Postcolonial Sentiments on Curaçao: On how Dutch and Curaçaoan Inhabitants Relate to Colonial History

Bults, Hannah

Universiteit Leiden

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''History, as no one seems to know, is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do.''

James Baldwin

Hannah Bults

S2998134

Supervised by Benjamin Fogarty

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Abstract

This article reflects on how Dutch and Curaçaoan inhabitants of Curaçao relate to their shared colonial history. Postcolonial sentiments is coined as a term to discuss the networks of emotions and attitudes that relate to colonial history. My own experience and position, being a white and Dutch woman, is included in the discussion. By deploying ethnographic methods, data was gathered during a 10-week period of fieldwork on Curaçao. Gathered data was analysed by means of a qualitative content analysis. It is argued that postcolonial sentiments seem to be concerned with narratives of inferiority and superiority complexes. Moreover, the discussion of postcolonial sentiments was often approached through the lens of national discourse. Finally, it is suggested that postcolonial guilt could form an incentive for reparative behaviour.

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Introduction

A renewed discussion about the Dutch colonial history was generated two years ago, in the context of the Black Lives Matter protests the Netherlands (Vermeer, 2020). Statues were removed and naming practices questioned. Over the last months, apologies have been expressed by the Dutch government regarding the violent colonial history in Indonesia (Geurts, 2022), Suriname (Deceuninck, 2022), and a discussion about recommendations regarding reparations for Curaçao will take place next week (the 27th of June) in the Hague (van Dam, 2022). These events were followed by controversial response in Dutch society, as articulated in the media. The removal of statues and names was critiqued for not implying a fundamental reconsideration of Dutch colonial history (Philipse, 2020). It has moreover been argued that a complete and honest record of colonial history and its consequences has been lacking in Dutch education (van der Hoeven, 2020; Gibbs, 2016; Soudagar, 2019) – although the 'Canon van Nederland' has been adapted accordingly in 2020. Apologies with regard to Dutch colonialism and slavery have been encouraged (van der Beek, 2021) as well as critiqued (Geels & Dietvorst, 2021). Not long before these developments, prime minister Mark Rutte expressed in 2019 that we should be very proud of the 'Golden Age' of Dutch colonialism (Keultjes, 2019).

These lively discussions triggered a reconsideration of my own position in the debate. I became increasingly aware of the far-reaching consequences of colonialism, such as its profound psychological effects (Fanon, 1961). This awareness triggered a sense of guilt about my privileged position as a white woman coming from a previously colonizer country (the Netherlands). In the proposal for the present study I had described this guilt as unproductive and useless. Moreover, some writers have criticized 'postcolonial guilt' for being selfish (Steele, 1990) and often handled with denial (Steele, 1990; Maddison, 2012). It has however also been argued that guilt can motivate support for reparation (Alpress et al., 2010), which is a finding I will endorse by discussing my own experience. The question of how I am to position myself in the debate, evolved in the following years into a general interest in how people currently relate to colonial history.

Colonialism can be defined as ''a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another'' (Kohn & Reddy, 2006). Sartre (1956) emphasized that colonialism is a systemic form of exploitation, and Fanon (1961) stressed that colonialism is inherently

violent and has profound psychological effects. How do the descendants of colonizer and colonized countries relate to this violent history today? This study will address *postcolonial sentiments*, which is coined as a term to discuss the networks of emotions and attitudes that relate to colonial history. The remembrance of colonial history can induce group-based emotions, which are emotions experienced in response to (the memory of) events that affect the group one identifies with (Bobowik, Valentim & Licata, 2018). These emotions are informed by social representations of colonial history, meaning the way that this history is framed and remembered (Bobowik, Valentim & Licata, 2018). Attributing a positive role to the ingroup (ie., the nation one identifies with) in the remembrance of past events can induce a sense of pride, whereas a negative role can induce feelings of guilt or shame (Licata et al., 2018). Negative ingroup history may moreover be suppressed, denied, or remained ignorant of. As these sentiments held by formerly colonizer and colonized groups can (negatively) influence the contemporary relation between these groups (Bobowik, Valentim & Licata, 2018), they are important to address.

In the present study, postcolonial sentiments will be addressed in the context of Curaçao. In the Caribbean Sea, over 7500 kilometers away from the Dutch coast lies the island of Curaçao, a constituent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Curaçao used to be a colony of the Dutch, who started bringing in enslaved people from West-Africa in 1665 and turned the island into a slave market (Roe, 2016). Slavery was abolished in 1863, but the former enslaved have been in a position of social and economic disadvantage ever since (Allen, 2014). According to Roe (2016), racial inequality is ingrained in Curaçao's national identity. After decolonization, many Dutch people stayed on the island or moved there in the following decades because the countries remained connected in a complex political structure, as will be elucidated later. The current population of Curaçao consists of predominantly African-descendants, and a great variety of minority groups. The Dutch make up about 6% of the population (Pieters, 2021). It is a multiracial society, counting approximately 150.000 people (Roe, 2016).

My preliminary research indicated a complex contemporary relation between Dutch and Curaçaoan inhabitants of Curaçao. The documentaries Curaçao (2010) and Onder Elkaar (2013) portray a tense relation between the Dutch and Curaçaoan inhabitants, expressed in mutual incomprehension and frustration. Both show an image of ignorant behaviour of rich

Dutch people residing in 'resorts'[1]. In Curaçao (2010, 1:01:02), Joceline Clemencia[2] explains how Curaçaoans developed an inferiority complex resulting from the island's history of colonialism and slavery. She describes how this still plays a role in the relation between Dutch and Curaçaoan inhabitants today. Dutch inhabitants conversely argue to put the past behind and move on, therewith approaching colonialism and slavery as no longer relevant topics that belong to a distant past. The makers argue that colonial history is collectively silenced. Onder Elkaar (2013) shows an image of several Dutch inhabitants expressing racist ideas, seemingly ignorant of the island's history of colonialism and slavery. This was subsequently criticized by those portrayed (Schults, 2013), claiming that a bad image of Dutch inhabitants was sensationalized for the purpose of high audience ratings. Similarly, Curaçao (2010) has been critiqued for being demagogic in its portrayal of Dutch inhabitants. It should therefore be questioned if these documentaries portray a nuanced image, moreover, both documentaries focus on the Dutch perspective. Literature demonstrates enduring racial inequality as a consequence of colonial history, but there are no academic texts engaging with the relation between Dutch and Curaçaoan inhabitants in particular, and how they relate to this history. However, because Bobowik, Valentim & Licata (2018) suggest that the way people represent colonial history plays a role in the relation between former colonizer and colonized groups, it is an important matter to address. They moreover state that the relation between colonial history and contemporary intergroup relations has been overlooked and ignored, and that empirical research has rarely included the perspective of both former colonizer and colonized groups simultaneously.

This study addresses postcolonial sentiments on Curaçao, because I want to understand how Dutch and Curaçaoan inhabitants of Curaçao relate to their shared colonial history. The aim of this study is to contribute to insights about the way colonial history shapes contemporary experiences of former colonizer and colonized groups, and the way these groups relate to each other. The perspective of both Dutch and Curaçaoan inhabitants will be included to seek for a nuanced understanding of the issue. The Black Lives Matter protests of 2020 brought renewed attention to the colonial history of the Netherlands, leading to valuable discussions and measures. Without dismissing these positive developments, I argue for the importance of educational recourses concerning the role that colonial history still plays in contemporary

[1] Gated communities on Curaçao such as Jan Sofat or Coral Estate often go by the name of 'resorts'.
[2] Joceline Clemencia (1952-2011) was a Curaçaoan writer and activist.

social issues. Colonialism is often dismissed as something from the past that is longer relevant today, which complicates critical engagement with contemporary issues that result from it.

To examine postcolonial sentiments on Curaçao, I have spent ten weeks on the island conducting ethnographic research. Ethnography entails the immersion in a place for an extended period of time, to investigate social interaction with the aim of identifying as many grounding assumptions as possible (Boellstorff, 2015). Ethnography recognizes an active role of the researcher, in the production but also the analysis of data. It is important to note that the purpose of this study is not to make any generalizable claims but rather to engage in deep and meaningful interactions within a particular context in order to potentially increase understanding about phenomena that extend beyond that context. Fassin (2013) argued that in order for ethnography to play a role in society, it must be simultaneously critical and public. This ethnography will therefore be publicly accessible, in the form of a multi-modal website[3]. The purpose of this web-based presentation is to reach an audience beyond the academic world.

The article will be structured as follows. I will begin by discussing the postcolonial context of Curaçao, leading up to the current political construction between Curaçao and the Netherlands. I will then provide a theoretical framework in which I explain and situate the most important concepts and terminology that will be deployed in this study. In the subsequent methodology section, I will elaborate on how the research was conducted as well as on ethical considerations. Thereafter, I will provide an analysis of postcolonial sentiments, including a discussion on support for reparations. Concluding remarks will be presented in the final section.

Theoretical Framework

Postcolonial Context

Curaçao's society is shaped by colonial times (Roe, 2016). Its complex and disruptive history of colonialism and slavery will not be covered entirely for the sake of this study, which focuses on the implications of Dutch colonialism for Curaçao's contemporary society. The

[3] www.postcolonialsentiments.com

indigenous population of Curaçao (the Caquetios) was – after the island was invaded by the Spanish in 1499 – almost in its entirety transferred to Hispaniola to be sold as slaves (Oostindie & Stipriaan, 2021). The shared history between Curaçao and the Netherlands begins in 1634 when the island is taken from the Spaniards by the West Indian Compagnie (WIC). By 1665 the WIC started bringing in enslaved people from West-Africa, turning the island into a slave market (Roe, 2016). Besides being a transit place, many were enslaved on Curaçaoan plantations and remained on the island. With the bankruptcy of the WIC in 1791, Curaçao became a Dutch colony. Ever since the abolition of slavery in 1863, the formerly enslaved Curaçaoans have been in a position of social and economic disadvantage (Allen, 2014). They were moreover excluded for many years from political participation (Allen, 2014).

The local establishment of Shell in the beginning of the 20th Century marked the start of the industrialization of Curaçao (Roe, 2016). The growing economy attracted an enormous influx of immigrant workers of diverse origins. Once the economy started to deteriorate, Shell fired over half of its employees. According to Roe (2016), the black working class was most negatively affected by these events. On the 30th of May 1969 (now referred to as 'Trinta di Mei'), a labour protest broke out at the refinery. What began as a protest against low wages, turned into a social uprising resulting from the build-up frustrations about poverty and the enduring marginalization of black people – although it was not initially deployed to resolve these deeper lying issues (Roe, 2016). The situation escalated into a violent revolt, and was eventually put down by the Dutch military. 'Trinta di Mei' is regarded an important turning point in Curaçaoan history, after which the situation of the black population improved with respect to education, employment, and political participation. According to Roe (2016) however, racial inequality nevertheless persisted.

In the wake of post-World War II decolonization, Curaçao becomes part of the Dutch Antilles in 1954 – a constituent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands – and is no longer a colony (Allen, 2010). The Dutch Antilles consisted of the six islands Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao (administrative capital), Sint Maarten, Saba, and Sint Eustatius. This island federation had autonomy over internal affairs, but were subject to the jurisdiction of the Dutch Kingdom with respect to foreign affairs, defence, nationality and cassation (Allen, 2010). In the following decades, the political divide around this structure grew among Curaçao's society, reflected in heated discussions and multiple advisory referendums about potential constitutional reforms

(Allen, 2010). According to Allen & Guadeloupe (2016), the political discussion shows the complexity of managing Curaçao's racially diverse society.

The debate resulted in a constitutional reform in 2010. This entailed that Curaçao would become an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the Netherlands Antilles would cease to exist (Allen, 2010). In practice, the level of autonomy was limited. During the negotiations it was determined that the Netherlands maintains financial supervision over Curaçao in exchange for a remission of accumulated debts from the time Curaçao was still a part of the Dutch Antilles (Sharpe, 2022). A subsequent condition was the introduction of Dutch laws and institutions (Sharpe, 2022). If Curaçao does not adhere to appeals from the Netherlands regarding financial management, the Dutch government may withdraw collaborations or ignore aid requests. The Netherlands moreover remains responsible for foreign policy and defence (Bloemhof, 2019). The fact that the Netherlands has the final say in many respects and had increased supervision, has led some to refer to the current political structure as neo-colonial (Sharpe, 2022). The evaluation of this structure amongst the Curaçaoan population is highly divided. Perceived advantages include economic benefits, security, higher living standards, relief aid and possession of a Dutch passport, as opposed to perceived disadvantages such as political interference, brain drain and national identity issues (Sharpe, 2022).

Postcolonial Sentiments

The remembrance of colonialism can induce group-based emotions, which are emotions experienced in response to (the memory of) events that affect the group one identifies with (Bobowik, Valentim, Licata, 2018). Group-based emotions can be experienced individually, when exposed to events that affect the respective group, and can be as intense as emotions that follow from personal experiences. Group-based emotions can be elicited by social representations of history, meaning the way that history is framed and remembered (Bobowik, Valentim, Licata, 2018). Licata and Klein (2010) argue that social representations of colonial history can be structured along two dimensions. Firstly, the dimension of exploitation, denoting the exploitative and abusive character of colonialism. And secondly, the dimension of development, implying that colonialism brought development to infrastructure and education (Licata & Klein, 2010). Attributing a positive role (ie., development) to the ingroup

in the remembrance of past events can induce a sense of collective pride, whereas a negative role (ie., exploitation) can induce feelings of collective guilt or shame (Licata et al., 2018). Negative ingroup history may moreover be suppressed, denied, or remained ignorant of. Of importance is the level of social identification: individuals must identify with the concerning group at least to some extent, in order to experience the emotion (Licata et al., 2018).

For the present discussion I am not only interested in emotions – which are primarily characterized by bodily arousal (Gordon, 1990) – but also in the attitudes that accompany them. This leads me to the concept of sentiments, which can be defined as the networks of emotions and attitudes (Gervais & Fessler, 2017). They are subjective and can be explicit as well as implicit. Sentiments can be distinguished from emotions because they form a relatively stable disposition, including beliefs and cultural meanings besides the bodily arousal that characterizes an emotion (Gordon, 2017). The concept functions better to cover my specific interest, and will therefore be deployed to coin the term of *postcolonial sentiments* to discuss the networks of emotions and attitudes in relation to colonial history. There are various definitions of postcolonialism. It refers to a critical discourse addressing the legacy of colonialism (Licata, 2012). It moreover refers to the social, political, and cultural conditions that followed from colonialism. The term is here used to denote the nature of sentiments, namely contemporary sentiments following from and referring to colonial history.

Race

In the conversations I had in Curaçao, I observed that racial categories were often used as markers for social differentiation. Even though the focus in this study is on national categories (Dutch and Curaçaoan), racial categories were repeatedly brought up and brought certain nuances to the discussion – the intersection between race and nation will be discussed later on. Given the appeared relevance of racial categories, it is paramount to discuss the meaning and historical contextualization of race, and how it will be used in this study.

The idea of race emerged together with the modern nation state, in a context of colonialism (Lentin, 2004). It is evolutionary adaptive to make us-vs-them categorizations, but the basis on which we define the in-or out-group is socially constructed (Hacking, 2005). Nationalism directed us-vs-them categorizations towards who did or did not belong to the nation (Hacking,

2005), and these ideas were racially defined. Over the course of the nineteenth century, race was biologically defined (Abu El Haj, 2007). The scientific project of race biology was entangled with the context of nationalism and colonialism, as biological definitions of race were used to legitimize racism in political context (Lentin, 2004). After World War II, a biological understanding of race became challenged. 'Race' was largely replaced by the concepts 'ethnicity' or 'culture' within social science (Wade, 2002). These latter concepts where thereby essentialized and allowed for a continuation of race in a cultural form (Visweswaran, 1998).

Even though the notion of race was found to be invalid in the context of biological science, and is now understood as a social construct within social science, it still bears implications in society. According to Bonilla-Silva (2010:9), although race is constructed, it has a social reality, meaning ''it produces real effects on the actors racialized as 'black' or 'white''. It follows that, because race is reified, it is crucial to incorporate the concept into the present discussion.

Nation, nationality, and national identity

I will draw upon Benedict Anderson's (1983) conceptualization of a nation as an ''imagined political community'', meaning the concept gains legitimacy for it exists in the minds of people. Anderson argues that people experience a sense of community even though they will never know most of the people belonging to the nation- in that sense the community is imagined. Anderson (1983) continued by defining nationalism as a mode of political imagination. Following, nationality is interpreted as social construct as well, by Anderson compared to gender, in the sense that everyone can, should or will have one. In line with Anderson's approach, Oostindie (1995) describes national identity as the shared subjective experience of a national character. Operationally, national identity is generally understood in terms of a shared culture, language and sometimes a shared religion and a shared history (Barnard & Spencer, 2010). Based on this understanding of a nation, Curaçao will in this article be regarded as a nation, despite its limited degree of autonomy.

Identity in general is a relational concept, relating multiple entities by asserting sameness (Wodak et al., 2009). It can only be described in relation to other entities; one cannot identify

sameness without addressing otherness. Identity is dynamic and situated in place and time (Wodak et al., 2009). It should therefore not be approached as a static or objective entity. National identity will in this study be approached as a shared subjective experience subject to change, as well as dependent on place and time. Despite its constructedness, national identity does have a social reality, producing real effects - as was just stated about race. In Curaçao I have observed that it formed and important marker of social difference, the categories of both 'Dutch' and 'Curaçaoan' holding implications about supposed attitudes, behaviour and socioeconomic position. For example, Dutch people were generally assumed by Curaçaoans to be highly educated. One might say these are racialized differentiations, pointing to race rather than nation, but national identity appeared to be a category bearing or adding significant meaning. This intersection will be discussed in the next section.

The intersection of race and nation

In the following paragraphs I will elaborate on why both race and nation are relevant concepts in the present discussion. The issue does not solely concern race nor nation, because the concepts are intertwined. They can therefore not be regarded as separate entities. I will draw upon empirical examples to illustrate this intersection.

Firstly, the issue is racial because it varies along a colour line. When interviewees referred to 'Dutch' people, they generally referred to white people, and when they referred to 'Curaçaoans' they generally referred to black people. This was illustrated in the mixing up of language, such as people using the words 'white' and 'Dutch' interchangeably at times. Obviously, there are exceptions to these general images, for example white Curaçaoans. Already the importance of nation becomes apparent: the factor that distinguishes white Curaçaoans from white Dutch inhabitants of Curaçao is national identity, the ability to speak Papiamentu in particular. I spoke to multiple white Curaçaoans who told me that they do experience wary looks at times from the black population at first sight, but that these vanish as soon as they start speaking Papiamentu.

''I speak Papiamentu very well, so therefore I was automatically accepted in this society. Primarily because of the language.'' – Raoul[4] (Curaçaoan, white)

[4] Raoul is born and raised on Curacao.

Papiamentu is argued to be a central element in Curaçaoan national identity (Allen, 2014; Oostindie, 1995; Römer, 1974). National identity is locally conceptualized as 'Yu di Korsou' (Child of Curaçao). This concept is important here, because it helps to explain the nuance in race-based prejudice. A Yu di Korsou was long understood as someone who is born on the island and speaks Papiamentu, however this conception is contested and changing, centering more on Papiamentu and patriotism rather than place of birth (Allen & Guadeloupe, 2016). Conversations during my fieldwork support this latter definition, as the majority of the people I spoke argued that one can become a Yu di Korsou if not born on the island, if you speak Papiamentu and contribute to the society. In other words, they laid more focus on the level of integration than place of birth. Moreover, from my observations and conversations with white Curaçaoans (born or not born on the island), it appears that the ability to speak Papiamentu diminishes the role of prejudice based on colour. Following, Curaçaoan national identity (of which Papiamentu is a central element) could potentially diminish prejudice against white people.

An example of how national identity might also increase, rather than diminish, the role of race-based prejudice, is that Curaçaoan interviewees made a clear distinction between attitudes and behaviour towards white Dutch people and white people with other national identities. This is illustrated in the following example referring to reactions by Curaçaoans:

''It's about 'white' but if it's white-Dutch it's stronger. If it's a white American, people will react differently. It has a different meaning.'' - Gibi (Curaçaoan, black)

The above can be interpreted as: it is a racial issue, but the (Dutch) national identity adds significant meaning to this dimension of race. The quote forms an illustration of a repetitive narrative, implying that the category of Dutch national identity adds particular significance to the racial category of being white. Therefore the issue cannot be designated as purely racial, because the national category of being 'Dutch' adds significant meaning to the racial category of being 'white'. This was explained by interviewees, by arguing that the Dutch have always been the colonial ruler, the oppressor (even though Curaçao had previously been invaded by other rulers), and that Dutch people are up until today the largest white population group on the island. This significant meaning of the Dutch national identity is an important remark because it is underexposed in existing literature on racial issues in Curaçao.

The significance of the combined classifications of 'Dutch' and 'white' is also expressed linguistically, in the word *makamba.* Although the etymology of this word is unclear, its use on Curaçao can be traced to the time of Dutch colonial rule, when it was used by Curaçaoans as a curse word for Dutch people (Latour, 1935). The word is still used regularly today to refer to white Dutch people, although its present connotation (negative or not) is contested. It can be interpreted as negative or neutral by Curaçaoan as well as Dutch people. An example is illustrated below.

''Makamba is a convenient indicator for European-Dutch people. Sometimes it holds a negative connotation, but it's mainly convenient. I call myself makamba as well. It all depends on *the way* it is said: as long as no adjectives are added.'' - Caspar (Dutch, white)

A variation to this term, which was described as negative by everyone I spoke to, is *makamba pretu* (black makamba). This is a curse word referring to black Curaçaoans who bear resemblance with Dutch people in their behaviour.

''There are prejudices from Curaçaoans, that I'm a makamba pretu, a black makamba. That is not true and it makes me angry. It implicates that you're on the side of the makamba's.'' – Iseline (Curaçaoan, black)

The discussion above shows how race and nation intersect in the present discussion. Both concepts appear as salient markers for social differentiation, I will therefore make use of the following terms to enable their discussion in this article. The word 'white' refers to people from European descent. The word 'black' refers to lighter as well as darker skinned people of African descent. This is not to say that there aren't numerous nuances to these classifications. I refer to Roe's dissertation (2016, Appendix 1) for an extensive listing of Curaçao's color hierarchy. Moreover, these classifications are relational and contextual, as someone racialized as 'black' in one context may be racialized as 'white' in another (Wade, 2002). Therefore these categories are based on self-identification in this study. Designations regarding nationhood will be based on national identity, since the entire research population formally holds the same – Dutch – nationality (as indicated in their passport). National identity was subsequently based on self-identification by the participants. I wish to emphasize again how

this terminology is controversial and socially constructed, but nevertheless important to include in the present discussion as these words do have implications in social reality.

Methodology

I spent ten weeks on Curaçao to conduct ethnographic fieldwork. Ethnography can be described as the immersion in a place for an extended period of time, to investigate social interaction with the aim of identifying as many grounding assumptions as possible (Boellstorff, 2015). Miller (2017) argues that ethnography is the goal of the discipline of anthropology, by which we gain understanding of humanity and subsequently pass on this understanding in the form of education. Ethnography recognizes an active role of the researcher in the production of data. In the wake of the postmodern turn in anthropology, there was an increasing awareness that there is no such thing as an 'objective reality', but instead that all realities are constructed in interaction (Kubik, 2018) – which the researcher is part of. It is therefore important to continuously reflect on these interactions, and to include these reflections in the analysis. These reflections were registered in the form of fieldnotes. Writing fieldnotes is an important element of ethnography, described by Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (2001), as ''a form of ethnographic writing''. The use of fieldnotes was applied across the research period to reflect on experiences and interactions with people, as well as on my own experience and position as a white and Dutch woman – my position will be further described below.

My initial interest and preliminary research was oriented on the contemporary relation between Dutch and Curaçaoan inhabitants and the potential role that colonial history still plays in this relation. Starting off my fieldwork period, I approached this research interest in an exploratory manner, examining the relevance of the topic and potential domains on which the issue takes place. Miller (2017) emphasized the importance of embracing 'humility' as an anthropologist, meaning the acceptance that one's initial presumptions may (likely) not turn out right. I have tried to embrace the not knowing, and to humbly let me be guided by conversations and observations in the field – rather than clinging to my preliminary research framework. I reached out and spoke to a variety of people that had appeared in my preliminary research as being opinionated or well-informed about the issue, such as historians, activists, anthropologists, and politicians. These conversations helped me get a

sense of the scope of the issue and how I could approach the interviews in the following weeks. Once I had refined my focus, I started conducting (and recording) interviews with Dutch and Curaçaoan inhabitants, which will be elaborated below.

Participants

During my period of fieldwork I have engaged in various interactions with Dutch and Curaçaoan inhabitants of Curaçao. Firstly, as mentioned above, I engaged in conversations with people that had appeared in my preliminary research as being opinionated or well-informed about the issue. To state some examples, Jeanne Henriquez (historian) provided an historical perspective, I discussed the political situation with Rene Rosalia (politician), and Rose Mary Allen (anthropologist) helped me redefine categories. Secondly, various street encounters developed into meaningful conversations, appointments for interviews, and moreover friendships. These encounters took place as I discovered the island, intentionally visiting a diversity of areas and neighborhoods, relevant museums, and places that were supposedly mostly visited or inhabited by either Dutch or Curaçaoans – according to people I had spoken to.

The purpose of ethnography is not to create a generalizable sample, but rather to engage in deep and meaningful interactions within a particular context in order to potentially increase understanding about phenomena that extend beyond that context. I did however try my best to seek for a diverse group of people in terms of age, sex, and background, with the purpose of engaging with people representing diverse perspectives. By attempting to include a variety of perspectives, this study aimed to bring nuance to the debate. First encounters soon led to many contacts, by means of snowball sampling (Bryman, 2016). As an example, after I had just finished an interview with someone, he recommended me to also interview his son, whom he thought to have a very different perspective because of his young age. Other times I searched in a more deliberate manner, for example when certain groups of people were repeatedly discussed during conversations or interviews. Multiple people had (negatively) referred to the Dutch people who live ‘behind closed doors’, meaning in gated communities. Rather than only listening to narratives about this ‘group’, I approached someone residing in such a gated community (through a mutual contact). Concluding, my search for participants (viewed as representatives of perspectives) was guided firstly by my preliminary research,

revealing relevant categories and individuals, and secondly by narratives I encountered in my field site.

Although all conversations and interviews were relevant for a broad understanding of the issue, history and place, not all are included in the analysis discussed hereafter, because some data appeared more relevant for the discussion of postcolonial sentiments than others. A list of the participants that were included (quoted) in the analysis is presented in Appendix 1, stating age, place of birth, current residence, and occupation.

Semi-structured interviews

The analysis for the present study relies heavily on interview content. Besides engaging in various conversations and (casual) encounters, I have conducted and recorded a total amount of 22 semi-structured interviews. The purpose hereof was to learn about the perspective people have on certain topics. Interviews provide the opportunity to ask people why they think and act in a certain way, to discover the meaning they attach to their beliefs. Semi-structured interviews entail the use of a question list whilst upholding flexibility in the use and order of questions (Bryman, 2016). This style of interviewing provides some guidance while still allowing interviewees to go in different directions. This gives insight into what they deem relevant. The interview question list is included in Appendix 2.

Data was analysed by means of a qualitative content analysis, as described by White & Marsh (2006). This is an iterative process in which data is repeatedly redefined and reinterpreted in the search for an adequate interpretation. Text is selected on the basis of uniqueness and relevance. Subsequently, coding is applied to the selected text. This is an inductive process in which relevant categories are identified, while decisions and comments on this process are recorded in memos (White & Marsh, 2006). The analysis is integrated in the coding process, as new themes and interpretations are weighed against initial research questions. Content analysis was used in this study to attempt to analyse and identify various postcolonial sentiments. The aim of qualitative content analysis is not to describe an ‘objective reality’, but to describe a phenomenon situated within a particular context (White & Marsh, 2006). It is therefore a suitable method within the present ethnographic approach.

Deep hanging out

It is important to complement interviews with more informal interactions with participants. The method of 'deep hanging out' was described by Geertz (1998) as immersing oneself in a social context on an informal level. This method brings valuable insights into the daily life of participants, and is moreover important for building rapport and trust between researcher and participant. Most of my days on Curaçao consisted of spending time with participants, not only in the form of conducting interviews but above all by engaging in casual activities in their daily lives.

Ethical considerations

Conducting a study always raises questions of power relations between the researcher and the ones that are researched, and therefore requires ethical considerations (Boellstorff, 2015). In the case of the present study, a consideration of my position as a Dutch and white woman conducting research which includes black Curaçaoans. I refer to Geertz (1988), who highlights the importance of continuous reflection on your positionality. Generally, it can be problematic to study black people as a white person, because this has led to the misrepresentation and silencing of black people in the past (Milner, 2007). In the case of my research, I am not only white but also belong to the nation that had previously colonized Curaçao. As explained in the previous discussion on the intersection of race and nation, this national category seems to add significant meaning to the racial category of being white. I have taken this into account firstly by conducting thorough preliminary research regarding these sensitive concepts and the country's history as well as contemporary issues at play. Secondly, once arrived on my field site, this preliminary research guided me in a constant process of considering and reconsidering my own position, the position of participants and how the two relate. Moreover, the deployed methodology enabled frequent and in-depth interactions with participants, which allowed for the building of trust between researcher and participant.

These reflections were not only important in my interaction with black Curaçaoans, but also with white Dutch people. Documentaries I had watched, (Curaçao, 2010; Onder Elkaar, 2013), had portrayed a negative image of Dutch inhabitants which had inevitably shaped my initial ideas. I was aware of this before I arrived on Curaçao, and consciously and

continuously reflected on my own prejudices throughout the period of fieldwork. I registered reflections on these interactions in the form of fieldnotes, which were subsequently considered in the process of data analysis. I adopted an open and humble attitude, seeking rather than avoiding a confrontation with my prejudices. I once again refer to Miller (2017), who pointed out the importance of embracing 'humility' as an anthropologist.

On a more practical note, I approached interviews and conversations by asking sensitive and open questions. Throughout all research activities and interactions in general, I have been open about my intentions and purpose of the research right away. There was no participation in any form to this research without obtaining informed consent.

Analysis

In this section I will provide an analysis of postcolonial sentiments I have encountered during my ethnographic fieldwork on Curaçao, and tempt to illustrate how they seem to be concerned with notions of inferiority and superiority. Following, I will argue that sentiments were often discussed through discourses about nation. I will conclude the analysis by discussing support for reparations, from a Dutch perspective.

Postcolonial sentiments on Curaçao

During my time on Curaçao, I have encountered a variety of postcolonial sentiments. I will start with a reflection on the sentiments I personally experienced. Starting off my research period on Curaçao, I was confronted with a feeling of postcolonial guilt. Partly due to my preliminary research and subsequent preoccupation with the topic, I was highly aware of my whiteness as well as of the Netherlands' – the country I come from – violent history on the island. I moreover felt critical towards the political structure between the Netherlands and Curaçao as it currently is, as well as towards the supposed ignorant behaviour of Dutch inhabitants as portrayed in documentaries (Curaçao, 2010; Onder Elkaar, 2013) I had watched. I felt responsible for wrongdoings in the past and present in the name of my nation – although not convinced of the legitimacy of the feeling. My guilt seemed to be informed by a representation of Dutch colonialism as a history of exploitation. I experienced the feeling as

being unproductive and wished to get rid of it. I projected my own critical stance on Curaçaoans, suspecting they must judge me on the basis of my national identity – guilty by association. My postcolonial guilt turned into overcompensating behaviour. It occurred to me that I was behaving extra friendly towards Curaçaoans in the hope to compensate for my country(men)'s past (and present). Fortunately, this feeling faded quickly, as it appeared irrelevant from the interactions I engaged in – not guilty by association. Apart from observing a wary look from Curaçaoans from time to time – which could or could not be attributed to my colour or nationality – being normally friendly and polite was more than enough. I observed similar experiences in some of the Dutch people I spoke to. The following example illustrates an experience centered on a sense of shame on behalf of the present behavior of Dutch inhabitants, rather than shame or guilt about belonging to a former colonizing country – as was the case for me.

''Sometimes when I enter a space, it feels like people [Curaçaoans] are thinking 'oh god, there you have one again'. I may be a little extra polite here, as if you need to break the ice first. It's almost as if you have to show that for a makamba, you're alright. As if you have to make up a little bit for the rude behaviour of other makamba's. Sometimes I feel embarrassed on behalf of them.'' – Caspar (Dutch, white)

I met Caspar on one of my first days on Curaçao, when I sat down for a beer in the afternoon at a kiosk bar named Pasa Kontrami. I engaged in conversation with the Curaçaoan men sitting next to me, and after a little while Caspar and his friend joined the conversation. Both in their fifties, from the Netherlands, living on Curaçao. I remember feeling prejudiced when first seeing Caspar. His white skin and pink polo were sufficient for me to associate him with the ignorant rich people that were portrayed in the documentaries (Curaçao, 2010; Onder Elkaar, 2013) I had watched. My prejudice had faded within minutes, as we engaged in a friendly and interesting conversation about Curaçao's history – of which he knew lots about. He moreover expressed that he hoped to not be representative of the 'average' Dutch inhabitant of Curaçao, as he apparently considered many to exhibit rude behavior. This interaction on my second day on Curaçao confronted me with my own initial prejudice towards Dutch people on the island, immediately realizing the importance of highlighting these nuances.

The experience of shame – although in a different form- was also brought up by some of the Curaçaoans I spoke to, discussed as a consequence of ‘’being a descendent of slaves’’, or ‘’being in a powerless position’’. When ‘shame’ was brought up, it was often in relation to supposed inferiority complexes. When I asked people about the role that colonial history plays in the contemporary relation between Dutch and Curaçaoan inhabitants, many brought up the narrative of an inferiority complex of Curaçaoans in relation to Dutch people. I say narrative, because it was mostly expressed in the form of a narrative rather than as an experience form first hand. The majority of the Curaçaoans I spoke to expressed the view that many Curaçaoans suffer from an inferiority complex, but did not point it out as something they experience themselves.

The fact that it was not expressed as first-hand experience could have multiple reasons, such as the denial of experiencing an inferiority complex or feeling ashamed about it, or that the existence of an inferiority complex is actually way less prevalent than thought, or it is highly prevalent but I spoke to the only Curaçaoans who do not experience it – seems unlikely. Some participants proposed an explanation for this contradiction. It was once suggested by a participant that this inferiority complex only prevails within groups of lower socioeconomic background. Admittedly, most Curaçaoans I spoke to were of a relatively high socioeconomic background, therefore further research would be necessary to examine this. Another participant expressed the view that the problem is not an inferiority complex of Curaçaoans, but that they have the idea that the Dutch feel superior. This view was contradicted by yet another interviewee, who argued it to be a twisted discussion. Supposedly, expressing the image of Dutch people feeling superior, would be deployed in order to prevent admitting you actually think they are better.

There are thus several possible explanations for the fact that the narrative of a supposed widely shared inferiority complex held by Curaçaoans is mostly brought up during my conversations as being a reality in society rather than as a personal experience.

I have however observed a personal expression of shame in a different form, coming from a socioeconomically well-off Curaçaoan woman. She directed her feeling of shame towards those Curaçaoans who are economically less well-off.

‘’I think I am privileged and was given many opportunities. I feel a sense of shame, that they did not get the same chances as I did.’’ – Iseline (Curaçaoan, black)

Iseline had initially invited me because I know her sons, whom I had met in the Netherlands. In the following weeks I had visited her multiple times in her home in Brakkeput Abou, a wealthy neighbourhood on the east side of the island. The above quote derives from the interview we did there. After finishing the interview, she was clearly upset about the socioeconomic inequality and the related shame she had discussed. Her experience seems to point to yet another dimension of shame. She grew up in a wealthy family, during a time of economic growth. She grew up on Curaçao and went to university in the Netherlands. She has always been surrounded by many Dutch people, and explained that she can easily manoeuvre in Dutch as well as Curaçaoan circles. She says to have ‘’never experienced that colonial yoke, I profited from it and moved on’’, but also that ‘’other people did not get the same chances’’. Her shame could be explained by her current (high) socioeconomic position as a black woman, in relation to the racially defined socioeconomic inequality on the island – as a consequence of colonial history (Roe, 2016).

Besides encountering sentiments of shame and my own experience of guilt, I have also observed ignorance in relation to the island’s colonial history, whereby the exploitative character of this history is neglected or denied. This ignorance seems to be informed by a social representation of Dutch colonialism bringing about development rather than exploitation. The following is an illustration of such a statement:

‘’If we wouldn’t have been here, then this would’ve been nothing, Curaçao. It would then really be a third-world country, because they can’t do anything themselves.’’ – Karin (Dutch, white)

This statement holds notions of superiority, suggesting that Curaçaoans should be grateful for the Dutch colonial presence. The supposed existence of a superiority complex amongst (some) Dutch people was a recurring narrative expressed by Dutch as well as Curaçaoan inhabitants, but none of the Dutch people I spoke to said to feel superior themselves. I want to illustrate this paradox by stating a quote by the same woman during the same interview as the quote above:

‘’There is a large group of Dutch inhabitants that look down upon the local [Curaçaoan] population. I find this to be very bad’’. – Karin (Dutch, white)

The two statements seem to contradict each other. As the first quote is a remark holding notions of superiority, the second quote condemns the existence of such a superiority complex. Following, the supposed existence of both a superiority and inferiority complex was mostly expressed in the form of a reality in society rather than as a personal experience. This contradiction could, again, be explained by factors such as shame, denial, or an actual low prevalence. In the case of a supposed superiority complex, I will add to these explanations the concept of ‘white innocence’, drawing from Baldwin’s theory on race in North-America. According to Baldwin (1963:14), ‘’it is the innocence which constitutes the crime’’. Innocence then refers to the fact that ‘’they do not know it and do not want to know it’’, which can be interpreted as being both unaware and unwilling. He goes on by explaining that people are trapped in this innocent self-image, because of the great discomfort that comes with questioning one’s reality. The concept of white innocence was later applied by Wekker (2016) to Dutch culture in specific, arguing that it is a central paradox in Dutch culture, which presents itself as highly tolerant. The concept could be helpful in trying to explain why a supposed superiority complex of Dutch people was only articulated as a reality in society and not as a personal experience. White innocence could allow for people to express superior statements, while condemning those at the same time – based on a self-image as being innocent and no part of the issue.

A final sentiment I wish to discuss is resentment. There was only one moment where I felt like a sense of resentment was projected on me. One afternoon I sat down in a bar and had a drink with the man who was sitting next to me. An acquaintance of his entered the bar and shortly joined the conversation. I told the two middle-aged men about my research, which immediately triggered critical comments about the behaviour of Dutch inhabitants on the island. Outraged they tell me how a restaurant around the corner called ‘De Gouverneur’ (the governor) initially almost had gotten the name ‘West Indische Compagnie’ (West Indian Compagnie), but supposedly stumbled on critique from the neighbourhood. They add ironically that its current name is practically equally bad. When one of the men expresses his annoyance about Dutch inhabitants, he turns to me when saying how ‘’you’’ Dutch people

only go to Mambo Beach, Jan Thiel[5], and go watch the sea turtles, implying 'we' show little interest in Curaçaoan culture. He did not behave in a hostile way towards me, and said to be happy that I was conducting this research once I explained my genuine interest. I however did perceive a sense of resentment about the events he had described. He moreover expressed critique about the current political structure between Curaçao and the Netherlands. Based on his critical comments about the postcolonial political structure, colonial naming and a closed and ignorant bubble of Dutch inhabitants, I suggest that his sense of resentment is likely informed by a negative social representation of Dutch colonialism, as being exploitative.

The lens of national discourse

As discussed previously, there is a complex political construction between the Netherlands and Curaçao, in which Curaçao's level of autonomy is limited. During the process of data analysis, I observed that the discussion of postcolonial sentiments was often approached through the lens of national discourse. I will tempt to illustrate this with the help of quotes from interviews and conversations. I wish to start by elaborating further on a quote stated above, and repeated below:

''If we wouldn't have been here, then this would've been nothing, Curaçao. It would then really be a third-world country, because they can't do anything themselves.'' – Karin (Dutch, white)

This quote was expressed in the context of describing the relation between Dutch and Curaçaoan inhabitants. What is interesting, is that this relation, taking place on the interpersonal level, is discussed on the level of nation. Moreover, linguistically speaking, the choice of words creates confusion about what the pronouns are referring to. Who are *we*, and who are *they*? It remains unclear whether she is referring to the Dutch and Curaçaoan government, respectively, or to the Dutch and Curaçaoan peoples in general. National policies seem to be appropriated as interpersonal affairs.

[5] Both Mambo Beach and Jan Thiel are places on the island known to be visited and inhabited by many Dutch people.

Karin invited me into her house to do the interview. A luxurious house in Jan Sofat, a gated community, also called 'resort'. We sat down on the balcony for the interview, with a beautiful view over the Spanish Waters. There was one thing in particular that occurred to me during the interview, namely that she was implicitly assuming my accordance with her views. This was expressed throughout the interview in the form of additions such as ''but you know this as well'' and ''but I don't have to explain this to you, do I?'', even though I did not express personal views or confirmations. She seemingly took me for an ally based on the fact that I am also a Dutch and white woman.

Another illustration of how postcolonial sentiments were described through a lens of national discourse is presented in the following quote expressed in an interview with Gibi. He argues that ever since colonial times there has been a dichotomy between the Dutch and Curaçaoans, which he sets out as follows in respective order:

''Better, worse; better educated, worse educated; more money, less money; white, black; superior, inferior; the Netherlands has more, we have less; the Netherlands is a potency in the world, we aren't; the giver and the beggar.'' – Gibi (Curaçaoan, black)

The last categories he uses all refer to discourses on the level of nation, despite asked to describe the relation on the interpersonal level. The two domains seem intertwined with each other. As was the case for expressions on the interpersonal level, expressions national discourse also seem concerned with notions of inferiority and superiority, suggesting the Netherlands and Curaçao to be a superior and inferior nation, respectfully. Potentially, views on nation trickle down to views on people that identify with the concerned nation. This trickle-down effect was described during an interview with Terence:

''There's this idea that you have to get people from abroad to do projects. Let's get a Dutch person to do this. Holland has all these universities. People have this idea of, to get better, you have to go to holland to study. Someone coming from that space is better. Because they have all these universities and tools to make them better.'' – Terence (Curaçaoan, indigenous[6])

[6] Terence identifies as descending from the indigenous population of Curaçao – the Caquetíos.

He argues that the image of the Netherlands being ‘better’ leads to the idea of someone coming from the Netherlands being ‘better’. It should be noted here that the Dutch population on Curaçao is not representative of the Dutch population in the Netherlands. The residence of most Dutch people on Curaçao is due to pursuing job and business opportunities or a particular lifestyle, rather than economic necessity. I was often told that many Curaçaoans were - and some still are – surprised when going to the Netherlands for the first time and seeing a Dutch garbage collector.

Vice versa, a negative or paternalistic attitude towards Curaçao as a nation could potentially trickle down to views about Curaçaoans, as explained by David:

‘’Curaçao is constantly financed by the Netherlands, so many Dutch people feel as they can act superior, because then they say that without ‘us’ you were nowhere. Politics always influences the behavior of the people.’’ – David[7] (white)

He specifically refers to the impact of the unequal power dynamic in the international relation between Curaçao and the Netherlands, and suggests this is used to justify superior behavior. Building on this, it was argued by Phaedra that a change in this international relation could induce a change on the interpersonal level.

‘’I think, the more autonomy can be gained, and the more self-reliance, the less tension there will be in the relation. The holding on to the idea of ‘the Netherlands and Curaçao’ from both sides – the relation would be way less difficult if it were two separate things [nations]. Curaçao will never be equal from the Netherlands political perspective. ’’ – Phaedra (Dutch-Curaçaoan, black).

Phaedra suggests that a change on the national level (more autonomy for Curaçao) would trickle down to the interpersonal level, because ‘‘Curaçao will never be equal from the Netherlands political perspective’’. She thereby seems to assume a relation between a recognition of equality on the national level and the interpersonal level.

[7] David does not wish to identify with a particular category, as he identifies with both Dutch and Curaçaoan elements. David was born in the Netherlands, and moved to Curaçao at the age of twelve.

Concluding, postcolonial sentiments seem to be informed by discourses regarding nation. This suggests that the way these nations currently relate to each other (which is characterized by dependency) and how this is perceived, could trickle down to perceptions on the social level. It follows that a change on the level of nation could possibly induce a change in sentiments. In the following section, I will discuss potential support for reparations from a Dutch perspective.

Support for reparations

In this section I will describe two examples from my fieldwork period to discuss how postcolonial sentiments could inform motivation for reparations. The first examples draws from my own experience of postcolonial guilt. As previously discussed, I had initially dismissed this guilt, and described in the proposal for the present study how ‘’these feelings are – regardless of legitimacy – ineffective and won’t help anyone.’’ I can moreover understand criticism implying it to be selfish (Steele, 1990) and often handled with denial (Steele, 1990; Maddison, 2012). However, it has also been argued that guilt motivates support for reparations (Alpress et al., 2010). I wish to endorse the latter finding, as in my case it did indeed trigger motivation for reparative behaviour. I am hereby not referring to my initial overcompensating behaviour towards Curaçaoans – which soon appeared unnecessary and undesirable – but to the fact that it motivated me to dedicate my Master’s project to the topic, thereby trying to contribute to education and awareness on the matter. Therefore my experience illustrates how postcolonial guilt could form an incentive for reparative behaviour. It has been argued by Steele (1990) that this should not be motivated by the selfish longing for a redemption of guilt, but rather by altruistic motives. One could however question whether a truly selfless act exists, thinking of Nietzsche’s (1986) argument that no action is free of egoistic motives. This is however not the appropriate place for philosophical debates, I rather want to pose the question of how relevant the moral value of the motivation is in this particular case, considering the positive outcome.

Contrarily to the example above, I want to use the second example to illustrate how ignorant sentiments can lead to a rejection of reparations. When I asked Karin about her thoughts on the fact that some people are now demanding a formal apology or confession from the Dutch state, she responded as follows:

‘’I think that is completely crazy. Haven't they already said it a hundred times? They just think they can get something out of it, they probably want money again. How much money has the Netherlands already pumped into this island? Doesn't make any sense.’’ – Karin (Dutch, white)

As previously discussed, Karin had expressed statements that suggest the neglecting of the exploitative character of Dutch colonialism on Curaçao, seemingly informed by a social representation of Dutch colonialism bringing about development rather than exploitation. This sentiment – by me characterized as ignorant – seem to inform the way she perceives reparations: she does not support them, rather rejects them. Baldwin’s writing (1965) is helpful in explaining this lack of motivation for reparations. He suggests that that people who have a falsely positive interpretation of history – and their role in it – become stuck in this history, as a reconsideration would imply the great discomfort of questioning one’s reality. Baldwin argues that these people who are stuck, become incapable of changing themselves or the world. The discussed example appears to illustrate how a positive representation of Dutch colonial history could prevent support for reparations.

Conclusion

This study has shed light on to the way Dutch and Curaçaoan inhabitants of Curaçao currently relate to their shared colonial history. Preliminary research indicated a complex relation between Dutch and Curaçaoan inhabitants. Interested in the potential role of colonial history in this contemporary relation, a 10-week period of ethnographic research on Curaçao was conducted to examine this question. Upon return, a qualitative content analysis was applied to the gathered data, whereby several postcolonial sentiments came to the fore. This article provided an analysis of these sentiments, in which shame, ignorance, resentment, and my own experience of guilt are discussed. The most important conclusions of this analysis will be stated below.

In the first section of the analysis, I attempted to illustrate how postcolonial sentiments seem to be concerned with notions of inferiority and superiority. Many participants brought up narratives about supposed widely shared inferiority complexes held by Curaçaoans and

superiority complexes held by the Dutch. It should however be noted that these narratives were mostly discussed as being a reality in society rather than as a personal experience. Several possible explanations for this are included in the analysis. Furthermore, I discussed how postcolonial sentiments seem to be informed by social representations of colonial history – the way that colonial history is framed and remembered.

In the second section, it is argued that the discussion of postcolonial sentiments was often approached through the lens of national discourse. Although being asked about views regarding the interpersonal level, many participants brought up discourses about nation. These again often seemed concerned with narratives of superiority and inferiority, suggesting the Netherlands and Curaçao to be a superior and inferior nation, respectfully. It was implied by multiple participants that views on the level of nation trickle down to views on the interpersonal level (ie., views on people that identify with the concerned nation). This suggests that views concerning the nation of Curaçao or the Netherlands potentially informs views of its inhabitants. Following, the current position of these nations and the way they relate to each other, might play a significant role in the shaping of sentiments. Could a change in this international relation (currently characterized by an unequal power dynamic) induce a change in sentiments? This study focusses on the social rather than the (geo)political and economic domain that currently binds these two nations, therefore further research is needed to examine the influence of this complex postcolonial relation between Curaçao and the Netherlands – in comparison to other postcolonial societies that have reached further degrees of autonomy. Furthermore, this study raises questions about the extent to which postcolonial sentiments prevailing in society might be mobilized for political agendas. And subsequently, if this potential political deployment of postcolonial sentiments would fuel or contribute to their persistence in society.

Another suggestion for future research is to explore postcolonial sentiments in the Netherlands – home to a large population of Curaçaoans. Geographic place could play a role in the way people relate to colonial history, considering the Netherlands is physically further removed from this history. Moreover, as previously mentioned, the Dutch population on Curaçao (relatively wealthy) does not appear to be representative of the Dutch population in the Netherlands, which could imply that narratives of inferiority and superiority are less salient within the context of the Netherlands. Moreover, the demographic composition of the

population could be of influence, considering that Curaçaoans in the Netherlands are a minority group, whereas on Curaçao Dutch people are a minority group.

Returning to the individual level, I propose that postcolonial guilt could potentially form an incentive for reparative behaviour. By drawing on my own experience of postcolonial guilt as an example, I concluded that this guilt – which I had initially dismissed for being unproductive – triggered my motivation to endeavour contributing to education and awareness on the matter (by means of the present study). Ironically enough I turned out to be an example of productive guilt. Baldwin (1965) suggested that people who have a falsely positive interpretation of history – and their role in it – become stuck in this history, and incapable of changing themselves or the world. This emphasizes the importance of education in teaching an honest history, that enables people to alter the way they represent (colonial) history and potentially adjust their behaviour accordingly.

Although renewed discussion about the Dutch colonial history was generated in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests in the Netherlands, resulting measures did not imply a complete and honest reconsideration of Dutch colonial history and its consequences. I argue for the importance of research and education on how colonial history still plays a role in contemporary social issues. I could not phrase the need for this any better than Baldwin (1965:723), who argued that ‘’the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do.’’ Colonialism is still too often dismissed as an historical event that is longer relevant today, which complicates critical engagement with contemporary social issues – such as a tense relation between former colonizer and colonized groups – because certain beliefs can become detached from their origin, the way they were historically constructed. It is therefore of great importance that the persisting presence of colonial history in contemporary society is recognized and further researched.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participants

	Age	Residence	Place of birth	Occupation
Caspar	52	Grote Berg	The Netherlands, moved to Curaçao 6 years ago	Works at the National Archive of Curaçao
David (son of Caspar)	18	Grote Berg	The Netherlands, moved to Curaçao at 12 years old	High school
Gibi	72	Tera Kòrá	Curaçao	Poet and part of a platform concerning the legacy of a history of slavery
Iseline	60	Brakkeput Abou	Curaçao (has also lived in the Netherlands for multiple years)	Corporate lawyer
Karin	58	Jan Sofat	The Netherlands, has lived on Curaçao since 8 years	Maintains a private island in the Spanish Waters
Phaedra	27	Boka Sami	Curaçao, moved to the Netherlands at 12 years old	Master's student
Terence	34	Pietermaai	Curaçao	Guide and maintenance of nature parks on Curaçao

Appendix 2: Question list of semi-structured interviews

Contemporary relationship between Dutch and Curaçaoan inhabitants

1. How would you describe the contemporary relationship between Dutch and Curaçaoan inhabitants?
2. Do you think colonial history plays a role in this current relation?
3. If so, how?
4. How would you describe Dutch or Curaçaoan identity?

Awareness regarding colonial history

1. What do you know of the colonial history on this island?
2. To what extent do you think people are aware of this?
3. Do you think this history still plays a role today? If so, how?

Relating to colonial history

1. What are your views on the matter of 'blame' (schuldkwestie)?
2. How do you feel about the question of rehabilitation and reconciliation?
3. What are your ideas on narratives about the victim role?
4. How do you think the current relation between Dutch and Curaçaoan inhabitants could be improved?