

**Representation, reflection and reconstruction of identity: The intersection of
black British history and British television, 1960-2015**



Promotional photo from Desmond's, a 90s British television series about a black barbershop and its customers

Master's Thesis

Saskia van Berkel

447360sb

447360sb@student.eur.nl

Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

Erasmus University Rotterdam

Supervisor: Alex van Stripriaan

Second Reader: Dick Douwes

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Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis explores the link between television, national identity and race relations in the United Kingdom. In recent years, the concept of onscreen ethnic minority representation – that is, whether or not different ethnic groups are included in visual art – has grown more prominent, characterised by the ‘Oscars so white’ furore, which highlighted the lack of diversity in cinema¹. Representation is important because in an increasingly multicultural world it’s important for everyone to see images they can relate to, and because seeing different ethnic groups on screen helps promote understanding and tolerance². Representation is the focus of this thesis, but in the United Kingdom, it is perhaps more interesting to consider onscreen representation in television rather than cinema. This is because the country displays a particularly symbiotic relationship between television and national identity. Television is one of Britain’s most successful exports^{3 4} and therefore informs how the rest of the world sees the country, so the image put forward in television is presumably the one the country wants the world to see.

My hypothesis is that British television has impacted the way in which British people of all colours understand race, and in this way the history of popular television programming and the evolution of race relations are linked. Further, I would posit that representation in popular culture has a double impact on race relations. It impacts how minority-ethnic people see themselves, but it also has an impact on how they are perceived by the white population. This in turn affects voter behaviour, and consequently how individuals and institutions treat ethnic minorities, as well as the often-virulent discourse on immigration. I

¹ Jawad Syed, “Oscars So White: an Institutional Racism Perspective”, *CounterPunch*, January 29 2016, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2016/01/29/oscars-so-white-an-institutional-racism-perspective/> Accessed on 30/07/2017

² Olivia Heusinkveld, “Why does media representation matter”, *The Wake*, March 23 2015, <http://www.wakemag.org/sections/voices/why-does-media-representation-matter> Accessed on 30/07/2017

³ Leo Barraclough, “British Television Exports Rise 10% to \$1.66 Billion”, *Variety*, February 2 2017, <http://variety.com/2017/tv/global/british-television-exports-rise-ten-per-cent-1201976483/> Accessed on 30/07/2017

⁴ James Medd, “Imperial gogglebox: TV is one of Britain’s most successful exports”, *The New Statesman*, June 26 2014, <http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2014/06/imperial-gogglebox-tv-one-britain-s-most-successful-exports> Accessed on 30/07/2017

am keen to conduct a full analysis into the changing face of representation and its relationship to evolving race relations.

In order to understand which aspects of this link are unique to Britain, and which are perhaps more universal, a comparative study will be used. I plan to analyse the history of race relations as compared with popular television programming in the Netherlands as well. The reason for this particular choice is twofold: The Netherlands is similar to Britain in that both countries have a colonial past but have also embraced multiculturalism in the latter half of the twentieth century before turning away from it in the twenty first. Second, the two countries are different in that they categorise race and identity in distinct ways. These ways will be illuminated later in this thesis.

The connection between race and television is a broad topic, and I narrow this in two ways. Firstly, it is the experience and history of the Afro-Caribbean community I focus on, rather than ethnic minorities in general. Second, the research considers multiple television formats, but excludes sport and news. This is because while both make up a large part of what is shown on television, they also exist independently of television. Sport is a multifaceted industry in its own right while news also encompasses print, radio and other platforms such as social media. By contrast, drama, entertainment and comedy television series exist only within the world of television, and it is these that form the focus of this study.

This leads to a central question which focuses on the extent to which representation of race in popular television programmes is linked to the history and current landscape of race relations in the UK, and how this is illuminated by comparison with the Netherlands. In order to answer this question, several sub questions are necessary. The first thing to consider is how ethnically diverse the popular television series developed and consumed in the UK are. I wish to understand both how ethnically diverse television is now, and how this has changed over time. The historical period I will be looking at starts in 1960 because this decade marked in Britain both the arrival of harsh race and immigrant legislation such as the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1961, and the advent of varied television programming, with the launch of commercial channel ITV in 1955 prompting the BBC to introduce a second

channel in 1964⁵. I will cover the period up until roughly the present day, with the end of 2015 marking the cut-off point.

This leads to the second question which concerns the relationship between the evolution of minority representation and changing race relations in the UK. I would theorise that increased diversity on television would have a positive impact on race relations and vice versa, and thus there will be parallels between the two.

My research will next move to the comparative study involving the Netherlands, asking the above two questions in regards to that country rather than the UK. What does studying the Dutch case reveal about representation on British television? What are the similarities and differences?

My questions so far consider the link between television representation and race relations in terms of how the black community are perceived, so the next question is about black people's perception of themselves, as linked to television representation. Do individual black British or Dutch adults feel their cultural identification has been affected by representation, and how?

Finally, as described above I suspect television is an important part of British national identity. Therefore, I wish to understand the importance of British or Dutch identification in the respective countries and how this links to representation.

This thesis will consider the first two questions in Chapters Two to Four, which address the past 55 years of television and racial history in Britain. Chapter Five will (more briefly) do the same for the Netherlands. Chapter Six concerns the individual experience of representation. The question of identity will be examined in every chapter, and my final conclusions will be detailed in Chapter Seven.

⁵ Gill Branston and Roy Stafford, *The Media Student's Book* (London: Routledge, 2010) 240.

Theoretical Concepts

Black representation

The key theoretical concept is that of black representation. By this, I mean how black people and stories are represented through imagery, namely in British and Dutch television series. Much of the theoretical insight here comes from the work of African American feminist writer bell hooks. In her work, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, she theorises that imagery is a tool which is used to keep black people in subjugation. In her words, 'white supremacists have recognized that control over images is central to the maintenance of any system of racial domination'⁶. What this means is that through control of how people are portrayed on screen, white people are able to impact how both white and black people are seen, and keep a racist world order in place. In order to resist, the black community must learn to critically assess, and thus resist and reject, the stereotypical images of them which are created. hooks refers to this as the 'oppositional gaze'⁷. hooks was writing about the black experience regarding popular culture in America, so I hope to apply her analyses to Britain and the Netherlands. Though her work is more than 25 years old, it remains a highly influential text on representation, evidence by the fact that it has been cited 1,165 times by other academics, including 74 times since 2017 (according to a Google Scholar 'cited by' search).

For me, the strength in hooks' theory lies in its understanding of the nuance of representation. It is not enough for black characters to simply be shown on screen, for the 'stereotyped image' also contributes to a negative view of black people. Thus, as well as considering black representation in quantitative terms, I must also consider it in qualitative. The questions to answer in the latter case are; does the characterisation of black characters rely on racial stereotypes common to the period, and are black characters fleshed out to the same extent as white characters?

Multiculturalism

⁶ bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992) 2.

⁷ Ibid. 115.

Multiculturalism is the coexistence of different cultures within a unified system, in which all cultures are valued equally. These cultures can manifest as religious practices, values, codes of behaviour and languages, among others. In a political sense, it means preserving the rights of different cultures within a state to maintain their particular culture.

Within this definition, however, there is debate. For example, in the UK some believe that multiculturalism means society splitting into separate layers of different cultures, with migrants not fully integrating. In an incendiary 2011 speech, British Prime Minister David Cameron denounced multiculturalism for these very reasons⁸. This way of thinking is often driven by fear of a loss of overall national identity.

However, surveys which address the immigrants themselves in the UK often find that the majority do not see embracing a British identity and preserving their home culture as mutually exclusive⁹. Bikhu Parekh, who chaired the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, argued for 'rethinking the national story' in Britain, in order to move forward as a nation which was united but inclusive of cultural difference¹⁰.

Similar contention exists around the term in the Netherlands. The debate was catapulted into the mainstream with publication of prominent Labour party member Paul Scheffer's *Het multiculturele drama* (The Multicultural Disaster) in 2000. Scheffer argued that policies concerning the integration of Dutch immigrants were failing badly, and that too little was being done to nurture and protect Dutch national identity¹¹.

Central to these debates are ideas about cultural identity and immigrant acceptance, hence why it is such a central concept for my research.

Race

⁸ David Cameron, PM's speech at Munich security conference. (Munich, February 2011) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference>

⁹ Anthony Heath, "Has multiculturalism failed in the UK? Not really", *The Guardian*, August 10, 2012. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/aug/10/multiculturalism-uk-research> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹⁰ Bhikhu C Parekh. *The future of multi-ethnic Britain: Report of the commission on the future of multi-ethnic Britain*. (London: Profile Books, 2000)

¹¹ Paul Scheffer, *Immigrant Nations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011)

Race is an interesting theoretical concept to consider as it is arguable that it doesn't even exist. While humanity has historically been divided into different racial groups, such as African, Asian and Caucasian, more recent thinking has found this division to be a fallacy. Biologists such as Nei and Roychoudhury have found that there is nearly as much genetic differentiation within supposed race groups as there is between them¹². The perceived differences between the races are merely socially constructed.

However, just because race is a social construct does not mean it is not important. The judgements made based on skin colour are still a real and present problem - to take just one example, black people in the UK are far more likely to be stopped and searched by police than their white counterparts¹³.

Race is in fact particularly relevant to my research because the perceived differences between races are exacerbated or diminished in the media we consume.

¹² Masatoshi Nei and Arun K. Roychoudhury. "Evolutionary relationships of human populations on a global scale." *Molecular biology and evolution* 10, no. 5 (1993): 927-943.

¹³ Vikram Dod, "Stop and search still targets black people, police watchdog says" *The Guardian*, September 21, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2016/sep/21/stop-and-search-still-targets-black-people-police-watchdog-admits> Accessed on 30/07/2017

Literature Review

There are two distinct areas of literature which will inform my research, and thus, this review is split into two parts. First, I examine literature which covers the history of and attitudes towards immigration and ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. This literature will place my research in a historical and social context. Second, I evaluate the literature on the link between popular culture and cultural identity for ethnic minorities, and on how effectively ethnic minorities are represented in culture in Britain and the Netherlands.

1) History of and attitudes towards ethnic minorities

This section looks at literature on the history of race relations in these two countries, and changing attitudes. In line with the periodisation of my research, the literature considered here deals chiefly with the 1960s onwards.

We begin with literature that sets the historical context of immigration and race relations in the United Kingdom. Starting with the influx of Caribbean migrants who came in on *Empire Windrush* in 1948, themes which have defined post-war race relations in Britain begin to emerge. The UK had seemed to welcome immigrations from countries in controlled order to boost its labor market. However, Carter et al. argue that the British government in the 1950s propagated stereotypes of West African immigrants as lazy and irresponsible, in order to mask the discrimination that was at play in the immigrant community's struggles with housing and the labor market¹⁴. Fundamentally, parliament was afraid that immigration would eventually lead to 'a change in the racial character of the British people'¹⁵.

Panayi claims that the first Race Relations Act in 1965 repeated this pattern of hiding racism in legislature. The Act was intended to outlaw discrimination in public places, but failed to address the more serious discrimination in the housing and employment markets¹⁶.

¹⁴ Bob Carter, Clive Harris and Shirley Joshi, "The 1951 – 1955 Conservative government and the racialization of black immigration" in *Black British Culture & Society: A Text Reader*, ed. Kwesi Owusu. (London: Routledge, 2002)

¹⁵ Ibid., 21.

¹⁶ Panikos Panayi. "The evolution of multiculturalism in Britain and Germany: An historical survey." *Journal of multilingual and multicultural development* 25, no. 5-6 (2004): 466-480.

Despite these creeping fears of the racial pollution of the English, Britain has been seen as one of the pillars of multiculturalism in Western Europe, and much of the literature on ethnic minorities and immigrants in the UK focuses on the success or failure of multiculturalism.

Goodhart is in the camp which believe multiculturalism is a failed exercise. He claims that immigration has caused two problems; one economic, as jobs are being taken by non-natives, and one social. The social problem is a lack of community, caused by immigrants who have not made enough effort to integrate¹⁷. The prevalence of these views in Britain is underlined by a speech from then-Prime Minister David Cameron in 2011, who claimed the UK needs a strong national identity to prevent extremism¹⁸.

However, Heath and Demireva found that the notion on which rejection of multiculturalism rests, that it results in immigrants living parallel lives to natives, is largely untrue. While the ethnic minority individuals surveyed felt positively about preserving the culture of their country of origin, they also displayed high levels of British identity and low levels of hostility to white people. This was particularly true among the younger generations, those born in Britain to immigrant parents. This suggests that multiculturalism can coexist with integration. Furthermore, Heath & Demireva point out that it is perceived discrimination which had the biggest impact on ethnic minorities not feeling integrated in British society, and suggest that discrimination is as likely as multiculturalism to explain a fragmented British society¹⁹. The same view is held by Maxwell, who found that Caribbean immigrants in Britain had high levels of expected discrimination, which lead to low levels of positive British national identity²⁰.

Menski highlights another reason for the supposed struggle with multiculturalism and lack of integration. By his reasoning, it is not that minority groups are failing to integrate

¹⁷ David Goodhart. *The British Dream: Successes and failures of post-war immigration*. (London: Atlantic Books Ltd, 2013)

¹⁸ David Cameron, PM's speech at Munich security conference. (Munich, February 2011) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference>

¹⁹ Anthony Heath, and Neli Demireva. "Has multiculturalism failed in Britain?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37, no. 1 (2014): 161-180.

²⁰ Rahsaan Maxwell. "Caribbean and South Asian identification with British society: The importance of perceived discrimination." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32, no. 8 (2009): 1449-1469.

into British society, but that the native British are not making an effort to understand these other cultures. Multiculturalism is inevitably the way of society, and the white British are just as much an ethnic group as South Asians or West Indians²¹.

To sum up, in the literature on Britain the theme of loss of national identity comes through strongly. Those who believe multiculturalism to have failed, or are looking into why others believe it has failed, claim that native British feel they are losing their cultural identity. This is attributed to a lack of integration with ethnic minorities. However, research shows that ethnic minorities identify with British identity, but are sometimes held back from integrating by real or perceived discrimination.

The literature on post-war immigration in the Netherlands tells a similar story of multiculturalism, identity struggles and discrimination. A common pattern emerges – that of a movement from an embrace of multiculturalism to a backlash against it. Meer et al. start at the 1950s, claiming *gastarbeiders* ('guest workers') arriving from Morocco and Southern Europe slotted into the existing Dutch system of religious institutional segregation ('pillarisation'), which was just extended to cover ethnic as well as religious minorities²². The Minorities Memorandum in 1983 made more of an effort to integrate the immigrant community into Dutch society, while still trying to help the distinct ethnic groups preserve their cultural identity. The backlash began when critics claimed the focus on cultural identity had meant that immigrant groups were not participating enough in the labour market and education²³. This sparked support for assimilation policies rather than multiculturalist ones.

Elsewhere in the literature, research has been done into Dutch attitudes towards immigration. Sniderman et al. carried out a study on native Dutch support for ethnic discrimination between 1997 and 1998. Their study rests on the principle that levels of support for ethnic discrimination are related to either realistic conflict theory (a fear of competition over diminishing resources) or group identity concerns (fear of a loss of unified identity). The latter was shown by their research to dominate the former, suggesting that

²¹ Werner Menski. "Immigration and multiculturalism in Britain: New issues in research and policy." *KIAPS: Bulletin of Asia-Pacific Studies* 12 (2002): 43-66.

²² Nasar Meer, Per Mouritsen, Daniel Faas, and Nynke de Witte. "Examining 'Postmulticultural' and Civic Turns in the Netherlands, Britain, Germany, and Denmark." *American Behavioral Scientist* 59, no. 6 (2015): 6.

²³ *Ibid.* 708

ethnic discrimination in the Netherlands is more about a loss of identity than economic concerns²⁴.

Bos et al. however made a connection between multiculturalism and positive attitudes to immigration in the Netherlands, through an analysis of media framing. Ultimately, it was a multiculturalism frame which engendered the most positive attitudes towards immigrants, even though multiculturalism has largely been abandoned by Dutch politicians²⁵.

Before moving on from the Netherlands, there are two key debates in the literature on late twentieth century Dutch immigration to be addressed. The first is whether or not multiculturalism is the best policy. According to Joppke, multiculturalism has been failing for some time²⁶, and Doomernik boldly states that 'multiculturalism is relegated to the dunghill of political history'²⁷. Vasta, on the other hand, argues that the definition of multiculturalism is often misconstrued. As well as cultural recognition, it should also be based on immigrant participation in society. If both of those principles are adhered to, then multiculturalism is an inclusive and mutually beneficial system²⁸.

The second debate is over what prompted the politician's and public's move away from multiculturalism. The work of Meer et al. summarised above points to the murders of anti-immigration politician Pim Fortuyn and filmmaker Theo van Gogh, who was killed by a Dutch Muslim, in 2002 and 2004 respectively. These assassinations, along with 9/11, were flashpoints which began the backlash against multicultural ways of thinking²⁹.

To sum up, the Netherlands has been moving towards assimilation, and away from multiculturalism. A multiculturalist standpoint leads to a more positive outlook on

²⁴ Sniderman, Paul M., Louk Hagendoorn, and Markus Prior. "Predisposing factors and situational triggers: Exclusionary reactions to immigrant minorities." *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 01 (2004): 35-49.

²⁵ Linda Bos, Sophie Lecheler, Moniek Mewafi, and Rens Vliegenthart. "It's the frame that matters: Immigrant integration and media framing effects in the Netherlands." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 55 (2016): 97-108.

²⁶ Christian Joppke, "The retreat of multiculturalism in the liberal state: theory and policy." *The British journal of sociology* 55, no. 2 (2004): 237-257.

²⁷ J. M. J. Doomernik, "The state of multiculturalism in the Netherlands." *Diversité Canadienne/Canadian Diversity* 4.1 (2005). 35.

²⁸ Ellie Vasta. "From ethnic minorities to ethnic majority policy: Multiculturalism and the shift to assimilationism in the Netherlands." *Ethnic and racial studies* 30, no. 5 (2007): 713-740.

²⁹ Meer et al., 7.

immigration, and the departure from this is likely to increase ethnic discrimination. The mistrust of multiculturalism is born out of the fear of a loss of national identity, and a debate over what should constitute citizenship.

The work of the scholars outlined here provides the social and historical context for my research. It seems in both Britain and the Netherlands, cultural and national identity is intrinsically linked with the discourse on immigration. My research hopes to build on this work by looking at the history of race relations through the lens of representation on television.

2) Minority Representation in Popular Culture

So far, we have addressed the historical debate on attitudes to immigration to Britain and the Netherlands. We look now at the literature which deals with minority representation in popular culture, and the impact this has on cultural identity.

The overriding opinion of authors on this topic is that media representation of minorities is important. The existence (or lack thereof) of ethnic minority characters in film, TV and literature is shown repeatedly to have an impact on the audience that consumes that media. Brooks and Herbert³⁰ argue that this is so because we live in a media governed-society. Social identity is shaped by the media one consumes, and informs our understanding of what it means to be a certain ethnicity or gender. Thus, media representation affects not only how black people see themselves, but how they will be seen by others.

As previously mentioned, bell hooks links the lack of black representation in media directly to white supremacy, saying that by displaying blackness in media only through negative stereotypes, the white elite maintain the racist social order³¹. This idea of blackness as constructed image harks back to the early immigration policies of the British Government described in section one of this review.

³⁰ Dwight E. Brooks, and Lisa P. Hébert. "Gender, race, and media representation." *Handbook of gender and communication* 16 (2006): 297-317.

³¹ bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992)

Hall demonstrates the importance of representation for ethnic minorities by saying that cultural identity can be conceptualised two ways – as a collective identity rooted in a shared past, and as a process of becoming that interplays with history, culture and power³². He uses the second understanding to explain how the Caribbean community in the West can use cinema to create 'discover places from which to speak'³³.

Other authors have shown the vital nature of media representation by showing the impact it has on individual lives. The personal essays collected by Nikesh Shukla in *The Good Immigrant* provide many examples of this. Bim Adewunmi skewers the argument that black people should only be cast in film or TV when the role calls for it, saying that this presents whiteness as the default³⁴.

This is the view expounded by Dyer in *White: Essays on Race and Culture*. His central argument is that white people don't realise they are white; they simply see themselves as human and everyone else as racialized³⁵. Furthermore, this idea is compounded by the fact that whiteness has long been set up as an ideal through the symbolism of the colour white meaning purity and goodness³⁶.

Elsewhere in *The Good Immigrant*, Reni Eddo-Lodge describes how American TV shows such as *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* and *The Cosby Show* gave her positive images of black families during her childhood. However, the characters in these shows were in their own way as one-dimensional as the black thieves and ne'er-do-wells shown on TV elsewhere. The families of the Fresh Prince and Cosby show were never allowed to be flawed or complicated, instead serving as paragons of black respectability. Eddo-Lodge attributes this to the black teams behind the programmes wanting to combat negative stereotypes: 'After centuries of racist depictions of blackness...black programme makers wanted to put their best foot forward, and not let the side down'³⁷. hooks agrees with this,

³² Stuart Hall "Cultural identity and diaspora." (1990): 37. 222-237

³³ Ibid., 237.

³⁴ Bim Adewunmi, "What we talk about when we talk about tokenism" in *The Good Immigrant*, ed. Nikesh Shukla. (London: Unbound, 2016)

³⁵ Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (London: Routledge, 1997)

³⁶ Ibid., 41.

³⁷ Reni Eddo-Lodge, "Forming Blackness Through a Screen" in *The Good Immigrant*, ed. Nikesh Shukla. (London: Unbound, 2016). 81

saying the debate rests too often on simply what is 'good' and 'bad' imagery, and that the content that reacts to white stereotyping is stereotyped itself³⁸.

Schaffer approaches the issue of minority representation in the UK from a different angle; that of the process of making programmes, and the political or social agendas that drive them³⁹. By looking at the reasons certain programmes are made, he arrives at the conclusion that even when British programme-makers are sympathetic to ethnic minorities, perceived differences from the white community were still highlighted. This links back to Dyer's point about white people seeing themselves as normal and everyone else as a departure from that normality. One criticism of his work, however, is that it is limited by his chosen timeframe, which is the 1960s to 70s.

Malik takes a different direction again, looking at race and representation through the lens of a single, extremely popular British TV show⁴⁰. *Little Britain* was a 2000s comedy sketch show that drew its humour from stereotypes of British people. In both of the first series, all of the core characters were white. Malik makes the point that although all the characters are white, they are all distinct from one another, showing the multiplicity of whiteness. Therefore, it could be said to be a show about whiteness, in the way that programmes such as *Goodness Gracious Me*, with its British Indian cast, are always described as 'ethnic' or 'Asian' comedies. However, '*Little Britain* and the discourse that surrounds it produce a neutrality of its own in which there is a refusal to pin it down as a white, English comedy'⁴¹. Again, we see the idea of default whiteness.

The above looks at just a small part of the extensive literature of representation in British popular culture. One challenge in reviewing the literature has been finding sources which deal with representation specifically in Dutch popular culture. This could either because these sources are so particular to the Netherlands that they are only published in Dutch, or it might be that this is an under-analysed area. However, there is much literature

³⁸ hooks, *Black looks: Race and representation*

³⁹ Gavin Schaffer, *The Vision of a Nation: Making Multiculturalism on British Television, 1960-80*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

⁴⁰ Sarita Malik, "How *Little Britain* does race" in *Reading Little Britain: Comedy Matters on Contemporary Television*, Ed. Sharon Lockyer (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2010)

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 80.

on racism and race representation in Dutch society more broadly. Through the arguments of these authors, I can both draw conclusions about representation in popular culture and make comparisons with the British case.

For example, Wekker tackles the supposed ignorance of race in Dutch society. She argues that there is a juxtaposition between the country's colonial past and the absence of this past in the national curriculum. The Holocaust is held up as the primary example of racist transgression in Europe, which conveniently erases past and present racism against ethnic minorities⁴². Her uses of the term 'white innocence' to refer to a wilful ignorance about the problems of race links to insights from Dyer about white people not acknowledging whiteness and hooks about white supremacy.

Both Deuze⁴³ and d'Haenens et al.⁴⁴ have run studies on ethnic minority representation in news media, and found in both cases that ethnic minorities did not feel represented by Dutch media. Deuze suggests that this is in part caused by the framing journalists use for ethnic minority stories, which propagate an 'us and them' way of thinking⁴⁵.

An area of scholarly debate which settles firmly on black representation in the Netherlands is the discourse around Zwarte Piet, the festive character who some believe is an innocent children's character, and some believe is a racist symbol.

Rodenburg and Wagenaar say that Sinterklaas (and Zwarte Piet by association) is the Netherlands' most important cultural tradition. As such, Zwarte Piet is an important part of the cultural identity of the country. Having no strict origin story, Zwarte Piet becomes a cipher for whichever narrative is projected on to him, whether that is one of racism, or of a loss of tradition. Their opinion is that the most damning indictment of Zwarte Piet is that it is sometimes used as a racist slur towards Dutch black people⁴⁶.

⁴²Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2016)

⁴³ Mark Deuze. "Ethnic media, community media and participatory culture." *Journalism* 7, no. 3 (2006): 262-280.

⁴⁴ Leen d'Haenens, Johannes WJ Beentjes, and Susan Bink. "The media experience of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands: A qualitative study." *Communications* 25, no. 3 (2000): 325-341.

⁴⁵ Deuze, 2006.

⁴⁶ Jeroen Rodenburg, and Pieter Wagenaar. "Essentializing 'Black Pete': competing narratives surrounding the Sinterklaas tradition in the Netherlands." *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 22, no. 9 (2016): 716-728.

Van der Pijl and Goulordava take a much harder line on Zwarte Piet. Their argument is that the continuance of this part of the Sinterklaas tradition shows how little black bodies are valued in the Netherlands. They reference bell hook's notion of white supremacy mentioned above, saying that Zwarte Piet is another example of the way whites exert dominance over the black community⁴⁷.

Out of the literature about cultural identity and ethnic minority representation therefore, I believe we can draw several conclusions:

- How black people are represented in popular culture has an impact on how black people construct their cultural identity.
- It has an impact on how white audiences see black people.
- Whiteness is the default in popular culture partly because white people see themselves as the default and other races as 'other', which makes representation more difficult

Conclusion

Having reviewed the above literature, I believe there has been much interesting and important work done on immigration and race relations in the UK and the Netherlands and on the importance of ethnic minority representation. Where I hope my research will differ is in the bringing together of these two elements. While there is definite overlap between immigration attitudes and representation in the current scholarly debate, I believe that a more direct comparison is lacking. The choice to compare the UK and the Netherlands in terms of television representation also represents unexplored television, especially in English language publishing.

⁴⁷ Yvon van der Pijl, and Karina Goulordava. "Black Pete, "Smug Ignorance," and the Value of the Black Body in Postcolonial Netherlands." *New West Indian Guide/Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 88, no. 3-4 (2014): 262-291.

Sources and Potential Problems

There are three types of primary source which will make up the backbone of my research: television programmes, statistical data, and interviews. Each comes with their own set of potential problems which must be circumvented.

Television programmes: As I am primarily assessing black representation on television, the television programmes themselves are naturally a key source. The main problem with this source type is considering one television programme representative of television as a whole. This is especially pertinent when one considers that different broadcasters have different aims. For example, ITV, a commercial channel, runs on ad revenue, and thus will have a different set of requirements and restrictions to the BBC. My plan to circumvent this is to only address programmes which were either the most or one of the most popular programmes of their time period. Popularity can be understood as a measure of impact, and therefore only the most impactful programmes will be considered.

Statistical data. In order to define these popular programmes, I need to lean on viewing figures. In the UK, the British Audience Research Board (BARB) provides this data, and in the Netherlands, it is Stichting KijkOnderzoek (SKO).

The issue with both these sources is that they don't keep historical data publicly. BARB has only recorded from 1981 and SKO from 2002. Therefore, to pick out popular programmes from earlier decades, I will use proxy data, from the Internet Movie Database (IMDB). This online source records an abundance of data on films and television series, but most importantly for me, production dates, country of origin, and popularity.

A possible criticism of this source is that, as a website built for entertainment purposes, IMDB is not particularly academic. However, I believe it is relevant to my purposes as one of my core concepts is that television both reflects and influences the real lives of ordinary people, which is why representation is so important. Therefore, a source which is used by ordinary people to rate and discuss their favourite programmes does seem fit for my purpose. One other thing is that the ratings on IMDB represent the aggregate

ratings of users over time, rather than the reception on first release, meaning the metric for these early years is not so much popularity, as endurance. While these often overlap, it should be noted that they are not the same.

Interviews. I want to understand how race, representation and identity affect individual black adults, and thus plan to conduct a series of interviews. A risk with interviews could be comparing the opinions of my key research group, without taking into account other differences such as class, sex, age, and location. For example, studies have shown that, when recounting life stories, women connect their stories to family events like marriage or children, whereas men are more likely to shape their narratives around public events⁴⁸.

Another consideration when conducting interviews is being aware of my own position as the interviewer. I will need to examine the biases I may be bringing to the table to ensure they do not cloud my findings.

⁴⁸ "Who is Talking?" *History Matters*, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/question1.html>

Methodological Approach

My research method for this thesis is as follows:

- 1) I plan to undertake a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the television consumed in the UK since the 1960s, and examine how ethnic minorities are represented, with a focus on those of Afro-Caribbean heritage. This will include close textual analysis of the television programmes, as well as contextual analysis of their reception.
- 2) My secondary sources will be academic studies on race and representation. I will apply the theories expounded by the authors to my own findings about representation in the UK
- 3) I will draw conclusions about changing race relations and immigration policy using a combination of sources. Firstly, statistical data on minorities and discrimination (for example, a study which revealed that UK job applicants with 'white-sounding' names were 74% more likely to get a call back than people with an ethnic minority-sounding name⁴⁹). Secondly, historical accounts of how the racial landscape in my focus countries has shifted, and finally academic literature on race and immigration.
- 4) I will then examine the same period of history in the Netherlands, and analyse how it intersects with the popular television of that country
- 5) The final aspect of my research will be a qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with black British and Dutch adults. I hope to set up my own interviews which will allow me to have full control over the subjects discussed. My interviews will follow a semi-structured format, with open ended questions which will allow me to steer the

⁴⁹ Full Fact, "Job applicants with ethnic minority sounding names are less likely to be called for interview"
<https://fullfact.org/economy/job-applicants-ethnic-minority-sounding-names-are-less-likely-be-called-interview/>

interviews in my preferred direction while allowing enough freedom to let the subject expand or take different paths as necessary.

Chapter Two: Britain Television in the 1960s and 70s

The 1960s may seem an unusual place to start an analysis of black representation in British television, as this representation was so minimal as to be non-existent. While black faces did very occasionally appear, they were in marginal roles and never the focus of the storyline. Things improved slightly in the 1970s in terms of the number of black people on television, with black-centric series such as *Love Thy Neighbour*⁵⁰, but these programmes were in entirely separate leagues to the most-watched shows. Building from bell hooks' argument that imagery is a tool of white supremacy⁵¹, television in this period maintained a status quo of white dominance through constructing multiple images of white British identity while erasing black people. As noted in my introduction, audience viewing figures are not available pre-1981. Therefore, this section uses data from the Internet Movie Database⁵².

By the mid-1960s, Britain had become the country with the largest overseas population of West Indians. The West Indian population was scattered widely across the country; in Manchester, in Birmingham and in London⁵³. By the 1971 census, those born in the Caribbean made up 7.9% of the total population⁵⁴. The 1960s was the decade in which the black population became more visible than ever, but it was also the decade in which the Government began to place greater controls on Commonwealth immigration, controls which some scholars have argued display racism.

The Commonwealth Immigrants Act, passed in 1962, brought in a system which meant only migrants with a Government-issued employment voucher would be allowed into the country. Claudia Jones has argued that the Tory Government which passed the Act revealed their racist motivation by removing the Irish Republic from the provisions of the Act, meaning it was black rather than white immigrants who were chiefly impacted.

⁵⁰ *Love thy Neighbour*, Thames Television, 1972 - 1976

⁵¹ bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992) 1.

⁵² An online repository of film and television which records popularity as well as other data. For more details, see Chapter 1

⁵³ Claudia Jones, "The Caribbean Community in Britain", in *Black British Culture and Society: A Text Reader* ed. Kwesi Owusu (London: Routledge, 2000) 49.

⁵⁴ Michael Rendall and John Salt, "The foreign born population" in *Focus On: People and Migration*, (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 134.

Furthermore, the Act coincided with the UK's attempts to join the European Common Market, which would open the country up to labour supply from European migrants. For Jones, this indicates that the government took issue with immigrants of colour, not immigrants in general⁵⁵.

The party's justification for the Act was rooted in propaganda about the West Indian community. West Indians were claimed to be flooding Britain, when in fact, they represented one in every hundred people⁵⁶ (though as they were concentrated in urban centres, their presence was much more visible). Fears over a possible housing shortage were also in evidence, despite the fact that West Indians were only allowed to purchase old run down houses, and contributed to the building of new homes through the labour they performed⁵⁷.

There is a separation in this example between perceptions of the British black community (by the white community) and reality. The spectre of colonialism hovers over this separation, as the British had for years portrayed non-whites as savages or sub-humans in order to justify atrocities against them. This fostered a reluctance or perhaps even inability to see the West Indian community as a vital part of Britain's economy and culture.

Discriminating against black migrants while inviting white migrant workers, all justified with propaganda which 'othered' the black community, is a clear example of white supremacy. Thus, to apply hooks' logic to 1960s Britain, this white supremacy would have been reflected and bolstered by popular culture.

Doctor Who: A distinctly British alien

Topping the list of popular television shows from the 1960s is *Doctor Who*⁵⁸. A science fiction programme first broadcast by the BBC in 1963, *Doctor Who* followed the adventures of a time travelling alien – known only as 'The Doctor' – who journeyed through time and space having adventures. According to the *British Film Institute* it was an

⁵⁵ Jones, "The Caribbean Community in Britain", 52

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ *Doctor Who*, British Broadcasting Corporation, 1963 - 1989

'immediate hit, quickly spawning a range of toys, board games and even wallpaper'⁵⁹. The series ran until 1989, was then rebooted in 2005, and is still broadcast to huge audiences to this day. Its endurance and popularity have made it a significant part of the UK's cultural make-up, but even in its early years it was intrinsically linked with Britishness.

A Britain which was unsure about its increasingly multicultural population is reflected right from the first episode of *Doctor Who*, which played on fears about immigration and integration. In the pilot episode 'An Unearthly Child'⁶⁰, the Doctor and his granddaughter are introduced as alien refugees from another planet, who come into contact with two 'ordinary' Britons, Ian and Barbara. In the episode, there is a clear integration narrative encompassing Susan, and an exclusion narrative around the doctor, who are both seen through Ian and Barbara's eyes. Susan appears odd but polite, and Ian and Barbara are sympathetic towards her. Her grandfather, on the other hand, initially appears slightly mad and has purposefully cut himself off from society, and Ian and Barbara's first reaction to him is to threaten to call the police. The treatment of these two visitors to the country mirrors the two political positions on immigration at the time. The Conservative Government, which had pushed through the Commonwealth Immigration Act, wanted to exclude the black population from the country, but the in-opposition Labour party were in favour of integration.

The most significant cultural impact created by *Doctor Who* is its part in the construction of white Britishness as the only British identity. One of the clearest examples of Doctor Who presenting a quintessentially British vision during the 1960s is in the episode 'The Dalek Invasion of Earth'⁶¹. The Daleks, the sinister robots which were the main antagonists of the series, had invaded London in 2164, and had to be thwarted by the doctor and his companions. The Daleks are paralleled with Nazis, in their blind desire to 'exterminate' and more overtly in their reference to their killings as 'the final solution'. The

⁵⁹ Anthony Clark, "Doctor Who (1963-89, 2005-)", *British Film Institute*, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/454592/index.html> Accessed on May 13 2017

⁶⁰ *Doctor Who*, "An Unearthly Child", Directed by Waris Hussein, Written by Anthony Coburn, British Broadcasting Corporation, November 23 1963

⁶¹ *Doctor Who*, "The Dalek Invasion of Earth", Directed by Richard Martin, Written by Terry Nation, British Broadcasting Corporation, November 21 1964

battle for England takes place around significant London landmarks such as the Houses of Parliament and Battersea Power Station, and the end of invasion is marked by Big Ben chiming, signally a new beginning. The linking of iconic cultural signifiers with a British defeat of Nazi-like opponents means the episode can be read as an allegory the British defeat of Germany during WWII.

From a cultural identity perspective, this victory is important to the British. The pure horror of the Nazi 'final solution' – the plan to exterminate the entire Jewish population – makes it easy to retrospectively view WWII as a good vs. evil struggle, in which the British are irrefutably on the right side. By reimagining the War as a fight between murderous aliens and the show's heroes, *Doctor Who* entrenches the perception of it as a triumph over evil, and the deep relation the programme had to British cultural identity secures its bona fides as an intensely British show. To return to my key analytic of race, the fact that *Doctor Who* represented British identity through an all-white cast means that it can be read as a tool of white supremacy.

While it is true that one TV show, one set of creative choices, does not create and maintain white supremacy, a television culture which consistently equates British identity with white characters and stories could be argued to uphold a racist order. While there were programmes which showed alternative ways to be British, looking at popular programmes seemingly shows no way to be black and British.

The Avengers: The inequality of feminism

*The Avengers*⁶² is another TV programme which has had its enduring cultural significance forged through a connection with British identity. It presents a slightly different version of Britishness from *Doctor Who*, but still one in which the black community are notably absent. Therefore, it is also complicit in constructing the social order which privileged whiteness.

The Avengers ran from 1961 to 1969, and followed the adventures of secret service agent John Steed, a classic British hero in both his eccentricity and strong moral fibre. The

⁶² *The Avengers*, ABC Weekend Television, Associated British Corporation 1961 - 1969

British superiority on display was aligned with whiteness. Writer Brian Clemens has declared that the lack of black characters in the series was a purposeful, stylistic choice:

We admitted to only one class – and that was the upper. As a fantasy, we would not show a uniformed policeman or a coloured man... Had we introduced a coloured man or a policeman, we would have had the yardstick of social reality and that would have made the whole thing quite ridiculous⁶³.

Clemens' thought process is that a fantasy version of England couldn't possibly contain black people because that would bring viewers crashing back to reality. It ignores the possibility of black viewers, and suggests that an ideal Britain would be one which was entirely white. This attitude, that black people could exist, but not in certain spaces, was a common one in the 1960s. It is best illustrated by the 1964 by-election in Smethwick, in the West Midlands. Conservative candidate Peter Griffiths ran and won using the slogan 'If you want a nigger neighbour vote Labour', and promised not only better control on non-white immigration, but repatriation for those already in the country⁶⁴. His dramatic slogan spoke to the white fear that black people might intrude on white spaces, whether that be the house next door or the escapist fantasy shown on television.

To consider *The Avengers* from another angle, the programme has been widely acclaimed as one of the first television programmes with truly feminist female heroes. The heroine, Emma Peel, played by Diana Rigg, was intelligent, independent and adept at martial arts, to the point where she was able to take down male combatants. As Thomas Andrae has argued, the character of Emma Peel 'refunctioned the patriarchal discourse of the spy genre, transforming women from an object of male desire into a subject who possessed masculine power and independence'⁶⁵

⁶³ Brian Clemens, quoted in James Chapman, "The Avengers: Television and Popular Culture during the 'High Sixties'" in *Windows on the Sixties: Exploring Key Texts of Media and Culture* ed. by Anthony Aldgate, James Chapman, Arthur Marwick (London: I.B. Tauris and Co., 2000) 49.

⁶⁴ David Olusoga, *Black and British: A Forgotten History* (London: Macmillan, 2016) 512.

⁶⁵ Thomas Andrae, "Television's First Feminist: The Avengers" and Female Spectatorship." *Discourse* 18, no. 3 (1996): 116.

It could be argued that the positioning of the show in the national consciousness as a feminist show is a further example of the tendency for British popular culture to place whiteness as the default. Post-colonial feminist theory argues that feminist thought often has a 'First World' voice, and assumes a universality of female experience which erases the very specific experiences of women of colour⁶⁶. As black women are subject not only to oppression based on gender, but oppression based on race, they experience misogyny in a different way to white women.

The sexist norm which the character of Emma Peel challenged was that a woman's place was in the home, looking after but subservient to her husband and family. This image referred exclusively to white women. As Wendy Webster has pointed out, black women were not seen as traditionally feminine; instead they propped up the labour market while white women were at home⁶⁷. The idea of a strong, independent female character does not resonate for black women in the same way it does for white, as black women were forced by circumstance to be strong. The fact that the programme is remembered for its feminism, with no specification that it is white feminism, points to the further erasure of black women in popular culture.

Fawlty Towers: Don't mention...the decline of the empire

Moving on to address the 1970s, one event particularly stands out when considering the importance of representation – the Notting Hill Carnival riot of 1976. The introduction of sound systems to the carnival greatly increased attendance, especially among Caribbean youth, which led to an increased police presence at the Carnival, and complaints from Notting Hill residents about noise. The tension reached a head in 1976 in a confrontation between black youths and policemen on patrol⁶⁸.

⁶⁶ Sandra Whitworth, "Feminism", in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 395.

⁶⁷ Wendy Webster, *Imagining Home: Gender, "race," and National Identity, 1945-64*. (London: UCL Press, 1998) 127.

⁶⁸ David Daybeen, John Gilmore and Cecily Jones, *Oxford Companion to Black British History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 345.

The 1976 Notting Hill Carnival riot gives an explanatory snapshot of race relations in Britain during the 1970s, and the cyclical way in which stereotypes trapped black Britons. Images in the media which showed young black men as aggressive troublemakers generated fear among white Britons and spurred the police to treat all black men with suspicion and force. This in turn created tensions between black youth and police which resulted in clashes, even riots, which were then used by the national media as further proof that black men were dangerous.

This can be seen through the account of Robert Golden, a photographer who covered the 1976 Carnival for the *Socialist Worker*. He notes that police at that time used the 'fiction' of young black men being pickpockets, a fiction which he thinks was created by the news media, to justify taking a 'consistently heavy handed approach' with groups of young black people⁶⁹. The national press coverage of the event, however, highlighted the risk to the police and depicted the black youths as the problem⁷⁰.

This clearly illustrates the damning nature of stereotypes, and the real world consequences of media influence. While news media was central in perpetuating stereotypes, popular television of the time presumably also had a hand in creating and fuelling the division and uneven power balance between black and white Britons, based on bell hook's theory that constructed imagery is a tool of white supremacy.

Looking at the most popular television of the decade according to IMDB, topping the list is *Fawlty Towers*⁷¹. *Fawlty Towers*, a situation comedy written by and starring comedian John Cleese and his then-wife Connie Booth, first aired in 1975.

The programme followed the trials and tribulations of Basil Fawlty, a bad tempered hotelier in the British seaside town of Torquay. Despite a slow start, by its second repeat in 1976 the series was a huge hit, pulling in more than 12 million viewers⁷². Assessing *Fawlty*

⁶⁹ Robert Golden interviewed by Sarah Phillips, "Robert Golden's best photograph: the 1976 Notting Hill carnival riots" *The Guardian* March 13 2013
<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/mar/13/robert-golden-best-photograph> Accessed on 30/07/2017

⁷⁰ Everton A. Pryce, "THE NOTTING HILL GATE CARNIVAL—BLACK POLITICS, RESISTANCE, AND LEADERSHIP 1976—1978." *Caribbean Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (1985): 39

⁷¹ *Fawlty Towers*, British Broadcasting Corporation, 1975 - 1979

⁷² Mary Greene and Martha Cliff, "As *Fawlty Towers* celebrates its 40th anniversary, we look at where the famous cast are now... while the lesser-known stars recall what REALLY went on backstage", *The Daily Mail*,

Towers from the perspective of black representation, one thing is instantly clear – there are no non-white characters in the cast. However, its popularity among the British in the seventies means it is still useful for understanding white supremacy in Britain.

There are several ways in which one can analyse *Fawlty Towers* when considering race. The first is the programme's synonymy with 'Britishness' and British identity. One of the key tropes of the series was Basil's own nationalistic fervour. Time and time again Basil references famous Britons or battles, is shown to be in thrall to any member of the British aristocracy, and disparages any and all foreigners⁷³. He is a caricature, but British viewers find him funny in part because they recognise themselves in him. Cleave, who as well as co-writing the show played Basil, described Basil in a 1995 interview:

...in a way Basil is tremendously English. He has all those characteristics...a fair amount of snobbery, an emotional uptightness. He's very embarrassed about talking about his emotions so he does not have any relationships with any real affection. So I think a lot of the time when not feeling puffed up with his own importance, he is feeling slightly depressed. That is why irritation and anger start to surface. The descriptions would apply to a very large part of lower-middle-class England, probably wider than that, but that is the class I know best.⁷⁴

The other point to consider is the direct ways in which the show tackled racism and xenophobia. For example, the infamous episode in which Basil continually brings up 'the War' in front of German guests could be seen as *Fawlty Towers* deriving humour from foreigners. In the episode, a German couple staying at the hotel causes an increasingly crazed Basil to constantly mention World War II, eventually goose-stepping across the

September 18 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3240286/As-Fawlty-Towers-celebrates-40th-anniversary-look-famous-cast-lesser-known-stars-recall-REALLY-went-backstage.html> Accessed on 30/04/2017

⁷³ Matthew Bartley, "Little Englander": *Fawlty Towers*-A textual analysis of nationalistic ideology." *Networking Knowledge: Journal of the MeCCSA Postgraduate Network* 1, no. 2 (2007).

⁷⁴ Andrew Davidson. Interview with John Cleave, "To Hell with Basil" *The Independent* May 13 2005 <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/arts-to-hell-with-basil-1619527.html> Accessed on 30/07/2017

dining room to the horror of all assembled⁷⁵. The German couple that bear the brunt of his mania are polite and unassuming, making it clear that Basil is the comic figure in this scene. The butt of the joke is not the Germans themselves but the British attitude to Germans and the former's inability to let go of the war. This example suggests that *Fawlty Towers* used discrimination and racism only as satirical tools, in which Basil was the one being mocked.

In summary, *Fawlty Towers* depicts an exaggerated version of Britishness, one that was in thrall to class, convinced of its own superiority relative to other nations and hanging on to past conflicts such as the Second World War and even the days of empire. As these things were played for humour in the show, we know that the viewers had to find recognition in them for the jokes to land. However, by satirising the British in this way, *Fawlty Towers* is propping up only one kind of British identity. Basil is the extreme version, but the other British characters in the sitcom do not present alternative British identities. *Fawlty Towers* was appealing to viewers to find recognition in the scenes, and thus viewers need to see themselves in the characters.

Fawlty Towers is admirable for its skewering of British perceptions of themselves and other nations. Despite this, however, its lack of alternative British representation means it remains a tool of white supremacy, in that it constructs a British identity which is purely a white identity. This is not necessarily a critique of the programme, which as described above was fairly progressive in its treatment of racism. It is more an illustration of how the white dominated television production in Britain reinforced the ideas of Britain being a white world.

To return to the Notting Hill Carnival Riot of 1976, the reaction of the black attendees to police brutality was given a negative filter by the media, confirming the negative stereotypes which incited the police brutality. Notting Hill Carnival is an important celebration for the black community in Britain, an opportunity for black people to reaffirm their presence in the UK culturally and socially⁷⁶. The British media's painting of the Carnival as a place of fear and violence undermines this expression of culture. At the same time, the

⁷⁵ *Fawlty Towers*, "The Germans", Directed by John Howard David, Written by John Cleese and Connie Booth, British Broadcasting Corporation, October 24 1975

⁷⁶Everton A. Pryce, 36.

most popular television show in the United Kingdom at the time showed a wholly white Britain which had a problem with foreigners from continental Europe, erasing the racial diversity which existed within the country. The undermining of black culture in the media and the centring of white culture on television were twin pillars of white supremacy in 1970s Britain.

Fawlty Towers upheld white supremacy through a certain kind of Britishness, but also made an effort to skewer and undercut this trope. Elsewhere on 1970s television the centring of the white experience was more overt. *Upstairs Downstairs*⁷⁷, which appears in position 12 of the Internet Movie Database most popular TV series of the 1970s, is a good example of this.

Upstairs Downstairs: The convolutions of the British class system

First aired in 1971, *Upstairs Downstairs* was an 'an instant hit in Britain, before being sold to 70 countries, winning seven Emmys and pulling in around one billion viewers worldwide'⁷⁸. It was set in Edwardian England (though over the course of its run covered the time period up to the 1920s), and depicted the life and times of both the upper-class Bellamy family and their collection of servants. It was committed to historical accuracy, but despite this its depiction of the past was in some respects rose tinted.

The patriarch of the family, Richard Bellamy, is a paragon of virtue. He is kind and generous, exemplified by his compassion towards a pregnant serving girl in 'A Cry for Help'⁷⁹, and loyal and honourable, as shown by his unwillingness to betray someone to whom he has given his word in 'Word of Honour'⁸⁰. As head of the traditionally British household and a member of parliament, he upholds both British family values and the British system of government.

⁷⁷ *Upstairs Downstairs*, London Weekend Television, 1971 - 1975

⁷⁸ James Walton, "How *Upstairs Downstairs* first conquered the world", *The Telegraph*, December 11 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/8194975/How-Upstairs-Downstairs-first-conquered-the-world.html> Accessed on 30/07/2017

⁷⁹ *Upstairs Downstairs*, "A Cry for Help", Directed by Derrick Bennett, Written by Julian Bond, ITV, November 14 1971

⁸⁰ *Upstairs Downstairs*, "Word of Honour", Directed by Christopher Hodson, Written by Anthony Skene, ITV, December 15 1974

Freedman ascribes the popularity of the series partly to the fact that, being set during the glory days of the British Empire, it upholds a nostalgic vision of a more powerful and influential Britain. However, he further argues that even more important was the image of Britishness portrayed by the series, with the Bellamy household functioning as an idealised version of the country. The Britain shown in *Upstairs Downstairs* may not actually ever have existed, but that didn't stop 1970s viewers longing for it. What was presented was 'an all-white society unified by certain generally accepted English values, and one in which class struggle, for the most part, could be charmingly sublimated into domestic foibles and occasional minor tensions between upstairs and downstairs'⁸¹. People of colour existed in the world of *Upstairs Downstairs* only in a colonial context, evidenced by a character's trip to India in series two⁸².

Not only did this all-white recollection provide no representation for black people in 1970s Britain, it was also an inaccurate portrayal of Edwardian times. Long before the arrival of *Windrush* there was a black community in Britain, and a black presence in many walks of life. For example, Hakim Adi has charted the West African student movement in Britain from the start of the twentieth century onwards⁸³, and Stephen Bourne has written about the presence of black performers on the Edwardian theatre scene⁸⁴. Seemingly though, this black presence in England did not fit into the idealised Albion of *Upstairs Downstairs*.

It's easy to see why 1970s Britons might have been searching for an alternative vision of England. The country was in a period of unusually low productivity, which meant the economy was stagnating and the threat of sterling devaluation was ever present. The international oil crisis of 1973 ultimately led to an energy crisis in Britain, which meant a three day working week and the government encouraging citizens to share baths and leave the lights off. Television has long functioned as a source of escapism for viewers, but it's

⁸¹ Carl Freedman, "England as Ideology: From "Upstairs, Downstairs" to "A Room with a View"", *Cultural Critique*, 17 (Winter, 1990-1991), pp. 79-106, 82

⁸² *Upstairs Downstairs*, "A Pair of Exiles", Directed by Cyril Coke, Written by Alfred Shaughnessy, ITV, October 28 1972

⁸³ Hakim Adi, *West Africans in Britain, 1900-1960: Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and Communism* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1998)

⁸⁴ Stephen Bourne, *Black in the British Frame: The Black Experience in British Film and Television* (London: Continuum, 2001)

critical to a history of race in Britain to highlight that it was not a future or contemporary world which viewers lost themselves in, but one from the past, and an unusually all white past at that.

This longing for the past can be glimpsed in many aspects of 1970s race relations. Enoch Powell's 'rivers of blood' speech baldly states the fear that some Britons felt at the growing black presence in the country. Although given in 1968, and despite the fact that the divisive nature of Powell's speech meant that he was dismissed from the Shadow Cabinet not long after, the anti-immigration rhetoric he typified formed the basis of 1970s race and immigration policy. The clearest example of this was the 1971 immigration act, which decreed that Commonwealth citizens lost their automatic right to stay in the UK.

The discrimination the black community faced led to the formation of the British Black Power movement, later known as the British Black Panthers, in 1968. As well as fighting this discrimination, one of the group's key aims was to educate the white British about black history. Neil Kenlock, a core member of the BBP, has said that while the white British felt the black migrants were taking their jobs, the black community felt they had a right to live and work in the UK because of the years of slavery in service to the country, as well as the fact as part of the commonwealth they were fellow citizens⁸⁵. This suggests that uneasy and charged race relations in Britain stemmed from conflicting feelings of ownership and right to Britishness.

To sum up the above, there were two important things at play in British 1970s race relations. The first was a fear held by some of the white population that the black population would eventually achieve a majority and thus dominance. The second, related, was that while Commonwealth immigrants thought they had just as much right to live and work in the so-called 'motherland', native British felt that they had the supreme right to a prosperous, successful life in Britain. Both of these viewpoints are linked to white British anxiety about identity, which manifested in racism and discrimination against black people.

⁸⁵ Bruno Bailey, "The Amazing Lost Legacy of the British Black Panthers", *Vice*, October 8 2013 https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/neil-kenlocks-photos-give-the-british-black-panthers-the-legacy-they-deserve Accessed on 30/07/2017

Upstairs Downstairs tapped into these anxieties and soothed them with its nostalgic depiction of England.

In fact, anxiety seems to be a constant thread which runs through the television programming of the 1960s and 70s. These fears all appear to stem from the single fear of a Britain in decline. This fear was not unfounded; after years as the self-proclaimed ruler of the waves, Britain had lost both its colonies and its position as a major global force. What is revealing about this fear as expressed in television was how much fear about loss of global status was tied up with loss of British identity, and how much this impacted on British race relations. The Britain as shown through television analysis was unwilling to accept the idea that Britishness now meant something more than white, and instead fell back on past narrative templates to centre whiteness as the default and only way to be British. Whether this trend continued or was challenged will be examined in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: British Television from 1980 - 2000

While it could be argued that from *Windrush*-onwards, every decade was seismic in terms of British race relations, the 1980 to 1989 was particularly eventful. The period opened with race riots in Brixton, London and Moss Side, Manchester, but by 1987, the first four black members of the Houses of Parliament had been elected. The riots, in response to police brutality and racism, were the extreme endpoint of a refusal to submit to discrimination, and the 1987 elections gave the community a strong political presence.

The 1980s were also years of great change in terms of television. Channel 4 began broadcasting in 1982, adding an alternative source for news and programming to a television landscape which had previously been dominated by the BBC, the public service broadcaster. Sky, a subscription satellite service, launched in 1989, adding yet more heterogeneity to the programmes available to British viewers.

Coronation Street: Realistic representation?

Looking at the data for the most-watched television programmes of the 1980s, the most obvious point is the dominance of soaps. *Coronation Street*⁸⁶, a soap depicting life on a fictional street in Manchester, was the most watched broadcast, closely followed by *EastEnders*, a soap with a similar premise but which was set in the East end of London.

Coronation Street is interesting to consider in terms of ethnic minority representation. UK soaps are intended as a reflection of the lives of ordinary British people, just with more dramatic disagreements and convoluted love stories. Often, television is aspirational and provides escapism for its viewers, but soaps are unafraid to present a gritty reality. For this reason, a soap is the ideal place to highlight underrepresented voices. *Coronation Street* was groundbreaking in its centring of the white working classes – for example, it's been credited with pioneering wide usage of Northern slang on television⁸⁷ - who did not often receive favourable television representation. However, during this period of the show's run the black community is almost completely ignored.

⁸⁶ *Coronation Street*, Granada Television, 1960 - present

⁸⁷ Jeffrey Miller, *Street Talk: The Language of Coronation Street* (London: Tiger Books, 1986)

In 1983, *Coronation Street* introduced its first regularly appearing black character; Shirley Andrews, played by Lisa Lewis. According to Stephen Bourne in his analysis of black characters on British television, Shirley Andrews was 'practically silent' during the first few years of her run, but later grew in prominence through her relationship with a white main character (Curly Watts)⁸⁸. In one episode, Shirley worried she would not be rented an apartment due to the colour of her skin, but this was one of the few times the program directly referenced her race.

There are two ways of viewing the character of Shirley Armitage when thinking about race and representation in the context of Britain at this time. The first is that to include a black character on television at all was a progressive move from *Coronation Street*. The second reading, however, is that by making Shirley such an easily integrated part of a white world the writers and producers of *Coronation Street* were shying away from the racial tension that was a very real presence in Manchester during this decade. The aforementioned riots had erupted in the Moss Side area of Manchester two years before Shirley's arrival on the street, in 1981.

The riots were spurred by the rising unemployment and racial discrimination faced by the Afro-Caribbean community, and exacerbated a tension between the police and the black community. Both viewed the other with suspicion and animosity, with the black community feeling that police were more likely to suspect black people of crimes and more likely to treat them roughly while in custody. The racism of some corners of the police force was shown overtly in the response to the riots, as police at the scene were reported to be shouting the n word⁸⁹ and using violence to control the protesters.

However, Shirley Armitage's time on the Street also coincided with an explosion of black creativity in Britain. Media scholar Jim Pines described the 1980s as 'a kind of watershed for black independent film and video in Britain'⁹⁰. Independent film companies

⁸⁸ Stephen Bourne. *Black in the British Frame: The Black Experience in British Film and Television*. (London: Continuum, 2005) 171

⁸⁹ "News Special: Moss Side Riots 25 years on", *Manchester Evening News*, July 6 2006, <http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/news-special-moss-side-riots-1035294> Accessed on April 17 2017

⁹⁰ Jim Pine, "The Cultural Context of Black British Cinema" in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader* ed. by Houston A. Baker, Jr., Manthia Diawara, Ruth H. Lindeborg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) 183

dedicated to black production had begun to emerge, such as Retake and Sankofa, which released their first feature films (*Majdhar*, and *Territories*) in 1984 and 1985 respectively⁹¹. The newly launched Channel 4 had an explicit remit to focus on more ethnically diverse programming, and in 1986 funded its first feature film, *Playing Away*⁹².

Black creators were also becoming more prominent in the art world. The late 1970s and the 1980s saw the advent of what Stuart Hall termed the 'second wave' of black British art, in which artists such as Keith Piper and Donald Rodney were making well-regarded art which was highly politicised and focused on the racial struggle⁹³. TV producer Simone Pennant has said in *The Guardian* that 'In the 1980s and 90s, there was a real black creative presence which was fuelled by the riots and other racial tensions...there were more film clubs and more events. We had a boom time'⁹⁴.

The 1980s was thus a decade of both racial struggle and the advancement of black creativity. *Coronation Street*, however, seemed to exist in a parallel Britain in which the single black character could be easily absorbed into the white stories. In this example, popular television's treatment of race seems to exist in a separate sphere to the reality of Britain at the time.

***Heartbeat*: Comforting crime drama**

Coronation Street continued to be popular into the 1990s, again topping the list of the decade's most watched television shows. In second place, and worthy of examination in the context of the 1990s, is *Heartbeat*⁹⁵, a police drama set in 1960s Yorkshire. The periodisation perhaps excuses the all-white cast, but the nostalgic portrayal of the police force and its popularity with audiences is interesting, considering the historical context.

⁹¹ Peter Childs and Mike Storry. *Encyclopedia of Contemporary British Culture*. 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1999) 151

⁹² Ann Ogidi, "Black British Film: Pride, Pressure and Rage", *BFI Screen Online*, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1144245/index.html>, Accessed on 23/07/ 2017

⁹³ Stuart Hall, "Black Diaspora Artists In Britain: Three 'Moments' In Post-War History". *History Workshop Journal* 61 (1): 1-24. 2006, doi:10.1093/hwj/dbi074.

⁹⁴ Lola Adesioye, "Black British Filmmaking Gets a Boost", *The Guardian*, July 30 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2009/jul/30/black-british-film-making>, Accessed on 30/07/2017

⁹⁵ *Heartbeat*, Yorkshire Television, 1992 - present

Reviewers on the Internet Movie Database describe *Heartbeat* variously as 'Brilliant nostalgic feel-good drama', for those who 'miss the sixties', and 'charming' with 'a sense of innocence'⁹⁶. This suggests that the appeal of the program was its evocation of a simpler time and its lionisation of a good hearted police force.

This stands in sharp contrast to the controversy which swirled around the police force in the 1990s, particularly in terms of race relations. In 1993, the year after *Heartbeat* premiered, Stephen Lawrence, a young British black man, was murdered in a racially motivated attack while waiting for a bus in South-East London. His murder exposed a British police force riddled with institutional racism. The Metropolitan Police Force's failure to bring Stephen's murderers to justice was investigated by Sir William Macpherson in 1999, the result of which was the Macpherson Report⁹⁷. The report found that multiple mistakes had been made by the police, including failure to administer first aid at the scene, repeated failures to arrest and charge suspects and insensitive treatment of the grieving Lawrence family. The Macpherson Report concluded that these failures resulted from 'something more than incompetence', and that officers 'approached the murder of a black man less energetically than if the victim had been white and the murderers black'⁹⁸.

Horrific as it was, in many ways the murder of Stephen Lawrence marked a positive shift in understanding of both personal and institutional racism. It was impossible to deny that racism had been present in the Lawrence murder case, which forced the British public to confront their own conceptions of racism, and foregrounded it as a British issue. Despite all this, however, the most popular representation of policemen on TV was the goodhearted 1960s force of *Heartbeat*. We can perhaps extrapolate from this that while the British were able to contemplate racism in themselves and their public servants, the world of television was something else entirely. This harks back to Shirley Armitage on *Coronation Street*, a black character who existed in a riot-free Manchester.

⁹⁶ Various reviewers, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0101114/reviews?ref=tt_ury

⁹⁷ Sir William MacPherson, "The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry" February 1999, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277111/4262.pdf

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Who Wants to be a Millionaire: In which the million pound question is...where are the black people?

Aside from soaps like *Heartbeat*, a TV format which stands out in the popularity rankings of the 1990s is gameshows. *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, *The National Lottery Live*, and *The Generation Game* all appear in the most watched broadcasts of the decade. The propensity of the British public to tune into gameshows is interesting to examine from the perspective of analysing race and representation.

*Who Wants to be a Millionaire*⁹⁹ first aired in 1998. The format was as follows; contestants would sit opposite affable host Chris Tarrant and answer a series of questions of increasing difficulty and win ever increasing amounts of money, in the hope of winning the top prize of a million pounds. The show proved incredibly popular, even earning a place in the *BFI*'s top 100 programmes of all time¹⁰⁰.

It's easy to see what was seductive about *Millionaire* for the average British viewer. Seemingly ordinary Britons could go on the show, answer a few questions and walk away with a life changing amount of money. The key to its success was the seeming attainability of the prize, combined with how rarely it was actually won. Unlike other gameshows, winning did not seem based on luck but on the ability to answer multiple-choice questions, so it was easy for viewers to convince themselves they could manage it.

There is one thing missing from this average Briton rags to riches story however, and that is that it doesn't reflect all average Britons. The contestants have almost all been white (as of 2001, ethnic minorities had made up only 1.6% of the contestants¹⁰¹). This is a common problem in quiz shows, and it is well-known among researchers that ethnic minorities are underrepresented because so few apply in the first place.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, 2Waytraffic International (2007-) Celador Productions (1998-2007) 1998 - 2014

¹⁰⁰ The BFI TV 110, *British Film Institute*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110911083558/http://www.bfi.org.uk/features/tv/100/list/list.php> Accessed on 01/04/2017

¹⁰¹ Charlotte Edwards and Susan Bissett, "'Millionaire' quiz show aims to broaden appeal" *The Telegraph*, September 30 2001, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1358013/Millionaire-quiz-show-aims-to-broaden-appeal.html> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹⁰² Adèle Emm. *Researching for television and radio*. (London: Routledge, 2012) 49.

There could be several reasons for this. The first is that the questions are not inclusive of minorities. Elaine Sihera argues that British gameshows demonstrate the 'monoculture' of Britain, in that minority participants would be expected to know the answers to questions which focus on British history and culture, but white participants would not be expected to know the same things about minority cultures. This 'reinforces a biased and narrow approach to what counts as knowledge and one which continually affirms minority invisibility and exclusion in the community'.¹⁰³ This is borne out by a 2008 report into diversity on British television, which claimed that *Millionaire* had so few minority contestants because the questions were too focused on the UK¹⁰⁴.

However, this does not apply to minorities who are second or third generation immigrants, who likely would have general knowledge associated with growing up in Britain. Perhaps then, Sihera's point that gameshows contribute to minority invisibility means that they are simply not watched in minority households, as the families find little to relate to.

Another possible explanation is that black people in the UK are constantly presented with the fact that they need to work harder than their white counterparts for a fraction of the success. Black students are far less likely than white students to get into the UK's top universities¹⁰⁵, and can find it much more difficult to find employment¹⁰⁶. Seeing white people on TV win money for answering questions would perhaps not be read by a black person as an aspirational story, but instead as another example of white people having everything handed to them.

The game show format thus remains majority white because minorities can't relate to its promises, and this then means that the game show reinforces the idea that success and prizes are only for white people through its lack of black contestants – it is both a cause and a symptom of the disadvantaged position of minorities in society.

¹⁰³ Elaine Sihera, *Managing the Diversity Maze* (Marlow: Anser Publishing, 2002) 168.

¹⁰⁴ "Report on ethnic minorities deems The Vicar of Dibley 'too white'", *The Scotsman*, July 16 2008, <http://www.scotsman.com/news/report-on-ethnic-minorities-deems-the-vicar-of-dibley-too-white-1-1080741> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹⁰⁵ "Race for Equality: A report on the experiences of black students in further and higher education", *National Union of Students*, May 20 2008. 8

¹⁰⁶ Oliver Wright, "Ethnic minorities can find it nearly twice as hard to get jobs", *The Independent* December 28 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/ethnic-minorities-can-find-it-nearly-twice-as-hard-to-get-jobs-a6787801.html> Accessed on 30/07/2017

***Desmond's*: Diversity outside the top ten**

Moving away from the BARB rankings, it is possible to find more diverse voices being represented on British television. In 1989 Norman Beaton appeared as the titular character in *Desmond's*¹⁰⁷, a Channel 4 comedy set in a black barbershop. *Desmond's* was notable for transcending both the tired stereotypes that previous sitcoms featuring black families had relied on (such as *Love Thy Neighbour*¹⁰⁸), and the expected performance for ethnic media – as Channel 4's longest running sitcom¹⁰⁹, it was a legitimately successful show in its own right.

The set up was simple; Desmond Ambrose was the owner of a barbershop in Peckham, and the plotlines were built around his interactions with his customers and his family. Deirdre Osborne, in an analysis of the programme's impact, highlights its importance as a representative of the lives of ordinary black people¹¹⁰. *Desmond's* did not turn its characters into stereotyped caricatures, but neither did it shy away from engaging with race and blackness.

Just allowing its characters to be black made *Desmond's* groundbreaking in many ways. Firstly, the representation of black British life was diverse and layered. While Desmond and his wife retained the attitude and habits of their West Indian home, their oldest son was an assistant bank manager with a white girlfriend who was keen that the colour of his skin did not get in the way of his ambition. Much of the humour of the show came from the disconnect between the Guyanese-born parents and their British-born children, showing that there was more than one way to be West Indian and engaging with the immigrant struggle of reconciling the culture at home and the culture of the home country.

Desmond's also showed the contention between those of West Indian descent and those of African descent in Britain, through the African character Matthew, and the

¹⁰⁷ *Desmond's*, Humphrey Barclay Productions, 1989 - 1994

¹⁰⁸ *Love thy Neighbour*, Thames Television, 1972 - 1976

¹⁰⁹ Paul Jackson, "Desmond's", *Britain in a Box*, BBC Radio 4, May 11 2013

¹¹⁰ Deirdre Osborne, "Black British Comedy: Desmond's and the Changing Face of Television." In *British TV Comedies* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016). pp. 167-182. 168

Guyanese character Porkpie, whose bantering and bickering was a staple of the show. By showing interactions between different factions of the black community, *Desmond's* was showing the richness and complexity of a community that was often defined only by its difference to the white community.

However, the show didn't shy away from the sometimes fraught relationships between white and black people. The programme addressed head on the fact that every negative thing a black person did would be seen to reflect the whole community. The sound of sirens on the show prompted discussions among the characters about which crime they would be blamed for next. By doing this, *Desmond's* drew attentions to this racist attitude, and combated it by portraying black people as individuals, not as standard-bearers for an entire community.

Desmond's was emphatically a show made for the black community, with references and beats which would have special resonance for the West Indian immigrants and their children in the UK. This had much to do with the diverse team behind the programme. The driving creative force was black writer Trix Worrell, who had moved from St. Lucia to the UK at the age of five. Worrell specifically wanted to tell a migrant story, and based *Desmond's* on black barbershops he himself had visited¹¹¹.

However, despite this the show did have cross-racial appeal. Charlie Hanson, the first producer, said it was even popular in places where there were very few black people because viewers were still able to identify with the idea of being an outsider¹¹². *Desmond's* proved that TV programmes could focus on black characters and black stories without alienating white audiences. Further, it provided its white audiences with an honest and positive view of black people which may have been absent in other forms of media. In Osborne's words: 'To screen *Desmond's* was to plant black British experience in a realm of universality in contrast to press and political decisions'¹¹³.

¹¹¹ Trix Worrell, interviewed by Ashley Clarke, "Desmond's creator Trix Worrell: 'Desmond's is a migrant story'", YouTube, *BFI films*, 59.38, December 21, 2016 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKX7u3srcxk>.

¹¹² Paul Jackson, "Desmond's", *Britain in a Box*, BBC Radio 4, May 11 2013

¹¹³ Osborne, 177.

Conclusions

This period, from the 1980s to the start of the new millennium, was the advent of more diverse television in Britain, but popular programmes were at odds with a society increasingly aware of racism. Popular TV shows tended to exclude black characters and ignore racial issues, and formats which should have been opportunities for diversity, such as gameshows and reality television, were alienating to black viewers.

The enduring popularity of *Coronation Street* shows that television that depicts real life resonates most with viewers. However, the real life shown was one with few black characters and no engagement with racial issues such as police discrimination. Programmes such as *Desmond's* proved that an honest and entertaining depiction of black life was possible, but it was the exception rather than the rule. What's more, *Desmond's* had a multicultural team behind it, suggesting that diversity behind the camera needed to progress to improve diversity in front of the camera.

Chapter Four – British Television from 2000 to 2015

In many ways, beyond simply the dawning of the new millennium, the 2000s seemed like a fresh start. The publishing of the MacPherson report in 1999 meant supporters of racial equality in Britain went into the decade with an undeniable feeling of optimism. Institutional racism was being addressed in the mainstream, and it seemed certain that more British were concerned with the evils of racism than Powell-esque fears about black dominance. Prominent commentator on race Gary Younge wrote in 2000 of his cautious hope that MacPherson report would herald a seismic change in race relations in Britain¹¹⁴.

The following ten years did see positive changes, such as the mainstreaming of black culture. In 2002 the BBC launched 1Xtra, a radio station which targeted a black audience and played a mixture of hip-hop, ragga, drum and bass and UK garage¹¹⁵. The recognition of black music as a powerful cultural movement had come long before, but the recognition of black people as a viable and important market to target was much more significant.

Black Britishness as a culture was also achieving prominence on a global scale. Grime, a style of music pioneered by young black men in the East End of London, achieved a popularity outside the demographic of its creators when Dizzee Rascal won the Mercury Prize, a prestigious music award, in 2003¹¹⁶. The rise of grime is important because it is a form of black culture which is undeniably British, unlike hip hop which was dominated by American artists. Grime gave a voice to black inner city youth which had previously been denied.

However, at the same time in other quarters, this voice was being silenced. A report for the Equality and Human Rights Commission in 2010 found that black people were at a significant disadvantage in several areas. For example, five times more black people were in

¹¹⁴ Gary Younge, "A year of reckoning", *The Guardian*, February 21 2000,

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/feb/21/lawrence.ukcrime>, Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹¹⁵ Matt Wells, "BBC enlists raw talent for radio station to woo black audience", *The Guardian*, August 19 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2002/aug/19/bbc.race> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹¹⁶ Angelique Chrisafis, "Rapper wins Mercury prize", *The Guardian*, September 10 2003, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2003/sep/10/arts.mercuryprize2003>, Accessed on 30/07/2017

prison in England and Wales than white people, and black people in their early 20s were twice as likely to not be in employment, education or training as white people¹¹⁷.

Furthermore, political actors were moving away from equality-focused legislation. Home Secretary David Blunkett, a mere four years after the MacPherson report was published, distanced himself from the concept of institutional racism¹¹⁸. He also designed policy based on the fear that immigrant communities were not fully integrating into British society, and among other things demanded British Asians should speak English at home¹¹⁹.

This simmering rejection of multiculturalism threatened to boil over in 2005 when Britain was rocked by terrorist bombings in London. That three of the four bombers were Muslim with Pakistani heritage caused a wave of anger against British Muslims, leading to an upswing in faith-hate crime¹²⁰. However, non-Muslim Asians were also targeted, pointing to the racial aspect of these attacks¹²¹. While it was not black people who were the subject of this increased racial hatred, it shows that white Britons still viewed members of other races as a homogenous mass, in which the actions of one represented the thoughts and feelings of all.

Britain then, was a country as divided as it was united in terms of race. Black Britishness was being embraced culturally, and racism and how to combat it was an openly discussed topic. However, black people were still held back by institutional racism in education, employment and law enforcement, and the UK was still a country confused about whether its identity was white or multicultural. This conflicted national mood is reflected in the popular television of the period. There were more black faces on television, and more engagement with race as a topic, but white identity and stories were still central,

¹¹⁷ Equality and Human Rights Commission, *How Fair is Britain*, October 1 2010, <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/how-fair-britain-report>, Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹¹⁸ Sarah Womack, "Blunkett signals retreat on race", *The Telegraph*, January 15 2003, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1418888/Blunkett-signals-retreat-on-race.html>, Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹¹⁹ Gaby Hinsliff, "Speak English at home, Blunkett tells British Asians", *The Guardian*, September 15 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2002/sep/15/race.immigrationpolicy> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹²⁰ Anita Ratcliffe and Stephanie von Hinke Kessler Scholder. "The london bombings and racial prejudice: Evidence from the housing and labor market." *Economic Inquiry* 53, no. 1 (2015): 276-293. 277

¹²¹ Shivani Nagarajah, "Mistaken Identity", *The Guardian*, September 5 2005, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/sep/05/religion.july7>, Accessed on 30/07/2017

and the treatment of black people on television often revealed British attitudes about race in the way that the Equality and Human Rights Commission's report revealed facts.

The X Factor: Britain reflected

According to BARB data, the television trend which defined the 2000s was reality talent shows. Programmes which feature ordinary Britons hungry for stardom litter the top ten, from *Strictly Come Dancing* to *Britain's Got Talent*. *The X Factor*¹²², arguably the most famous and successful of the TV talent show format, was first broadcast in September 2004, and as of 2017 is still on British screens. Its popularity has waned over the years, but at its peak in 2010 the final episode was watched by 17.2 million people¹²³. Created by pop music mogul Simon Cowell, the concept behind the show is to find future singing stars from ordinary members of the public. Cowell and his fellow celebrity judges start each series with auditions looking for an indefinable star quality – the 'x factor' which gives the show its name. The contestants perform each week in front of the viewing public, and are either eliminated or saved through a combination of public votes and the decision of the judges.

In terms of diversity, *The X Factor* at first seems moderately progressive, as there are usually several ethnic minority participants who make it through the audition process. However, how the black contestants on *The X Factor* are treated and framed reveals many truths of the black British experience. The treatment of the Black female contestants is particularly telling. Two women of afro-Caribbean ancestry won the X Factor in the 2000s; Leona Lewis in 2006, whose father is of Guyanese descent, and Alexandra Burke in 2008, who has Jamaican heritage. Both women had almost identical long flowing hair.

Hair is a deeply coded subject for black women in western countries. bell hooks has written on the pressure black women feel to straighten their hair, as their natural hair texture is perceived by a white-dominated world as unprofessional in a work context, and unattractive in everyday life. As she puts it: 'Straightened hair is linked historically and

¹²² *The X Factor*, Fremantle Media, Syco Television, Talkback Thames, 2004 – present

¹²³ Telegraph Reporters, "X Factor final ratings: Matt Terry's win is least watched so far, and trounced by Strictly Come Dancing", *The Telegraph*, December 12 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/tv/2016/12/12/x-factor-final-ratings-matt-terrys-win-least-watched-far-trounced/>, Accessed on 30/07/2017

currently to a system of racial domination that impresses upon black people, and especially black women, that we are not acceptable as we are, that we are not beautiful'¹²⁴. By sending Burke and Lewis to perform each week with relaxed hair, *The X Factor* was indicating that to be a star, to capture that 'x factor', a singer must conform to white beauty standards.

The idea that black female *The X Factor* contestants must conform to white beauty standards is compounded by the trajectory of Rachele Adedeji, a contestant in series 6 in 2009. Adedeji began the show with a bold quiff, but swapped it for a sleek bob just a few weeks in. The change was complimented by Simon, who included 'you've lost the silly haircut' in his comments after her performance¹²⁵.

The X Factor's reflective nature does not end there however. The whole show can be read as a mirror for British society during the 2000s, as both positioned themselves as meritocracies and thus avoided engaging fully with issues of race. The term meritocracy has a complicated history. It was first coined by Michael Young in his satirical novel *The Rise of the Meritocracy*, in which he depicts a fictionalised United Kingdom where intelligence and talent are central¹²⁶. Despite Young's meritocratic society being framed as a dystopia, in which anything other than conventional intelligence regulates citizens to the bottom of the heap, the term was absorbed in British culture stripped of its negative connotations. It has been used in recent years to mean an egalitarian society in which anyone can succeed, providing they work hard enough. New Labour, the centrist iteration of the Labour party pushed by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown from 1997 to 2010, advocated strongly for the concept of meritocracy in the UK, particularly in regard to education¹²⁷. A meritocracy by this definition implies that class and background have no bearing on success.

The flaws in the supposed meritocracy of Britain in this time period are highlighted by the experience of ethnic minorities. A report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2007 found that ethnic minorities were suffering an 'economic apartheid' which meant that black

¹²⁴ bell hooks, "Straightening Our Hair" in *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (New York: South End Press, 1989). 5

¹²⁵ *The X Factor*, "The X Factor 2009 – Live show 3", Directed by Phil Heyes, ITV, October 24 2009

¹²⁶ Michael Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy*, (London: Transaction, 1958)

¹²⁷ John Beck, *Meritocracy, citizenship and education* (London: Continuum, 2008)

and Asian Britons were far less likely to be in higher paying jobs and far more likely to live in poverty than their white counterparts¹²⁸.

If Britain was truly the meritocracy that New Labour promised, the reason for this 'economic apartheid' is a simple one; black people and other ethnic minorities were less capable of or qualified for well-paying jobs which would lift them out of poverty. This highlights the flaw in meritocracies, which is that racial prejudices mean black people never have the luxury of just being judged on merit. For example, an undercover government operation in 2009 revealed that job hunters with Asian or African names had to send out 16 applications before receiving a positive response back, while those with white-sounding names only needed to send out nine¹²⁹. As the job histories used in the operation were similar, the only reason for the discrepancy is race-based discrimination.

The X Factor clearly sets itself up as a meritocracy. The central premise of the show is that anyone can be a star as long as they are talented enough. Advantages which might help aspiring pop stars outside the show, such as industry connections, have no influence and success is dependent purely on star quality and singing ability. This however, is a fallacy. There have been multiple instances of black contestants having a much more difficult time on the programme, due to racism from judges¹³⁰ or racism from the voting public.^{131 132} As *The X Factor* shows, a meritocracy cannot exist while there is racial prejudice.

¹²⁸ Vikram Dodd, "Report finds 'economic apartheid'", *The Guardian*, April 30 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2007/apr/30/discriminationatwork.socialexclusion>, Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹²⁹ Rajeev Syal, "Undercover job hunters reveal huge race bias in Britain's workplaces", *The Observer*, October 18 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2009/oct/18/racism-discrimination-employment-undercover> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹³⁰ Jack Doyle and Sarah Nathan, "Cheryl Cole engulfed in row over 'racism' after she boots out Gamu... and snubs the chance to bring her back as a wildcard", *Daily Mail*, October 5 2010, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-1317762/X-FACTOR-2010-Cheryl-Cole-racism-row-Gamu-Nhengu-booted-out.html#ixzz4jV9RM0Ub> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹³¹ Adam Sherwin, "'Racist' X Factor voters reject black singers, says Chris O'Dowd", *The Independent*, February 11 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/racist-x-factor-voters-reject-black-singers-says-chris-odowd-9119869.html> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹³² Amelia Butterly, "Hannah Barrett: X Factor racist abuse disappointing", *BBC Newsbeat*, November 25 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/25089552/hannah-barrett-x-factor-racist-abuse-disappointing> Accessed on 30/07/2017

***EastEnders*: Is there a right kind of representation?**

Aside from reality talent shows, the other type of programme dominating the top ten was, as in previous decades, soaps. *EastEnders*¹³³ is a particularly interesting programme to consider in terms of diversity, because it is set in London, an incredibly racially diverse city. According to the 2001 census 30% of the population had been born outside of England¹³⁴, and this is not to mention the many second and third generation immigrants who called the city home. A programme like *EastEnders*, which prided itself on its realism, should surely have been fertile ground for black and other ethnic minority characters.

However, this was not in fact the case. In the early 2000s, the programme was criticised by the Commission for Racial Equality. The Commission was established in the 1976 Race Relations Act to ensure that ethnic minorities were protected from discrimination in the ways highlighted by the Act. One of its major concerns was representation on television, as shown by its introduction of the Race in Media Awards, which recognised excellence in race relations television, news and radio¹³⁵.

Their criticism of *EastEnders* was that it did not reflect the true ethnic make-up of the East end of London¹³⁶, forcing the makers to take a more active stance on ethnic minority cast members. One prominent way in which they did this was to air an episode with an all-black cast in 2009.

The episode focused on two black families, the Truemans and the Foxes, and the plot seemingly revolved around fitting as much black history as possible into the episode's runtime. Patrick Trueman, the patriarch of one of the families, shared multiple stories of the past at a dinner party to which the Foxes were also invited, covering topics from the *Windrush* arrival to the Notting Hill Carnival¹³⁷.

¹³³ *EastEnders*, British Broadcasting Corporation, 1985 - present

¹³⁴ Office for National Statistics, "2001 Census aggregate data" (Edition: May 2011). *UK Data Service*. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5257/census/aggregate-2001-2>

¹³⁵ "The 2001 Awards", *Guardian Unlimited*, <https://www.theguardian.com/raceinthemedia/0,,392389,00.html>, Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹³⁶ Gill Branston and Roy Stafford, *The Media Student's Book* (London: Routledge, 2010)

¹³⁷ *EastEnders*, "Episode dated 24 February 2009", Directed by David Tucker, Written by Christopher Reason, British Broadcasting Corporation, February 24 2009

This episode reveals how little programme makers knew about how to create compelling stories for black characters. *EastEnders* writers resorted to an almost lecture style format, educating viewers on black history instead of sticking to what the show did best usually, which was exploring the messy, complicated lives of real people¹³⁸.

If the popular programming of the 1960s and 70s can be characterised by no black representation, and the 80s and 90s by the slow emergence of ethnic minorities on popular television shows, the 2000s was the decade in which representation was viewed much more critically. This is best illustrated by the character of Masood on *East Enders*, who in 2008 was shown eating during the fasting hours of Ramadan. Roughly 100 viewers complained, and the BBC countered with the explanation that Masood was a character who had made a mistake, and he was 'not intended to be representative of the British Muslim experience'¹³⁹.

Trying for representation and then being accused of missing the mark can then become an excuse for avoiding the tricky issue of representation altogether. The solution however can be found by returning again to the work of bell hooks. She writes that for black people to overcome racist imagery they must be able to critically assess the images created of them, and create their own, which rebel against the racist stereotype¹⁴⁰. In the context of British television, I interpret this to mean that the industry needed more Black writers, directors and producers. More ethnically diverse creativity behind the scenes translates to better and more empowering representation on screen. Britain in this period was woefully lacking in diversity behind the camera, with a Director's UK report finding that black and minority ethnic directors make up only 3.5% of the directing community in the UK¹⁴¹.

The Great British Bake Off: Great British Branding

¹³⁸ Hannah Pool, "All-black *EastEnders* makes soap history - as in lesson", *The Guardian*, February 25 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2009/feb/25/eastenders-black-tv-review>, Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹³⁹ Paul Revoir, "BBC bombarded with complaints after *EastEnders* shows Muslim snacking during Ramadan", *The Daily Mail*, October 2 2008, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-1066352/BBC-bombarded-complaints-EastEnders-shows-Muslim-snacking-Ramadan.html#ixzz4k0XJGZDk> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹⁴⁰ bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992) 4.

¹⁴¹ *Directors UK*, "UK Television: Adjusting the Colour Balance", November 13 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-34807831>

In the final period which this thesis addresses, 2010 to 2015, reality television talent shows remained popular. In the midst of *The X Factor* and *Strictly Come Dancing*, however, a twist on the format was drawing in huge viewer numbers. This was *The Great British Bake Off*¹⁴² (*GBBO*), a cooking show in which 12 amateur bakers competed each week to make the most delicious, creative or technically assured cakes and other baked goods. The programme taps into a nostalgia for a Britain gone by, thanks to quirky elements such as a finale that takes place at a village fete¹⁴³.

As well as enjoying massive popularity in Britain, *GBBO* has had huge international success, with the format having been sold to 196 countries as of 2015¹⁴⁴. Interestingly, another programme which appears in the top 20 for this period, *Downton Abbey*¹⁴⁵, a sumptuous period drama set in the early twentieth century, has also been extremely successful abroad, having been sold to 220 territories¹⁴⁶. According to media scholar Barbara Selznick, in order for British television shows to have international success they needed to be branded as one of three things: heritage, cool, or eccentric. Heritage is for programmes which hark back to a nostalgic vision of Britain's past, cool refers to programmes which are edgy or anti-establishment, and eccentric is anything unusual or quirky¹⁴⁷. These three brands tie into basic templates of British identity. *The Great British Bake Off*, with its bunting-strewn set and squabbles about Baked Alaska¹⁴⁸ fits clearly into the 'eccentric' mould. *Downtown Abbey*, as a period drama, is classic heritage television.

¹⁴² *The Great British Bake Off*, Love Productions, 2010 - present

¹⁴³ Charlotte Higgins, "The genius of The Great British Bake Off", *The Guardian*, October 6 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2015/oct/06/genius-of-great-british-bake-off> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹⁴⁴ John Plunkett, "Great British Bake Off: new contestants poised to serve up sixth series", *The Guardian*, July 28 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2015/jul/28/great-british-bake-off-contestants-series-six> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹⁴⁵ *Downton Abbey*, Carnival Film & Television, Masterpiece Theatre, 2010 - 2015

¹⁴⁶ Press Centre, "ITV commissions a fifth series of Downton Abbey", *ITV*, Sunday 10 November 2013, http://www.itv.com/presscentre/press-releases/itv-commissions-fifth-series-downton-abbey#.Uu5drD1_uSp Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹⁴⁷ Barbara Selznick, "Rebooting and Rebranding: The Changing Brands of *Doctor Who*'s Britishness" in *Ruminations, Peregrinations, and Regenerations: A Critical Approach to Doctor Who*, ed. by Christopher J. Hansen (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010) 69.

¹⁴⁸ Christopher Hooton, "Great British Bake Off embroiled in Baked Alaska 'sabotage' scandal", *The Independent*, August 28 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/the-great-british-bake-off-rocked-by-baked-alaska-sabotage-scandal-9695831.html> Accessed on 30/07/2017

This desire to have programmes hit certain beats of Britishness is perhaps one of the reasons why diversity is still a problem for British television. That it is a problem is shown by a 2016 Government report, which found that black and minority ethnic people make up 10% of the television population compared to the 13% of that there are in the English population¹⁴⁹. More pressingly, 51% of black people surveyed felt that on television they were portrayed unfairly and/or very negatively¹⁵⁰.

It should be said that *The Great British Bake Off* has always had multicultural contestants, to the point that the programme has even been criticized for being 'too PC'¹⁵¹. However, the essential twee Britishness of the show being an acceptable platform for diversity is problematic. As writer Nikesh Shukla explains, immigrants are seen as 'bad immigrants' in the UK until they do something the British perceive as good, at which point they are absorbed into Britishness. He cites the example of 2015 *GBBO* winner Nadiya Hussain, a Muslim woman of Bengali descent, as a typical 'good immigrant'¹⁵². Hussain was embraced as an icon of diverse Britain¹⁵³, in the same year that hate crime against Muslims rose by up to 70%¹⁵⁴. This suggests that the British public were accepting of Muslims only when they conformed to British ideals.

As shown by the above, the eccentric and heritage brands provide limited opportunity for black representation, due to their link with the past and their inherent nostalgia. The cool brand provides a better platform in that is innately more modern, and there have been several examples of cool-branded programmes being successful vehicles for Black actors. *Top Boy*¹⁵⁵ was a 2011 crime drama set on an estate in East London, in

¹⁴⁹ Philip Ward, Noel Dempsey & Benjamin Politowski, "Diversity in Broadcasting", *House of Commons Library*, No. 7553, April 12 2016. 4.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 7

¹⁵¹ Nadia Khomami, "Great British Bake Off contestants are representative of Britain, says creator", *The Guardian*, October 6 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2015/oct/06/great-british-bake-off-contestants-representative-of-britain-anna-beattie> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹⁵² Nikesh Shukla, *The Good Immigrant* (London: Unbound, 2016)

¹⁵³ Simon Kelner, "Nadiya Hussain serves up the perfect rebuttal to Theresa May's xenophobic rhetoric", *The Independent*, October 8 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/great-british-bake-off-nadiya-hussain-serves-up-the-perfect-rebuttal-to-theresa-mays-xenophobic-a6686601.html> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹⁵⁴ Zack Adesina and Oana Marocico, "Zack Adesina and Oana Marocico", *BBC News*, September 7 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-34138127> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹⁵⁵ *Top Boy*, Cowboy Films, 2011 - 2013

which most of the main parts were played by black actors. The programme detailed the gritty reality of drug dealing and gang culture in London, but also showed the humanity and vulnerability of those involved in this lifestyle. This programme generated enough international attention to catch the eye of black Canadian musician Drake, who in 2017 purchased the rights to the show¹⁵⁶.

However, while television is plodding towards change the rise of the internet has given young black creatives an avenue to make and promote their own content. For example, black British actor and comedian Angie Le Mar has said that using the internet as a medium was the only way to sidestep the racism she encountered in traditional broadcasting.

We decided to make [new sitcom *The Ryan Sisters*] ourselves and put it up online because we just can't get TV networks interested. There really is a lot of racism in the industry: they're not ready for black women. Commissioners say: 'Can you make white people laugh?' Or: 'Middle England won't like you'.¹⁵⁷

Le Mar's quote demonstrates that white people are still thought of as the default audience, and that there is structural racism in the television which prevents black-centric programmes being made. The internet is a form of counterattack to this. Terje Rasmussen has written on the 'radically democratised access to media'¹⁵⁸ that the internet provides, and this democratisation has created a new platform for diversity.

Web series created by and starring black people are a rich field. Along with *The Ryan Sisters*, there's *Ackee and Saltfish*, about two black girls in their twenties living in London, *Housemates*, a black female-lead ensemble comedy, and *#SoHeSays*, a discussion programme on men's perspectives. British Blacklist, a database of black UK talent, describes

¹⁵⁶ Sasaf Ashan, "Drake saves British series Top Boy from cancellation by buying the rights, now plans to star", *National Post*, April 4 2017, <http://news.nationalpost.com/entertainment/television/drake-saves-british-series-top-boy-from-cancellation-by-buying-the-rights-now-plans-to-star> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹⁵⁷ Bim Adewunmi, "Why black British drama is going online, not on TV", *The Guardian*, July 2 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jul/02/black-british-tv-drama-online> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹⁵⁸ Terje Rasmussen, "Internet-based media, Europe and the political public sphere." *Media, Culture & Society* 35, no. 1 (2013): 97-104. 97.

the rise of black produced web series as a phenomenon that speaks volumes about the attitude of a new generation of talent, irrespective of race, who refuse to sit and wait for a door to be opened'¹⁵⁹.

Conclusion

The period between 2000 and 2015 saw both television and British society take important steps towards more inclusivity. However, the difficulties of representation were also thrown into sharp relief, such as how to write ethnic minority characters which were multidimensional and not stereotypes. Another problem is that when black people were shown on television they were still impacted by racism, such as in the case of *The X Factor*.

The reason behind the continuing deficit in black characters on television appears to be a combination of not enough black creatives behind the scenes, and a focus on British branding for international sale which has left little space for the black population. A big positive step has been the democratisation of media caused by the internet, which has created a platform for black talent in a way that traditional broadcasting has struggled to do. However, these web series serve a much more niche audience and usually need to be sought out by potential viewers, and so lack the possibly for large scale communication which can be achieved by the BBC and its main commercial competitors.

¹⁵⁹ Albert Yanney, "The Rise of the British African Caribbean Web Series", *The British Blacklist*, August 1 2013, <http://www.thebritishblacklist.com/rise-african-caribbean-web-series-albert-yanney/> Accessed on 30/07/2017

Chapter Five: Comparison with the Netherlands

This chapter moves away from discussing race and television in Britain to examine how these two things interact in the Netherlands. I'm using the Dutch case chiefly as a comparative, in order to highlight features of British racism, identity politics and particularly black representation, which might not be visible with a more singular view.

There are several ways in which the Netherlands provides an interesting comparative study to the United Kingdom. Both are former colonial powers and have experienced waves of migrants from former colonies in the latter half of the twentieth century. Both have strived for multiculturalism in the past, but have also hosted a backlash against multiculturalism, and both countries have seen far right parties gain more support in recent years.

An interesting difference is that when it comes to television, British television tends to have greater global reach than Dutch television. It therefore functions as a cultural export, projecting a certain image of the UK to the rest of the world. Dutch television usually gains less traction outside the Netherlands, due to the fact that Dutch is less widely spoken than English. Dutch television can be therefore analysed in terms of what it means to and reflects of the Dutch people, free from the constraint of projecting a certain image to the global consumer.

This chapter covers the same period in Dutch history as the previous chapters do in British history, but in a more concise manner. I begin by setting this historical context, looking at the history of migration to the Netherlands and the Dutch perception of race and racism. I then highlight popular programmes produced in the Netherlands from over the period in question for a more considered analysis.

A brief history of Dutch multiculturalism

The Netherlands is a fascinating case for those interested in how states navigate immigration and integration policies. From the 1970s up until the 1990s the Netherlands seemingly embraced multiculturalism, but simmering feelings of dissatisfaction reached boiling point with the murder of Theo van Gogh in the early 2000s. Since then, the

Netherlands has moved away from its focus on maintaining immigrant identities and more towards integration, and even assimilation. While the murder was a concrete event on which to hang fears about immigration, the native Dutch were experiencing anxiety about identity well before that.

In the late 50s and early 1960s, the Dutch economy was slowly starting to recover from World War II. Gaps in the re-energised labour market lead to the Dutch government devising schemes to attract so-called 'guest workers' from Italy, Spain, Greece, Yugoslavia, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. The term 'guest' is significant, as the idea was that these workers would eventually return to their home country. There was however opportunity for the guest workers to 'regularise' and become legal citizens, an opportunity which many of the Turkish and Moroccan immigrants took. Their new legal status allowed the workers to bring their families over too, which many started doing from the 1970s onwards¹⁶⁰.

Around this time, migrants were also starting to arrive from Surinam. There were two significant influxes of Surinamese into the Netherlands; the first in the years just before independence, in 1975, and the second in the years 1978-79, which was just before the Netherlands introduced a visa requirement¹⁶¹. Like the West Indian migrants to Britain, the Surinamese saw the Netherlands as a benevolent 'mother country', a place where they already knew the language and it would be easy to integrate.

Increasing numbers of legal citizens aside, up until the 1980s the prevailing view was that migration was temporary, and governmental policies towards immigration were developed with this in mind. The maintaining of migrant cultures was encouraged to make the return home easier, to the point where migrant children were taught their mother tongue in Dutch primary schools¹⁶². This maintenance of culture was seen by some as veering towards exclusionist, and particularly affected by this sense of exclusion were the Moluccans, an ethnic military group from Indonesia who had been loyal to Dutch colonists.

¹⁶⁰ Leo Lucassen and Jan Lucassen, "The strange death of Dutch tolerance: The timing and nature of the pessimist turn in the Dutch migration debate." *The Journal of Modern History* 87, no. 1 (2015): 72-101.

¹⁶¹ Mies Van Niekerk, Mies. "Surinam country study." *A part of the report on Informal Remittance Systems in Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries* (2005). 2.

¹⁶² Han Entzinger, "The growing gap between facts and discourse on immigrant integration in the Netherlands." *Identities* 21, no. 6 (2014): 693-707. 695.

When two separate train hijacks by groups of young Moluccans resulted in death, the Dutch government realised that integration needed to be handled more sensitively¹⁶³.

The idea of temporariness was abandoned and replaced with the 'minorities policy'¹⁶⁴, an umbrella Government strategy in which policies were designed to cater for specific ethnic groups based on their specific needs. The policy harked back to the earlier Dutch societal model of 'pillarization', which organised different religions and ideologies into separate, but peacefully coexisting groups. The focus of the minorities policy was on migrant integration into Dutch society, while maintaining a sense of identity based on the migrant's home culture¹⁶⁵.

This policy did not last. An economic restructuring in the 1970s meant that lower-paying jobs were ceasing to exist, reducing the job opportunities for migrants and creating high unemployment among both migrants and native Dutch¹⁶⁶. This led to negative feelings towards migrants among the native Dutch, and a growing sense that multiculturalism was failing. The Government moved away from the minority policy in the early 90s and instead promoted an 'integration policy', in which the focus was on education and employment to help migrants fit better into Dutch society. While this was successful in some areas, such as a rise in employment rates for migrant citizens, concerns remained around high rates of crime among certain groups and increasingly segregated housing areas¹⁶⁷.

From the midst of this move away from multiculturalism came the rise of Pim Fortuyn, a charismatic politician with views intended to shake up the Dutch political landscape. Beginning as a columnist for weekly Dutch magazine *Elsevier*, Fortuyn used his platform to attack both the political establishment and the religion of Islam. After a short stint as party leader of 'Leefbaar Nederland' (Liveable Netherlands), he formed his own party, the Lijst Pim Fortuyn, or LPF, in 2002. He campaigned on, among other things, the notion that the Netherlands could not take any more asylum seekers and that previous

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Peter Scholten, *Framing immigrant integration: Dutch research-policy dialogues in comparative perspective*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011)

¹⁶⁵ Entzinger. 696

¹⁶⁶ Mies Niekerk. "Afro-Caribbeans and Indo-Caribbeans in the Netherlands: Premigration Legacies and Social Mobility." *International Migration Review* 38, no. 1 (2004): 158-183.162s

¹⁶⁷ Entzinger, 697.

attempts to integrate immigrants had not worked. His message, while out of step with political norms, resonated with 'native-born Dutch from the lower social classes...and acquired a specific following among the nouveau riches from the 1990s computer and communications boom'¹⁶⁸.

At what seemed to be the height of his popularity, Fortuyn was assassinated as he left a television studio in Hilversum, on 6th May 2002¹⁶⁹. The politically motivated murder, one of few in Dutch history, shocked the Netherlands. Fortuyn's party ended up winning an unexpectedly high number of seats in the national election a few weeks later. Though the party collapsed due to its lack of leadership, it paved the way for the rise of the next Dutch far right party, the 'Party for Freedom' lead by Geert Wilders.

The country's shock at Fortuyn's death had barely subsided when the Netherlands played host to another politically motivated murder. Theo van Gogh was a Dutch filmmaker who had incited controversy with a short film in which verses from the Koran relating the subjugation of women were projected onto a female body. He was murdered on 2nd November 2004 by a young Dutch-Moroccan man named Muhammad Bouyari. Van Gogh's murder generated a 'nationwide panic' with the Minister for Finance claiming that there was a war between Islam and the West¹⁷⁰.

The two murders, combined with the existing dissatisfaction with multiculturalism and compounded by terrorist attacks abroad such as the ones in New York and London, lead to what Lucassen and Lucassen have termed a 'pessimistic turn', in which Dutch society began to move further and further away from the benevolent attitudes towards immigration it had previously embraced¹⁷¹. A country that had been a leader in tolerance had become inward and afraid.

From this brief history of Dutch multiculturalism, several questions emerge. It's clear that anti-Islam feeling is growing in some Dutch citizens, but does this rejection of

¹⁶⁸ Peter Jan Margry, "The Murder of Pim Fortuyn and Collective Emotions Hype, Hysteria and Holiness in The Netherlands?" *Etnofoor* (2003): 106-131. 109

¹⁶⁹ "Dutch far-right leader shot dead", *BBC News*, May 6 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1971423.stm> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹⁷⁰ Peter Van der Veer, "Pim Fortuyn, Theo van Gogh, and the politics of tolerance in the Netherlands." *Public Culture* 18, no. 1 (2006): 111-124. 111.

¹⁷¹ Leo Lucassen and Jan Lucassen, "The strange death of Dutch tolerance". 73.

difference extend to the country's Surinamese and Antillean inhabitants? Did the multicultural policies of the past mean the Netherlands is/was a diverse utopia, or is there unacknowledged racism, as Wekker¹⁷² and others have claimed? Finally, what impact does the colonial context have on Dutch treatment of racism? My aim is to see what answers popular Dutch television can give us to these questions, returning to bell hook's insight that television can be used to construct a dominant racial ideal.

The Occupation: An Establishment Tale of Resistance

The first Dutch television channel, *Nederland 1*, was launched in 1953, after a two year experimentation period¹⁷³. Early broadcasting was managed by the same 'pillarisation' structure that ordered society, with, for example, Catholic and Protestant networks broadcasting programmes which fitted¹⁷⁴ with their world view. *De Bezetting*¹⁷⁴, a war documentary shown between 1960 and 1965, transcended these differences and was 'experienced as a national happening'¹⁷⁵.

De Bezetting (referred to hereafter by its English title, *The Occupation*) detailed the key events of World War II as they were experienced in the Netherlands. The series had a lecture format, with prominent historian Dr. Lou de Jong speaking directly into the camera, and using interviews, maps and photographs to illustrate his narrative.

It is clear *The Occupation* was in line with the Dutch official position on the war. Those interviewed were politicians or governmental elites, and their interviews were constructed statements (shown by the fact that interviewees sometimes read from notes)¹⁷⁶. This official position was that the Dutch had put up a heroic resistance against their German oppressors.

¹⁷² Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016) (ebook version)

¹⁷³ Kees van der Haak, *Broadcasting in the Netherlands* (Norfolk: Routledge, 1977) 17

¹⁷⁴ *De Bezetting*, Dutch Television Foundation, 1960 - 1965

¹⁷⁵ Chris Vos, "Breaking the Mirror: Dutch Television and the History of the Second World War" in *Television Histories: Shaping Collective Memory in the Media Age* (Kentucky: University Press Kentucky, 2001) 125.

¹⁷⁶ Vos, "Breaking the Mirror" 127.

The Occupation was very positively received by audiences, and in 1962 won the prestigious Silver Nipkowschijf prize¹⁷⁷. It had a further impact too, as it was part of the shift in Dutch thinking which led to what Lucassen and Lucassen term the 'ethical revolution'. This was a growing realisation in the Netherlands of the evils of racism and discrimination, which stemmed from the acknowledgement of the immense suffering of the Jews in WWII. *The Occupation's* depiction of the persecution of Jews played a part in this awakening¹⁷⁸.

In the UK, collective memory of WWII revolves around victory and pride in British identity, as we have seen in the good vs. evil narratives of popular television shows. In the Netherlands however, as shown by *The Occupation*, the collective memory positions the Netherlands as valiant victims, which has its own impact on identity. The programme both lionised the resistance and drew attention to the terrible treatment of the Jews. These two elements contribute to what Dutch scholar Gloria Wekker has termed the 'white innocence' of the Netherlands. Wekker's view is that for years the Dutch has refused to acknowledge the racism in their own society because Dutch self-image cannot perceive of itself as racist. This is partly because 'the dominant self-image is that of an innocent victim of German Occupation during World War II'¹⁷⁹ which precludes the Dutch themselves from being oppressors. To compound this 'the memory of the holocaust as the epitome and model of racist transgression in Europe erases the crimes that were perpetuated against the colonized for four centuries'¹⁸⁰.

The Occupation aptly summarises the mindset with which White Dutch view race and racism. Its strong establishment bias was challenged by critical documentaries made in later years, such as *Begrijpt u nu waarom ik huil?*¹⁸¹ (*Do you now understand why I'm crying?* in English). *Begrijpt...* focussed much more on the experiences of the Jews in Concentration camps rather than politicians or academics¹⁸². However, this does not undermine the projection of innocence by Dutch remembrances of the War.

¹⁷⁷ "De Bezetting (1960)", *Beeld en Geluidwiki*, [http://www.beeldengeluidwiki.nl/index.php/De_bezetting_\(1960\)](http://www.beeldengeluidwiki.nl/index.php/De_bezetting_(1960)), Accessed on 03/06/2017

¹⁷⁸ Leo Lucassen and Jan Lucassen, "The strange death of Dutch tolerance", 83.

¹⁷⁹ Wekker, *White Innocence* 400

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. 261.

¹⁸¹ *Begrijpt u nu waarom ik huil?* Louis van Gasteren, 1969

¹⁸² Vos, "Breaking the Mirror", 130.

The suffering of Jews in WWII is unfathomable, and the crimes against them horrific. By centring the holocaust as the chief ethnic crime, however, the Netherlands is able to turn a blind eye to other forms of racial atrocities, including those committed by its own forefathers.

Zeg 'ns Aaa: Opening Up Parts to Black Actors

While it may come with an inherent denial of a colonial past, the famous Dutch tolerance is not entirely a fiction when it comes to race. This is shown by a programme first aired some years after *The Occupation*, in the positive aftermath of the 'ethical revolution'. *Zeg 'ns Aaa*¹⁸³ was a sitcom following the life of a female GP, Lydia van der Ploeg, and her family, housekeeper and her boyfriend and neighbours. On television from 1981 to 1993, it was one of the Netherlands' longest running sitcoms, and one of the most popular, with between five and six million people tuning in every week¹⁸⁴.

The light-hearted setting is the ideal place to show off the tolerant society of the Netherlands. The central character is a working single mother, a lesbian couple also feature, and most pertinently for my analysis, there is a Surinamese main character from 1988 onwards, played by Kenneth Herdigein.

Simon Critchley has observed that humour is tied up with culture, and having unique things which make a particular culture laugh is 'like sharing a secret code'¹⁸⁵. It can be extrapolated from this that humour is an important part of cultural identity, and therefore humorous television shows have a part to play in constructing identity. The racial and societal diversity shown on *Zeg 'ns Aaa* is an important part of Dutch self-conception. On the one hand, this commitment to displaying tolerance created opportunities for actors like Herdigein, and gave young Surinamese boys watching the show a positive representation. On the other hand, the diversity of the programme could be feeding into the attitude that

¹⁸³ *Zeg 'ns Aaa*, Verenigde Arbeiders Radio Amateurs (VARA), 1981 - 1993

¹⁸⁴ "Zeg 'ns Aaa", *Institute of Sound and Vision Wiki*, http://www.beeldengeluidwiki.nl/index.php/Zeg_'ns_AAA
Accessed on May 26 2017

¹⁸⁵ Simon Critchley, *On Humour* (London: Routledge, 2002). 68

Wekker identifies, that the Dutch do not acknowledge their own racism because they are convinced they are living in a society where race is not an issue.

That humour is used to amplify this aspect of cultural identity rather than undercut it makes an interesting comparison with Britain, where humour is frequently more subversive (e.g., the skewering of English national pride performed by *Fawlty Towers*). That humour in the Netherlands echoes dominant social mores is supported by ethnic minority comedians. A Beams Project report on stereotyping on European television found that comedians from immigrant backgrounds in the Netherlands often derive many of their jokes from racial stereotypes. A popular Moroccan comedian, Najib Amhali, makes jokes about Moroccan people being more likely to steal, to the delight of both immigrant and indigenous Dutch¹⁸⁶. The question is whether this is regressive, and an indicator of a racially-imbalanced society, or whether the key thing is the success of Amhali, which seems to suggest equality. This question is both central to my analysis and an important point of divergence with the UK.

Part of the separation between immigrant and indigenous which allows stereotype-based humour to flourish comes from the language which the Dutch use around identity. The term *allochtonen*, which was brought in by the *Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid* (Scientific Council for Governmental Policy) in 1989¹⁸⁷, signifies Dutch residents born outside the Netherlands, including the children of these residents even if the children were born in the Netherlands. The opposite term, *autochtoon*, refers to the indigenous Dutch – in other words, the white Dutch. The terms confer an insider and outsider status on to Dutch citizens regardless of language they speak or culture they identify with. Melissa Weiner explains that ‘this boundary creation and policing inhibits the social acceptance of multiple-generation non-European immigrants who share nativity, language, culture, and citizenship with “native Dutch”. To be “Dutch” is to be

¹⁸⁶ Mercita Coronel and Ed Klute, Netherlands section in “Research Beams Light on Stereotypes and Discrimination”, *Beams Project*, March 11 2015, 16

¹⁸⁷ Guus Extra and Massimiliano Spotti, “Language, Migrations and Citizenship: A case study of testing regimes in the Netherlands” in *Discourses on Languages and Integration: Critical perspectives on language testing regimes in Europe* ed. by Gabrielle Hogan-Brun, Clare Mar-Molinero, Patrick Stevenson (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2009) 65

"White".¹⁸⁸The interesting thing about this terminology in respect to a comparative with the UK is that it does not allow for Dutch hybrid identities, such as Moroccan-Dutch. While black British is an identity in its own right, in the Netherlands people remain defined by the country of their birth, or even their parents' birth.

***Sesamstraat*: The importance of representation in children's programming**

Zeg 'Ns Aaa was not the only programme which promoted diversity on Dutch television in the 1980s. *Sesamstraat*¹⁸⁹, the Dutch version of American children's programme *Sesame Street*, began broadcasting in 1976, but added a Surinamese character in 1985. Gerda Havertong, an actor of Surinamese descent, joined the show in 1985, playing herself. She later played another character on the show, Peetje, an unapologetically Surinamese character with an accent and traditional dress.

Unlike the American programme, which taught children letters and numbers, the Dutch version instead aimed to educate children on social values. By functioning as a vehicle to help children understand the world, *Sesamstraat* was an ideal way to normalise the diversity of the Netherlands for its young viewers.

Representation on television is particularly important for children. A landmark study conducted in 2012 on American children found that television exposure was significantly linked to self-esteem, and that white children tended to have higher self-esteem due to greater television representation¹⁹⁰. The study concluded that it's important for black children to see images that they can look up to and find recognition in, but it is also important for white children to see a diverse range of people on television, so that they accept diversity as the norm in their own lives. Havertong herself has said that her role

¹⁸⁸ Melissa Weiner, "The ideologically colonized metropole: Dutch racism and racist denial." *Sociology Compass* 8, no. 6 (2014): 731-744. 733

¹⁸⁹ *Sesamstraat*, Children's Television Workshop, 1976 - present

¹⁹⁰ Nicole Martins and Kristen Harrison. "Racial and gender differences in the relationship between children's television use and self-esteem: A longitudinal panel study." *Communication Research* 39, no. 3 (2012): 338-357.

builds a bridge between cultures, and gives white and black people an opportunity to connect¹⁹¹.

Sesamstraat provides a good example of the way in which the Dutch openness to imported television puts it ahead of the UK. The American *Sesame Street* did air on UK screens but was rejected by the BBC as television commissioners felt that there were already good educational programmes for children being produced in Britain, and thus there was no place for *Sesame Street*¹⁹².

The British unwillingness to show *Sesame Street* points to a homogenised culture in which British programming is seen as the high watermark. This is despite the fact that the more open attitude towards race in America, due to a prominent civil rights movement, perhaps meant that it was ahead in diverse programming, and this was certainly true of *Sesame Street*, which had a purposefully racially diverse cast¹⁹³.

Good times and bad times? It's not that black and white...

Zeg 'ns Aaa and *Seasmstraat* both took pains to have an inclusive cast, but were broadcast in the 1980s, after Lucassen and Lucassen's 'ethical revolution'. As the country moved away from multiculturalism, did popular programming change? To answer, I will look at one of the most popular programmes in the 1990s, *Goede Tijden Slechte Tijden*¹⁹⁴ (*Good Times Bad Times* in English; abbreviated as *GTST*), the first Dutch soap. During this period the programme did have a prominent black character, but this came with its own issues.

The soap is a particularly interesting format to consider in terms of representation. Other fictionalised programming may escape rigorous questioning on casting choices by purporting to show a specific fantasy world, but soaps aim to reflect real life. As Meijer and

¹⁹¹ Gerda Havertong. "Peetje", *Gerda Havertong's Blog*, May 12 2010, <https://gerdahavertong.wordpress.com/2010/12/05/tante-weetje/> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹⁹² Tom Geoghegan and Megan Lane, "Why did Britain fall out of love with Sesame St?", *BBC News Magazine*, November 6 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8340141.stm> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹⁹³ Alia Wong, "Children's TV—Left Behind", *The Atlantic*, July 16 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/07/the-1960s-experiment-childrens-tv/398681/> Accessed on 30/07/2017

¹⁹⁴ *Goede tijden, slechte tijden*, Endemol Entertainment, Grundy, Joop van den Ende TV Producties, 1990 - present

de Bruin put it, 'soaps invite their audience to talk about them by confronting viewers with issues of identity, and challenge viewers to explore who they are and how they see others'¹⁹⁵. As the first Dutch language soap opera, *GTST* cannot escape making statements about Dutch identity.

GTST introduced its first black character, Arthur Peters, played by Surinamese actor Jimmy Geduld, in 1992. For a long time, Arthur was the sole black character in an entirely white world, meaning he bore the full weight of black representation¹⁹⁶. To have multiple white characters and a single black character in a soap that reflects daily life is rooted in the presumption that the white experience is multi-layered and divergent while the black experience is essentially homogenous.

An interesting parallel can be drawn between Arthur Peters on *GTST* and Shirley Armitage on *Coronation Street*. Both were the first black characters on an already extremely popular soap, but the similarities do not end there. Like Shirley, Arthur's first major plotline features him entering a relationship with one of the white central characters, and experiencing discrimination because of this.

That the sole black character is first interpreted through an interracial relationship is significant in two ways. Many migration scholars, including Lucassen and Laarman, use intermarriage between different racial groups as a measure of integration¹⁹⁷. Showing a relationship between a black and a white character suggests 'us and them' distinctions, at least for the characters in question, have broken down. However, there is another way of looking at the use of interracial relationships in white dominated productions. hooks has argued that when white people sexually desire black people, this is an example of the way dominant white culture 'consumes' the Other. Interracial relationships can be a form of rebellion against the status quo for the white person, which forces the black person to

¹⁹⁵ Irene Costera Meijer and Joost de Bruin. "The value of entertainment for multicultural society: a comparative approach towards white 'and black' soap opera talk." *Media, Culture & Society* 25.5 (2003): 695-703. 695.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 698

¹⁹⁷ Leo Lucassen and Charlotte Laarman. "Immigration, intermarriage and the changing face of Europe in the post war period." *The History of the Family* 14, no. 1 (2009): 52-68.

assume a passive role. By keeping this active/passive dichotomy in place, this seeming rebellion actually reinforces the status quo¹⁹⁸.

My own interpretation would be that interracial relationships are in fact a positive example of integration. However, when the single black character in a programme is given a storyline which revolves around his relationship with a white person that seems to play much more into hooks' theory of the sexual commodification of black people. It would have been easy to establish the character of Arthur Peters without putting him in a relationship, or even better, created the opportunity for him to have a meaningful relationship with another character of colour.

***Boer Zoekt Vrouw*: Farming as a cornerstone of Dutch national identity**

Goede Tijden Slechte Tijden continued to be popular into the new millennium, but according to ratings provider Stitching KijkOnderzoek, the most watched programme in the Netherlands aside from the evening news between 2002 and 2009 (see Appendix) was *Boer Zoekt Vrouw*¹⁹⁹ (*BZV*), a reality dating show. The concept, neatly summed up in the title, is to try and match up unlucky in love farmers with women from the city, in the hope of finding true love.

The programme is based on a British show, *Farmer Wants a Wife*²⁰⁰, which premiered on ITV in 2001. The Dutch version is format adaption, taking the basic structure of the British show and adding Dutch touches. This makes the show an intriguing prospect in terms of analysing Dutch cultural identity and attitudes to race, as the changes made to adapt the show to Dutch audiences are ways of improving its 'cultural proximity'. Cultural proximity refers to how closely media is linked to the cultural identity of the viewers, and encompasses nationality, ethnicity, religion and gender²⁰¹.

¹⁹⁸ bell hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance" in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992) 21-40.

¹⁹⁹ *Boer zoekt vrouw*, Katholieke Radio Omroep (KRO), 2004 - present

²⁰⁰ *Farmer Wants a Wife*, Freemantle Media, 2009

²⁰¹ Jolien van Keulen and Tonny Krijnen. "The limitations of localization: A cross-cultural comparative study of *Farmer Wants a Wife*." *International journal of cultural studies* 17, no. 3 (2014): 277-292. 280.

The biggest change in the Dutch version compared to other country's formats was the strong focus on farming as a way of life, and the business aspects of farming, which in versions in other countries was brushed over²⁰². This is fitting, as farming is an important industry in the Netherlands. The country's climate, topography and population density have long made it an ideal place for the agricultural industry to flourish, and it is second only to the US as a net exporter of agricultural products on a global scale²⁰³. A UN report into Dutch agriculture suggests that the Dutch have high expectations of the agricultural industry, expecting it to produce healthy, reasonably priced food in an attractive rural environment which can also be used for leisure activities and the appreciation of nature²⁰⁴.

This suggests that traditional rural farms are an important part of Dutch national identity. Attractive, successful farms are part of what makes the Netherlands what it is, and this is why *BZV* places such an emphasis on farming life. In addition to the focus on farming as a business, the programme is also full of traditional cultural signifiers of Dutch rural life, such as windmills, canals and people cycling.

I would argue that farming in the Netherlands on television plays a similar role to the period drama on British television. Both uphold comforting ideals of national identity, and allow viewers both escapism and cultural recognition. Interestingly, just as the period drama does in the UK, the television focus on farming excludes black people.

The official website of *Boer Zoekt Vrouw* stores information on the programme dating back to its inception in 2004, and this reveals that there have been no black farmers on the show, and seemingly no black potential wives (based on the concept of the visible minority). While this may be a reflection of the actual farming industry, it nonetheless points to the fact that a programme which perhaps derives its popularity from its connection to national identity, puts toward a national identity which is uniformly white.

The Voice of Holland: Speaking in many languages?

²⁰² Ibid. 286.

²⁰³ United Nations, "Agriculture and sustainable development in The Netherlands", August 12 2011, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=504&nr=887&menu=139>

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

While *Boer Zoekt Vrouw* remained the popular television programme between 2010 and 2015, the programme that really dominates the most watched programmes list is *The Voice of Holland*²⁰⁵, with multiple variations appearing in the top ten (the auditions, the final, etc.). *The Voice of Holland* is a reality singing competition much in the vein of the aforementioned *The X Factor*, but with a unique twist; the first addition is a blind audition, which the celebrity judges hearing contestants' voices before seeing them.

The blind audition aspect implies the show claims to be even more meritocratic than *The X Factor*, but it does seem to live up to its egalitarian promise. Since the show's inception in 2010, there have been two Black winners, Leona Philippo, of Jamaican descent²⁰⁶, and Julia van der Toorn, who was adopted by Dutch parents but has African American heritage²⁰⁷. What's more, since 2013 Dutch-Moroccan rapper Ali B has been one of the programme's vocal coaches. Ali B has been hailed as a cross-cultural icon, promoting diversity and uniting black and white audiences²⁰⁸.

However, the most interesting thing about *The Voice of Holland* is its transnational appeal, and the calculated moves which have been made to make this so. Adaptions of the programme have been made in 50 countries, with many of its fans abroad not even realising the programme is originally Dutch²⁰⁹. The adaptable nature of the show is a purposeful choice by creator John de Mol. De Mol, who is also responsible for reality television behemoth *Big Brother*, sets out to make programmes which will sell well abroad. In the words of media studies expert Jaap Kooijman, 'Dutch television merely functions as a test market and showroom for international buyers'²¹⁰.

²⁰⁵ *The Voice of Holland*, Talpa Productions, 2010 - present

²⁰⁶ "Leona Philippo: You need to give yourself the green light", *Het Parool*, January 2 2010, <http://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/leona-philippo-je-moet-jezelf-groen-licht-geven~a273633/>, Accessed on 30/07/2017

²⁰⁷ <http://www.juliazahra.com/> Accessed on 13/06/2017

²⁰⁸ Charlemagne columnist, "The Fly Dutchman", *The Economist*, November 21 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21678821-rapper-ali-b-has-charmed-netherlands-can-he-stay-above-fray-fly-dutchman> Accessed on 13/06/2017

²⁰⁹ Jaap Kooijman, "Globalisation and television formats." *NECSUS. European Journal of Media Studies* 3, no. 1 (2014): 319-325. 319

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

There is a clear contrast to the UK here. As discussed in the previous chapter, British television attracts international buyers by amplifying aspects of Britishness which sell well abroa

d. In terms of race, this has a twofold impact in that there are fewer acting opportunities for black people in these kinds of programmes, and that they link British identity with whiteness. However, The Netherlands has a less marketable global identity and so focuses on making its programmes as global as possible, or at least, as appealing to American audiences as possible. Therefore, while we do see a centering of white identity in programmes such as *Boer Zoekt Vrouw*, promoting this is less common than attempting a kind of marketable universality. This means that in general diversity can be incorporated more naturally.

The strange case of Zwarte Piet

So far, we have seen that the Dutch openness to imports, desire for transnational formats and commitment to displaying tolerance has meant that there is a reasonable amount of diversity in popular television programming. However, as a general rule black cast members are absorbed into majority white programmes, and race as a topic is not actively engaged with.

This fits the pattern of the Netherlands as a whole – representation does not appear to be a much debated subject in the Netherlands, because race is rarely discussed. As Wekker notes:

We are, thus, dealing in the Netherlands with a situation in which subjects and objects of racism keep each other in a delicate balance and where, until recently, the same evasive discursive repertoires with regard to race were shared. It is a system where both white and blacks are overwhelmingly invested in denying and disavowing racism²¹¹.

²¹¹ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 909

This is backed up by the comments of the aforementioned Ali B, who has been quoted as saying 'If Wilders says something you never come out with a reaction; if there's a debate about Zwarte Piet you're nowhere to be found. You're always hiding!'²¹². This implies that to be successful as a minority in the Netherlands, you keep your head down and avoid engaging on matters of race. Further, as Pooyan Tamimi Arab puts it, there is 'a resolute public denial of any hints of racism'²¹³. He uses the example of the trial of the white man accused of fatally stabbing murder of Aziz Kara, a Turkish man. Despite statements from witnesses the prosecutor denied any racist motive for the attack, as a way of 'reassuring the Dutch public that they do not need to worry about being infected by racism themselves'²¹⁴.

However, there is one area where the topic of black representation is passionately contested, and that is Zwarte Piet. Zwarte Piet is the comical helper of Sinterklaas, the Dutch patron saint of children who delivers presents on December 5th, and adults dress up as both Piet and Sinterklaas during the Dutch festive season. This issue is that Zwarte Piet is depicted as a colonial caricature. Physically he is dark skinned with a large afro and bright red lips, and his role is that of the ignorant submissive. Those dressed as Zwarte Piet during Sinterklaas celebrations are often white, and thus in blackface.

Protests against Zwarte Piet from anti-racism activists have been going on for years, but achieved particular cultural recognition in 2011, when two young black men wore t-shirts proclaiming 'Zwarte Piet is racism' to the festive entry in Dordrecht, and were attacked by police. The media attention generated by this incident propelled discussion of Zwarte Piet into the Dutch mainstream, where it has been ever since.

Those who believe that Zwarte Piet his racist point not only to his appearance and that the fact that he is played by white people in black face, but also to other racialised aspects of his presentation. For example, the white Sinterklaas enters the city on a horse

²¹² Charlemagne columnist, "The Fly Dutchman", *The Economist*, November 21 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21678821-rapper-ali-b-has-charmed-netherlands-can-he-stay-above-fray-fly-dutchman>. Accessed on 30/07/2017

²¹³ Pooyan Tamimi Arab, "The Covenant of the Allochthons: How Nativist Racism Affects Youth Culture in Amsterdam" in *Dutch Racism*, ed. by Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 2004) 404

²¹⁴ Ibid.

while the Piets follow on foot, creating a clear hierarchy in which white is dominant and black is subservient. Further, that there is one white Sinterklaas but many Piets suggests that the black experience is not individual but homogenised. The arguments for Zwarte Piet are that it's just a nice tradition for children and so can't be racist, and that Piet isn't actually black, just covered in soot from the chimney²¹⁵.

According to Wekker, the 'white innocence' she perceives in Dutch society is encapsulated by the debate around Zwarte Piet. She describes how, when giving a talk about stereotyping in Dutch culture, she was challenged by a white audience member about her comments on Zwarte Piet. The audience member wanted black people to understand 'how much pain it causes whites to hear that Black Pete is a racist figuration'²¹⁶. To Wekker, this illustrates the White Dutch propensity to play the victim, meeting accusations of racism with confusion and hurt.

The most compelling explanation for desire to protect and maintain Zwarte Piet is that it forms a part of Dutch national identity, and is a cultural building block in the Netherlands²¹⁷. Once again, an adherence to national identity is shown to be one of the primary ways in which progress towards varied, positive black representation is stymied. The Netherlands may promote diversity and tolerance in its television, but the continuing existence of Zwarte Piet suggests a country which has not achieved racial equality.

Conclusion

In conclusion, race on television over the last 55 years in the Netherlands shows many similarities with the British case, but with a few key differences. Programmes are dominated by white faces, but have become increasingly more diverse over the years.

²¹⁵ Melissa Noel, "The Fight Against 'Black Pete', a Holiday Blackface Tradition", *NBC NEWS*, December 23 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/fight-against-black-pete-holiday-blackface-tradition-n485081>
Accessed on 30/07/2017

²¹⁶ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 2853

²¹⁷ Jeroen Rodenberg and Pieter Wagenaar. "Essentializing 'Black Pete': competing narratives surrounding the Sinterklaas tradition in the Netherlands." *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 22, no. 9 (2016): 716-728. 719

Often, programmes fall prey to the same problems prevalent in Britain, such as making a single black character bear the entire burden of representation.

A major difference is that the fixation on an exportable national identity that so plagues British programmes, and keeps them locked in rigidly appears to be absent in the Netherlands. When Dutch programme makers seek exportability, they instead focus on a format which appears more American than Dutch. This allows more room for on screen diversity.

Despite this, the issue of national self-image is relevant to an analysis of race on Dutch TV as it is to one on British television. The Netherlands appears to hold its self-image of tolerance dearly, and this often manifests in positive ways in terms of representation, such as in the case of *Sesamstraat* and *Zeg 'ns Aaa*. However, there are also instances in which national identity is too readily conflated with whiteness, such as in the case *Boer Zoekt Vrouw*. Finally, there are clear blind spots to racial issues which manifest in negative representation, most clearly exemplified by *Zwarte Piet*.

Chapter Six: The Individual Experience of Black Identity and Representation

So far, this thesis has explored how popular television has interacted with race relations over the past 55 years in the UK and the Netherlands. While this has allowed me to draw conclusions about the impact of television representation on the perception of black people, I further wish to understand how representation affects black people themselves. In order to do this, I have conducted a series of interviews with black individuals from both the UK and the Netherlands. This chapter summarises and analyses the interviews.

Each interviewee discusses their experience of race and cultural identity more generally, and then their experience of and opinion on television representation specifically.

The United Kingdom

Subject One – May 16 2017, Rotterdam, Telephone interview

S1 was born in Nigeria and moved to London when he was seven, growing up in Peckham in the 1990s. His childhood was partially overshadowed by the crime in the area, particularly the stabbing of 10 year old Damilola Taylor, which made national news. Another powerful memory from growing up is the identity struggle between his Nigerian heritage and growing up in Britain. In the years after he first arrived, there was a clear sense of divide between the black African children and the black children who had been born in Britain. As he grew older, however, his feeling of connection to the British black community deepened.

S1 highlights the importance of language in creating this sense of community. Slang is a prominent part of black youth culture, developing a new dialect. Particular slang words, such as 'mandem' first arrived in Britain with *MV Empire Windrush*, so this dialect has a specific link with black British history. Language is often used by the dominant culture to exclude those not part of it, as evidenced by the repeated insistence that migrants to the UK take compulsory language lessons²¹⁸. To create a separate, slang-based dialect is in some

²¹⁸ Nicholas Watt, "David Cameron says that immigrants should learn English", *The Guardian*, April 14 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2011/apr/14/david-cameron-immigrants-learn-english> Accessed on 30/07/2017

ways a form of resistance. He also points to the fact that, due to the global reach of black British music, slang like 'mandem' is used in America and Canada, by young people who have no idea of the original, Caribbean context. With this suggestion, S1 taps into Paul Gilroy's concept of the 'Black Atlantic'. This is a hybrid culture which employs elements of African, European, American and Caribbean cultures to create a black identity which transcends national borders²¹⁹. This implies that black British identity can separate itself from the dominant British identity (which, as discussed, is fused with whiteness) and find recognition elsewhere.

The representation S1 felt growing up came not from television but from music: 'I was heavily involved in grime music, and had my own crew²²⁰'. Born as it was out of East London, for S1 and his friends grime music felt very close to their lived experience; it was being made by people who looked like them, who were creating music about things they related to. The urge to join in and make music themselves came partially from a lack of representation in television and film, and partly from the 'DIY ethos' of grime music: 'We were just getting on with it, creating stuff for ourselves'.

However, while he found recognition in grime music, simultaneously he sees it as problematic.

Grime is rising in popularity, but it's only one part of black experience, it represents the black experience in this county. It's not American, or Caribbean, and so is not reflective of different ways to be black. It contributes to one homogenised black experience.

This quote shows both the importance and difficulty of representation in all forms of popular culture. It's vital to show that there are as many ways to be black as to be white, but the limited amount of representation available can mean that the images of black people there are unwillingly prop up stereotypes.

²¹⁹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993)

²²⁰ The grime equivalent of a band

Perhaps to combat this, S1 has joined the growing number of black creatives addressing representation on their own terms, through their own creative projects. In 2016, he directed a documentary called *Heartbreak & Grime*²²¹, exploring the effect that grime music has on black teenagers growing up in inner city London. Inspired by his own experiences, the film explores how the patterns of masculine behaviour he saw in himself and his friends were reflected in and perpetuated by grime music. He says 'Music is a reflection of culture, and grime reflected various strands of black culture, particularly that it was very patriarchal, which in part leads back to religion'. Making the documentary allowed him to work through his memories of the past, and the mixed nostalgia and regret he felt about this performative masculinity.

The key insight from S1's interview is for him, while representation in popular culture is of paramount importance, television has little relevance as a medium. This is indicated both by the fact that he found little recognition in television growing up, and that he used the internet to and publish and publicise his own films (he has made others not referenced here) later in life.

Subject Two – June 6 2017, Rotterdam, Telephone interview

Subject 2 is in his mid-twenties, and grew up and still lives in London. His mother is White Jewish while his father hails from Chad, in Central Africa, and S2 says that his mixed heritage means his identity often feels fluid. He identifies as mixed race most of the time, but says when he is only with white people he feels black. Culturally, he feels very English, but acknowledges that he switches roles depending on his surroundings.

S2 is candid when it comes to discussing racism. While there are only a couple of occasions on which he's been directly racially abused, subtle instances of discrimination are fairly common. He says 'It's little things, like I'll be served last at a bar...sometimes I can sense a change in the air when I'm around, particularly if I'm in a nice area. But it's hard to tell whether it's real or whether I'm just being paranoid'.

²²¹ Caleb Femi. "Heartbreak & Grime". YouTube video, 11:57. Posted August 7 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fk-1IEOGDBk>

Subtle racism is a recognised issue among both the ethnic minorities who experience it and the academic community. Reid and Blanchard describe tackling it as complicated because it goes against the notion that racism is always violent and obvious, and say 'almost all instances of contemporary racism fall below the thresholds of clear intentionality'²²². Black people dealing with subtle racism thus face both the effect of the racism itself, as well as the effect of having their experience erased when they name it as racism. The prevalence of subtle racism is largely due to the pervasive idea of "colour-blindness" or of a society being 'post-racial', which allow the dominant group within that society to completely deny the existence of race-based prejudice²²³.

The damaging effect that this denial of racism has on the non-white population is made evident by S2's next comment, that these encounters make him feel ashamed. He tries to be hyper aware of his own behaviour, making himself smaller when walking home at night because in the past people have reacted with fear when he passes them. He's conscious that as a tall black man he's automatically seen as more of a threat, suggesting that stereotyped images of black people affect self-perception as well as the perception of others.

On the subject of representation specifically, S2 remembers seeing 'a fair amount of black people on TV...I mostly watched American comedies like *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, *My Wife and Kids* and *Hang Time*.' The black characters on these programmes made him feel 'comfortable', hence why he opted for American over British television. There were no British television shows which gave him the same feeling of connection and belonging.

Another significant point of recognition was in fact a 2000 music video, for nu-metal band Papa Roach's single *Last Resort*²²⁴. S2 says 'There was a video, I think it was *Last Resort* that had a black person in, and that was really cool. I always thought of nu-metal as quite a white scene, but I guess they were making music for outsiders, and that spoke to me too.'

²²² Reid, Landon D., and Kristen E. Birchard. "The people doth protest too much: Explaining away subtle racism." *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* (2010). 479

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Jacoby Shaddix and Tobin Esperance, *Last Resort*. CD. DreamWorks. 2000

Through this statement, S2 reveals both how impactful representation can be, in that a short moment in which he recognised himself would be remembered nearly a decade later, and how the colour of his skin in Britain made him feel relegated to outsider status.

These experiences have convinced S2 of the importance of representation, but his perspective is that British television has not improved much since he was growing up in the 1990s. He points instead to the growing pool of black actors and creatives who are able to use the internet to publicise their work, and bring positive representation to a new generation – ‘If you’re a young black comedian, (video sharing website) YouTube is a better platform. Black people are creating representation themselves, not relying on television’. For S2, diverse television programming has been too slow in arriving, and other forms of media have taken over.

Subject Three – July 17 2017, Brighton, In-person interview

S3 was born to a Scottish mother and Antiguan father in Leicester in the 1960s. At the time, the city was a vibrant migrant community, in which S3 rarely felt othered because everyone was from somewhere else. She sums up the connection felt between migrants of different origins by saying ‘I’ve found that mixed people of my generation usually have Scottish or Irish heritage because (people from those countries) were also discriminated against by the English’.

However, moving to live with her father at 15 in an upper middle-class neighbourhood brought her a sudden, sharp experience of racism. She recalls ‘My best friend was told she couldn’t be friends with me in case her brother started to like her’. In another memory ‘I was told I couldn’t get a job in a café because people didn’t want me touching the food’.

The strongest sensation was feeling very sexualised whenever she went into predominantly white spaces. Here, S3 references the way in which perceptions of black people by the white community are dominated by stereotypes. The portrayal of black women as overtly sexual and promiscuous dates back to the slave trade, in which female

slaves had their value partially determined by their reproductive capacity²²⁵. In post-slavery America, the image of black women as sexual temptresses was perpetuated by anti-black groups such as the KKK, who used it to justify sexual violence against black women²²⁶. This imagery has seeped into popular culture, which could explain its dominance in the UK while S3 was growing up.

This hints at the importance of representation, but S3 herself believes representation is largely 'helpful as a measure...it gives an illusion that society is more advanced than it is'. This is partly because a focus on diverse television could be a distraction from more pressing racial issues, and partly because the representation that there is 'is often clumsy'. She feels the type of representation is paramount.

Growing up, the television which had the most impact was music television. In particular, *Top of the Pops*, a weekly programme which counted down the official UK music charts with live performances, stands out. This was the height of lovers rock, a distinctly British take on the reggae music of Jamaica, birthed from the diverse black community in London. S3 fondly remembers watching Janet Kay, the first British black female reggae artist to have a #2 chart hit with *Silly Games*²²⁷, and thinks music in general was far more diverse than non-music television.

Today, S3 thinks children's programming is currently doing diversity and representation best, especially BBC youth channel *CBBC*. She believes this is because 'the agenda is different - parents care about children being a part of a global rich world'. This is interesting because it suggests that better representation is possible across television if more effort is made; the main barrier is the agenda of the programme makers.

Finally, as a filmmaker herself, S3 also believes it's important for black people to get behind the camera as 'Making a film means you can transcend beyond the narrow dialogue on race.' This recalls bell hooks' concept of the oppositional gaze, which is the theory by

²²⁵ West, Carolyn M, "Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire and their homegirls: Developing an "oppositional gaze" toward the images of Black women" 4th New York *Lectures on the psychology of women* (2008) p. 286 - 299.
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²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Kevin Cooper, "Interview: Janet Kay", *UK Music Reviews*, September 4 2014,
<http://www.ukmusicreviews.co.uk/interviews/interview-janet-kay/> Accessed on 30/07/2017

looking at white representations of blackness on screen leads the black viewers to develop a critical understanding of the importance of imagery and the way one is portrayed, which leads to the development of independent black cinema²²⁸. She also believes that, whoever is behind the camera, honesty is the key to creating good, representative art. White creatives attempting to tell black stories must position themselves honestly: 'You can't make a film trying to justify your own guilt'.

The Netherlands

Subject Four – May 11 2017, Leiden, In-person interview

S4 embodies the experience of growing up between worlds. Now in her 40s, she was born in Curacao and moved to the Netherlands at just a few months old. She then moved to Surinam at age seven and back to Curacao aged nine, before returning to the Netherlands at 18 for university.

Throughout her description of this global childhood, the theme of belonging comes through most strongly. In Surinam and Curacao, those who had grown up there openly told her that she wasn't one of them. Back in the Netherlands, she was also looked on as different by the natives. However, today this doesn't bother her, as she says 'I see myself as a global citizen. I've always been interested in travel and meeting new people and seeing different places'.

Language was intimately connected with belonging in her eyes. She struggled to understand people when she first arrived, and blamed herself because 'I spoke the wrong kind of Dutch'. On the subject of Dutch tolerance, and whether that made it easy to blend in, S4 feels that if you behave as the native Dutch do, then they tolerate you quite happily. It is when you openly maintain your own culture, or struggle to fit in, for example, speaking a different form of Dutch, that us and them dynamics become more obvious.

²²⁸ bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators" in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992) 117

Furthermore, the signifiers of Dutch identity which she sees most often all relate to the European Dutch, and not only that, are fairly cliché – tulips, clogs and windmills are all things she mentions. Her experiences both simultaneously point to a national identity which knows what it is not – in order to create us/them dynamics – but perhaps does not know what it is.

She does not claim to have experienced racism, but rather 'I've persistently been made to feel 'non-Dutch', which is hurtful as I've been in the Netherlands for 80% of my life'. Somewhat ironically this seems to be a fairly Dutch attitude. Wekker and others have argued that the Dutch are unwilling to discuss or acknowledge racism, but do have the concept of Dutch and non-Dutch baked into their language, in the form of the words 'Autochthon' and 'Allochthon'.

When our conversation turns to representation on television, S4 confesses to not watching a lot of television, but does say 'When I see people on screen who look like me I feel like I belong'. Growing up, she saw very few people from the Caribbean on television, but things are changing, for example 'Companies like Albert Heijn have realised that you need people of different ethnicities in adverts'. However, she sees issues with certain types of representation: 'Not being represented in a broad way is a problem. Black people are over-represented in music and entertainment but seen too little as lawyers.'

Another problem S4 identifies is that black faces in all forms of Dutch popular culture, not just television, are relegated to specifically black-focussed productions. For example, she says, 'To see a play with black characters you have to go and see a specific play by a specific group'. This links to the idea of white being the default put forward by Dyer²²⁹ and discussed previously.

Furthermore, The Netherlands (she thinks) is lagging behind other countries in terms of diverse television programming, particularly the United States. The diverse array of roles for black actors in America is just not a reality in the Netherlands, and comedian or actors of colour often fall back on to stereotypes, something I address in Chapter 5.

²²⁹ Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (London: Routledge, 1997)

Finally, S4 feels many Dutch-produced programmes, such as *Ik Hou van Holland*, a quiz show in which Dutch celebrities answer questions about the Netherlands, are 'too self-indulgent and nationalistic'. These traditional representations of Dutchness seem to preclude the inclusion of people of colour.

Subject Five – May 4 2017, Leiden, In-person interview

S5 was born in Nijmegen to a white father and Curacaon mother who came to the Netherlands to seek opportunities. He lived in the Bijlmer area of Amsterdam, a suburb with a high migrant population.

Thanks to his mother's tenacity and desire for her sons to get a top education, S5 and his brother didn't go to a local school, but one in a much more upmarket area of Amsterdam. They were one of the few black children in the school, which came with certain stereotypes. These were not always negative, however; S5 was always picked for football at break times, something that had a high social currency and was seemingly based only on the colour of his skin. This makes sense in the light of van Sterkenburg and Knoppers' study into racialisation in Dutch sport media, which found that black sportsmen are presented as more naturally athletic, a stereotype of animal strength which harks back to colonial times²³⁰.

At around 11, S5 moved to Curacao, and says he was considered Dutch by his new school friends. Language is highlighted as a fundamental part of belonging. S5 learnt the local vernacular, Papiamentu, quickly, which was a vital part of feeling accepted in his new community.

After moving back to Netherlands to study, S5 says he struggled to find his footing, due to a strong sense of displacement: 'Everyday things were suddenly incredibly different, such as the weather, and the orderliness of Dutch society – I was fined for not walking on the pavement'. Again, language was a gateway to belonging. The Curacao-inflected Dutch S5 spoke made him self-conscious, particularly in the city of Haarlem, which he describes as elitist, due to its strong links to Dutch history. He began to feel more settled when he met

²³⁰ Jacco van Sterkenburg, and Annelies Knoppers. "Sport as a contested racial/ethnic discourse: Processes of racialization in Dutch sport media and sport policy." *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* 7, no. 2 (2012): 119-136.

other people from the Islands, and describes feeling more comfortable on the outskirts of the city than in the centre, where all the rich, white people lived.

To S5, there is no single Dutch identity, and there are as many Dutch identities as Dutch people. He sees national identity as defined through citizenship only, and suggests that qualities which seem to imply Dutchness are transient, and are adopted or rejected as necessary. To explain, he says 'I was watching a national football game in France with diverse group of tourists. In that moment, the audience are all supporting France, despite having no allegiance to France beyond their location at that time'. I have discussed previously that television constructs an image of national identity which viewers can relate to, but S5 goes one step further and suggests that national identity itself is a construction. This idea has an academic foundation²³¹, and perhaps S5's experience of moving between national identities allows him to be more objective.

When considering representation on television, S5 says it was his daughter that has made him truly realise the importance of television representation: 'My 9 year old daughter is becoming aware that age and gender matter, and it's important to recognise yourself on TV. TV is like a ritual that forms you into a shared idea of a nation.' This suggests that S5 sees a clear link between television and national identity, and that seeing yourself represented on television On *Sesamstraat*, the children's programme discussed in Chapter 5, he says:

A great thing about *Sesamstraat* is that it has an Afro-Surinamese character in (Gerda Havertong). She evolved over the years, and developed more of a persona. She wore traditional Afro-Surinamese dress, including a headdress, which has a folkloric component to the Afro-Surinamese – they have a different message depending on how they're ironed. That character has a very important role in popular culture in terms of changing the discourse, and *Sesamstraat* has an important role culturally.

²³¹ Frank Louis Rusciano, "The construction of national identity—A 23-nation study." *Political Research Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2003): 361-366.

The headdress S5 refers to is the *angisa*, which Afro-Surinamese women can use to communicate with one another²³². S5 sees the inclusion of this as crucial, as it means *Sesamstraat* is introducing its young viewers not to the concept of different races, but different cultures.

As for his own experience watching television growing up, S5 says that there were few black faces on television, but remembers imported programmes having an impact: '*The Cosby Show* was something we would sit around and watch as a family...we watched the British show *Desmond's* as well'. *The Cosby Show*, first shown in 1984, is considered ground breaking for being the first sitcom to show a middle-class black family living normal lives²³³. That S5 recalls sitting down together as a family to watch the programme is significant, as it suggests that this rendering of black life was considered special, and worthy of attention.

Subject Six – April 24 2017, Amsterdam, In-person interview

S6 is a 30 year old man living in Amsterdam. He was born in the Netherlands but both his parents are Surinamese – his dad of West African descent while his mother is mixed Chinese, African and Native American.

S6 explains that his parents were very keen on him assimilating into Dutch culture. He says 'They always wanted to give me experiences which were common among Dutch children but uncommon among Surinamese, such as skiing or camping'. S6 says his father in particular was focussed on the responsibility for integration being on the immigrant.

S6 cites the importance of the internet in finding other black Europeans with to share stories and analyses in developing a sense of black identity. This again recalls the concept of the Black Atlantic, a central tenant of which was that black identity in Europe and the Americas is and always has been transnational²³⁴.

²³² Gloria Wekker, *The Politics of Passion: Women's Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006) 111

²³³ Robin R. Means Coleman, *African American Viewers and the Black Situation Comedy: Situating Racial Humor* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998) 199

²³⁴ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*

However, on the subject of Dutch identity, S5 says: 'Part of Dutch identity is not really knowing what an identity is. I think Dutch people are struggling to find out what it is that makes them Dutch. Queen Maxima even said that the Dutch have no identity²³⁵. There's lots of imported or appropriated culture - that's why people care so much about Zwarte Piet, because it's properly Dutch. Dutch people rely on vague stereotypes, like clogs, to define identity.'

S6 says the process of Othering in the Netherlands is constant. He talks about being called a 'bounty' – a derogatory term for a black person who acts white – when he didn't live up to other people's ideas about how a black person should speak and act. That people have certain ideas about blackness against suggests that the black experience is too often represented as one single thing, and recalls S5's experience of being assumed to be good at football. This is partly due to the Dyer-identified white tendency for white people to see themselves as 'just people', while viewing other races as groups which can slot into neat stereotypes²³⁶.

On the subject of television and representation, S6 says 'I watched loads of television growing up, literally anything, and there was no representation at all really'. What he does remember is the negative stereotypes put forward by advertising: 'There was this advert for chocolate dessert and John Williams (a black television personality) played the dessert. There was another one for a radio show in which the black DJ was covered in black paint'.

These recollections are interesting in two ways. First, they reveal that even as recently as the 1990s and early 2000s, when S6 was growing up, advertising was reducing black people to the colour of skin. Secondly, however, S6 remembers John Williams appearing the advert, but does not mention the programmes he features in as a television presenter (which are numerous²³⁷), and instead struggles to remember any positive representation on television. This suggests that negative, stereotyped representation has a powerful impact.

²³⁵ Queen Máxima of the Netherlands, "Speech to introduce the WRR report "Identification with the Netherlands"/"Identificatie met Nederland"" (speech, The Hague, September 24 2007)

²³⁶ Richard Dyer. "The matter of whiteness." in *White privilege: Essential readings on the other side of racism 3* (New York: Worth Publishers, 2008): 9-14.

²³⁷ John Williams, *Internet Movie Database*, <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0930973/#self>

Conclusion

These interviews are revealing on the subject of television representation in two ways; the direct opinions of the interviewees on television, and in their broader experiences of race and identity. To consider the latter first, a prominent theme which emerges is that of stereotyping, whether positive or negative. Although all groups, ethnic or otherwise, can be affected by stereotyping, the impact is more damaging when there is little in the way of positive imagery to counteract negative stereotypes²³⁸. Racial stereotypes and television have a symbiotic relationship in that television imagery is informed by stereotypes, but that imagery also perpetuates stereotypes.

A prominent theme in all the interviews was that of belonging, and how to navigate identity in a country or society in which you feel different. This was also cited several times as one of the most significant impacts of ethnic minority representation on television; that seeing yourself on screen makes you feel as though you belong. In fact, the respondents all asserted the importance of representation but found television in the UK and the Netherlands wanting. Despite the diverse range of ages, all interviewees remember a lack of black faces on home-grown television during their childhood, whether this was in the 70s or the 90s. What also comes across strongly is that representation and diversity in themselves are not enough; the type of representation is extremely important.

The historical analysis in the previous chapters points to an upward trend in diversity over time, but this is not reflected in the interviews. Instead, reference is made to the growing number of black comedians and creatives using the internet to publicise their work. Children's television is highlighted as doing diverse programming well in both countries, suggesting that the capacity for broader representation across all formats is there, but the motivation is not.

Particularly in the UK, music is the form of popular culture in which the interviewees found the most recognition growing up. Unlike television, there has long been music in Britain being created by black people for black people, and diverse range of genres from

²³⁸ West, "Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire and their homegirls", 288.

reggae to grime which means there is less of a burden on individuals to represent the black experience.

Furthermore, both British and Dutch respondents felt that imported programmes, especially from America, were much more representative than the television from their own countries. The connection to programmes from outside the UK and the Netherlands, both in the past and now links to another prominent theme of the interviews that of black identity as a transnational experience, which connects people beyond the boundaries of the nation state. The black community is also driving toward creative projects in television and other cultural avenues, which contributes to a strong sense of identity. This would suggest that black identity in both the UK and the Netherlands has found avenues to flourish and develop despite unrepresentative television programming.

Chapter Seven – Conclusion

As I reach the end of this thesis, I want to conclude by returning to my central research question: *To what extent is representation of race on television linked to the history and current landscape of race relations in the UK, and how is this illuminated by comparison with the Netherlands?* As detailed in my introduction, I broke this question down into several sub questions to aid in my answering of it. These questions are answered below.

When considering how ethnically diverse the television consumed in Britain is, I would suggest that British television struggles with diversity. While there are more black faces on television than there have been in previous decades, there is a lack of the multifaceted representation which is afforded to white characters. Often, black characters are absorbed into white stories, or else play stereotyped roles. On gameshows or reality programmes, the treatment of black contestants is affected by the white-centric outlook of the programme-makers. A key issue here appears to be a pervasive sense of whiteness as the default, meaning they are the main audience that programme-makers and commissioners keep in mind. This exacerbated by the lack of diversity in programme making, including writing, directing and producing.

Despite this, diversity on screen has improved over time. At the start of the historical period in question, not only was representation on television minimal, popular programmes contributed to the idea that Britain was first and foremost a white country. British anxieties about race and national identity were played out on screen in the 1960s and 1970s, but people of other races themselves were almost totally absent. The 1980s and 1990s did introduce more black characters, but often these were clumsily drawn. There were standout programmes, such as *Desmond's*, which managed to be both hugely popular and represent black people as fully three dimensional characters. Both the popularity of *Desmond's*, which had a majority black crew, and the criticism of the handling of diversity on programmes such as *EastEnders*, suggest that the contribution of black screenwriters, directors and producers is the best avenue for improving representation.

A contributing factor to the continuing issue of representation is the desire for programmes to have international success. Making programmes which are marketable abroad can result in falling back on the old notions of white Britishness which dominated the 1960s and 1970s. This has led black writers, directors and actors to turn to the internet as a way of broadcasting their work.

Over the 55 year period I studied, the pattern has been that change in society in terms of race relations happened before improved representation on television. For example, Britain's biggest television soap, *Coronation Street*, had a single black character with little agency at a time when the black community was both fighting back politically and flourishing creatively. This could be partly due to the concept of television as escapism, a way to retreat from the harsh realities of life. This is shown by the popularity in the 1990s of *Heartbeat*, a charming provincial police show, during the time in which Britain was waking up to serious racism in the police force as a result of the Stephen Lawrence murder.

When studying the Dutch case in order to illuminate the British case, my key findings are around representation of national identity. A study of television diversity in the Netherlands highlights the abovementioned fact that the marketable aspect of British television programmes can sometimes fix them in old fashioned templates. Dutch-produced television is often only watched within the Netherlands, due to the fact that Dutch is less widely spoken outside the Netherlands than English is outside of Britain. Furthermore, when Dutch programme-makers want a programme to have global success, they focus on making it as adaptable as possible, ideally hoping that it will appeal to American audiences. By contrast, when British programme-makers want a programme to be successful in America, they use branding templates which all too often are associated with a past conception of Britain. Dutch programme makers thus give themselves more room for flexibility regarding diversity in their projects.

Another point is that while there is clear evidence of national templates in Dutch television, these don't always translate to white-dominated programmes, as they can in British television. A rural lifestyle was idealised in programmes such as *Boer Zoekt Vrouw*, but elsewhere the need to represent tolerance is central, such as in *Zeg ns Aaa* or *Sesamstraat*.

On the subject of the individual black experience of television representation, the general consensus from the interview sample was that representation on television was extremely important, as it creates feeling of belonging, and makes one feel recognised and validated. Both British and Dutch television were thought to be lacking in programmes which created this feeling however, with respondents remembering negative, stereotyped images of black people, or turning to imported television.

However, the interviewees had often developed a strong sense of identity despite that fact that television representation had often been inadequate when they were growing up. Identity was found in other aspects of popular culture such as music, in language and the local community, and by forging connections with black people across the world.

Finally, on the topic of British and Dutch identity, a particularly interesting finding from the research is the different way identity functions in the two countries, and the ways in which it interacts with both race and television. In Britain, national identity is clearly defined, and there are many cultural signifiers which British people can easily name, and are often present in popular television. These ideas about identity are so strong that they can be packaged into brands and sold to other countries. However, popular television also highlights a sense of anxiety around this identity. Programmes which play on nostalgia remain popular up to the present day, whether that be the overt nostalgia on display in *Downton Abbey*, or the more subtle callbacks to the past in *The Great British Bake Off*. Fears about a loss of national identity are what drives fears about multiculturalism, and leads a country to turn inward, and towards populism.

In the Netherlands, where there has also been a rejection of multiculturalism and rising populism, there is also an anxiety around national identity, but the anxiety is focused on defining what that identity is. Things which do strongly represent national identity, such as *Zwarte Piet*, are fiercely defended. Thus, anxieties about identity impact race relations in both countries, but the anxiety is derived from different things.

In conclusion then, the history and current landscape of race relations is linked to representation on television to the extent that anxieties about race and identity play out in the UK's popular television. What's more, the history of race relations and the evolution of representation on television have largely followed the same trend. However, it seems that

in the main greater representation on television has been influenced by greater regard for the needs of black people rather than better television representation contributing to advanced attitudes towards race. This does not necessarily undermine the importance of representation, as on a personal level representation creates a feeling of belonging in the viewer. However, there is a sense that television has missed the chance to become a truly diverse medium, as other avenues for creative work, such as the internet, are evolving much faster.

The fact that, based on my sample, black people in the UK and the Netherlands feel that television lacks relevance as a medium presents an interesting proposition for further research. I would recommend further research into the link between the history of race relations and other forms of popular culture, in particular music. While this research does not deal with it extensively, there is evidence that the evolution of black music in the UK is mapped much more closely on to the evolution of race relations. For example, in the 1980s the growing politicisation of the black community which sparked the riots coincided with an increase in the popularity and production of black music. Furthermore, the British black adults interviewed all pointed to music being a significant part of their identity formation. At the same time, there are also problems with this type of representation, such as the homogenous experience perpetuated by grime that was pointed out by one of the interviewees. Based on this, I would suggest that the entwined histories of black activism and black music would make fertile ground for further study.

In addition, insights from the interviews not covered in great detail here suggest another avenue for further research. In particular, there was a subtle difference between the reported experiences of the female and male interviewees. For example, women reported feeling sexualised while men were seen as threatening, or even just athletically gifted. It would therefore be interesting to examine representation in terms of gender as well as race, and the intersection between the two.

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Appendix I – UK Television Data

1960 – 1979 – Internet Movie Database data

The Internet Movie Database uses a weighted average to calculate popularity, combining vote score and number of voters. More information is available at http://www.imdb.com/help/show_leaf?votes. The programmes listed here are the ones discussed, with their associated popularity score (out of 10), and where they rank in the full list for the decade.

Programmes: 1960-1969	Score	Ranking
Doctor Who	8.5	1
The Avengers	8.4	3

Programmes: 1970-1979	Score	Ranking
Fawlty Towers	8.8	2
Upstairs, Downstairs	8.4	12

1980 – 2015 – British Audience Research Board Data

BARB record the most watched programmes of each year. I consolidated the data to get the most popular programmes by decade. The viewing figures of the programmes analysed are listed here, and where they rank in the full list for the decade.

Programmes: 1980-1989	Viewing figures (millions)	Ranking
Coronation Street	181.11	1

Programmes: 1990-1999	Viewing figures (millions)	Ranking
Coronation Street	196.22	1
Heartbeat	88.25	2
Who wants to be a millionaire?	19.21	17

Programmes: 2000-2009	Viewing figures (millions)	Ranking
Coronation Street	152.44	1
EastEnders	151.75	2
The X Factor Results	42.57	7
Britain's Got Talent	39.8	10

Programmes: 2010-2015	Viewing figures (millions)	Ranking
The X Factor Results	30.01	6
The Great British Bake Off	28.56	7
The X Factor	27.43	8
Coronation Street	26.66	9
Downton Abbey	23.85	13

Appendix II – Dutch Television Data

1960 – 2000 – Internet Movie Database data

The Internet Movie Database uses a weighted average to calculate popularity, combining vote score and number of voters. More information is available at http://www.imdb.com/help/show_leaf?votes. The programmes listed here are the ones discussed, with their associated popularity score (out of 10), and where they rank in the full list for the decade.

Programmes: 1970-1979	Score	Ranking
Sesamstraat	7.7	11

Programmes: 1980-1989	Score	Ranking
Zeg 'ns Aaa	6.6	4

Programmes: 1990-1999	Score	Ranking
Goede tijden, slechte tijden	3.5	1

2002 - 2015 – Stitching KijkOnderzoek

Stitching KijkOnderzoek record the most watched programmes of each year. I consolidated the data to get the most popular programmes by decade. The viewing figures of the programmes analysed are listed here, and where they rank in the full list for the decade.

Programmes: 2002-2009	Total number of viewers	Ranking
BOER ZOEKT VROUW	18,102,000	2

Programmes: 2010-2015	Viewing Figures	Ranking
BOER ZOEKT VROUW	21,981,000	1
VOICE OF HOLLAND THE BATTLE	13,019,000	3
VOICE OF HOLLAND	10,335,000	5