



# HOW TO CONFRONT STRUCTURAL RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AT GERMAN UNIVERSITIES IN THE POSTCOLONIAL ERA?

**Lecture Series:  
Concepts of inclusion of disadvantages groups to education**

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# Content

- Global context & inequality
- Inequality and discrimination in the German Education System
- Whiteness, privilege and racism
- How do we see the world?
- Cultural essentialism and racism
- Spaces for creativity and pluriversal knowledge
- How to create ethical solidarity with the Other as part of teaching?

# Global context and inequality

Since the end of colonialism: exclusive growth/externalization/imperial lifestyles.  
Since Corona: rapid increase in global inequalities within and between countries and regions

Increase of conflicts, climate emergency, mass displacement and migration, xenophobia

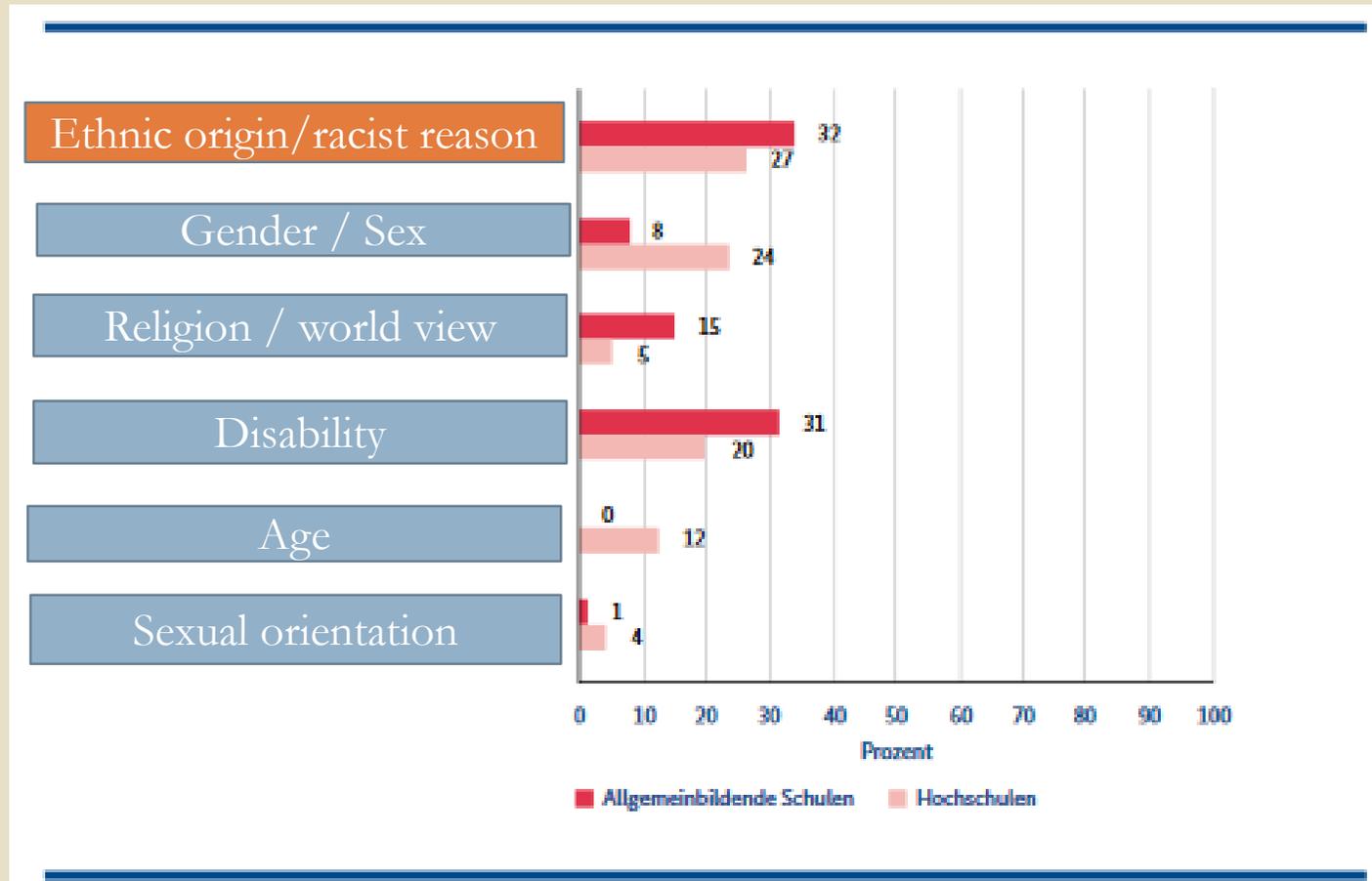
Global challenges destabilize the European education systems as it engages with the “colonial matrix of power” (Mignolo 2011) and the dark side of modernity

Increasingly heterogeneous students community with diverse cultural, political, social and economic backgrounds

Poor study performance in Germany is perceived as linked to gender (41,4) **ethnic origin** (30,8%), class (22,8%), age (17,3%) (Federal Antidiscrimination Office 2017)

# Inequality and discrimination in the German Education System

Figure 1: AGG (general equality law) related discrimination features and requests for advice from the areas of general education schools and universities



Source: Advice requests to the federal anti-discrimination office in the 2013–2016 reporting period

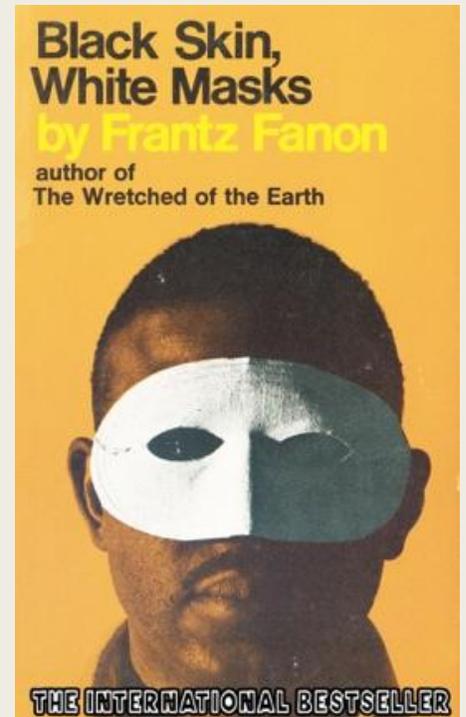
# Whiteness, privilege and racism

“White is not a color. White is a political definition, which represents historical, political and social privileges of a certain group that has access to dominant structures and institutions of society. Whiteness represents the reality and history of a certain group. When we talk about what it means to be white, then we talk about politics and certainly not about biology. Just like the term black is a political identity, which refers to a historicity, political and social realities and not to biology.”

Author and psychoanalyst Dr. Grada Kilomba

Spivak (1998, p. 271) describes the inevitable power imbalance clearly:

An understanding of contemporary relations of power, and of the Western intellectual's role within them, requires an examination of the intersection of a theory of representation and the political economy of global capitalism. A theory of representation points, on the one hand, to the domain of ideology, meaning, and subjectivity, and, on the other hand, to the domain of politics, the state, and the law.



# How do we see the world?

- Tendency of Western scientists to present their knowledge and values as universal (Battiste, 2004)
- Mignolo (2000) conceptualizes this perspective as the universalization of a local European epistemology, with it the claim to neutrality, objectivity, secularity, all myths related to modernity and cultural Western hegemony.
- Spivak (1999) conceptualizes this (cultural) attitude as a movement towards subordination (subalternization) and normalization of difference (epistemical violence)

The social work scholar Dieter Röh, for example, argues that Indigenous knowledge must be decontextualized for scientific inclusion and examined with methods of Western science (Röh 2020).

# Cultural essentialism and racism

Bhabha, Spivak and Battiste: Cultural essentialism as a problem, which reproduces an identical version of Western culture/identity/nature of science. In its extreme form, this becomes cultural racism.

- University Curricula must include the reconceptualisation of "mainstream culture" as a "changing, fluid area of action", be open to dialogue and cooperation with "marginalized" knowledges and cultures (Battiste 2004)
- There is a need for a pedagogical strategy to destabilize the cultural-essential Eurocentric position that drives the social sciences, to demand the recognition of pluriversal knowledges and to promote hybridity ➡ "Third Space" (Bhabha 1994)
- Permanent critique and reflection of one's own theories, methods and representations (selection criteria, examination procedures, appeal procedures)



# Exp.: Spaces for *Creativity*

**Border thinking** (Mignolo 2006)– Balancing the colonial power matrix (who defines human rights, through which processes?)

“Bottom-up” validation of autonomy and self-determination - whilst setting ethical standards.

- ‘Minimum core’ social rights - ‘adequate standard of living’: UDHR ART 25; ICESCR - Article 11; CRC -Art 27.
- “...necessary subsistence rights: adequate food and nutrition, clothing, housing and the necessary conditions of care.
- Right of families to assistance and social security, women’s rights, migrant’s rights

Methodological considerations:

- Rights-from-below approach; mobilising rights (social activism perspective) (Ife 2012)
- Reflections ‘in’/through field-based learning / experiences (Lesvos camps)
- Expressions using Creative Pedagogies - zine/media/theater; power of poetry
- Development of understanding of how knowledges are produced, how they relate to power

- ***‘Es tut mir leid, I am Sorry’: A poem on the situation of Lesbos.***

- *I’m sorry that you had to be victims of circumstances,  
Only to get here  
and it is worse than where you used to be,  
Life is so unfair sometimes,  
I’m sorry you had to face indescribable horror here:.....*

- Excerpt from poem by Rita Odion

Public Event, Munich School of Philosophy 8.12.19

‘Engaged research’ (activism, civil society)

Poetry as a means to **witness** an act of **poiesis**, making sense  
Creative expression offers affirmation and clarity

...decolonization is a language of urgency, a language that is both timely and timeless (Morris 2020)

# Discussion:

Where do we stand in the process of decolonizing knowledge (research, theories, methods, teaching) in European Universities?

What should be our priority?

# How to create ethical solidarity with the Other as part of teaching?

- engage with complex local or global processes and diverse perspectives
- to examine the origins and implications of their own and other people's assumptions
- to negotiate change, to transform relationships, to dream different dreams, to confront fears and to make ethical choices about their own lives and how they affect the lives of others by analyzing and using power and privilege in ethical and accountable ways
- to live with and learn from difference and conflict and to know how to prevent conflict from escalating into aggression and violence

# How to create ethical solidarity with the Other as part of teaching?

- to cherish life's unsolved questions and to sit comfortably in the discomfort and uncertainty that it creates;
- to establish ethical relationships of solidarity across linguistic, regional, ideological and representational boundaries (i.e., to be open to the Other) and
- to negotiate principles and values “in context”; and to enjoy their open and uncertain individual and collective learning journeys.

(Andreotti, 2010)

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