsterdam International Colonial Exhibition of 1883 in which a group of 28 Surinamese people were “displayed” in their “native” habitat. They had been told that the King of the Netherlands was giving a party for ‘all nations’ to which they had been invited (Pieterse, 1992: 96). Here the role of “native blacks” as exhibits, like animals in a zoo, fulfilled the voyeuristic cravings of the “white” public. Pieterse explains:

Exoticism is a luxury of the victors and one of victory’s psychological comforts. The “Other” is not merely to be exploited but also to be enjoyed, enjoyment being a finer form of exploitation. (Pieterse, 1992: 95)

In the Netherlands today, Zwarte Piet retains the characteristics of both entertainer and subordinated worker, which has roots in the history of Dutch slavery and colonialism. Furthermore, as Pieterse notes, the representation of blacks by European culture as being unintelligent, naïve and almost sub-human, as can be seen in the example of the 1883

<sup>5</sup> This is an archaic term that I take issue with as it is derived from the Spanish and Portuguese word ‘mulo’ meaning mule (Phoenix & Owen, 1996: 113). However, due to the historical significance of the group I will use the term though will place it under inverted commas as a means of showing its racist connotations.

Exhibition, performed an important strategic function enabling a tiny minority to control the local majority in the colonies. As one observer during the exhibition wrote:

The appearance of these groups of Creoles had something kind and childlike, that is naturally appealing; real children of tropical nature... (Pieterse, 1992: 89).

Representation of blacks as childlike reinforced the idea of European protectionism and the idea that colonialism was in the best interests of the “simple” natives as well as the Christian colonials. Just as the adult protects the child, the altruistic white European had a Christian duty to protect its little brown cousins in the colonies imbuing them with the rigours of European discipline. The habit of calling black slaves of all ages a ‘boy’ also confirms this assumption of immaturity implying that black men lacked the capacities with which white adult men were presumably endowed. Thus, the fact that in the Netherlands today children and youth, and women often play Zwarte Piet, whilst Sinterklaas’s role is reserved only for male adults is not insignificant.

The cases of both Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles provide interesting insights into Dutch colonialism and Master and Slave relations as well as showing how experiences varied from colony to colony. Furthermore, the experience of the Surinamese “mulatto” elite has interesting parallels with the apartheid structures of South Africa, as also initially imposed by the Dutch, as it shows how differential treatment was applied on the basis of skin-colour. In a nutshell, the example of Suriname showed that the more white a person was, the closer they were seen to belonging to some ideal of the Netherlands or “Dutch ness”. The association between whiteness and Dutch ness will be further explored in subsequent sections.

### **2.3 A changing Dutch World.**

The relationship between colony and colonised could be seen as creating the foundations for future changes within Dutch society. Leeman and Saharso (1996: 39-63) explore these changes looking at the major movements of migration into the country during the twentieth century. This took various waves all related to the socio-economic and political situation of the Netherlands. Indonesian independence in 1949 saw a subsequent 300,000 people migrating from the Moluccan segment of Indonesian society over the next ten years with the intention of many to settle permanently, particularly in the Netherlands (Leeman and Saharso, 1996: 39).

The migration from the Dutch Antilles in the 1950's by many students pursuing further education when the economy was booming was not intended by many to be a permanent one. However the 1960's saw a change in the situation in Antilles with an increased computerisation and rationalisation of the oil industry leading to high unemployment within the Antilles and the subsequent migration of working class Antilleans as well (Leeman and Saharso, 1996: 40).

During the 1960's "guest-workers" were also recruited from Turkey and Morocco for unskilled work in old labour-intensive industries. In 1973, economic activity decreased and consequently labour recruitment stopped with the idea that immigration into the Netherlands would decrease as well. However, this did not happen as increasing numbers of people were moving into the country to rejoin their families who had moved a decade earlier. During this same decade, as already mentioned, Suriname gained its independence. Due to the legacy of Dutch colonialism this was not an homogenous group of Surinamese people but rather an influx of an ethnically diversified group with Afro-Caribbean, Hindustani, Chinese and Javanese heritages. By 2002, approximately 20% of the Dutch population were of non-native Dutch descent, 10% of whom belong to the so-called category of ethnic minority groups: migrants and asylum seekers of non-Western descent (Prins, 2002: 365).

The demographical changes from 1960-2006 can be seen in table 1. The table shows that there is also a significant number of both British and German nationals living in the Netherlands. However in Dutch discourse of migration these groups are not identified as being problematic.

Table 1: Population by nationality (in 1,000)

	foreign	Periods				
		1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Total nationalities		107	212.2	473.4	641.9	651.5
Belgian		20.2	20.2	23	23.3	25.4
German		25.4	31.3	42.7	41.8	54.3
Italian		5.2	16.3	20.9	16.7	17.9
Former Yugoslavia		0.9	4.3	13.7	12.8	15.6
Moroccan		0.1	17.4	71.8	148	119.7
Spanish		0.3	22.6	23.5	17.4	16.9
Turkish		0.1	23.6	119.6	191.5	100.7
British		5.7	9.8	35.4	37.5	39.5
USA		4.2	7.4	10.7	10.5	14.1
Persons of Surinamese Origin				145.7	219	302.5
Persons of Antillean				36.2	71.2	107.2
						331.9
						129.7

## Origin

Source: CBS (Central Bureau of Statistics) “Statline”<sup>6</sup>

### 2.4 Racism, Tolerance and Non-racism.

The subsequent increase in numbers of non-white Dutch citizens (and inhabitants without citizenship) was met with resistance in the Netherlands. In several surveys conducted in the 1980s the presence of other cultures was held to be a big problem. In one survey amongst 4,800 students in the highest grades of 15 secondary schools, 27% of respondents indicated a negative attitude towards ethnic minority and 8% held extreme right-wing views (Hagendorf & Janssen 1983, in Leeman & Saharso: 46) whilst in a national survey other cultures within the country were held to be as big a problem as AIDS, unemployment and drugs (Scholierenonderzoek 1992, in Leeman & Saharso, 1996: 46). In addition hate crime against members of the ethnic minority included the drowning of a Turkish man in a canal in 1977 and the murder in 1983 of a 15 year-old Antillean boy, Kerwin Duinmeyer by a 16-year-old skinhead.

On a political front, racism began to get a voice through the founding of the Dutch People’s Union (Nederlands Volks Unie) in 1971, calling for all foreigners to get out of the country. 1980 saw the formation of another far-right party Centre Party (Centrumpartij), which gained a seat in the Parliament in 1984, improving that in 1994 by winning 2.5% of votes during the election and a subsequent 3 seats in the Parliament (Leeman and Saharso, 1996: 46-7).

It is within this context that the Dutch government recognised the need for action. This took the form of the initial “Minority Memorandum” of 1983, which acknowledged the fact that many immigrants had come for permanent settlement and, also acknowledged their socio-economic plight. A minority policy was subsequently launched setting about to address deprivation, promote social integration and combat racism and discrimination. According to Leeman and Saharso (1996: 42) it was oriented in practice towards social integration with a

<sup>6</sup> <http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/table.asp?STB=T&LA=en&DM=SLEN&PA=37556eng&D1=0-44&D2=1,11,21,31,41,51,61,71,81,91,101,l&HDR=G1>

focus being on integration within the labour force as the most important means to achieve this.

The social climate of the 1980s and early 1990s imply that this integration was not a huge success. At time of writing Leeman and Saharso identify there being four national organisations engaged in fighting racism: The Workshop for Law & Race Discrimination (1983), the National Office Combating Racism (1983), the Anne Frank Foundation (1957) and the Anti-Discriminatory Consultancy (1987) (Leeman and Saharso, 1996: 48). However, the successes of these organisations are not analysed within the article and so are difficult to measure. One project that the article does analyse further is entitled the “Children of the World” initiative based at two different youth centres: one for the Dutch and one for youth of Moroccan origin, living in Maastricht. The project focuses on positive approaches aimed at fostering respect and tolerance developed through collective activities (Leeman and Saharso, 1996: 54), which, has led to the realisation that there is a need to avoid forcing young people to perceive the world in terms of ethnic categories (IBID: 62). However, in today’s multicultural world, progress amongst different citizenry groups surely needs to move beyond the notion of tolerance. To take a recent British example - the “race riots” between white British and South Asian British youths in Oldham - Bradford and Burnley (2000-2001) took place in areas in which both communities seemingly tolerated each other. What was missing somewhat was the acceptance of the ‘other’ within the culture. Toleration can therefore occur from a distance whereas acceptance requires active contact. As Goldberg writes:

Tolerance expresses denial directly. Acknowledging begrudging presence as desire of willed absence. The refusal of equality of standing, of access, of outcome in the name of an ecumenical largesse, a hostile generosity. Tolerance is always expressed towards the tolerated...from the tolerating agent’s position of power. (Goldberg, 2006: 338)

Of particular note here is the notion of power in which the tolerating agent can choose who is and who is not tolerable, and also how this process of toleration should occur. A recent example of this occurred in June 2007 when 80 police, using dogs and horses, raided a concert on the grounds of searching for persons engaged in Internet fraud. According to Allincluded, a network for organisations exploring racism in the Netherlands, 111 people were arrested with the majority being of African origin.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the identity cards of all “black” people were checked at the venue whilst all the “white” people were allowed to leave without having their identities searched. This was in direct contrast to the information provided in the flyer handed out by the police that asked for everyone to provide proof of their identity (see appendix table 1). The separate treatment given to these concert attendants,

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.allincluded.nl/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=104&Itemid=](http://www.allincluded.nl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=104&Itemid=)

depending on their colour shows how inconsistently the notion of tolerance can be applied and implies a degree of institutional racism.

## 2.5 The “Other” in Dutch Society.

Essed (1995:49) refers to the strong defensive tone of Dutch ‘non-racism’, which she believes shows more understanding for prejudice than objectors in a society that is becoming increasingly tolerant of racism. This increasing racism has led to a public fear of a ‘swamping of masses’ from the Global South that would threaten the very fabric of Dutch society both economically and culturally. This is despite the fact that the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics reports that since 2003 the Netherlands is the only country in Europe where emigrants outnumber immigrants<sup>8</sup> which implies that the supposed ‘swamping of masses’ is a myth.

It is within this context that the semi-fictional figures of Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet interact with the non-fictional reality of Dutch society. To make the leap explicit between the non-fiction and the fiction, I have been asked by several Dutch people why I cannot leave the subject of Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet alone as the celebration is perceived as being one of the few elements of Dutch culture that remains untouched. Here the notion of Dutch culture implies a degree of whiteness. This can be linked to Helder’s (2005) critique of the defence of the festival as being a matter of tradition that cannot be changed by foreigners. This raises questions concerning to whose tradition this festivity actually belongs within Dutch society, as well as who is able to constitute part of Dutch society and who is viewed as being foreign.

These questions were particularly brought to my attention during an informal conversation with a friend about the suitability of Zwarte Piet as a children’s character in 21st century Europe. In response to a question in which I asked him whether or not he considered there to be anything dubious about the festival he told me:

If you look at it in terms of Master and Slave I can understand why **coloured** people might be offended by us Dutch people celebrating this thing but they’re nice and I never felt it that way, seeing this big difference and not linking it to race at all.

It is obvious from this account that this young man associated Dutch people with an implicit whiteness and thus in the process implying that non-white or coloured people could not be

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/themas/bevolking/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2006/2006-1960-wm.htm>

real Dutch people. This example is supported by Essed's view of a *construction of otherness* that occurred within the Netherlands differentiating between white and non-white (1995:52). According to Essed this is reflected linguistically through the names, words and concepts that have been used to refer to minority groups (1995: 52-4). In the 1970's, for example, Southern Europeans and North Africans were referred to as Gastarbeiter (guestworkers) before policy makers assigned the term ethnic minority to people from the former Dutch colonies, Turkey and Morocco. In the 1980's, the term black was acknowledged as a common expression for all groups targeted by racism. At that time Dutch policy-makers adopted the term "Allochtoon" explicitly for non-natives of colour and immigrants with real or attributed Muslim Identity, to distinguish them from the "Autochtoon": native Dutch. Essed (1995:52-54) suggests that "Allochtoon" is not applied to US, British or Germans, and thus sets apart all people from the South from a constructed image in which genuine Dutch or European identity is white. This is a view that is supported by Wekker (1995) who considers the hegemonic versions of Dutch national identity as being deeply imbued with notions of being white and partaking in Christian religion (Wekker, 1995 in Lutz et al 1995). Essed's observation is interesting although she too could be seen as falling into the trap of associating colour with place as she implies that US, British or Germans are white.

In the Netherlands, the dominant national discourse celebrates tolerance and diversity but also defines ethnicity as a trait of others. In confrontation with such otherness, ethnicities operate as mirrors: the white Dutch form representations of who they are by defining others and thus who and what they are not. This is a point that is further supported by Butler (1993) and Phoenix (1998). Butler argues that when subjects define themselves as subjects, they in the process create an abject. The subject is constituted through the process of exclusion and abjection, which produces a constitutive outside to the subject (Butler, 1993: 3).

Thus, whiteness can be seen as being very much a social construction in the same way as blackness is, and as such, constituting a central part of the context in which black and other minority people are racialized (Phoenix, 1998: 109). This is particularly interesting because, as Essed (1995) suggests, "other" "white" "Westerners" within the Netherlands are not considered to be Ethnic minorities. Applied to the Netherlands, the subject is very often the white Dutch citizen created through excluding blackness i.e. not being black and being defined through the subordinated black that reinforces the ordinary white.

Essed & Trienekens (2007: 5-9) further explore notions of Dutch ness and European ness, this time adding a new category of inclusion/ exclusion, namely the distinction between a "real" Europeans - members of the EU - and those aspiring to be Europeans. In policy practice, this

means that persons and children of persons born in the former Yugoslavia are also referred to as being *Allochtoon* along with other ‘non-western’ ethnic groups considered to be disadvantaged or less integrated into Dutch society<sup>9</sup> (Essed and Trienekens, 2007: 6). However, because *Allochtonen* are not considered to be a race, the fear of accusations of racism is dwindling (Essed and Trienekens, 2007: 8). Thus, assigning such a label to all people with perceived non-Dutch identity could be seen as being a clever ploy in reinforcing the idea of non-racism. In this context negative feelings towards non-white Dutch people within the Netherlands can be phrased as discrimination, as opposed to racism. The “other” is therefore not a race but rather a “non-race” separate from the white Dutch hegemonic order.

The existence of institutional discrimination can therefore be seen as being based on a denied history and culture of racism. Racism is not seen to exist in the Netherlands where there is a preference among policy makers and researchers to refer to any exclusionary practice as discrimination, as racism remains defined very narrowly in terms of biological differences (Vasta, 2007:727).

## **2.6 Institutional discrimination.**

Vasta (2007: 719-732) suggests that immigrants are marginalised in all sectors of Dutch society. Of particular relevance to this research is the role of the School as an institution. Vasta, for example, identifies trends of segregation in Dutch schools, which can be seen by the process of flight of white population from schools with high numbers of immigrant children, creating the notion of “black” and “white” schools. Children can be refused an entry to schools based on their religion or ethnicity. This is supported by complaints made to the Equal Treatment Commission on the basis that ethnic minority students were put on a waiting list for placement into a particular denominational school.

According to Vasta, this waiting list was created in order to induce ethnic minority parents to send their children elsewhere. In addition, marginalisation continues in the arena of the job market where people of Turkish and Moroccan origin who have lower educational levels experience three times as much unemployment as native white Dutch with similar qualifications. Furthermore, more highly educated (with higher vocational and university degrees) amongst the Turkish and Moroccan descendants have more than double the unemployment rate, whilst those of Surinamese and Antillean origin have double. Other non-

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<sup>9</sup> The full list of *Allochtoons* as defined by policy practice consists of persons and children of persons born in Turkey, Morocco, Suriname, the Dutch Antilles, Aruba, former Central Yugoslavia, or countries in South and Central America, Africa and Asia, according to Essed (Essed and Trienekens, 2007: 6).

western groups, including many African refugees, experience three-to-four times higher unemployment rates than the equivalent native Dutch (Figures taken from Jaarrapport Integratie/Annual Report on Integration, 2005, cited in Vasta, 2007: 724).

Furthermore, there is evidence that discrimination is embedded in the ideological structures of Dutch hegemony. Essed and Nimako (2006), for example, look at the influence that government funding has in leading researchers to advocate the theory of non-racism, meaning that only the more principled or independent scholars continued to write about the systematic racism in the Netherlands against the grain of denial (Eshed & Nimako, 2006: 298). Furthermore, the authors suggest that the white male dominance in relevant research contributes to this denial. They write:

Whereas Dutch women's studies consist almost always of white women, the area of minority research operates almost exclusively through white and male dominated networks (Eshed and Nimako, 2006: 296).

At the heart of this problem is the denial of a subject position given to the people who are directly affected by such research. This has interesting parallels with Meijer's (1993) critique of *The Miracle of Frieswijck*, a prize winning book situated in a fourteenth century Dutch city and written by Theo Beckman in 1991, that led to a heated discussion concerning its racist overtones. At the heart of the story lie the characters of Danga, a black slave boy owned by a Portuguese merchant, and the protagonist, the white girl Alijt who sympathises with Danga and eventually succeeds in freeing him. Meijer's criticism is centred round the attribution of the role of focalizer in this story i.e. the role that the narrator or focalizer plays in providing the focal point of every story. In *The Miracle of Frieswijck*, many of the characters are given the role of focalizer at some point with the notable exception of Danga. She writes:

When we look at the network of focalisations we can see how all the 'agents' in the story (Alijt, her sister Agnes, her father, the merchant) are at some moment or other, focalizing subjects. Thus we often experience their thoughts, views, and feelings on events and fellow-characters from the inside. Danga, however, is never set up in the position of focalizer. This implies that he always remains an object of other (white) people's views of him. Thus Danga is, on the narrative level, expelled from the community of subjects, a position he shares with - guess who - the dog. (Meijer, 1993: 376)

The denial of a subject position of race and racism within research could be seen as equating a tokenistic exploration of discrimination within the Netherlands in which the "other" remains a silent entity.

## 2.7 Zwarte Piet in Dutch Society

As can be seen, the character of Zwarte Piet exists in a society complicated by both interpretations of history and different representations of the changing face of the nation. Both Blakely and Pieterse offer specific but brief accounts of Zwarte Piet, situating him in the broader context of colonialism and racism. To Blakely, the emerging controversy over the character in the 1980s is synonymous of the cracking of the self- image of Dutch society as being a safe haven for those escaping intolerance elsewhere (Blakely, 1993: xiii). It is in fact this, along with the controversy surrounding the aforementioned *The Miracle of Frieswijck* that provides Blakely inspiration and a starting point for his book. Thus, though Zwarte Piet is not the focus for the book the controversy and re-examining of this character could be seen as a catalyst for his study. He writes: “The inimitable, enduring figure of Zwarte Piet may be the best representation of all of the composite images of blacks which has come down through the centuries” (Blakely, 1993: 275).

Pieterse’s account briefly traces the history of the character through its invention, re-invention and re-examination by anti-racist campaigns and controversies (Pieterse, 1992). Here, Black Peter arises from the Christian tradition of the early Middle Ages in which he is a devil/demon, emerging as a servant of Sinterklaas during the nineteenth century at a time of ‘high’ Dutch colonialism in both Africa and South America. Pieterse appears to sit on the fence between criticism/defence of the festival, somewhat tactfully identifying the middle ages Black Peter as having little to do with Africa or black people but acknowledging the significance of the points in which Christian demonology and imagery of black people overlap (Pieterse, 1992: 165).

There have, however, been several works in English focussing specifically on Zwarte Piet. Of particular significance is Lulu Helder’s (2005) short article *Who is Black Peter*, which places the representation of Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas in the context of the dichotomy between Black and White in the Dutch World, and Mieke Bal’s (2004) *Zwarte Piet’s Bal Masque*, which offers a critical reflection of the character from a white Dutch woman’s perspective.

Bal recalls her feelings towards the character as a child growing up in a small all-white town in which Zwarte Piet marked her first encounter with racial difference (Bal, 2004: 114). During her childhood there were three dominant versions of the story explaining their blackness: 1. They were Moors who accompanied Sinterklaas from Spain where they had been ever since the Moors came from Africa to fight the Christians; 2. They were veritable

athletes prancing on roofs and climbing down chimneys; 3. They were not Moors but had rather become black from the chimney soot (Bal, 2004: 116). These different explanations of the origins can be seen as contributing towards the character's ambiguity leading to children's confusion about the character's "true identity". Tellingly, on the rare occasions when she saw a black person she equated the person to Zwarte Piet as she writes:

On the rare occasions when I saw a black person I said or at least thought: a Zwarte Piet who missed the boat and has to spend the year here. Poor guy! Even if this guy was a girl. (Bal, 2004: 116)

To Bal, the continuing existence of the tradition becomes increasingly sophisticated with racism being worked over by classism (Zwarte Piet are servants) and sexism, through the feminisation of the character (Bal, 2004: 117). Thus, there are a multitude of prejudices at play in the creation and re-enactment of the character.

Bal suggest that changing the character is not impossible but requires the Dutch to confront the inner contradictions that they try to deny, whether it is forced by social reality and intellectual and moral debate. Thorough self-examination could contribute to a genuine working through of a past, bringing that work to bear on today's ambivalences (Clifford, 2004: 164). Bal ends with a hopeful vision for the future of the tradition in which, through this self-reflexivity, Dutch culture heals itself. She writes:

Until one day, the culture concerned wakes up sick of the pain. Only then – perhaps – can this tradition be relinquished, wholeheartedly; not suppressed by moralism, but rejected for the pain it causes to all its members. By that time, another tradition will have been invented, one that fits the culture better – and that hurts less. Until, it too becomes the culture's backlog, dragging behind the time. (Bal, 2004: 165)

To Helder, the contemporary character of Zwarte Piet shows how power relations can be read in Dutch multicultural society (Helder, 2004: 4) protected by the portrayed self-image of the Netherlands as being the most tolerant nation in the world that makes a critical self-reflection also very difficult: every accusation of racism is beforehand answered with denial (Helder, 2004: 5). Helder also traces contemporary resistance to Zwarte Piet as taking prominence in the 1970's onwards with Surinamese independence from the Netherlands coming in 1975 and the subsequent migration of Surinamese people to the former colonial power. According to Helder, the increased presence of this black community within the Netherlands led to a re-evaluation of the ways the Dutch dealt with their colonial history and images of black people, and consequently the figure of Zwarte Piet was re-examined. This initially led to the successful introduction of yellow, blue and red painted versions of Zwarte Piet but as protest voices died down the black version re-emerged during the 1980's (Helder, 2004: 4).

However, the debate was to take centre stage again in 1995 organised by second and third generation migrants. Unlike their parents or grandparents, they were born in the Netherlands and thus were not limited by the idea that they are “guests” having to conform to the symbols of a “host” which they find insulting (Helder, 2004: 5). According to Helder, resistance to changing the tradition remained, instead becoming polarised as if the different opinions were divided along lines of race. She writes:

The argument is as follows: as an ‘allochtoon’, a ‘migrant’, one has to accept the Dutch ‘traditions’. Just as a ‘Dutch’ person would have to accept local traditions if they live in another country: The logic here is that it is not their country and culture that the youngsters are criticizing (Helder, 2004: 5).

According to Helder there are several main arguments in defence of the tradition. Firstly, the holiday is a celebration for children and children are not racist. This is a point that Pieterse also mentions suggesting that supporters defend Zwarte Piet’s traditional role as a feature of a perfectly innocent family feast that is framed for children (Pieterse, 1992: 164). Secondly, it is a matter of ‘tradition’ that cannot be changed by foreigners and, thirdly, the critics are the ones that make it racist. This is a view supported by defenders of the tradition contributing in the annual Zwarte Piet debate that occurs on Expatica.com<sup>10</sup>. Evert Jan Kraal, a self defined “born and bred” Dutchman suggests that:

Nobody in the Netherlands thought that the colour of their skin had anything to do with racial discrimination. At least until people made it into a problem<sup>11</sup>.

This narrative implies that as the critics view race in the character of Zwarte Piet they are creating racism in something seemingly innocent. At the heart of these points of defence lies the notion of denial. In reference to human atrocities such as the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide of 1915-17, Cohen (2001: 9-19) identifies denial as occurring at a personal, official and cultural level which cannot be separated from history. Though the character of Zwarte Piet does not amount to genocide there are certain characteristics of historical denial that can also be applied to the continuing existence of the character. Of particular relevance here is the idea of a cultural denial, which is neither wholly private nor officially organized by the state (Cohen, 2001: 10). Here, people pretend to believe information that they know is false or fake their allegiance to meaningless slogans and kitsch ceremonies that can amount to collective denials of the past (Cohen, 2001: 11). In the context of the Netherlands, the continuing visual representation of Zwarte Piet with Afro wig and red lips explicitly suggests a caricature of a

<sup>10</sup> A website for expatriates within the Netherlands that also has contributions from Dutch people.

<sup>11</sup> Kraal, J.E: “Will Sinterklaas turn black?”: In defence of Sinterklaas  
[http://www.expatica.com/actual/article.asp?channel\\_id=1&story\\_id=1749](http://www.expatica.com/actual/article.asp?channel_id=1&story_id=1749).

person of African origin and yet the complicated web of denial supported by an emerging discourse of chimney climbing fails to recognise this.

To Helder, Zwarte Piet in itself is not the problem. Rather, the debate centred round the character is a discussion about citizenship, identity and racism (Helder, 2005: 5)<sup>12</sup> in a country where being “white” and Christian at least in part defines whether or not you belong (Esed: 1995, 2007). It is this last point that is of particular relevance to my paper, placing the representation of Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas in the context of the dichotomy between “Black” and “White” in a Dutch World that is changing rapidly.

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<sup>12</sup> Helder also edited a study of Zwarte Piet entitled *Sinterklaasje, kom maar binnen zonder knecht* (1998) but unfortunately there is no English language translation.



## Chapter 3: Concepts and Framework of Analysis

### 3.1 Background of the child.

Categorising the background of the children was problematic as a result of the author's desire not to use essentialist notions of race centred on "white" and "non-white" that would homogenise all ethnic minorities into an overly simplistic category. According to Verkuyten and Thijs (2002:313) there is a tendency in existing Dutch research to do this, which ignores the many visible and cultural differences between ethnic groups that may affect the experiences of ethnic minority group children. In their research, centred on racist victimisation among children in The Netherlands, Verkuyten and Thijs focus on the experiences of children of Surinamese, Turkish and Moroccan background separating the results into these categories of parental nationality. Due to a greater diversity in parental background analysed in this study, I was not able to separate all children's background into categories of nationality.

Furthermore, in light of the discussion over race and ethnicity that took place in previous chapters, it is especially problematic to position oneself outside the ideological construction of "white" and "non-white", "ethnic- minority" and "Dutch", "Allochtoon" and "Autochtoon". This is not to say that I agree with these categories. However, due to the fact that one of the purposes of this research paper is to investigate whether or not there is a link between the 'innocent' Dutch tradition - with Zwarde Piet's blackness explained as being from chimneys - and the colonial history and racism in the Netherlands, I chose to use categories that have been framed within the ideological constructions of Dutch history to racialise society despite the rhetoric of tolerance and non-racism.

I will therefore divide the children into the categories of "black allochtoon", "non-black allochtoon" and "white autochtoon" though placing these categories under quotation marks to show their constructed ness. The categories shall be influenced by the criteria that Essed uses to criticize Dutch policy assigning the terms "allochtoon" and "autochtoon", although I shall divide the "allochtoon" category into two: "black allochtoon" and "non-black allochtoon".

“Black allochtoon” will be used for children from the former Dutch colonies of Suriname and the Netherland Antilles, as well as those from sub-Saharan African countries<sup>13</sup> and South Asia,<sup>14</sup> and those children of dual heritage with one parent born in any of these countries. “Non-black allochtoon” will be used for children from North Africa, Turkey, non-European Union countries, South and Central America, and South East Asia<sup>15</sup>, and those children of dual heritage with one parent born in any of these countries. “White autochtoon” will be used for children with both parents white Dutch, from all European Union member states and North America.<sup>16</sup>

### **3.2 Gender.**

Scott (1999) defines gender as being the element of social relations based on perceived differences between the sexes that is constructed through four elements, namely: institutions, ideologies, and symbolic meanings that intertwine and interlink to form the final element, subject identity (Scott, 1999: 28-52). In the context of my findings, gender is analysed through two different dimensions. On the one hand, it is approached through the different perceptions that a girl-child and boy-child may have concerning both the character of Zwarte Piet and the celebration at large. On the other hand, it is approached through the notion of hegemonic masculinities, as referred to by both Connell (1995) and Messerschmidt (1998). This second definition is made to explore whether or not the children observe any power relations at work between Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas.

### **3.3 Age/childhood.**

The essay question was set for children between the ages of 10-13. Children are an often-used argument in the defence of the Sinterklaas tradition in the sense that the celebration itself is framed at being “for children”. The argument that “we only do it for the children” could therefore be seen as being one of the main justifications for its continuing existence as part of Dutch culture (Pieterse, 1992: 164). Furthermore, through the intergenerational transfer from adult to child, children are in effect placed with the responsibility to keep the tradition alive. Thus it could be argued that the world of children is not separate from the world of adults but

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<sup>13</sup> With the notable exception of “white” South Africans. In the context of this paper one girl from the HSVschool has parents from South Africa and Poland: she shall be categorised as “non-black allochtoon”.

<sup>14</sup> In the context of this paper this applies to children of Indian and Pakistani parents, as there were no other South Asians in my data. I include this group as being “black allochtoon” because of their perceived darker skin compared to South East Asians which in turn may contribute to them ascribing different meanings of the Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet compared to “South East Asians”.

<sup>15</sup> In the context of this paper this applies to children of Thai, Chinese and Vietnamese parents as there are no other South-East Asians in my data.

<sup>16</sup> According to Essed & Trienekens (2007: 10) Japanese people are also included in this category though I have not mentioned them here as there were no Japanese children in my sample.

rather that “the world which adults shape for children reflects the logic of the adult’s world” (Pieterse, 1992: 167).

Moreover, framing the celebration as being for children implies that the celebration is an innocent one and denies a child’s capacity to gather other meanings from it. This views children as being innocent or pervasive rather than active shapers of their own lives (Van Oudenhoven and Wazir, 2005: 123). There seems, in particular, to be a large gap between the subject and object position in child research with adults assuming the scientific rationale to tell the true story of children’s lives. Thus, children should be given the opportunity to formulate their own understanding of the world around them (i.e. participation) as opposed to being told by adults what the world is (manipulation). As Mayall (2000:243) suggests: we must study the social condition of childhood and write children into the script of the social order. This was attempted through framing the question in an open way for children to express their own perceptions of the characters and celebrations, thus treating children as social actors rather than simply incomplete beings learning to become adults (Ansell, 2005: 21). This does not mean that all the narratives were free of adult interference (manipulation) as the answers given in Nutsschool Nutshage imply that the teacher may have influenced the class beforehand. However from the position of the researcher the question was framed in an open way to prevent, or at least minimise, any researcher bias.

### **3.4 Schools as Institutions.**

In this research I specifically chose to use schools because they are important social spaces within which children learn about Zwarte Piet and the celebrations of the 5th December are organized. Schools are institutions that cannot be separated from political changes that occur at other social levels. As Gilroy (1993: 59) suggests, the school provides a ready image of the nation in microcosm. It is an institution for cultural transmission and therefore a means of integration and assimilation. Vasta (2007: 720), as already cited, also identifies the school as being one of the arenas in which immigrants are institutionally marginalized through the creation of “white” and “black” schools. Both the Edith Stein school and the Nutsschool Nutshage could be defined under these categories with the former having a majority of children with perceived ‘allochtoon’ backgrounds and the latter being perceived as an ‘autochtoon’ school.

Furthermore, the consequences of institutional marginalisation are not limited to the school with future unemployment levels being linked to educational levels, as the 2005 Jaarrapport Integratie/Annual Report on Integration suggests (Vasta, 2007: 724). As this source shows,

Dutch authorities recognize the relevance of links between marginalization at school and wider social contexts.

### **3.5. Selection of Schools.**

Though the choice of three different schools was not a representative sample of Dutch children, it was intended to best capture an example of the diversity of children's backgrounds within Dutch society. This was done in order to investigate whether or not there are different meanings associated with Zwarte Piet depending on the background of the child. The three schools that were selected were the Haagsche Schoolvereiniging (HSV) International Stream, the Edith Stein School and the Nutsschool Nutshage.

The HSV International Stream provides education for primary school children between the ages of 4-11 and is located at Konnigin Sophiestraat 24a, The Hague. The children studying in the International Stream are predominantly "autochtoon" in nature (fees are 3,300 euros per annum) consisting of 'expatriate' children (i.e. white Europeans and North Americans) whose parents work in The Hague. The International Department year 6 (ID6) group (aged 10-11) were selected to write the essay about Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas and were also interviewed three weeks after the essay had been written though the interviews have not been used in this Research Paper.

The Edith Stein School is a secondary school that provides education for children from the age of 12-18 and is located on Louis Couperusplein, The Hague, geographically very close to the HSV School. The majority of the students there, like in the HSV International Stream, are the children of parents born abroad. However, there is a large contrast with the HSV both in terms of "class"<sup>17</sup> and "colour" of the children, which is one of the primary reasons why the school was chosen. The 12-13 year group selected to write the essays consisted overwhelmingly of children born to parents of perceived "allochtoon" backgrounds both "black" and "non-black". Furthermore, the Edith Stein School is the only one out of the three that does not celebrate the Sinterklaas festival within the school. This was explained by the co-ordinator as being a result of the large number of "non-Dutch" children within the school.

Finally, the Nutsschool Nutshage was selected, as the majority of the students there are 'white' Dutch. The choice of a predominantly 'white' and 'Dutch' school was selected as a good comparison to both the predominantly 'non-white' Edith Stein School and also the

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<sup>17</sup> Unlike the HSV International stream there are no school fees

predominantly ‘non-Dutch’ HSV International Stream. The Nutsschool Nutshage belongs to a category of Nutsschools, which were established in the late eighteenth century as a secular alternative for parents who did not want their children to go to either a Protestant or Catholic school. The School is not run by the local authority unlike the other two but rather by an association of parents and volunteers and is thus also a registered charity<sup>18</sup>.

### **3.6 Policy on anti-discrimination.**

The Edith Stein and HSV School both come under the jurisdiction of the local authority, which defines their policy on social behaviour. Any specific policy on discrimination on the basis of race or colour was strangely absent from the front pages of the Municipality’s website. The website mentions discrimination briefly in relation to the criteria of a safe school in which problems like harassment, discrimination, and sexual intimidation deserve consideration, and the school building should be well maintained. However, no other information was given on discrimination (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap<sup>19</sup>).

Due to the Nutsschool Nutshage’s separate status from the Local Authority, its policy on social behaviour is also independent from the authority. The general category of the school is referred to on the Municipality’s website under special schools (Algemeen-Bijzonder Onderwijs). This also provides some general information on this type of school’s behavioural policy, which states that there is no distinction between children, everyone is welcome regardless of belief or skin colour and the school is a tolerant and accepting institution<sup>20</sup>. However, on the Nutsschool Nutshage website there was very limited information on anti-discrimination. This could only be seen through the school’s vision: to be neutral, relational, competent, autonomous in order to create World citizens<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> from: <http://hop.residentie.net/opdrachten/algemeen/wegwijzer2006PO.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Taken from: <http://www.minocw.nl/veiligeschool/312Sociaalveiligeschool.html>

<sup>20</sup> from: <http://hop.residentie.net/opdrachten/algemeen/wegwijzer2006PO.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> from: <http://www.nutsschoolnutshage.nl/>

### 3.7 Methodology.

The study is based on qualitative primary research, conducted through a written answer of the primary school children in a “black”, “white” and “international” school on a given essay question structured as followed:

Write a letter to an imaginary male or female friend who lives in another country and has never heard of Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas. Describe who they both are and give your opinion (what do you think/ how do you feel) about them.

The purpose of this question was to generate reflective answers without me asking leading questions about relationship between Zwarte Piet, racism and multiculturalism. Therefore, a question like *“Why is Zwarte Piet black?”* would not have been suitable. As my hypothesis is to disprove the argument that children do not see the connection between Zwarte Piet and colour, the question needed to be focussed on Zwarte Piet as opposed to colour, in order to find out what the character means to the children. In addition, I also asked the children which countries their parents were from, in an attempt to find out whether or not nationality and colour play a part in children’s conceptualisation of the characters.

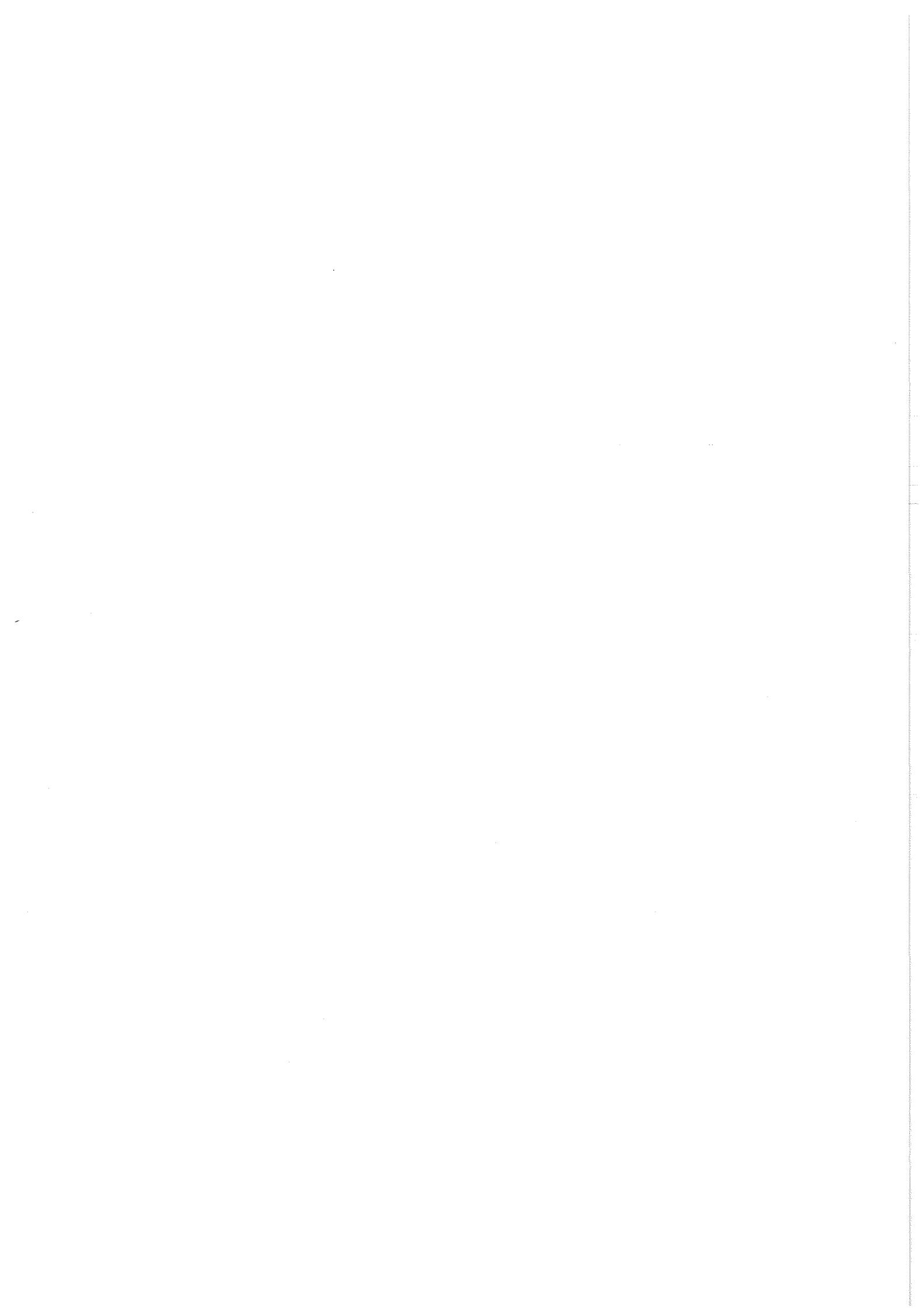
Furthermore, as Schaeffer (1980, in Tizard & Phoenix, 1995: 1408) suggests there is some evidence, mainly from the USA, that black and white people tend to give different answers to questions with a racial content, according to the colour of the interviewer. Although the question does not explicitly have a racial content I deliberately chose not to meet the children before setting the essay question, as I did not want my presence as a person of mixed parentage to influence any decision to write about race. Therefore, although I hoped for an active discussion by the children on race and power relations, I wanted them to do this on their own accord.

To make more sense of the findings the essay questions were separated into the categories of: colour, colour-personification, status/occupation, possessions, age characteristics and personal traits (good or bad). These categories were then further summarised through the following questions:

1. Is there a link between Zwarte Piet and black people?
2. What are the class/power dynamics in the relationship between Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas?
3. What are the positive/negative qualities associated with Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas?

Both questions 1 and 3 were designed to analyse how the children conceptualised Zwarte Piet's colour with question 1 looking for the explicit connections that the children made and question 3 looking at the implicit criteria that may constitute Zwarte Piet's colour (as suggested earlier in Bogle's Toms and Coons, 1995).

Question 2 was specifically designed to analyse the relationship between Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas in light of Connell's theory of Hegemonic Masculinities. I posed this question because I wanted to view how the children conceptualised the gendered relationships between the two characters of different colour and status i.e. whether or not they observed the subordination or domination and in turn what this meant to them.



## Chapter 4 Meanings of Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas

### HSV International Stream

In HSV School, International Stream I interviewed sixteen children, ten and eleven year olds, six of whom were boys and ten girls. The children from the HSV International Stream were the only group to opt for both images and written description and thus the findings have been based on analysis of both. Disaggregating my data along the lines of classification described in the previous chapters shows that there were 2 “black allochtoon” children (1 girl, 1 boy), 4 “non-black allochtoon” (2 girls, 2 boys) and 10 “white autochtoon” children (7 girls, 3 boys)<sup>22</sup>.

#### Image Analysis

The majority of children drew pictures with their essays (15 out of 16 children). I separated the analysis between the images into the following categories: 1) Image of Zwarte Piet /Sinterklaas, 2) Colour of skin, 3) Hair, 4) Smile, 5) Other features and 6) Direction image is looking in. I chose to use these categories as a basis to analyse how the HSV children visually conceptualised both the ‘blackness’ and ‘whiteness’ of the characters as well as the features associated with ‘blackness’ and ‘whiteness’. In total, nine children draw images of both Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas and in all of these images there is a disparity between the possessions of both characters with Sinterklaas portrayed wearing a Bishops attire and carrying a golden staff and Zwarte Piet drawn with a simple servants costume. This can be seen as relating to the dominant and subordinate positions of their age and masculinities, reinforced by the bearded images of Sinterklaas, which serves to create a definite symbol of masculinity when compared to the almost genderless depiction of Zwarte Piet. On occasions, Zwarte Piet almost appears to be female as can be seen by the images drawn by two girls<sup>23</sup>.

This Depiction of a seemingly genderless Zwarte Piet as a subordinate character is reinforced through the fact that women can play him whilst women cannot (or at least do not) play Sinterklaas. Thus the apparent genderless-ness may amount to a metaphorical castration of a character known to be a boy, in which he is representative of what he is not.

According to the visual images the majority of the children see connections between Zwarte Piet and race. In total, ten children draw images of Zwarte Piet. Of these, eight coloured in the

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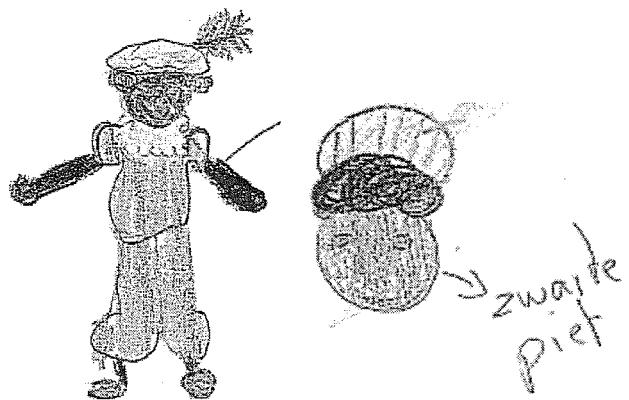
<sup>22</sup> (See appendix 2a)

<sup>23</sup> (See appendix 2b)

skin using either dark or black colour for the entire body (four of the children did so), black only for the face (two did so) or brown for the entire body (two did so). This use of colour could be insignificant as the process of going down the chimney could explain the use of black. But the choice of brown particularly attracted my attention as it appeared to racialise the character even more than the black did. However, when the use of colour is accompanied by other characterizations, its significance becomes more apparent constituting a piece of what I refer to as the racialisation jigsaw puzzle.

The other parts of this puzzle include hair, smile and some exaggerated features. The significance of the hair is obvious as Afro/ curly hair combined with a dark skin colour implies that Zwarte Piet's character is based on a person of African origin. However, the smile is more complex relating to both the stereotype of the Tom and the Coon in the way that it visually represents contentment, verging on happiness, to be submissive to a white master. Finally when combined with the exaggerated features (big red lips, orange eyes, big eyes) the visual racialisation process is complete. In total, four children combined all the pieces together. Two of them were "white autochtoon" girls and two were "non-black allochtoon" girls. The fact that neither of the "black allochtoon" children completes the racialisation of Zwarte Piet is interesting as it might imply that they see something morally ambiguous in the visual depiction of Zwarte Piet whereas the children that draw the "completed" racialized image visually portray what they observe in the depiction of the character.

Images: Complete Racialisation Jigsaw Puzzle



Girl: Sweden/Bolivia

Girl: Portugal

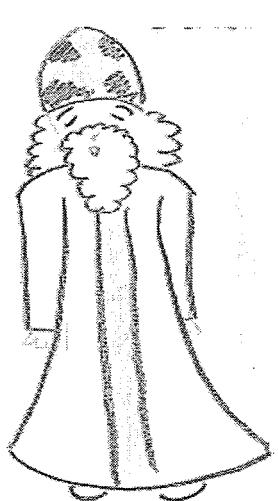


Girl: South Africa/Poland

Girl: England

A minority of children also linked Sinterklaas to race through colouring in his skin. This is important in analysing whether or not children on the whole see colour in both characters. If this is the case then using colour whilst drawing Zwarte Piet is seemingly less significant. Once again, girls did the colouring, divided evenly between “white autochtoon” and “non-black allochtoon”, with three colouring the skin pink and one using an orange outline for the face and body. My hypotheses for the majority not colouring in Sinterklaas’s skin is that white is the colour of the paper used to write/ draw on and also the colour through which the children conceptualised Sinterklaas (though not made apparent in written descriptions). This implies that white is the norm and that anything else is the exception and thus must be defined – drawn - as such.

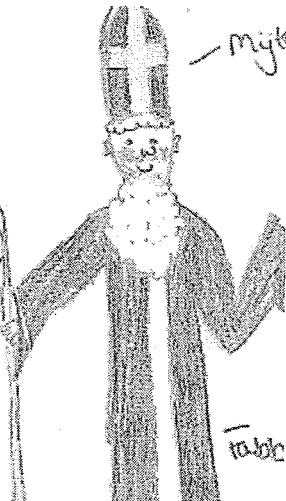
#### Images Associating Sinterklaas with colour



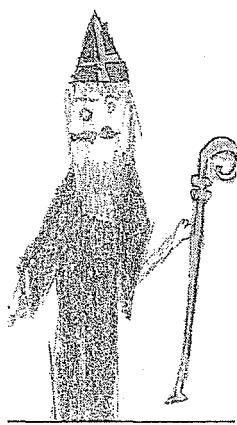
Girl: South Africa/ Poland



Girl: Sweden/Bolivia



Girl: France/USA



Girl: England

### **Written descriptions of Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas**

#### **Is there a link between Zwarte Piet and race?**

Supporting the findings from the images, in the case of the written descriptions, the majority of the children also explicitly made the link between Zwarte Piet and black people. Nine children make this link through using an amalgamation of colour and person. Four were “non-black allochtoon”, four were “white autochtoon” and one was “black allochtoon”<sup>24</sup> The description of dark colour skin also implies in English that Zwarte Piet is a non-white person as opposed to being a person who had painted their skin or gone down a chimney. The fact that a significant percentage of each group identified Zwarte Piet’s “natural” blackness implies that they recognise race in the character and thus reinforces the notion of the character as being a mis-recognition of black people. This is further strengthened by what is not being said here i.e. the majority of the children did not mention that Zwarte Piet paint their own skin or go down the chimney.

The link between Zwarte Piet and race was also made implicitly through the reference to his athleticism. I take this to be an implicit reference due to the connection between “black” and athleticism. As Pieterse writes:

*Another terrain on which blacks have been permitted to manifest themselves is sport...their success seems to confirm one of the stereotypes of the black as the bestial brute, the 'all brawn and no brains' kind of athlete' (Pieterse, 1992: 148-9).*

In total nine children, all either “non-black allochtoon” or “white-autochtoon” made reference to him as being acrobatic, athletic or gymnastic. This was the only significant proportion of children in all three schools to make reference to the character’s athleticism, which in part can be attributed to what they observe during the festival at school in which Zwarte Piet displays his athletic prowess.

#### **What are the class /power dynamics at play in the relationship?**

All but one of the children referred to Zwarte Piet’s status as being subservient to Sinterklaas’s either through describing him as being an assistant, helper or like reindeer to Santa Claus. This was despite the fact that only a small minority referred to Sinterklaas’s ‘s profession as a bishop though this was implicit in the drawings of him in a bishop’s attire. The

<sup>24</sup> (See appendix 2 c)

class dynamics can also be seen in the written description of the possessions of both characters with Sinterklaas possessing a range of golden attire, horses and his helpersassistants: Zwarde Piets. This reinforces the notion of Sinterklaas's dominant masculinity vis a vis Zwarde Piet's subordinate masculinity.

#### **What are the positive/ negative qualities associated with Zwarde Piet and Sinterklaas?**

The majority of the children do not make an explicit comment about the qualities either negative or positive of Zwarde Piet. Still, four associate him with deviance whilst only one child refer to him in positive terms as being good, and this in reference to his role as assistant to Sinterklaas along with Americo – Sinterklaas's horse. A “non-black allochtoon” boy writes: “*Sinterklaas has two good assistants, Americo and Zwarde Piet*”.

All four children associating deviance with Zwarde Piet are “white autochtoon” (two girls, two boys). These consist of references to him as either being trouble, very scary or very naughty. Furthermore, these references reinforce the image of the character as being immature or childlike which has its roots in the colonial depiction of “native” people as expressed by the observer at the 1883 exhibition. Here Zwarde Piet is mischievous or trouble as opposed to being bad or dangerous which implies that, like a child, he requires constant attention to prevent any damage to either himself or to people around him.

Interestingly, in two of these accounts<sup>25</sup> there is an association between his athleticism and deviance with one girl referring to a very bad trouble Piet that she danced, and a boy referring to “them” as being very naughty by doing dangerous things like placing lots of chairs on top each other. Though the boy is the only child in the group to denote the chimney as being the cause of the character's “blackness” he does appear to make a comparison with “black people”. He does this by saying that although they look like people who are bad, they are not actually bad but rather naughty. This can be linked to the colonial depiction of natives. These descriptions contrast greatly with the assessments of Sinterklaas's character in which four children<sup>26</sup> refer to his positive qualities and none say anything negative about him. Both “black allochtoon” children make this reference.

#### **Acceptance and Rejection of Zwarde Piet and Sinterklaas**

The vast majority of the children in the class (eleven) accept the tradition, with only three rejecting it and two giving no indication in their account whether or not they accepted it opting instead for a purely descriptive narrative of what happens.

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<sup>25</sup> See appendix 2d

<sup>26</sup> See appendix 2e

Interestingly, the only “black-allochtoon” children in the class accept the tradition because they view Sinterklaas as being either a kind or a very nice man<sup>27</sup>. A further interesting result is that despite the fact that all the children of this school are expatriates, two “white autochtoon” and one “non-black allochtoon” (all girls) use the term either ‘*We*’ or ‘*our*’ in relation to the festival<sup>28</sup>. This implies that these children have become part of the tradition internalising it as being their own. Of the other children accepting the tradition, the majority connect it with fun and happiness<sup>29</sup>. Interestingly the boy with Dutch and UK parents was by far the most expressive in his acceptance referring to the magic of Sinterklaas, his kindness and the fun of the whole celebration (“*He’s a very kind person. It’s really fun, really good and he’s got magic*”). In his case, the acceptance could be seen as arising from an inter-generational transfer of traditions, as unlike the other children in the class he has Dutch heritage.

Of the three that reject it two do so due to a self- perception of being too old to enjoy it (Two “white autochtoon” girls<sup>30</sup>). The third and final rejection is perhaps the most interesting as the child distances herself from it claiming that it is ‘*a Dutch celebration*’ (G: Eng) which is in direct contrast to the ‘*We*’ and ‘*Our*’ expressed by another two “white autochtoon” girls and one “non-black allochtoon girl<sup>31</sup>.

#### **The meanings of Zwarte Piet to the HSV International children**

On the whole the HSV children associate the Sinterklaas celebration with fun. Moreover, the children concentrate most of the narrative round the character of Sinterklaas and the celebration itself with references to Zwarte Piet being limited to his role as helper, to the description of his colour and to some of his personality traits. The fact that the vast majority of the children recognise the connection between Zwarte Piet and people of African origin is significant and is expressed through both their drawings as well as the written description<sup>32</sup>. Although this connection is made, there is no reference to any discriminatory aspect of the character with both of the “black allochtoon” children recognising something positive in the character of Sinterklaas and failing to recognise any racist connotations in Zwarte Piet’s depiction. However, in light of hegemonic masculinities, there is recognition from the majority of the children concerning the dominant position of Sinterklaas in the relationship.

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<sup>27</sup> See appendix 2f

<sup>28</sup> See appendix 2g

<sup>29</sup> See appendix 2h

<sup>30</sup> See appendix 2i

<sup>31</sup> See appendix 2 j

<sup>32</sup> See appendix 2 k

This is made implicitly through referring to Zwarte Piet as being a servant of Sinterklaas as opposed to Sinterklaas being a master but nonetheless still carries the same meaning.

Furthermore, the only disparity between the three groups in any of the narrative lies in the association between Zwarte Piet and deviance. In this instant, four of the “white autochtoon” children make the connection labelling Zwarte Piet as being either trouble, scary, or being very naughty. Moreover, there is no gender disparity in these accounts with two boys and two girls referring to deviance. Neither of the other two group backgrounds associate deviance with the character with the only positive account of Zwarte Piet’s characteristics coming from a “non-black allochtoon” boy who refers to Zwarte Piet as being one of Sinterklaas’s two good assistants.

In conclusion, the sum of the parts of the children’s meanings of Zwarte Piet could be seen as equating to a black present giver who contributes to the fun of the festival through his role as Sinterklaas’s servant. It is the celebration that holds the most meaning to the children with the notable exception of one “white autochtoon” girl (Girl: England) who rejects it as being a Dutch festival which contrasts greatly with the excited narrative given by the “white autochtoon” boy with a Dutch parent. The girl implies that there is something alien in the festival though as no more detail is given one can only speculate about her motives for distancing herself from it.

## 4.2 Edith Stein School

In the Edith Stein School I interviewed seventy children, twelve to thirteen year old, thirty-nine of which were boys and thirty-one girls. The children from the Edith Stein School did not opt for visual images in their essays and so the analysis is drawn solely from their written descriptions in the essays answered by 70 children in year group 9 (12-13).

Disaggregating data along the lines of classification described in the previous chapters shows that there were 19 “black allochtoon” children (10 girls, 9 boys), 40 “non-black allochtoon” (16 girls, 24 boys) and 11 “white autochtoon” children (5 girls, 6 boys)<sup>33</sup>.

### **Written descriptions of Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas**

#### **Is there a link between Zwarte Piet and race?**

The findings suggest that children in this school see the link between Zwarte Piet and race. In the case of the written descriptions, the majority of the children that referred to Zwarte Piet’s colour implied that the character’s colour was a natural characteristic. Furthermore, according to Essed’s account of Dutch immigrant policy- terminology (Essed, 1995: 52) 24 of the children making the link would be referred to as being “allochtoon” being children of non-natives of colour and immigrants with real or attributed Muslim Identity. Interestingly, 12 of these children come under the “black allochtoon” category. I find this interesting and wonder if “black” people see the link between Zwarte Piet and black people, can it be the case that they are in effect seeing a link between themselves and Zwarte Piet? If this is the case then one can only wonder what the psychological effects are for black people every year during this celebration. As Taylor underlines in *Politics of Recognition*: “a person or a group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves” (Taylor et al: 25).

#### **What are the class/power dynamics at play in the relationship?**

Half of the children referred to the subordinate position of Zwarte Piet in the relationship with Sinterklaas. Of particular interest here are six references to Zwarte Piet as being a slave (“slaven” in Dutch). Initially I thought that slave might have had a different meaning in Dutch (more similar to servant) than the English meaning. This would in turn explain why some children in the Edith Stein School decided to use this term whilst others in the HSV School did not. However, after discussion with my translators, I was assured that it carries the same strength in meaning in Dutch as it does in English. Four of the children that used the

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<sup>33</sup> See appendix 3 a

term slave in their narrative rejected the celebration with all four coming under the category of “non-black allochtoon”<sup>34</sup>. Interestingly only one of these rejected it because of the discriminatory aspect of it. The other three rejected it because they considered themselves to be too old for it.

#### **What are the positive/ negative qualities associated with Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas?**

The majority of the children do not make an explicit comment about the qualities either negative or positive of Zwarte Piet. However, four of the children made positive comments about Zwarte Piet referring to him either as being friendly, or as a nice person or as being pretty cool<sup>35</sup>. A further four implied that there was something ambiguous in their narrative about the character opting neither for a completely positive assessment nor a negative one<sup>36</sup>. In addition, one “black allochtoon” boy was openly critical of the character referring to him as being a loser<sup>37</sup>. Furthermore, no “white autochtoon” children observe anything negative in the character of Zwarte Piet compared to the four “allochtoon boys” that do (2 “black” and 2 “non-black”) implying that they recognise something wrong with the character. Moreover one “black allochtoon” boy who refers to the character as being a loser can be seen as making an implicit reference to Zwarte Piet’s subordinate masculinity vis a vis Sinterklaas’s. This is made more explicit through his reference to Sinterklaas as being just a white guy with too much money. Therefore, although he does not appear to like the character of Sinterklaas this is not as a result of the character possessing a lowly status, which he does not because he has too much money, whereas Zwarte Piet simply remains a loser.

Interestingly, and unlike both the other schools, a small minority refer to Sinterklaas in a negative manner. All four of these children are boys and come under the category of allochtoon (2 “black allochtoon”: 2 “non-black allochtoon”)<sup>38</sup>.

#### **Acceptance and Rejection of Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas**

Unlike both the other schools there is not a great disparity between numbers of “rejectionists” and numbers of “accepters”. Out of the 70 essays 26 rejected the celebration, 34 accepted and 10 gave no indication of either in their narrative. Because of the large numbers of essays, I divided the rejections and acceptance into three separate categories: rejection because of age, ambiguous rejection and rejection because of discrimination; acceptance because of presents, acceptance because of fun and ambiguous acceptance.

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<sup>34</sup> See appendix 3 b

<sup>35</sup> See appendix 3c

<sup>36</sup> See appendix 3 d

<sup>37</sup> See appendix 3 e

<sup>38</sup> See appendix 3 f

## I. Rejections:

### a) Rejection because of age

In total fifteen children rejected the festival as a result of perceiving themselves as being too old for the festival. This group consisted of one “black allochtoon”, twelve “non-black allochtoon”, and two “white autochtoon”, seven of whom were boys and eight girls<sup>39</sup>.

Examples include:

*“I used to like it but not anymore because I don’t get anything. I’m 13 and too old for Sinterklaas!” (B: Tur) and “I myself do not like Sinterklaas that much as I am too old for it. It is just for small children” (G: Tur).*

Interestingly, this is one of the few areas in which the girls outweigh the boys. One possible explanation for this could be a self-perceived increased maturity amongst girls entering puberty. Furthermore, this form of rejection is significant for the small number of “black allochtoons”. This implies that the meanings that children have for rejecting the festival do vary according to background and that “black allochtoon” children have other reasons for rejecting the festival.

### b) Ambiguous Rejection

Nine children in total reject the festival without giving any explicit reason for doing so and thus have been categorised as being ambiguous rejections. This group consisted of five “black allochtoon”, two “non-black allochtoon” and two “white autochtoon”<sup>40</sup>, seven of whom were boys and two girls. This group is particularly significant because it is the only category in which “black allochtoons” comprise the majority. Examples include:

*“...They consider him a sort of living legend...I think Sinterklaas is an unimportant celebration, I don’t even know why it’s celebrated” (G: Sur), “Sinterklaas is a holy man for many people. Some love them but I don’t” (B: Sur),*

Interestingly, in most of these accounts there is an apparent separation/ distancing of the children from the celebration. In this sense, it is the *other* that celebrates, it whether it is *they*, or *many*. However, by referring to these categories of a seemingly Dutch majority and rejecting the celebration they are in effect creating an impression of themselves as being *other* implying that they are not part of “real” Dutch society. Either way there seems to be a deliberate attempt here not to recognise the characters and the festival as being part of their identity, which is made more apparent through their distancing. This is despite the fact that

<sup>39</sup> See appendix 3 g

<sup>40</sup> See appendix 3 h

unlike the HSV children the majority of the Edith Stein are presumably second or third generation and thus have Dutch citizenship, thus their self-distancing appears to reinforce the notion of an implicit whiteness in Dutch ness.

### c) Rejection because of discrimination

The final group were the only children in all three schools that explicitly referred to the discriminatory practice of the celebration. Both of these children were “allochtoon”: one “black allochtoon” and one “non-black allochtoon”<sup>41</sup>.

The “non-black allochtoon” girl relates the fact that Zwarte Piet is a black slave to discrimination writing: “*The slave is black and works for Sinterklaas and it looks a little like discrimination! He's very popular in Holland*”. The “black allochtoon” boy also equates the subordinate position of Zwarte Piet as being discriminatory writing: “*I don't like him very much because he is the boss of brown people*”. Interestingly, both children have non-European heritage and could be seen as relating the tradition to colonial legacy of slavery as well as the misrepresentation of black people. Furthermore, both children appear to recognise the “mis-recognition” of black people that occurs within the celebration and the representation of Zwarte Piet through relating the tradition to the colonial legacy of slavery. Thus the narratives also show both children’s capacity to gather and express other meanings of the festival moving away from the dominant discourse that frames Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas as being harmless characters in a children’s event.

## II Acceptance:

### a) Presents

Eighteen children in total accepted the festival because of the present aspect of the festivities. This group consisted of three “black allochtoon”, ten “non-black allochtoon” and five “white autochtoon”, five of whom were girls and thirteen boys<sup>42</sup>. This is significant for the large number of “non-black allochtoons” compared to the small number of “black allochtoon”.

### b) Fun/ nice celebration (14/33)

This group was categorised as such because of a reference to something either fun or nice in the children’s narrative of the celebration. The group consisted of six “black allochtoon”, six “non-black allochtoon” and two “white autochtoon” children, three of whom were boys and eleven girls<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> See appendix 3 I

<sup>42</sup> See appendix 3 j

<sup>43</sup> See appendix 3 k

Both a) and b) could be seen as constituting an acceptance of the whole tradition. In the case of the latter, this was one of the few categories that girls overwhelmingly mentioned. The boys seemed to be more interested in receiving presents as an aspect of the celebration, than the tradition itself. Furthermore, there are significant numbers of both “black” and “non-black allochtoons” which suggests that both the festival and the characters play an active part in their lives despite the fact that they do not celebrate it at school which implies that they gather meanings of the festival from elsewhere. This is supported by the fact that there was a significant minority of both allochtoon children at Scheveningen harbour to welcome Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet’s arrival into the Netherlands on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2007 (see photos appendix). In the case of the “black-allochtoons” this implies that they have internalised the festival, which in turn shows that mis-recognition can also be applied to the self.

### c) Ambiguous Acceptance

In total, two children provided ambiguous acceptances in their accounts of the festival. Both of these children were “non- black allochtoon” boys. The first narrative is classified as being ambiguous as the boy first states that he does not really like Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet but then says that they are quite nice, before concluding that it will be a nice day. This implies his ambiguity towards the characters, but at the same time enjoyment of the celebration/festivities (B: Tur: *“I don’t really like them but they are quite nice. This day will be a nice day”*).

In the second narrative, the boy from Morocco writes that he *“likes Sinterklaas for Christian believers but cannot understand why Zwarte Piet is black and why Sinterklaas is old”*.

This could be because he observes a mis-recognition of “black-people” by “real” Dutch society through the depiction of Zwarte Piet or that he is genuinely confused because of the differing and contradicting explanations for the character’s blackness that Bal refers to (Bal, 2004: 116).

### The meanings of Zwarte Piet to the Edith Stein children

In comparison to both the other two schools there was a significant minority of children within the Edith Stein School who attached a negative meaning to both the characters of Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas as well as to the celebration. Furthermore all of these children were either “black” or “non-black allochtoons”. Of particular significance was the notion of discrimination that two children derived from the celebration. To both of these children the Sinterklaas celebration explicitly resembles the history of colonial slave relations in which Sinterklaas retains the position as Master (*“the boss of brown people called Zwarte Piets”*: B: Ned Ant) and Zwarte Piet the position of slave (*“the slave is black and works for Sinterklaas”*.

*It looks a little like discrimination*" G: Egy/Gre). Furthermore, the hegemonic dominance of Sinterklaas's masculinity is referred to by approximately half of the children with another significant minority within this group referring to Zwarte Piet as being a slave of Sinterklaas. Of the six that use the term "slave" (slaven in Dutch) only one is "white- autochtoon" with the others being "non-black allochtoon". A hypothesis for this could be that these children observe the subordination of the character of Zwarte Piet through their own lens of subordination within Dutch society. This also implies an active recognition of both history and contemporary relations on the behalf of these children although only one explicitly refers to discrimination.

Moreover, the ambiguous responses given by eleven children were also significant showing a trend of distancing from both the characters and the celebration. Though this was not explicitly stated as deriving from some negative meaning towards the character's representation there were some implicit thoughts from some of the children that suggested that they observed something "wrong" or offensive in the tradition. This can be seen in the narrative given by one "non-black allochtoon" boy: "*I like the tradition for Christian believers. Only I don't understand why the Zwarte Piet are black. And why Sinterklaas is old*" (B: Mor).

With the children accepting the tradition it is interesting to observe that only one boy ("non-black allochtoon") refers to Zwarte Piet in their reasons for liking the festival. Furthermore, though the child writes that both Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet are nice men he admits that he was initially scared of the Zwarte Piets before stressing that now he wants everyone in the whole world to celebrate the festival<sup>44</sup>. It is also interesting to note that 64%<sup>45</sup> of the "white- autochtoon" children accept the festival, compared to 42%<sup>46</sup> of the combined "black" and "non-black allochtoon" groups in this class. Though this does not directly imply a negative meaning of the character for "non-white autochtoon children" it does however imply a negative meaning for them of the celebration on the whole.

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<sup>44</sup> See appendix: Table of Edith Stein information

<sup>45</sup> See appendix 3 l

<sup>46</sup> See appendix 3 m

#### 4. 3 Nutsschool Nutshage

The Nutsschool Nutshage group consisted of 10 children in the year 7 group (10-11) and 4 in the year 8- group. All of the children accepted the tradition although the formulations of the answers of the year 8-group were particularly interesting.

##### Year 7

The Year seven group consists of ten “white autochtoon children” of whom two are boys and eight are girls aged between ten and eleven. This group is particularly significant as all the children are white autochtoon, which reinforces the notion of segregated schooling.

##### Is there a link between Zwarte Piet and race?

As in the case of the two schools analysed above, in Nutsschool Nutshage children do see the link between Zwarte Piet and race. Four out of ten children (one boy, three girls) implied that Zwarte Piet’s blackness is a natural characteristic. Of particular interest here is a reference to Zwarte Piet as being ‘close to black’ and another that refers to them as being brown men and women. As with the illustrations of Zwarte Piet made by the children within the HSV school political correctness suggests that “black people” are not black but are rather shades of brown (or in this case: close to black) and thus suggests that the two girls believed that Zwarte Piet is based on a black-person. Although another explanation could be that the children actually draw what they see. Either way, the use of brown seemingly contributes to a humanising – and racializing - effect of characters and makes Zwarte Piet appear to be a real person.

Interestingly, the same number denoted the blackness as being a result of the chimney (four girls). This figure is disproportionately large in comparison to the other two schools and implies that the children have been taught this information.

##### What are the class/power dynamics at work in the relationship?

The majority of the children referred to Zwarte Piet’s status as being subservient to Sinterklaas although there were no references to him being a slave unlike in the Edith Stein School. My hypothesis for this is that children are “taught” about the Sinterklaas festival in this school unlike in the Edith Stein school and therefore they write down what they are taught as opposed to what they see/observe. As with the HSV School, only a small minority

referred to Sinterklaas's occupation as a Bishop, which contrasts heavily with the majority referring to Zwarte Piet's occupation. Also, as with the HSV School, there is a huge disparity between the quality and quantity of possessions that both characters have. This reinforces the notion of Zwarte Piet's subordinated masculinity in relation to Sinterklaas's position of dominance.

#### **What are the positive/ negative qualities associated with Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas?**

Unlike with both the other schools there was no reference to either positive or deviant behavioural characteristics of Zwarte Piet. Two referred to Zwarte Piet as always being happy (2 boys) and one referred to the Pieten as being "*super-funny kind of helpers*" (a girl). Both these references could link to the caricature of the Tom and Coon as outlined by Bogle and Hall. Furthermore, there is only one direct reference to Sinterklaas's character as being a friendly man (a girl). The essays from this class appear to be less analytical and more descriptive than both the HSV and also the Edith Stein group.

#### **The meanings of Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas to Year 7 children**

As with the other schools, there is a significant equating of Zwarte Piet to black people although this year group is the one exception in all the groups as a large proportion of the children designate the chimney explanation as being the cause for his blackness (4/10). This implies that 40% of this class see Zwarte Piet as being separate from race and thus Zwarte Piet does not "mean" a black person. However, there were still some telling references to caricatures of black people as can be seen by the description above of Zwarte Piet being a "*super-funny kind of helper*". This in turn relates back to the ideological construction of black people as being entertainers or exhibits on a stage to please a white audience as expressed in Chapter 2 and reinforces the notion of mis-recognition. Also, the reference to Zwarte Piet as always being happy complements this view of a slapstick entertainer and reinforces the idea that the Sinterklaas festival is fun for all.

#### **Year 8**

The Year eight group consisted of three "white autochtoon" and "one black allochtoon" children, three of whom were girls and one boy, aged between eleven and twelve years old. Because of the small number of children in this group I will not follow the three questions (as above) but rather analyse the Meanings of Zwarte Piet to the Nutsschool Nutshage year 8 children directly.

All the children accepted the tradition with three of the four explicitly referring to no discrimination within the festival. This implies that the teacher might have said something to the class beforehand. If this is the case then it implies a degree of manipulation in which adults actively try to shape the way that children view the festival. The reason for this could be a fear that children do possess the agency (Ansell, 2005: 21) to recognise something wrong in the festival and thus challenge a tradition that is very much part of Dutch identity. However, though the children do defend the festival through denying any discriminatory aspects, the way that these defences are constructed implies something very different.

One of the three girls wrote: "*It's only a positive sign for the dark/coloured people because Zwarte Piet are funny playful, naughty, nice and above all not mean*". The implication here is that dark/ coloured people are generally mean or at least have been viewed as being "mean" within Dutch society. This in turn poses the question of whether or not Zwarte Piet is the exception to this rule. If so, is he representative of all non-mean blacks within Dutch society today with his sweet, funny and playful disposition as opposed to the past representational practices of Dutch colonialism? The symbolic result is the same in that black is generally seen as being negative or mean unlike the white goodness/purity of Sinterklaas. However, the example of Zwarte Piet shows that black can be redeemed or un-meant although how exactly this process happens is not clear. Maybe it arises from the daily interaction with binary opposites. So as Zwarte Piet becomes cleansed of all possible mean-ness through his relationship with Sinterklaas, black people can become civilised through learning the ways of white Dutch society. The girl is clearly making a direct link between Zwarte Piet and race which is further strengthened by association between the character and promiscuity which feeds the stereotype of black people being overly sexed:

*At our school Zwarte Piet always come and I always have fun with them one time one is in love with me and my friend and another time with the teacher and I always find that quite jolly.*

The only boy in the group stated:

*Some people think that Zwarte Pieten come across as discriminating. But I don't understand why. I have asked why. Because in the past black people were slaves of white traders and then they say it comes across wrong*

The boy (African parents) also provided an interesting answer though the formulation of his argument was more significant than his failure to see Zwarte Piet's character as discrimination. His reference to Sinterklaas also provides an interesting insight to the child's environment as he refers to Sinterklaas as being a very nice person, but stressing that he does

not celebrate it outside school: “*Sinterklaas is a very nice person. But I myself do not do anything with it. But in school I do take part in it*”.

This may be because his parents do not allow it to be celebrated at home and he appears to be confused between what has been explained to him at home and at school. It appears that he has been informed about Dutch colonialism and slavery, and yet the use of the terms some and they in his narrative appear to distance himself from the view of “black people” leading to a confused recognition of history. This reinforces an idea of a self mis-recognition in which the child has internalised the festival finding himself situated within two contrasting worlds which recognise history in a different way: the people whom he asks why, who recognise a past in which black people were slaves of white traders, versus those who dissect the umbilical chord of colonial history from the festival. In the case of both children the actual denial of discrimination is contradicted very much by the construction of its own design.

#### **4.4 Summary of findings**

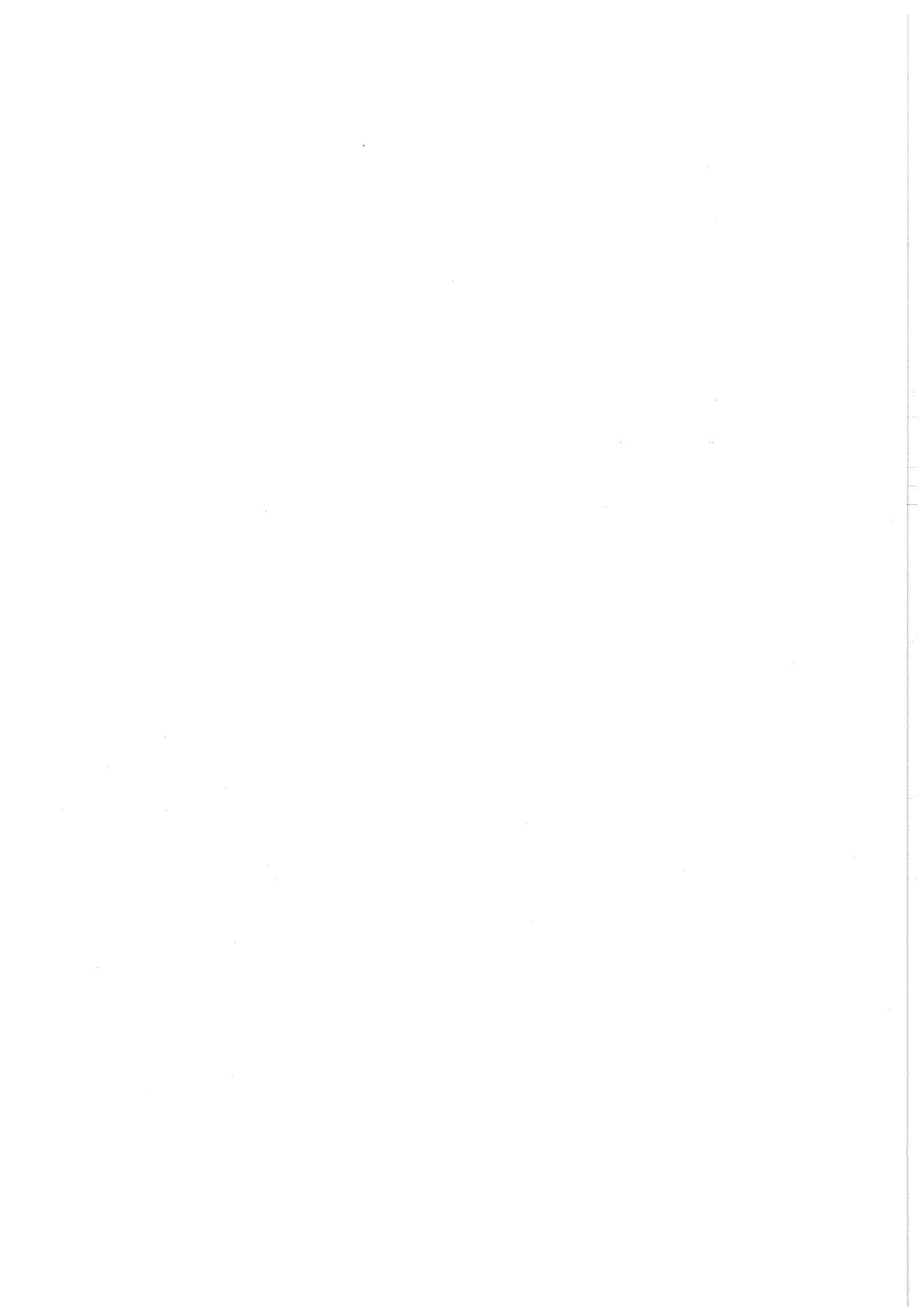
It was surprising to me that a larger number of children in all three schools did not reject the festival because of discrimination. This was despite the fact that in all three schools a large proportion of the children referred to Zwarte Piet’s blackness as being a natural characteristic. This recognition of Zwarte Piet as being a black/ brown man or person as opposed to being a person who had painted themselves black or brown suggested that children did make the link between Zwarte Piet and race. Also of significance is the fact that the vast majority of the children recognised the unequal power relations at play between Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas with the latter identified as being the symbol of hegemonic masculinity through the former’s subordinate position (Servant/ Assistant/ Slave). Therefore the character of Zwarte Piet meant not only a black person to the children but also a black person without autonomy. To return to Taylor’s (1994) *Politics of Recognition*, the combination of a humanising/ racializing description of the character with the caricature effects of exaggerated features, as expressed by so many of the children, makes it difficult to view Zwarte Piet other than as a mis-recognition of a black person (Taylor et al 25).

Another defence of the character of Zwarte Piet centres round its framing as being a harmless tradition full of fun for children and yet many of the children’s accounts refer to the active role that adults play in it as well as the fun that is enjoyed by all ages. This is also reinforced by the fact that accompanying children to the welcoming of Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet into the Netherlands on 17<sup>th</sup> November this year were a large number of parents who actively participated in the festival. It was particularly interesting to observe one father with his “blackfaced” son on his shoulders singing aloud to the Sinterklaas songs whilst his child

looked silently on. This epitomised the way in which tradition is passed on by generation to generation. Thus, the argument that “we only do it for the children” (Pieterse, 1992: 164) appears to be a non-argument. The transmission of tradition from adults to children come explicitly in the form of the teachers, parents and actors who all contribute to the festival and implicitly perhaps in the parents whose children view the celebration as being discriminatory.

Bal’s reference to racist taxonomy as a contributor to her stock of prejudices (2002: 137) suggests that children whose parents had experienced the processes of racism, either directly or through social/ political events, would be framed in a way so as to understand its many different forms. In this context I consider the debates centred round the racist connotations of the golliwog figure in the UK and am surprised that none of the children with British parents in the HSV School make this comparison. However, perhaps of more relevance is the fact that no children of Surinamese parents made the connection to discrimination either. This is especially surprising considering Helder’s historical explanation of the anti- Zwarte Piet movement as taking prominence with Surinamese migration to the Netherlands in the 1970’s (Helder, 2005).

As already mentioned, Edith Stein School provides the only two children who overtly reject the celebration because of discrimination. Furthermore, both children have non-European heritage (G: Egyptian/Greek, B: Netherland Antilles) and could be seen as relating the tradition to colonial legacy of slavery as well as the misrepresentation of black people. Both narratives provide an interesting comparison to the “white autochtoon” Dutch girl in the Nutsschool Nutshage whose mis-recognition of black people is reinforced through her assessment of Zwarte Piet as being only a positive role model for dark-skinned and “coloured” people. It would be interesting to see how these children as adults in turn narrate the tradition to their own children.



## Chapter 5: Conclusions

This paper investigated the meanings that children in three different schools in The Hague attach to the character of Zwarte Piet, setting these in the context of history and contemporary immigration relations, the colonial past and the “Dutch”/“non-Dutch” debates of the present. It is within history that the multiple prejudices of racism, classism and sexism are reinforced and made increasingly sophisticated (Bal, 2004:117).

Colonialism was not only instrumental in creating the notion of master and slave in the Dutch world but also attached the notion of colour - “whiteness” and “blackness” - to these categories. Consequently, the notion of “otherness” could be seen as having its roots in this period, being reinforced for example by the exhibiting of “colonised people” for “Dutch” entertainment as occurred in the International Exhibition of 1883 in Amsterdam. Interestingly, as Pieterse observes, the association between Zwarte Piet and people of African origin was also to occur during this height of Dutch colonialism in the nineteenth century re-invention of the medieval tradition of the character as a devil (Pieterse 1992: 163-5).

Gender can be observed in the processes of both Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas's invention and re-invention through the notion of hegemonic masculinities in which Sinterklaas's dominant age-masculinity-whiteness is reinforced through Zwarte Piet's subordinate youth-genderlessness-blackness. Though the characters of Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas are not responsible for perceptions of Dutch nationality, they can be seen as being symbolic of the ways in which hegemonic identities are created and also represented within the Netherlands. Thus the “autochtoon” character of people of the Netherlands is reinforced by their relationship with perceived “allochtoon” others in what Butler might define as a subject/abject inclusion/exclusionary process (Butler, 1993: 3).

This not only excludes “black” people within Dutch society but also other groups who do not confirm to the norms or values of “modern” Christian Europe, thus, also non-European Union members and Europeans with Muslim identity.

Therefore, it was perhaps not surprising to observe a different perception of the characters and the festival along these lines of socially constructed identities. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the Edith Stein School: a school that if not being seen to provide a ready image of the Netherlands in microcosm (Gilroy, 1993:59) certainly embodied the immigrant “other” of Dutch society.

A possible future progression of the character of Zwarte Piet should not take the form of changing the character's colour. Both Helder and Bal have pointed out past failures in attempting this. As the 5<sup>th</sup> of December is fast approaching, shops have already begun to prepare their merchandise to suit consumer society and since the 17<sup>th</sup> November Zwarte Pieten have already begun to walk the streets of The Hague again. A few days ago I observed a "red" Zwarte Piet and was interested to observe that although the colour of the character's face had changed, he still carried the characteristics of before: complete with Afro-wig and exaggerated lips. This change seemed to miss the point completely, and if anything, reinforcing the stereotype of a "black" identity through a disguise that fails a complete revolution. Thus, half-hearted attempts at re-invention again amount to mere "tokenism" in a similar light to the notion of Dutch tolerance. Painting over the cracks of history is not the solution.

Any future progress, instead, requires what both Clifford and Bal refer to as active self-examination (Clifford, 2004 and Bal, 2004) by the society as a whole. In this instance researchers have an important role to play in "contributing to a genuine working through of a past, bringing that work to bear on today's ambivalences" (Clifford, 2004: 164). However, in order for this to occur policy-makers need to also recognise the voices of "others" within society providing them with a subject position moving away from the current climate in which they are represented 'almost exclusively through white and male dominated networks' (Essed & Nimako, 2006: 298).

Moreover, lessons can be learned from the accounts that children give. As the findings suggest, children see both "race" and class relations in the characters of Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas at times literally labelling the characters as Master and "black" Slave. This shows that children possess the agency to move beyond the "hegemonic" discourse in which Zwarte Piet's blackness is defined as being from chimneys and to derive their own interpretative meanings of the festival. If experts in society can also enact such a degree of genuine self-reflexivity then it is not improbable that Dutch culture will wake up one day, sick of the pain, inventing another tradition that fits the culture better (Bal, 2004:165) having learned genuine lessons from the past. This is a genuine challenge for the future that could pave the way for a culture of acceptance as opposed to a society of tolerance - moving away from misrecognition and embracing recognition - and finally enabling society to see that Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet are representative of something much larger than mere characters in a children's story. Unlike a dog of history that continuously chews on its own vomit, Dutch society needs to learn lessons from its past.

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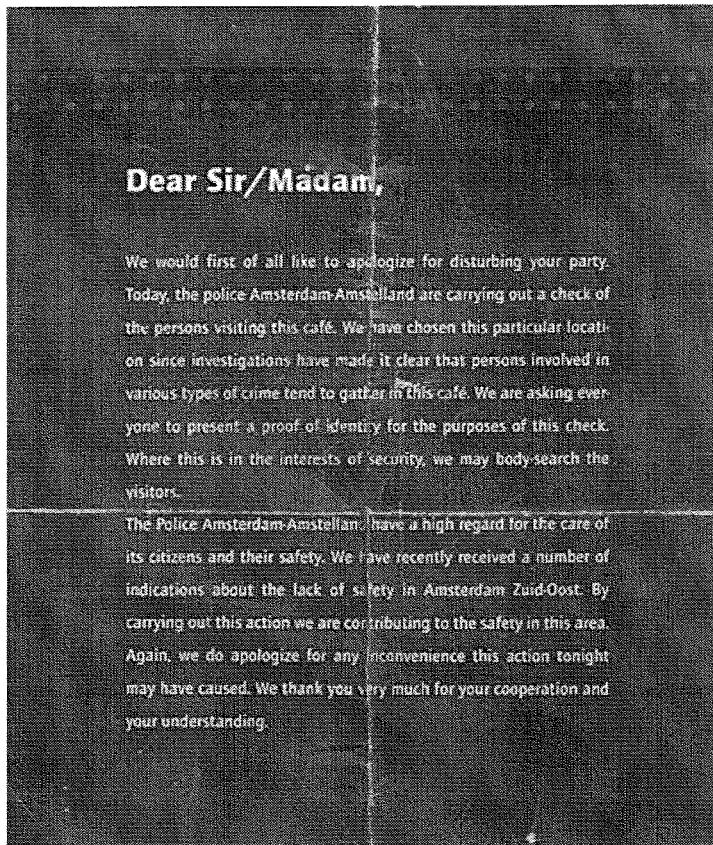
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## Appendices

Table 1: Police letter to concert attendants in Amsterdam



Appendix Table 2 Children in HSV School

- a) The children came from the following backgrounds (Mother/Father for two nationalities): Nigeria (Girl), Pakistan (Boy), Sweden/ Bolivia (Girl), Ecuador (Boy), France/USA (Girl), 2 Italy (Girls), 2 English (Girls), 1 Portugal (Girl), 1 El Salvador/Sweden (Boy), 1 Poland/South Africa (Girl), 1 Hungary/USA (Boy), 1 Romania (Boy), 1 Scotland (Girl) and 1 UK/ Dutch (Boy).
- b) Girl: South Africa/ Poland and Girl: England; see Images: complete “racialisation process”.
- c) Three of the children referred to Zwarte Piet as either being ‘people with dark skin’ (G: France/USA), ‘people with black skin’ (B: El Sal/ Sweden) or as being a ‘dark- skinned person’ (G: Sweden/Bolivia). Two referred to Zwarte Piet as being ‘black’ (G: Portugal and G: England) which in English linguistically implies that he is a black person. Four referred to Zwarte Piet as having either dark or very dark skin (B: Ecuador, G: Nigeria, G: Italy, G: Poland/South Africa).
- d) G: Scotland, B: UK/Dutch
- e) Two “white autochtoon” boys, one “black allochtoon” girl, and one “black-allochtoon” boy
- f) B: Pakistan: “*Sinterklaas is a very kind person*”, G: Nigeria: “*he is a very nice man that makes people happy especially the children*”.
- g) G: Italy: “*We celebrate the coming of Sinterklaas*”: G: Scotland: “*This is what we have been doing, near Christmas time, in December...we celebrate this on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December*”, G: Sweden/Bolivia: “*Our tradition is called Sinterklaas*”.
- h) Examples include: B: El Sal/Sweden: “*I feel that everyone likes Sinterklaas and that especially the younger kids get excited when he arrives. I think that Sinterklaas is very kind*” (B: El Sal/Sweden) and G: Poland/ South Africa: “*It is still very fun for all ages...older children and adults like to join and find it fun too*”.
- i) G: France/ USA, G: Portugal
- j) G: Italy, G: Scotland and G: Sweden/Bolivia
- k) This is also supplemented by a significant majority of children who made reference to Zwarte Piet’s athleticism. This did not occur on such a scale in either of the other two schools

Table 3 Children in Edith Stein School

- a) The parental background of the children was especially diverse with 17 of the children having Turkish parents (6 girls, 11 boys) 11 Moroccan (1 girl, 10 boys) 7 Surinamese (3 boys, 4 girls), 5 Dutch (2 girls, 3 boys), 5 Indian (1 girl, 4 boys), 4 Polish (2 girls, 2 boys) 2 Russian (2 girls), 2 Serbian (2 girls), 2 Netherlands Antilles (1 girl, 1 boy) 1 Thai (boy), 1 Egyptian (girl), 1 Cameroonian (girl), 1 St Kitts (boy), 1 Netherlands/ African (girl) 1 Egyptian/ Greek (girl), 1 Russian/Ukrainian (girl), 1 Pakistan (girl), 1 Portuguese (girl), 1 Portuguese/Dutch (boy) 1 Chinese (girl), 1 Ghanaian (girl) 1 Indonesian (boy), 1 Vietnamese ( girl), 1 Iraqi (boy).
- b) B: Turkey, G: Egypt/Greece, B: Morocco, B: Indo
- c) G: Portugal, G: Cameroon, B: Thailand, G: Morocco
- d) Examples include: “*I don't really like them but they're quite nice*” (B: Turkey) and “*Some love them but I don't*” (B: Suriname:)
- e) B: India
- f) Examples include B: India: “*He's just a white guy with too much money. They Want to make kids happy but they don't succeed*” and B: Ned Ant: “*I don't like him very much because he is the boss of brown people*” (see rejection section).
- g) 3 Turkey, 2 Morocco, 1 Poland, 1 Serbia, 1 Ukraine/Russia, 1 Iraq, 1 Indonesia, 1 China, 1 Russia, 1 Dutch, 1 Suriname, 1 Egypt.
- h) 2 India, 1 Morocco, 2 Suriname, 1 Netherlands Antilles, 1 Poland, 1 Turkey, 1 Portugal/Dutch
- i) 1 Netherlands Antilles, 1 Egypt/Greece
- j) 4 Turkey, 4 Morocco, 3 Dutch, 2 Suriname, 2 Poland, 1 Thai, 1 Viet, 1 India
- k) 4 Turkey, 2 Suriname, 1 Dutch, 1 Russia, 1 Serbia, 1 Pakistan, 1 Portugal, 1 Cambodia, 1 Dutch/Africa, 1 Ghana
- l) 7/11

Table 2: Written descriptions of Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas Edith Stein School

Deleted: ¶

Table 1 Table 2 Table 3 Table 4 Table 5 Table 6 Table 7

Colour of ZWARTE PIET & SINTERKLAAS		Colour	personification	Status/ Occupation		Possessions		Age Characteristics		Personal Traits: good or bad	Acceptance or Rejection		
ender	Parents	ZWART E PIET	SINTER KLAAS	ZWA RTE PIET	SINT ERK LAAS	ZWARTE PIET	SINT ERK LAAS	ZWA RTE PIET	SINTER KLAAS	ZWART E PIET	SINTERKLAAS	ZWARTE PIET	SINTER KLAAS
Turkey	none	none	n/a	n/a	kind of assistant	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	come every year	n/a	n/a	<i>A good fun for children</i>
Thailand	paint brown	none	no	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	red clothing, red hat, gold staff	old man	pretty cool	pretty cool	<i>A I think they're pretty cool and the presents as well</i>
Turkey	black	none	they're black	n/a	servant	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	old man, already died	n/a	n/a	<i>R I used to like it but not anymore because I don't get anything. I'm 13 and too old for SK</i>
Turkey	none	none	n/a	n/a	Servant	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<i>n/a</i>
Egy/Gre	is black	none	black	n/a	servant	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	v old, died long time ago	n/a	n/a	<i>R the slave is black and works for SK and it looks a little like discrimination. It's really</i>
													<i>DISCRIM</i>



Rus	none	none	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	A <i>It's a nice celebration for children</i> <i>R I like the idea of celebrating SK but when you get older &amp; discover he's not real the feeling goes away</i> <i>R I used to like it but now I know it doesn't exist</i>	<b>FUN</b>
Rus	brown skin colour	none	brown skin colour	n/a	n/a	n/a	hat w feather	mitre, red cloak	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<i>R most people 10 or over don't believe in SK</i> <i>A we celebrate SK by giving presents to family members, usually to children</i>	<b>AGE</b>
Dut	look black	none	no	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Americo	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<i>R most people 10 or over don't believe in SK</i> <i>A we celebrate SK by giving presents to family members, usually to children</i>	<b>AGE</b>
Suriname	completely black	none	completely black	n/a	n/a	n/a	hat, clown clothes	red cloak, mitre w cross, Americo	clown clothes	old white man	n/a	n/a	<i>R most people 10 or over don't believe in SK</i> <i>A we celebrate SK by giving presents to family members, usually to children</i>	<b>AGE</b>
Suriname	none	none	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	silk suits, silk hat w feather	hat w mitre, staff, cape w cross, Americo	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<i>R most little children believe but I know that he doesn't exist</i>	<b>PRESENTS</b>
Turkey	completely black	none	completely black	n/a	helpers	n/a	funny uniform	red cloak, red mitre, staff, Americo	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<i>R most little children believe but I know that he doesn't exist</i>	<b>AGE</b>

Morocco	don't understand why= black	none	don't unders tand why ZP is black	n/a	special servants	n/a	n/a	n/a	large white beard	n/a	n/a	<i>A It's a Christian tradition and most children believe in it... Only I don't understand why the ZP are black and why SK is old</i>	<b>AMBIG</b>	
Turkey	none	none	n/a	n/a	helper	n/a	n/a	hat and cloak	usually younger than SK	Wise old man	I think he's a nice man, just like those ZPs. I was initially scared of them	I think he's a nice man	<i>A It's lots of fun... I was initially scared of them (ZPs) but now I want everyone in the World to celebrate this</i>	<b>FUN</b>
India	chimney =black	none	no	n/a	helpers	used to be holy	n/a	n/a	n/a	large white beard	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Surinam	none	none	n/a	n/a	helper	n/a	n/a	red cloak, mitr w cross	n/a	old man who used to be holy	n/a	n/a	<i>A I think this day is a nice and enjoyable day</i>	<b>FUN</b>
Morocco	none	none	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	climbs roofs	long white beard	n/a	n/a	n/a	

Morocco	they're black	none	they're black	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	what an asshole. He comes here to fool the children	<i>R I hate SK. What I'd love to do most is pull out his beard. Oh yes! You knew he was fake, right? what an asshole. He comes here to fool the children</i>	<b>AMBIG</b>
Morocco	none	none	n/a	n/a	kind of present men	kind of present men	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	I still think SK is pretty cool because I still get presents	<i>A a nice Dutch tradition that everyone's proud of. I still think SK is pretty cool because I still get presents</i>	<b>PRESENTS</b>
Suriname	none	none	n/a	n/a	n/a	a person who gives presents	n/a	his ZPs	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<i>A I like SK because I get presents</i>	<b>PRESENTS</b>

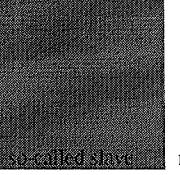


Morocco	none	none	n/a	n/a	little helper	n/a	n/a	n/a	little helper	n/a	n/a	very kind man	<i>A That is a very kind man who gives presents to children &amp; ZP is his little helper... You have to choose expensive stuff</i>	<b>PRESENTS</b>
Dut	none	none	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	very sweet man	<i>A SK is a very sweet man and when he comes he is going to check whether you have been sweet the whole year and then you'll get a present</i>	<b>PRESENTS</b>

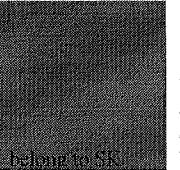
Turkey	dark brown	none	dark brown	n/a	n/a	n/a	ankle trouser s, black tights, hat w feather	long white/red dress, red mitre w cross	n/a	n/a	n/a	very sweet man, loves children, gives presents to all children, whatever the children like	<i>A SK is a very sweet man and loves children... That day he visits all schools to give the children presents. And as such all children are made happy. A They hand out the presents for the children.</i>
Turkey	black man	none	black man	n/a	n/a	n/a	colour ed hat, shorts, T-shirt	hat w cross, stick, long dress, his ZPs	n/a	n/a	n/a	<i>And in the NL we celebrate Sint&amp; Piet. Cool isn't it</i>	<b>PRESENTS</b>

Turkey	chimney =black	none	no	n/a	little helper	n/a	n/a	wears red/white and has mitre	little helper	used to be a helpful person	of course he didn't do that alone	SK used to be a helpful person, helping children	<i>A Lots of presents are given during the evening... all children are very happy, that is a pleasant feeling for me and for children.</i>	<b>PRESENTS</b>	
Turkey	none	none	n/a	n/a	little helper	n/a	n/a	big book, gingerbr ead, nuts marzipan , sweets	little helper	old man	n/a	n/a	<i>A every year we celebrate on the 5th of December</i>	<b>AMBIG</b>	
Turkey	none	none	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	throw ginger bread nuts	n/a	throw gingerbr ead nuts	n/a	n/a	Sk is quite nice	<i>A I think Sk is quite nice A We have celebrated SK today. It was lots of fun. SK brings presents for children each year and it becomes a cheerful feast.</i>	<b>FUN</b>
Serbia	are black	none	are black	n/a	assistants	n/a	n/a	red/ white clothes, long red hat	n/a	white beard	n/a	n/a			<b>FUN</b>
Pakistan	are black	none	are black	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	he had died on 5th December	n/a	n/a	<i>A special holiday....we</i>	<b>FUN</b>	

													celebrate...fun day
Portugal	none	none	n/a	n/a	help SK	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	they are very friendly	n/a	A here we celebrate it on 5 December... I wish you a happy SK day R In other words it is nice for small children but I don't like it
Polish	none	none	n/a	n/a	servant	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	AGE
Neth/Port	none	none	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Colourful clothing & red hat w feather	bishop hat, red clothes	n/a	old man	n/a	n/a	R dumb party but do celebrate it with my family
Suriname	none	none	n/a	n/a	SK's best friends	holy man for many people	n/a	n/a	n/a	holy man for many people	some love them but I don't	some love them but I don't	R The Sint is a holy man for many people. Some love them but I don't R Here in NL, they celebrate each year... Every child gets a present from him, but their
Curacao	none	none	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	bishop hat, long red suit, golden stick	n/a	long white beard	n/a	n/a	n/a	AMBIG

China	completely black	none	completely black	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Americo	n/a	old man, white beard	n/a	n/a	<i>R I think SK is nice for the children. When I was small I also liked the holiday A This holiday is usually for the children. I hope that you like this holiday R they celebrate. Kind of liked it in the past but now I think it's a bit childish A I think it's a nice holiday because everyone is happy and I get presents</i>	<b>AGE</b>	
Ghana	painted brown	none	no	n/a	buddy of SK, helps SK	n/a	n/a	red hat ( like Pope)	n/a	red hat ( like Pope)	n/a	n/a	<i>R they celebrate. Kind of liked it in the past but now I think it's a bit childish A I think it's a nice holiday because everyone is happy and I get presents</i>	<b>FUN</b>	
Morocco	totally black complexion	none	totally black complexion	n/a		n/a	n/a	long red robe	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<i>R they celebrate. Kind of liked it in the past but now I think it's a bit childish A I think it's a nice holiday because everyone is happy and I get presents</i>	<b>AGE</b>	
Polish	none	none	n/a	n/a	helper	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	like SC	n/a	n/a	<i>R they celebrate. Kind of liked it in the past but now I think it's a bit childish A I think it's a nice holiday because everyone is happy and I get presents</i>	<b>PRESENTS</b>	

3	Turkey	black skin	none	black skin	n/a	n/a	n/a	colour ed clothi ng, throw ginger bread nuts	red hat, red clothes, has Pieten	throw gingerbread nuts	old man, long white hair, long white beard	n/a	n/a	R I myself do not like SK that much. I am too old for it. It is just for small children A SK I like because he gives everyone a present	AGE
3	Turkey	black man	none	black man	n/a	helper	n/a	ginger bread nuts	red clothing	n/a	old man	n/a	n/a	R I don't like SK at all. The holiday is meant for small children	PRESENTS
3	Indonesi a	none	none	n/a	n/a	slaves	n/a	n/a	Americo	n/a	old man	n/a	n/a	A In Nl, they celebrate SK...I like SK, because we get presents	AGE
3	Vietnam	none	none	n/a	n/a	helper	n/a	n/a	Americo	n/a	old man	n/a	n/a	R I don't like SK at all. The holiday is meant for small children	PRESENTS
3	Polish	black	none	are black	n/a	n/a	n/a	weird clothin g	long cape, hat & big stick	n/a	like SC	n/a	n/a	R I don't like it	AMBIG
3	Turkey	none	none	n/a	n/a	carries sack	n/a	sack w presen ts	n/a	carries sack	long white beard	n/a	n/a	n/a	

Polish	none	none	n/a	n/a		boss of everything	n/a	Americo and ZP's (belong to SK)	n/a	old grandpa	n/a	n/a	<i>A think is is a nice holiday because we get presents and don't have to go to school</i>	<b>PRESENTS</b>	
Turkey	completely black complexion	none	completely black complexion	n/a	helpers	n/a	n/a	Americo	n/a	old man	n/a	n/a	<i>n/a</i>		
Turkey	completely black	none	completely black	n/a	n/a	n/a	feathers in hat	red clothes, hat w yellow, Americo	n/a	n/a	I don't really like them but they are quite nice	I don't really like them but they are quite nice	<i>A I don't really like them but they are quite nice. That day will be a nice day</i>	<b>AMBIG</b>	
Morocco	black	none	are black	n/a	n/a	n/a	hat w feather	red hat, ZPs and Americo	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<i>n/a</i>		
Turkey	black	none	are black	n/a	n/a	n/a	hat w feather	red mitre, hat w cross, gold staff, has ZPs	n/a	old man	n/a	n/a	<i>n/a</i>		

Dutch	are brown	none	are brown	n/a	n/a	n/a	hat w nice feather , beauti ful colour s	looks beautiful , mitre & staff, nice robe	n/a	n/a	n/a	He is so nice that we call 5 Dec Sinterklaa sday	<i>A Sk goes to a couple of schools and gives presents to the good children. He is so nice that we call 5 Dec Sinterklaasd y</i>	<b>PRESENTS</b>
India	black head	none	no	n/a	n/a	n/a	large golden earrin gs, big sack	staff, red hat, mitre, Americo	big sack	white beard	n/a	n/a	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
Turkey	none	none	n/a	n/a	helpers	n/a	nice clothin g	Americo	n/a	n/a	n/a	nice man who wants to shake hands with everyone	<i>A He is quite a nice man who wants to shake hands with everyone</i>	<b>FUN</b>

Morocco	brown	white	are brown	Is white	n/a	n/a	colour ed hat w feather	long robe, mitre	n/a	very old	nice people	nice people.	<i>R To be honest I think SK is nice for little children. Because when you are big you don't really care anymore</i>	<i>AGE</i>
Iraq	none	none	n/a	n/a	little helper	n/a	n/a	Americo	little helper	old man	n/a	not a nice man.	<i>R I think SK is childish and it is not a nice man</i>	<i>AGE</i>
Ned Ant	brown people	none	brown people	n/a	n/a	brown people	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	I don't like him very much because he is the boss of brown people	<i>R I don't like him very much because he is the boss of brown people called Zwarre Piet</i>	<i>DISCRIM</i>
Morocco	always black	none	always black	n/a	helpers	angel Sint	colour ed suits	mitre, kind man in red	n/a	white beard	n/a	kind man in red, angel Sint	<i>the kind Sint birthday so it's a tradition to give everyone a</i>	<i>PRESENTS</i>

India	are black in colour and this colour doesn't exist	none	no	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<i>R It's a little ridiculous because SK comes every year and he never actually dies. And the Piets, they are black and this colour doesn't exist</i>	<i>AMBIG</i>
India	black man	white guy	black man	white guy	n/a	n/a	weird clothing, bag sweets	weird clothing	n/a	n/a	ZP is a loser	<i>R I think SK is a white guy with too much money and ZP is a loser, and they want to be cool but they just screw it up. They want to make kids happy but they don't succeed</i>	<i>AMBIG</i>

*present. I like that*

Dut	none	none	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	skirts w pants. Unfor tunate ly is Zeem an	Americo, nice clothes, red & white: knows a lot about good fashion	n/a	n/a	worst Piet is cool Piet. I swear, only he's quite good	n/a	<i>A I really like SK because then I get presents</i>	<b>PRESENTS</b>
Morocco	none	none	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	hat w cross, long staff	n/a	old man	n/a	n/a	<i>A I like SK because it makes all the children happy with presents</i>	<b>PRESENTS</b>	
Dutch	black	none	black	n/a	helpers	n/a	nice suits	red mitre, red clothes, Americo	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<i>A As a small child I enjoyed this a lot... I say come to NL and celebrate with us</i>	<b>FUN</b>
India	none	none	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Americo	n/a	very old man	n/a	he's sweet	<i>A We celebrate that on Friday night which is present night!</i>	<b>PRESENTS</b>

Table 3: HSV International Stream Images and Written descriptions

		All 10-11 year olds: Group 7				
ext	Gender	Parents Nationality	Image ZWARTE PIET	Image SINTERKLAAS	Written description ZWARTE PIET	Written description SINTERKLAAS
arrow	Girl	M=Swe F=Bol	Y-Dark black skin, big red lips+smile, baggy trousers, hat with feather	Y-Pink skin, Beard and smile, gold staff, mitre w. cross, red cloak	Dark skinned person, helper of, wears bright colours, very acrobatic	Like S.Cl., long white beard, red cloak, red mitre w. gold cross, gold staff, has helpers (ZP's) and white horse, gives presents, fake
	Boy	Both=Pakistani	Y-Dark black skin, smile, baggy outfit, hat with feather	Y-Beard+smile, gold staff, mitre w. cross, red cloak	Helper of SK, paint faces black, different names e.g. music piet	Very kind person, white beard, red suit, black gloves, gold staff, different transport, religious, white horse
	Boy	Both=Ecuadorian N		N- but pict of staff+ mitre w. cross	1of2 good assistants, gives sweets, very acrobatic, purple red+black clothes, very dark skin	A man, holds golden staff, red suit+hat w. cross. Has 2 assistants: horse(Americano)+ZP's, leaves presents
	Girl	Both=Nigerian N		Y-smile +beard, red mitre w. cross	Has really dark skin, an assistant of SK	Very nice man: makes people happy esp. children, long white hair+beard, comes w. 2 pretty horses, comes from Spain, has an assistant
	Girl	M=Fra F=US	Y-Brown skin, smile, puffy pants, hat w. feather	Y-pink cheeks, red mitre w. cross, smile w. people w. very dark skin+curly black hair, hat w. feather, usu. Wear trainers	like S.C., "has" ZP's instead of reindeers, long robe, staff, from Spain, gives presents	
	Girl	Both= Italian	Y-puffy pants, hat w. feather, blank expressions	Y-Staff, mitre w. cross, horse	live in Sp, has dark skin, hat w. feather, climb on roofs+throw presents	long white beard, red hat+cross, "HIS ZP"+horse called Americano, visits schools

Girl	Girl	Both=English	Y-Dark black skin, curly hair, puffy trousers, <b>red lips+smile</b> , hat w feather	Y-Pink skin, mitre w. cross, red cloak, gold helper, black faces+hat w. feather, throw sweets+pepernoten to children, Athletic staff	Like S.C., has ZP helpers, comes to houses+ rooftops w. horse, "HIS ZP", children get excited
	Boy	M=El Sal F=Swe	Y-hat w feather, <b>curly hair, smile, servantile neck choker</b>	Y-smile +beard, staff, mitre w. cross, cloak	by boat from Sp, throw sweets+mandarines to children, like reindeers to SC, people w. black skin
lmes	Girl	Both Portugese	Y-black face+smile, curly hair, orange eyes, hat w. feather	Y-face w. beard+smile, mitre w. cross, staff, cloak, horse	assistant is <b>black</b> +drags bags of sweets, many diff types:funny,angry, singing, High, trouble, favourite part of SK
sten	Girl	Both English	Y-Black face+red lips, curly hair, hat w. feather, neck choker	Y-face w. beard+red lips, mitre w. cross, staff	SK helpers, lots of them, black w. black curly hair, 1 piet is very bad-Rommel piet (trouble), I danced w. him
	Girl	M=Pol F=Sth Afr	Y-curly hair, red lips, red hat w feather, Y-beard+long hair, mitre w. cross, gold crossed legs, bag of sweets	assistant, v. dark skin, v. acrobatic w. colorful clothes, hat w. feather+curly hair, ride on roofs w. Sk, drop sweets	from Sp, white hair, beard+moustache, mitre w. cross+gold staff, comes in diff ways, arrives by boat, lots of fun
	Boy	M=Hung/Ger F=US/Mal	Y-black skin, big eyes, green clothes, hat w. feather	N	Old Bish, lives in Sp, red+gold attire, silver beard, fest=bit childish but still fun for older children+ adults
ng	Girl	Both Italian	N	N	Sk assistants, hands out sweets, tells stories ab. Journey, sm. Children believe+look forward to, little hat w. feather
	Boy	Both Romanian	N	N	wears old Swe bishop's costume, gives sweets, do a surprise at school: pick name out of hat+make present for the child
				SK helper	Bishop, old, cool, from Sp, horse called Americo:cool
				Assistant	Pick name from hat+ buy present, comes different way, dressed all in red w. long beard, appear on TV for an episode

Girl	Both Scottish	N	Y-beard, mitre w. cross, red cloak, gold staff	Normally quite athletic+throw sweets in the air, walk thru streets+give sweets to children	From Sp, gives sweets, like S.C., big celebration+special for me now, travels on big white horse
Boy	M=UK F=Dutch	N	N	Assistants, look like people who are bad but are not, very naughty, put chairs on top of each other, v. dangerous, chimneys make faces black, very gymnastic all over the roof: don't even need a ladder	Big person, big red hat: v. odd, v. kind (says it 3 times), gives presents to others on his b.day, really fun, really good, got magic, not fake, military tried to catch him but failed, got friends, cousins: hundreds of them who help

Table 4: Written descriptions from Nutsschool Nutshage school Groups 7 (10-11) and Group 8 (11-12)

Mixture of Group 7 (10-11)+Group 8 (11-12)					
Boy	Dutch	N	N	<b>black w. various outfits, always happy, helpers</b>	man who gives presents, has ZP's, red mitre w. gold, golden staff, red cape, white horse
Boy	Dutch	N	N	<b>black face, coloured suits, always happy, help SK</b>	long hat, gold staff w. diamonds, red suit, long beard. Has lots of ZPs
Boy	Dutch	N	N	<b>black w. little curls, v. bendy+ climb</b>	red hat, cape, gives lots of presents, horse called Americo
Girl	Dutch	N	N	<b>black as soot, dressed, super funny, kind of helpers</b>	Friendly man, long white beard, long white cape, mitre, has super funny kind of helpers, bishop
Girl	Dutch	N	N	<b>brown men+women, all kinds</b>	quite an old man, red tabard, mitre, all <u>his</u> ZPs, gold staff, big book: good/bad children, horse
Girl	Dutch	N	N	<b>completely black=chimneys.</b>	Always takes 2-3 ZPs along
Girl	Dutch	N	N		sing songs, gives presents to every class grade

le      Girl      Dutch      N

Girl Dutch N

N

helpers, close to black, lots of curls,  
stands wide/round, berret w. long  
feather, distribute presents

old man, bishop of Mira: Turkey, used to do very good things for children, long white beard, long moustache, always wears a mitre w. Jesus cross, red cape, white gloves, beautiful red ring in right hand, staff: upper side ends in spiral, white dress, purple trousers, red scarf, totally white horse: Americo

chool - | Girl - Dutch - - - N  
zeabel

Girl-Dutch- - - - N

— N — — — — — — — — — — — — —

Little helpers: black as soot, curly black hair, knickerbockers+beret, come from Sp used to be Bishop of Mira, many good things for children, red mitre, like the Pope, wears a dress, cape, purple — trousers, staff+ring, grey horse, has little helpers

**Deleted: nn**

Girl Dutch N

Girl Dutch N

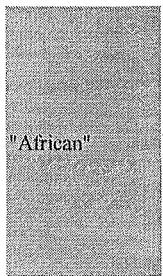
N

black as regards to skin colour bec he  
with SK climbs through chimney

long white beard, mitre, cape, white dress, lots of rings w diamonds. Has little helper, horse called Americo: such a cuty

Girl	Dutch	N	N	don't think it's <b>discrimination</b> at all bec lots of children like it. Only a positive sign for <b>dark/coloured</b> people bec ZP= sweet, funny, playful, naughty, nice, above all <b>not mean</b> . Children would find it a real pity if Zp wouldn't be there anymore. ZP always come+ I have fun, one is in love w me +my friend+ my teacher: always find that quite jolly. Always a mess-Piet so <b>funny</b> : you have to clean up whole classroom	I always like _____	<b>Deleted: SK</b>
Girl	Dutch	N	N	Don't believe anymore but good for younger children.ZP= <b>little helper</b>	Nice/sweet man, gives presents/sweets, Zp= <b>his little helper</b> , has horse. SK+ZP do not exist	
Girl	Dutch	N	N	Why ZP= <b>discriminating</b> I do not understand	Nice atmosphere around Sinterklaas	

Boy



"African"

N

N

some people think that ZPs come  
across as discriminating: don't  
understand why? I have asked why: in v nice person, but I myself do not do  
the past black people=slaves of white anything with it but in school I take part  
traders+ they say it comes across in it, similar to SC  
wrong?

Appendix 3: "Welcoming" Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas into The Netherlands. Photos taken on 17th November 2007



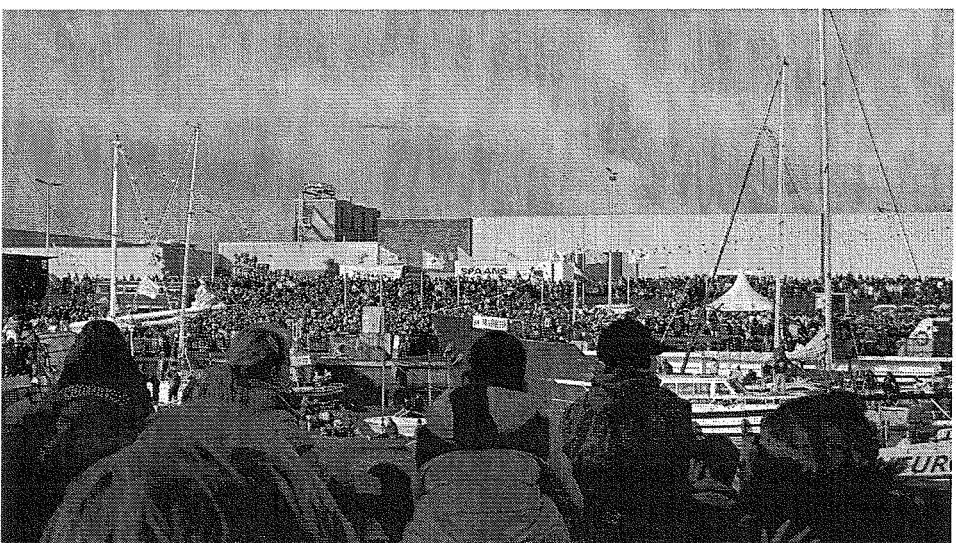
Male Piet and apprehensive looking girl



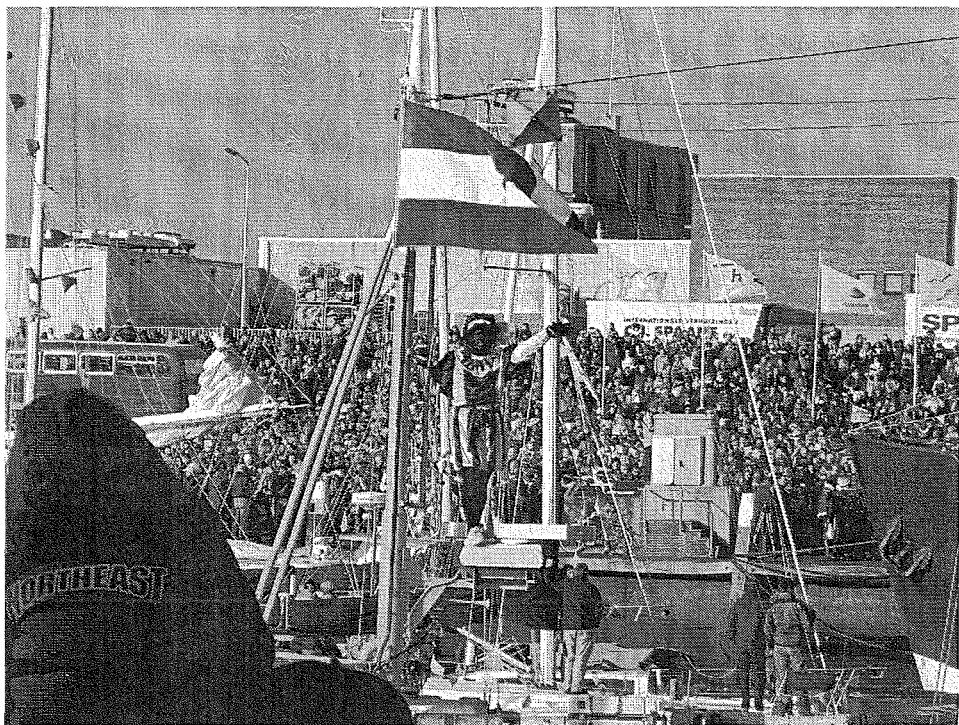
Arrival from Spain



Crowds waiting to greet the grand arrival



Zwarte Piet under the Dutch flag



But it's for the children of course



Melancholic Piet



Caring Piet



The official welcoming



Child observing the official welcoming



A rare child Sinterklaas



Piet with "Afro wig" and no make up



Playing Piets with suspicious looking observer in background



Meanwhile back in the city centre....



Peace Piet







And in the shops....



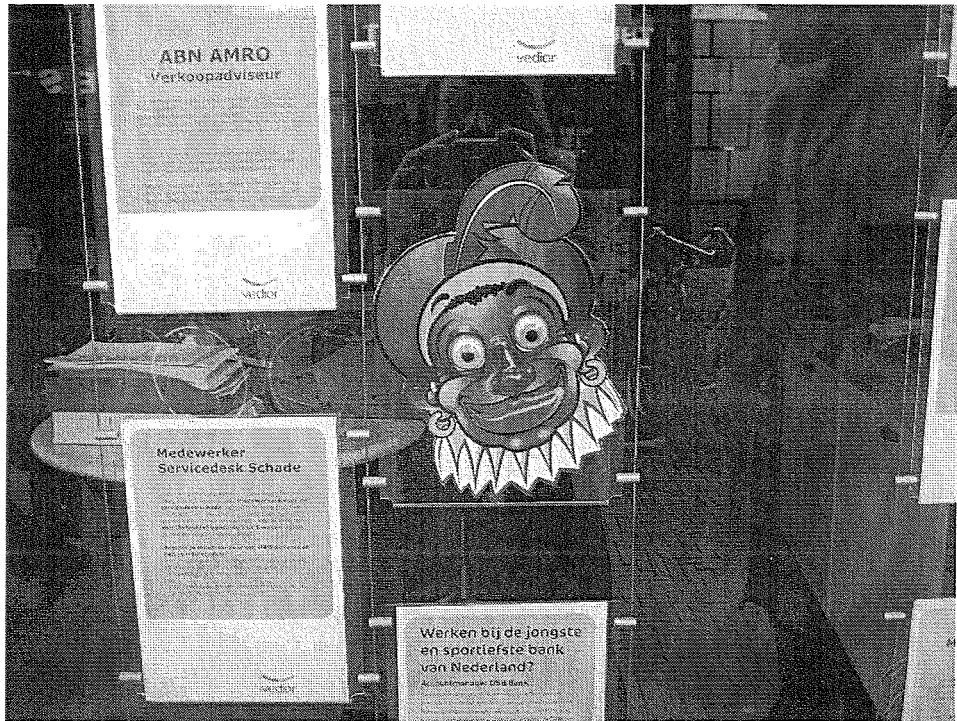
Pharmacy Piet



Expensive Pen Piet



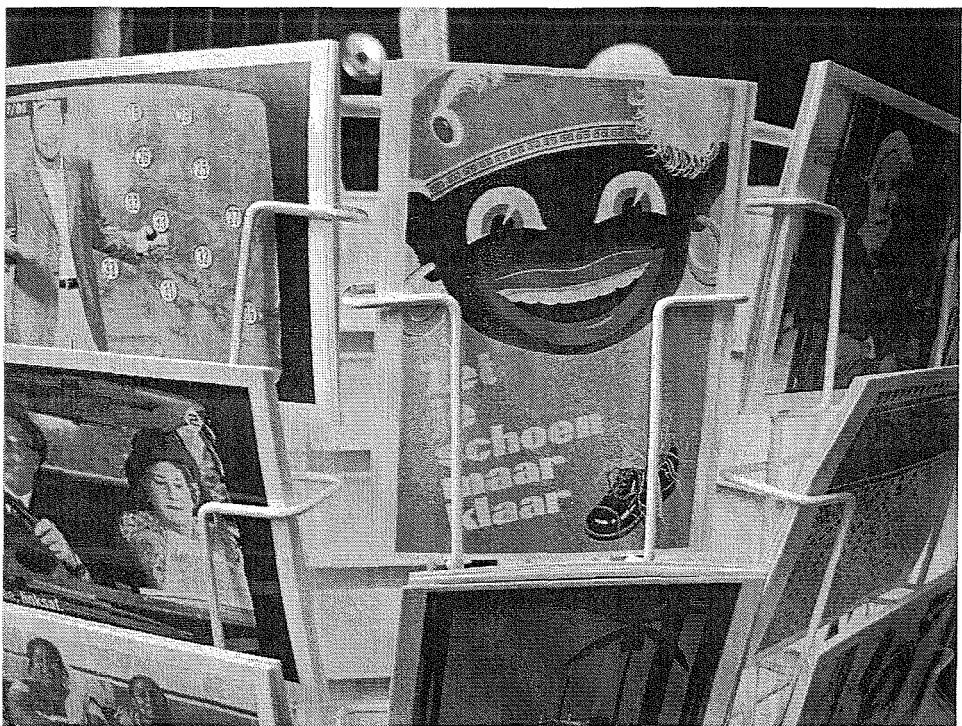
Find a job agency Piet



Chocolate Piets



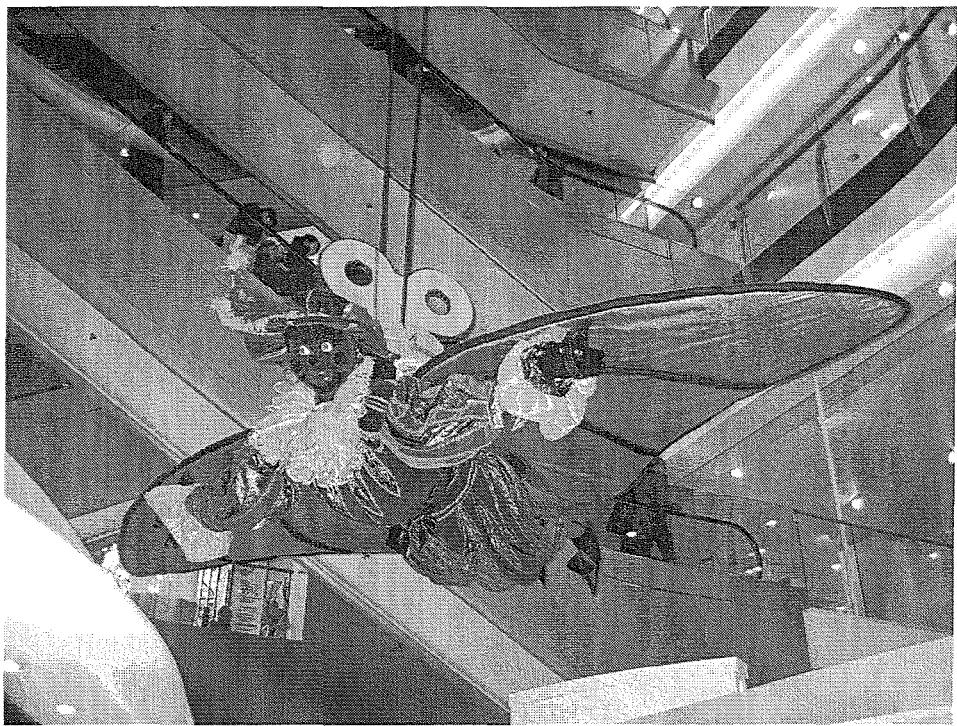
Postcard Piet



De Bijenkorf Piet



One you cannot miss: flying de Bijenkorf Piet



And just for the children....



