

Article

Coloniality in the German Higher Education System: Implications for Policy and Institutional Practice

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Abstract

This article focuses on the public German higher education sector as a site upon and through which coloniality is enacted. This status quo indicates exclusionary effects and merits interrogation. We briefly discuss the history of German colonialism to understand how coloniality pervades higher educational structures in the German context today. Two proposals addressing coloniality in German higher education are made: the development of structures centering diverse faculty and the support of ethnic and identity studies.

Keywords

colonialism; coloniality; diversity; Germany; higher education; identity

Issue

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1. Introduction

Coloniality has been described by Grosfoguel (2007, p. 219) as “the continuity of colonial forms of domination after the end of colonial administrations, [which] produced colonial cultures and structures in the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system.” That is to say, coloniality is an ongoing and pervasive system of hierarchy that persists worldwide, and whose antecedent is the physical occupation of colonialism. Mechanisms of coloniality impact educational structures. Clifford and Montgomery (2017, p. 1149) illustrate that “coloniality still pervades many countries and education systems, and institutional inertia and investment in the status quo fuel resistance to change.”

Coloniality lingers not only in sites of colonization, but in colonizing contexts as well (Asher, 2009; Collective People’s Knowledge Editorial, 2016). As Migliarini (2018, p. 439) has written of the Italian case, terms and concepts related to race and racism are made prob-

lematic by Italy’s colonial history, thereby “foreclosing any discussions of race and white privilege in public space.” This reflects a relationship between coloniality’s structures and institutionalized, nationally specific racism (Friedrich, 2011), as well as European taboos around race-based discourses (Grigolo et al., 2011). As Erel et al. (2016, p. 1341) have noted, “recognition of racism as a structuring feature of European societies is needed to address how Europe’s migration regimes articulate and are articulated by racialization and coloniality” (see also Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al., 2010; Lentin, 2014; Mignolo, 2012; Möschel, 2011). These discourses extend to the tertiary education sector as well. Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2016) has addressed this point in her work on the German setting, writing that racial stratification has evolved to reinforce racism and coloniality. She writes that:

Subtle institutional practices [favor] the access of the White national affluent population....Further, as we

will see in regard to the implementation of migration control policies in universities, while not explicitly operating within a racial matrix, the logic of differentiation that they establish reproduces social hierarchies reflecting and reinforcing processes of racialization. (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2016, p. 169)

This article focuses on the largely public German tertiary education sector as a site upon and through which coloniality is enacted, a status quo indicating exclusionary effects and one which merits interrogation. As Pusser and Marginson (2013, p. 552) have written, distinct, nationally specific ideologies frame “creation myths, sagas, and beliefs about national culture that motivate postsecondary policies and assure legitimacy” (see also Meyer & Rowan, 1977). In the German setting, this also refers to the myth of white German racial and ethnic superiority, which in the context of colonial fantasy can be traced to at least the 18th century as discussed by Susanne Zantop (1997). Indeed, mechanisms for higher education access and student support in Germany are frequently couched in language emphasizing excellence and meritocracy, which are discursive proxies for racial and ethnic hierarchy (Hüther & Krücken, 2018; Klein, 2016). This argumentation is also familiar in other national contexts (Chong, 2014; Morgan, 2006; Pilz & Alexander, 2011; Warikoo, 2016; Yao et al., 2018).

In short, we conceive of German public higher education institutions (HEIs) as social institutions of the state—funded by the nation, the federal states and the public—in which the discourse of racial and ethnic superiority (racism) and its discursive expression through curricula and meritocracy circulate to limit educational access and opportunity for disenfranchised racial and ethnic minorities including, but not limited to, migrant groups. The discourse of racism produces the principle of meritocracy and supplies the application of meritocratic systems with discursive power. Consequently, the principle of meritocracy becomes discursive itself, and its systems or mechanisms—e.g., faculty hiring practices, curricular restrictions—distribute power and reify racist regimes. Here, discourse is understood as encompassing systems and structures that, in the case of higher education, frame knowledge exchange and creation. This draws from Bohman’s (1999) depiction of research as social process (see also Martínez Alemán, 2014).

We outline how a postcolonial or decolonial lens might be productively applied to the German higher education context and focus on two specific areas. We begin by briefly discussing how coloniality and tertiary education have been considered transnationally, then summarize relevant German colonial history, thereby elucidating how and why Germany is a colonial context. A summary of the German higher education system follows, before we turn to discussion of the barriers to inclusion faced by minoritized faculty in German research universities and *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences) alike and posit that the development of degree

programs in ethnic and identity studies to help subvert racist curricular discourses is essential. In other words, establishing race and ethnic studies courses and programs can disrupt the racist coloniality of the curriculum, as well as improve access to faculty positions for racially minoritized scholars.

2. Framing the Interrogation of Coloniality in German Higher Education

Our consideration of coloniality in German higher education is framed by the work of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. Decolonial theorists including Quijano, among others, also offer important insights into the practice and contestation of coloniality; both postcolonial and decolonial perspectives “challenge... the insularity of historical narratives and historiographical traditions emanating from Europe” (Bhambra, 2014, p. 115). Despite their relevance, neither postcolonial nor decolonial scholars have been applied extensively to analyses of German education, let alone German tertiary education. For example, in March 2021, a search in the Web of Science database for topics “Edward Said AND German*” produced 27 results, none of which were relevant to higher education. Similarly, a search for “Bhabha AND German*” resulted in 36 matches and a search for “Quijano AND German*” produced one match only, none of which were focused on higher education. This paucity of education scholarship contrasts with the work of activists, historians, and German Studies scholars, who have addressed racist/racialized discourse and its connection to educational practice in Germany. For instance, Peggy Piesche’s (2015, p. 224) discussion of Audre Lorde’s engagement with “Black antiracist interventions in Germany that were from the start premised on transnationalism” and the benchmark publication *Showing our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out* (Opitz et al., 1992).

Edward Said famously made clear the constructed duality of the Orient/Occident. Said (1978, p. 13) asserted that the “Orient” is but a Western idea in which “tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West.” While his work did not focus on Germany or Germans per se, Said noted an equivalency of that country with other colonial powers, writing that that “what German Orientalism had in common with Anglo, French and later American Orientalism was a kind of intellectual authority over the Orient within Western culture” (Said, 1978, p. 27).

Homi Bhabha (1994, pp. 19, 21) has written that “exclusionary imperialist ideologies of self and other” create existential and real-life marginalization, but also produce an opportunity for “cultural and historical hybridity.” Further, Bhabha “conceives of Otherness as not only a construction of individuals and groups but a dialogue, a constant navigation of self and other. Hybridity, then, represents a dialectical space for translation of identity, and is fundamentally temporal, a

‘discursive temporality’” (Unangst, 2020, p. 61; see also Bhabha, 1994, p. 25).

This postcolonial perspective makes clear that we ought not to think of individual identity as a binary construct (colonizer: colonized; citizen: alien), but rather changeable hybrids. University constituents, by extension and example, may not be easily categorized as, for example, ‘refugee’ or ‘migrant’ in terms of their identities and experiences, though indeed their legal status and attributed social role as such may influence lived experience. Rather, as we see in these cases, identity and its discursive power are fluid. Similarly, ethnic and identity studies program consider hybridity and negotiation as key concepts. Minoritized faculty members and students also encounter hybridity in their experiences of belonging to an academy and yet being excluded from it (in different ways and in different forms; see Avraamidou, 2020).

Bhabha’s (1994, p. 22) work also references Foucault’s discussion of “repeatable materiality,” or the process in which discourse from one entity or institution may be “transcribed in the discourse of another.” In the context of tertiary education, this clearly applies to a decentralized system such as Germany’s, which is indirectly influenced by national politics and policy, but depends largely on the ‘translation’ of state-level initiatives and implementation at the institutional level. That is to say that the discourse (or systems and structures) of tertiary education is informed by the discourse of politics. “Similarly, the structures of one university may be adapted by another higher education institution, thereby mimicking power structures and hierarchies” (Unangst, 2020, p. 62). In fact, Foucault (1982, p. 787) refers to educational institutions as a discursive “block of capacity-communication-power.” Effectively engaging in mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), universities may be seen to communicate power structures through their discourses that frequently echo each other.

In the German setting, and with particular reference to the support of marginalized populations, it is recognized that institutional mimetic isomorphism may be accelerated by law. In particular this includes anti-discrimination laws with regard to gender. A common response of German tertiary organizations has been to establish structures within the institution to comply with legal mandates (Hüther & Krücken, 2018, p. 145). These institutional structures or units include the Gleichstellungsbüro, present at all public HEIs, which were instituted to support women in the academy (Blome et al., 2013; Löther & Vollmer, 2014; Schroeter, 2009). Other forms of oppression associated with coloniality, specifically racism and racialization, are addressed in the broadest terms by legislation (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany, 1949). However, elaborated regulation targeting entrenched racism and racialization is not as visible at the federal, state, or institutional levels. In fact, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (2014, p. 10)

observed that “the notion of racism is often interpreted too narrowly in Germany and is linked to organised groups. The racist, and particularly xenophobic, character of some public discourse is still not established clearly enough in public debates.”

3. German Colonialism and Coloniality

How is the German nation state understood as colonial or vehicle for coloniality? German principalities and Imperial Germany pursued colonial territory throughout the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and by the mid-19th century Germany acquired the fourth largest colonial empire behind Britain, France, and the Netherlands (Conrad, 2013). Outposts were established in Africa, Asia and the Pacific (Berman et al., 2014), and German Imperial troops were responsible for the genocide of the Herero and Nama peoples in present-day Namibia. However, as Kurthen (1995, p. 916) has noted of the former West Germany, the “notion of national homogeneity was not challenged by massive postcolonial remigration movements of persons from former overseas colonies” in the post-1945 period. Instead, Schilling (2015, p. 429) observes of this post-war period that the influence of “former colonialists” in essence “ensured that a positive memory of colonialism was upheld [and] established a near seamless link from colonial paternalism to postwar “development.” Both the former East and West engaged in what may be seen as colonial acts (Verber, 2010). In 1972, the former West reached a “cultural agreement” with Senegal to ensure that German would be the first foreign language taught in its public school system (Witte, 2011). Colonial policies affected minoritized groups within Germany as well; writing of the former East, Piesche (2018, p. 229) observes that:

In the GDR’s relatively homogeneous and closed society, Blacks were presumed to be exotic, foreign, and different—patterns of attribution similar to those occurring in other countries. To be associated with such attributes meant also to be regarded as part of ‘another’ society, definitely not part of the GDR but rather foreigners whose stay was limited.

In present day Germany, despite increasing acknowledgment of profound colonial violence, issues around coloniality persist in education and external to it. We now move to discuss the structure of higher education system in that country in order to preface our proposals for change.

4. German Tertiary Education

4.1. System Structure

In order to understand the function of coloniality in the German higher education sector, it is important to briefly outline the system’s present structure. The higher

education system is both primarily public and decentralized, ceding the direction of higher education to the 16 federal states. Most students in Germany attend university within their state of residence (Spiess & Wrohlich, 2010), which is important given that the demographics (particularly related to residents of migrant background) vary quite dramatically across the former border of East and West Germany. Consequently, the student bodies at the HEIs in question are distinct.

The German system is binary, with universities of applied sciences offering a clear technical or vocational orientation, and research universities including disciplines across the humanities, social sciences, and natural and physical sciences, as well as some professional fields including law (other professional fields associated with the civil service are offered at alternate, specialized institutions; art and musical performance are offered at distinct institutions). Admissions practices differ by both institutional type and field of study; a ‘restricted qualification’ may be gained by a graduate of certain vocational upper secondary schools to a specific track at universities of applied sciences aligned with their work and study experience (Schindler, 2016). The *numerus clausus*, an enrollment management technique that admits students to university based on the secondary school leaving exam score (*Abitur*), applies to almost half of all disciplinary fields in Germany (Finger, 2016).

Historically a relatively ‘flat’ higher education system in that German research universities were of comparable quality, these institutions are now being intentionally differentiated under the auspices of the German Excellence Initiative, into which billions of Euro continue to be invested in order to facilitate increased competition in terms of admissions, faculty recruitment, and public-private collaboration (Bloch et al., 2014; Wolter, 2017). There is concern that the robust support of more ‘prestigious’ institutions will result in access and equity issues becoming even more urgent (Hüther & Krücken, 2018). While German universities enrolled a higher proportion of ‘non-traditional’ students in 2018 than in decades prior, including students with children, part-time students, and others (Middendorff et al., 2013), only 2.4 percent of all enrolled first-year students were classified as part-time in 2013, a signal that there is much progress to be made (Brändle & Häuberer, 2014). Further, first generation immigrant students display on average a longer time to degree, as well as a higher risk of attrition (Kerst & Wolter, 2017). In sum, the German tertiary sector may be characterized as highly dynamic and decentralized though increasingly hierarchical, and displaying persistent gaps in terms of student access and success (Unangst, 2020).

5. Supporting a Diverse Faculty

Faculty have historically played a powerful role within German HEIs. German faculty have been “the heart of the university,” and were at one time “all-powerful fig-

ures” (Anderson, 2017, p. 3), resulting in a post-1945 system of promotion being established to dissolve relevant forms of exclusion, elitism, and isolation. The current promotion system compels prospective academics to apply for positions at institutions other than where they completed their study. Further, with limited positions at each step of the academic ladder (assistant professor, etc.) competition is fierce for senior positions. While the system purports to rid hiring practices of preferential treatment of internal (and by default, mostly white German) candidates and responds to historical problems of German faculty isolation and elitism, the policy effectively invalidates professional networks built by marginalized groups that would be utilized in the academic job search process. By forcing academic job market candidates to leave the institutions at which they have developed networks, the current system ultimately divests racialized/ethnicized faculty of professional power. A recent German University PhD graduate who self-identified as being from the Global South noted of the academic track that though “in theory” universities had to comply with various hiring laws, “in practice no one can question the institutions which do not implement these guidelines. The white professors can always justify hiring white Germans as their assistants or *Habilitanden*” (post-docs; Arghavan, 2019, p. 187). Thus, it seems that this structure is unlikely to facilitate the hiring of faculty whose racial/ethnic/migrant identities challenge the norms of the academic profession.

However, the representation of (mostly white) women in the professoriate has risen: The proportion in “Grade A” positions has “more than doubled” over the past 11 years, the period in which equal opportunity offices and support programs centering women have been most active (Hüther & Krücken, 2018). Additionally, the proportion of women holding chancellorships at public research universities rose from 13 percent to 30 percent between 2008 and 2015, and from 17 to 41 percent at public universities of applied sciences over the same period (Hüther & Krücken, 2018). These results may be understood as facilitated by the substantial federal and state level support provided to university (Gleichstellungsbüro) for a program referred to as the PWP (*Professorinnenprogramm*). The PWP that has provided women better access to faculty positions by allocating “substantial funds (150 million euros for its 2008–2012 first phase and another 150 million for 2013–2017)” to support professorships for female faculty members at “universities that submit acceptable gender equality plans to an expert committee” (Zippel et al., 2016, p. 877) appointed by the Ministry of Education (BMBF). Further, junior professorships have also been established with the goal of welcoming women to faculty ranks. However, these professorships are still rare and most are non-tenure track (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, 2018, p. 23).

Reflecting coloniality and the tensions around data collection on ethnicity and race in the German case,

no authoritative data are available on the racial/ethnic/migration background of faculty, as national faculty surveys query only gender and no other ‘background’ questions (Hüther & Krücken, 2018). However, relatively small-scale surveys have indicated that somewhere between 6 and 9 percent of all German professors (of any level) self-identify a migration background (Neusel & Wolter, 2016). At present, women comprise less than 20 percent of full professors in Germany (Hüther & Krücken, 2018), suggesting that German HEIs follow the trend in the West in which diversification of the faculty begins with (white) women followed by minoritized men and women (Farrokhzad, 2008; Gasman et al., 2015).

Effectively, structural changes imposed on HEIs by federal and state entities have improved the composition of the faculty in terms of gender. By dedicating funds to improve women’s opportunities to enter the academic profession, the German government proactively challenged gender discourse. It can be argued, then, that funding can serve as one driver for institutional change; in this example, dulling the edge of discursive sexism. In contrast, targeted and well-funded state and federal programs supporting and improving faculty racial and ethnic diversity are few and far between. As Leichsenring (2011, p. 53) has observed, “at the moment,” without state and federal mandates and funding for structural change to improve racial/ethnic diversity, German universities “are very much on their own” in this area. Recently, though some faculty jobs have been posted noting a preference for applicants from migration backgrounds, this appears to be a decentralized, institution-specific effort. Given that the vast majority of tertiary programs in Germany are public and conducted through only a few hundred HEIs (German Rectors’ Conference, 2021; Salmi, 2000), system-wide initiatives to promote a more diverse faculty are achievable and necessary (Langholz, 2013). Existing efforts to support an increase in the number of female faculty can serve as a model for funding and program development to recruit and promote faculty of migration and other minoritized backgrounds.

It should be noted that programming for increasing the number of women faculty is fueled by social, cultural and political forces that challenge mainstream consciousness. For example, the integration of feminist consciousness and epistemologies into scholarship and the curriculum is often a reflection of discursive challenges to societal norms. A notable example is the case of women’s and gender studies in the curriculum of US HEIs that served to alter academic epistemologies/knowledge paradigms and challenge disciplinary canons. Fueled by the rise in feminist consciousness in the 1970s, the development of gender and women’s studies programs’ ‘new knowledges’ quickened institutional change to address gender inequities in faculty recruitment, hiring, and promotion (Glazer-Raymo, 2001; Martínez Alemán, 2014). In turn, academic departments can serve as incubators

for action, participatory, emancipatory, or decolonial research (Weber, 2016). However, it is important to note that affirmative action in the US setting has tended to benefit white women; there is increasing recognition within US higher education that an intersectional lens is indicated in order to contest continued and pervasive exclusionary hierarchies and support, in particular, Women of Color (Crenshaw, 1991).

6. University Curricula: Ethnic and Identity Studies Departments

Coloniality imbues a primarily public tertiary education sector such as Germany’s with exclusionary practices consistent with racist and ethnocentric discourses. In this context, identity and power take on important relevance to the institution and for individuals. ‘Identity’ here refers not only to the fluid self-conceptions of tertiary faculty, staff, and students, but also to identity as social construct and indicator of (possible) lived experiences of discrimination (Nasser, 2019; Wilkins, 2014). Further, it refers to national and institutional identity, which combine in unique and ever-changing ways to influence institutional discourses.

The case for the decolonization of the university curriculum has been made across many national contexts, at the heart of which is an argument for an acknowledgment that curricula are discourses. As discourses, curricula are (as Foucault asserted) “procedures of exclusion” (Peters & Jandrić, 2018, p. 166) that are marked by the absence of knowledge and subjectivities, and that serve to maintain dominant power relations. Language and practices are expressions linked to knowledge in this scheme, suggesting that what is known and not known, who is known and not known, is an expression of value and validity. As discourse, the university curriculum is a codified expression of knowledge that is valued (if not revered) in society, and by extension, should be reproduced.

A reflection of dominant expressions, beliefs, prevailing norms, and sanctioned politics, a university’s curriculum is an expression of the coaction of the accepted narratives of historical context and their sanctioned interpretations. For example, Coate’s (2006) diagnosis of the UK’s gendered discourse in university curriculum reveals how academic knowledge is an interplay of socio-political power relations and the organization and history of the higher education system. The decolonization of the university curricula is not uncommon. Scholars have argued for the decolonization of African university curricula (e.g., Knight, 2018; Winberg & Winberg, 2017), and have made the case for a decolonization of the Australian university curriculum based on the exclusion and erasure of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives (e.g., McLaughlin & Whatman, 2011). Lewis (2018) broadens the call by considering the epistemological challenges brought to the university curriculum when we engage the fact of Black diaspora through colonization. In the

US, ethnic and cultural studies as well as women's and gender studies in the university served to contest the discourse of exclusion and hegemony in university curricula. While there is a nascent literature on the topic in the German sphere, this remains an emerging area of research not only in Germany but in other former colonial states of Western Europe (Colak et al., 2020).

The need for the decolonization of the university curriculum is perhaps especially apparent in the German setting given that the research university has historically occupied a position of power within German society as a whole (Euros, 2016; Phillips, 2016; Tsvetkova, 2014). In the post-1945 period, for example, the German "university was still a 'centre of national identification,' especially for the educated middle class that dominated public life" (Östling, 2016, p. 388). However, that esteemed status belied the purging of racialized students only years before: "By 1937, there were only 500 Chinese students nation-wide, though Berlin alone had registered 1000 Chinese students in 1923....Further, this group was subject to the 'Central Office for Chinese' founded in 1938 by Richard Heydrich to sharply control visas" (Unangst, 2020, p. 30; see also Ha et al., 2007).

Based on the 2012 census of families with a migration history living in Germany, 17 percent have an Asian background and 4 percent an African background (Henkel et al., 2016). These figures do not include foreign nationals who may identify as Afro- or Asian-German. Given Germany's colonial history in most regions worldwide, attention within the university's academic units to the epistemologies that enable the examination of colonial identities and knowledges seems urgently called for. As Maldonado-Torres (2011, p. 4) has noted, ethnic and women's studies departments have enabled "necessary explorations and experimentations that go beyond the strict and largely self-imposed disciplinary and Eurocentric limits" of the Western curriculum that relate to nativist logic of colonial identity.

Using the German Rectors' Conference (2021) database, which is an authoritative source allowing prospective students to search study courses across private, public, and religious institutions and spanning all federal states, we conducted a keyword search to discern to what extent current academic offerings relate to identity studies and diversity in the German context (see Table 1). Of the 20,732 programs included in the database, we found that while there are regional studies programs focused on Asia and Africa (German Rectors' Conference, 2021), there are no programs in place focused on Afro-German Studies or Asian-German Studies at German HEIs. Here, we refer to interdisciplinary programs (comparable to African American Studies or Native American Studies) that draw from history, culture, political science, literature, and sociology, among other fields. This relative inattention to Afro-German and Asian-German literature and culture in curricula occurs in spite of a colonial history on the continents. Further, the incorporation of Afro-German

literature into German Studies curricula has been identified as slow and insufficient (Johnson, 2001). Calls to include works by Afro-German authors are largely ignored and most HEI curricula lack a systematic incorporation of texts by Afro-Germans (Schenker & Munro, 2013). In addition, a search for "mobilität" (mobility) resulted in 143 program matches, though the vast majority were engineering and technology-related. Searches for "intercultural" and "interkulturell" also pointed to many programs related to business rather than ethnic or identity studies. All to suggest that coloniality continues to guide German HEI curricula.

Stein (2018, p. 150) has suggested that an epistemologically orienting question for educationalists might be "whose voices are centered in curriculum, and whose are absent?" Such an interrogation indicates (among other things) the importance of identity studies departments within existing Western HEIs. Much like women's and gender studies has done, these units may approach "reform from within" in pursuit of a decolonized university (Tamdgidi, 2012). Their curricula may center absent voices of the marginalized or subaltern, and simultaneously explore the epistemology of difference supported by the university. Further, these units may serve as catalysts and coactive forces for political advocacy and action, though indeed there is also danger that the formation of identity studies departments may redirect energy towards normative academic goals and away from such advocacy (Glass et al., 2018). Finally, ethnic and identity studies units may serve as generators of new methods and methodologies and as multipliers of related work. Germany's contemporary HEIs manifest their own hierarchies of privilege that inevitably relate to temporally-bound discourses of 'equal opportunity' and 'diversity' in their curriculum.

7. Conclusion

Critique of coloniality is emergent in the German sphere. To this point, referencing the work of Dietze et al. (2007), Boatca (2012, p. 27) has written that:

For Germany's critical intellectuals, having (virtually) no academic curricula dealing with social differences from the perspective of the subalterns' emancipatory claims, represents not only a regrettable German Sonderweg, or special path, in comparison to other Western European settings such as the British or Scandinavian context, but also, and especially, a temporal and financial lag with respect to US American academia.

The decomposition of coloniality in higher education is particularly urgent given the increasing differentiation of the higher education sector in Germany, facilitated by the German Excellence Initiative and implementation of Bologna reforms. Increased differentiation indicates increased selectivity at more prestigious HEIs, which is

Table 1. Existing degree courses related to identity studies at public universities in Germany.

Searched Term	No. Results	Sample Program Titles
Afro	1	Cultural and Social Anthropology
Afrika	34	African Languages and Cultures; African Studies; German as a Second Language in German-African Contexts; Art History of Africa; History; International Area Studies; Linguistics
Asiatisch (Asian)	32	Archeology, Buddhist Studies, International Area Studies
Black	0	
Diversity	41	Biodiversity and Conservation; Gender and Diversity; Leading Diversity (in-service training at Helmut-Schmidt-University/University of the Army Hamburg); Intercultural Conflict Management; International Business Administration
Diversität (diversity)	68	Biodiversity and Ecology; Diversity and Inclusion; Diversity Management, Religion and Education; Empowerment Studies; Physical Geography; Sociology: Diversity and Society; Sustainable Agriculture
Ethnische (Ethnic)	2	Education; International Migration and Intercultural Relations
Ethnizität (Ethnicity)	2	Health and Diversity; Social-Cultural Studies
Frauen (women)	13	Mechanical Engineering (women's degree course); International women's degree course in Computer Science
Gender	67	Advanced Anglophone Studies; Gender Studies; Business Psychology; Health and Society; Gender and Diversity Studies
Identity	4	Communication Design; Visual and Experience Design
Identität (identity)	4	Religion and Politics; Spanish Culture and European Identity
Intercultural	42	Engineering Management; Intercultural Anglophone Studies; Intercultural Business Psychology; International Agribusiness; Software Engineering and Management
Interkulturell	214	European Studies; French Cultural Studies and Intercultural Communication; Globalization, Governance, and Law; New Media and Intercultural Communication; Translation
Migranten (Migrants)	3	Intercultural Conflict Management; Flight, Migration, Society; Social Work
Mobilität (Mobility)	143	Automobile and Mobility Management; Logistics, Infrastructure, and Mobility; Electrical Power and Machine Engineering; International Tourism and Event Management; Cultural Anthropology and European Ethnology; Trans-cultural Studies
Queer	3	Gender and Queer Studies
Rassismus (racism)	1	Social Work
Schwarz (Black)	0	
Vielfalt (diversity)	17	Health and Diversity; Pedagogy of Diversity (<i>certificate program for teachers in training</i>); Linguistic Diversity: Linguistics of anglophone, Baltic, Finnish, Scandinavian and Slavic cultures

Source: Assembled by the authors based on German Rectors' Conference (2021).

very likely to further marginalize students less favored by coloniality's hierarchies (Hüther & Krücken, 2018) that include women, migrants, refugees, LGBTQ+ students and others (Grosfoguel et al., 2015).

By no means does this article present an exhaustive catalog of equity issues in German higher educa-

tion to which postcolonial attention is indicated. We propose here initial steps towards applying a postcolonial frame to Germany's tertiary sphere, acknowledging that various bureaucratic and institutional specificities will inevitably challenge the implementation of interventions suggested in these pages.

However, as we have sought to demonstrate, there is clear evidence that comprehensive, nationally-scoped programs supporting diversity measures (specifically, the equal opportunity of women in academia) have had success in the German setting. Indeed, they represent accepted practice, and it is upon these initiatives that we propose expanding. In order to move towards a liberation of German higher education from coloniality and to effect equitable policies and practice, stakeholders should engage in focused attention to relevant research and policy work in the public and private domains alike. At stake is no less than the equitable support of present and future scholars in an increasingly diverse national context—one which may offer lessons to similar cases worldwide.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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