


Fall 2013

# How far would you go with him?: Interethnic Romantic and Sexual Encounters and Relations among Men in the Dutch Context

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**How far would you go with him?: Interethnic Romantic and Sexual Encounters and Relations among Men in the Dutch Context**

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Independent Interdisciplinary Major: Critical Race and Sexuality Studies

Europe, Netherlands, Amsterdam

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

The Netherlands: International perspectives on sexuality & gender,

SIT Study Abroad, Spring 2013



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## **ABSTRACT**

This report seeks to explore the experiences and complications men face romantically and sexually when ethnicity and race are used as focus lenses to reflect upon the participants' past interpersonal interactions. The interviews and analyses within this article reflect the ways in which Dutch ethnic/racial norms and stereotypes shape attraction and desire, and how men who pursue other men romantically and/or sexually negotiate with said external constructions of identity. Research in this paper provides the reader with insight into race relations on an intimate level through the participants' personal narratives, revealing the complexity of Dutch race relations on the most intimate levels. Many may claim that race is not an issue in the Netherlands, but this report proves that although race may no longer be a volatile issue, it and ethnicity are certainly relevant factors in the pursuit of romance and sex between men.

**KEYWORDS:** ethnicity, race, race relations, gay, men who have sex with men, interracial, interethnic, dating, romance

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my family, I give so many thanks for making my participation in the SIT Study Abroad program possible. Things were so close to not working out, but courtesy of their flexibility and generosity I was able to have an unforgettable experience in the Netherlands and Morocco.

To my friends back at home and school, I thank you for always serving me realness and giving me life. My contact with y'all was invaluable in renewing my spirit during moments of stress and homesickness here.

To my newly acquired SIT friends, thank you all for going through the struggles of this experience in solidarity. It has been a pleasure to be with y'all in and out of the classroom. I love how we could be venting quite intensely about an assignment one hour of the day and then meet up later at a bar to have some laughs and dance.

To the SIT staff, thank you for your patience and guidance throughout this experience. Your work has made it possible for me to study topics I love in two countries I have never been to before in my life and Lord only knows if and when I will be able to return to see them again. Both the in-class material and our various interactive excursions have made me not only a stronger academic but also a more open-minded and resilient person. Words cannot accurately reflect how indebted I feel to y'all for making so many exciting things happen in

my life this year.

To the SIT lecturers, thank you for giving me so many new perspectives on ethnicity, gender, race and sexuality. As someone who wants to partake in activism and advocacy in the future I am very grateful for your lessons that prompted me to reflect on my own identity and the social norms shaping it at any given moment. It was incredibly affirming to hear about the struggles our identities face in intersectional capacities.

Finally I must thank the friends and lovers I have found here in Amsterdam. My time with y'all brought me not only great joy but also pushed my limits, allowing me to mature greatly throughout this semester. It is amazing how much I have seen and felt in these few short months and now I find it incredibly difficult to leave. I hope y'all remain your wild, fun, intelligent, authentic selves and that we find a way to reunite throughout our futures.

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## INTRODUCTION

"Assuming that someone's racial background gives them more desirable qualities reflects harmful histories of colonialism and the exotification and fetishization that went along with it."

(2013, Tatum)

For those of us who partake in interpersonal interactions of a romantic and/or sexual nature, encountering a moment of ethnic/racial difference, or even stereotyping, is inevitable. Colorblindness is not a medical condition applicable to the ways we read and mark an individual's physicality and presumed culture. Of course individuals can choose not to let ethnic/racial difference bar them from certain romantic and sexual experiences, but the act of not letting race and ethnicity be an issue represents a conscious decision, thus illustrating that one needs to "see" ethnicity/race in order to decide to ignore it. Moreover, having the ability to ignore ethnicity/race requires the privilege of not having one's own ethnicity/race constantly called into question and evaluated as potentially different, inferior and/or "other." When a person's physicality and the cultural backgrounds assigned to such features are not out of place, it is foreseeable that they would not be put into a place that brings such facets of identity under scrutiny and contempt.

Oftentimes societies that proclaim themselves as open, tolerant, and/or liberal claim that race/ethnicity is not an issue worth mentioning or drawing great attention to. It is a source of discomfort and a gateway to historical guilt and shame for past national practices of ethnicized/racialized abuse, discrimination and exploitation. Positing that as a given, I



contend that most individuals do not acknowledge race beyond the surface level, if one chooses to actively address it at all. Instead I believe that it is something frequently minimized and kept quiet to avoid causing tension and upset. For several western cultures, and especially for the Netherlands, to discuss ethnicity/race critically is taboo. The main exception I see to this silence is on special occasions orchestrated to (usually superficially) celebrate and display a nation's multicultural "progress" like a trophy. For example, pride celebrations for marginalized groups or events held to commemorate the passage of legislation that struck down previously codified discrimination are recognized, properly so, as markers of a society's advancement in social cohesion. Sadly, many of the marginalized groups technically included and recognized by a State's legal and political systems continue to face significant obstacles and inequities in their quest for upward mobility and a social sense of belonging.

Preferring to side step the complexity and harsh challenges difference produces, people generally limit conversations about ethnicity/race because doing so allows one the ability to focus on progress that has been made thus far as opposed to the overwhelming amount of work yet to be done. Ethnicity/race, however, is peculiarly acceptable to discuss explicitly in romantic and sexual contexts. This acceptance is communicated through the use of the word "preference". Preferences may refer to attractive aspects of life that are not culturally specific, such as ambition or humor, but many do use the concept of preference to construct ethnicized/racialized hierarchies and even restrictions in the case of interpersonal desire. This is not to say that an individual's ethnic/racial desires and preferences contain an inherent malice. In fact, many people would argue that their ethnic/racial preferences are not rude and

certainly not *racist*.

However, placing ethnic/racial criteria in the realms of romance and sex indicates that a man does indeed view some bodies and backgrounds as more attractive and appealing than others. Individual experiences shape what one finds attractive, but there are also societal/macro-level messages out there lending a hand in constructing what we see as desirable. From the time we are small we are educated socialized by those immediately around us as well as by the media. If our environments and the media represent a particular type of person as successful, acceptable and/or commendable in the domains of beauty, employment, and personality, then we can infer that such images teach us who to covet, to aspire to and will consequently play out in our romantic and sexual pursuits. Thus a construction of the desirable is generated and I believe that ethnicity/race is not a neutral component during this process. Numerous novels and academic texts exist to reveal how colonial history and its fallout have infected citizens of western societies with various inferiority and superiority complexes to overcome in our interethnic relations and relationships.

This paper seeks to uncover ethnic/racial complexes and politics in the arenas of romance and sex between men in the Dutch context. Participation in this study required an individual to identify as man who pursues romantic and/or sexual interactions and encounters with men and to have spent a significant amount of time living in this country. Although the sample size is small, my goal is to use oral history techniques to allow these men the opportunity to reflect on their intimate lives candidly and to work through tough questions concerning interethnic/interracial romance and sex that have not been explored significantly in the past.

The more interethnic/interracial stories we have on romance and sex the more we can innovate solutions to increase intercultural connections in ways that recognize and respect differences as opposed to ignoring or minimizing them.

## **ASSUMPTIONS, SUBJECTIVITY AND REFLEXIVITY: "THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL" - AUDRE LORDE**

I identify as a black, queer-gay, man from the United States, particularly a suburb of New York. I am also a student from Brandeis University majoring in Critical Race and Sexuality Studies and minoring in Legal Studies in hopes of becoming a progressive activist and advocate in the future to do civil rights and anti-discrimination work particularly for communities of color. Due to my experiences and education thus far it is not possible for me to ignore ethnicity/race in my daily interactions, let alone during my most intimate moments. This information is being shared in no effort to be boastful but rather to forwardly present my identities and experiences so that the reader may be able to take my own biases, experiences, and privileges into account. The topic of this research and the questions I asked of the participants are all incredibly personal and subjective. However, that does not make these perspectives any less insightful or relevant. This experience in oral history qualitative research combined with the studies I received through the SIT program illuminated to me various myths surrounding objectivity and how the most subjective experiences reveal the most instructive lessons on State influence and regulation. It is important to remember that we all have our own biases and prejudices. The challenge is recognizing, interrogating, and deconstructing them so that we can form diverse relationships in an equal and equitable fashion. Not addressing them, especially in the case of research, does not allow for an

objective and critical distance for analysis; it only leaves the reader in the dark about the researcher's own identity and worldview.

Upon deeper inspection, one will witness how romance and sex are incredibly political exchanges. In the United States I have had multiple interactions with men where my ethnicity/race has generated comments and reactions that at best gave me pause and at worst disgusted me. As a man of color, a black man in particular, I often find myself weary of the manner in which my perceived ethnicity/race is alluded to or discussed in romantic and sexual contexts. I find it important to avoid men whose actions and words make me feel like a sexual commodity that is either discarded outright or eerily objectified/fetishized. At times I have been compared to chocolate, and other times my light-skinned complexion has been complimented in a comparative manner that positions me as more attractive than darker-skinned men. Instances like these are inappropriate and rude, not sexy. A light-skinned v. dark-skinned moment happened to me in Amsterdam at a party during my first month here. Such an experience reminded me of the problematic and divisive standards of beauty bodies of color face. Colorism results in multiple senses of "othering," creating separation between those in as well as out of the ethnicity/race receiving the compliment or insult for their complexion. To further explain, in that moment I was clearly spoken to as non-white man but also made different and somehow better than other men of my race, thus displaying a double separation. Situations like this happen far too often for people of color and this incident propelled my interest in investigating interethnic/interracial encounters between men in romantic and sexual settings.

Having that party moment which colored and racialized me quite directly foreseeably

made me more curious than I was prior to my arrival in the Netherlands about relations between men of color and white men. The experience struck as highly problematic but I could not take it as a given that this was typical or even acceptable behavior here in the Netherlands; my cultural biases as a black man from the States had to be kept in check before I too quickly labeled this situation as the same or heavily similar to sexualized, racializing moments back men of color face back at home. Yet, I soon learned how the Netherlands is another western nation with a history of slavery and colonialism, causing me to develop the strong preconceptions that racism, ethnic biases and prejudices had to exist on some level here. These preconceptions also prompted me to expect that sexual stereotypes would be assigned to different groups of color, such as the myth of black hypersexuality and the subordination and effeminization of Asian men I have encountered in my past in the United States. Being an outsider though left me with no clue to what extent, if any at all, these stereotypes and biases existed.

Scholars have argued that the Netherlands in particular does not view itself as a racist society, especially post-World War II when the preference for using the term "ethnicity" took precedence, as explained in an SIT lecture conducted by Nancy Jouwe. I did not know ahead of time how prevalent the use of preferences in regards to ethnicity/race was a part of Dutch narratives on attraction and endeavored to find out if it was used at all. As previously mentioned, I find that preferences can be quite problematic both in their existence as well as in the way they are communicated in interpersonal interactions. If we look through the lenses of social constructionist perspectives on sexuality, then sexual preferences and desires can be attributed to/informed by standards of beauty and worth as defined by dominant societal

norms. Thus, as an outsider to the Netherlands, I was prompted to speak with men who pursue romance and/or sex with men within the country, both white and of color, to see how race/ethnicity are presented, experienced and hierarchically organized during romantic and/or sexual encounters and relationships.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

To my dismay, interethnic/interracial relationships between men have not been popularly explored by previous SIT students. I found this to be quite surprising but was lucky enough to come across an ISP written by Giovanni Rodriguez in 1996, entitled *Race Relations Between People of Color and White Dutch People in the Amsterdam Gay Culture*. The paper begins with a promising analysis of Dutch history and culture, introducing the reader to the Netherlands various waves of migration, attitudes regarding public and private life, and the previously pillarized state of the nation. Rodriguez tone demonstrates a passionate energy to deconstruct the Netherlands popular image as an open society, as demonstrated when he asks the reader "Is this tolerance?" after summarizing Dutch expectations of assimilation for Surinamese migrants (Rodriguez, 1996, p. 9-10). The author's concise introduction combined with the breakdown the Netherlands's history gives the reader a feeling of great anticipation for shocking stories of discrimination and maltreatment as experienced and told by queer people of color in Amsterdam.

Rodriguez does succeed in providing stories of how queer people of color encounter neglect, exoticization, as well as "othering" in Amsterdam's gay subculture, thus proving that race relations are indeed difficult and contentious between the Dutch and those perceived and/or identified as non-Dutch. Although this is not good news as far as interethnic/interracial

communication is concerned, it was relieving to find out that my curiosity and aspects of my assumptions were well-founded. The study would have been strengthened if the author chose not to group participant responses according to his interview guide towards the end of the report. The abbreviated narratives at the end of the report deprive the research of evocative firsthand insights from participant experiences. A bit more storytelling and quotation would have made Rodriguez's work feel more genuine and gripping, as opposed to the more detached, academic tone I received as the reader. I believe that if thematic, sub-topic headings were used, Rodriguez could structure the paper in a manner that allows for the expansion of common experiences and patterns his subjects faced. For example, it would have been compelling to have a section dedicated to revealing experiences of discrimination within Amsterdam's nightlife scene, and another focused on the stereotypes participants have seen attached to different persons based upon their perceived/actual racial/ethnic background. With a bit more nuanced organization this work could powerfully showcase the struggles queer people of color deal with in and out of queer and gay spaces in Amsterdam.

The next ISP I reviewed is called *Gay Male Youth in Amsterdam: A Qualitative Analysis with comparison to the United States*, written by Christopher Rene Dufault in 1996. Dufault's research topic involves exploring the models of coming-out, the formation of and socialization within gay spaces, how young men are initiated into gay spaces and how said initiation affects their identity formation (Dufault, 1996, p. 1). Considering that I initially wanted to center my research in Amsterdam with men who likely have had some connection to gay spaces in their romantic and sexual pursuit, this seemed to be a highly relevant study to learn from. After a closer look, I came to realize that Dufault's research does more to inspire

my own project than to provide particularly relevant data to it. To start, it is important to note that unlike Rodriguez who dealt exclusively with queer people of color, Dufault exclusively interviewed white Dutch men. The author's participant selection is not an issue, but what I discovered to be a significant flaw and consequence of Dufault's approach is that it generated an absence of acknowledging the privilege his subjects likely had in navigating a variety of spaces in Amsterdam.

Throughout the report the author compares the testimonies of his Dutch subjects to United States theories on gayness, particularly "coming-out," to explore differences and similarities between the two societies. The inundation of theory unfortunately depicts Dufault as a distanced researcher more concerned with proving said theses as opposed to a fellow community member seeking to share and learn from his participants' narratives. Quotation use was minimal, and it was disheartening to see that the few quotes used never referenced a specific participant. Anonymity is important but the author's lack of specification led to a large homogenization of his subjects, thus oversimplifying and combining their experiences. As a result, a reader of this report will walk away believing that white Dutch men benefit from pleasant coming-out experiences, can traverse any gay scene within Amsterdam as they please, and can fully access the Dutch way of self-determination (p. 34).

I am not arguing that one of Dufault's participants had to have a terrible experience with their gay identities and interactions, but the lack of narrative presented by this paper leads me to believe that key insights into Dutch sexualized racial norms were lost by an overgeneralization. Additionally, the lack of investigating how and why these Dutch men could have such positive experiences as they engaged in Amsterdam's gay subculture reflects



the benefit an intersectional analysis would have had within this study. Neglecting Dutch perspectives on race, ethnicity, and citizenship and who gets to feel as though they belong within the Netherlands depicts this nation as a safe and happy space for all. From what I have learned thus far within the SIT program, in addition to Rodriguez's research published the same year as Dufault's, I feel confident in stating that not all bodies here in the Netherlands have such privilege and unweighted agency. Therefore I hoped to use Dufault's research going forward as an insight on the power of white Dutch privilege and to see if it comes about in the narratives of my subjects taken now, 17 years later.

All in all it was a pleasure reading the aforementioned studies as to learn about Amsterdam's queer and gay past. This research not only illuminates the continued need for intersectional analyses of gay and queer relations and spaces, but also shows the need for more qualitative research exploring the romantic and sexual experiences between men in the Dutch context. Courtesy of Rodriguez and Dufault I have learned how it is important to set a detailed, locational context so that the reader understands the racial, ethnic, and sexual attitudes affecting the interpersonal interactions being discussed. Additionally, the necessity of structure was constantly reiterated to me throughout this literature review. The use of sub-headings and categories made the papers easy to read and provided flow, but when Dufault and Rodriguez drifted away from structure their work lost the value of transitioning and impeded the demonstration of strong, proven arguments substantiated by participant narratives. I hope to learn from these examples and shed more light on interethnic romantic and sexual encounters between men in the Dutch context to contribute to scholarship which proves that race/ethnicity is not exempt from politics and power within the domains of desire

and pleasure.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND THE DUTCH CONTEXT**

I approached my research topic believing that although attraction and desire are heavily influenced and shaped by individual experiences, external and intangible forces shape what one is drawn to as well. Moreover, I believe that external norms and preconceptions provide the foundations for what we find desirable and as we mature we gain more control over our desires as our firsthand encounters may validate or refute the norms placed inside of our minds as a result of socialization. One of, if not the, largest producers and regulators of what is desirable to be or have in life is the State. Every nation contains models of ideal citizenship, privileging certain modes and forms of being while marginalizing, criminalizing, and/or punishing those who do not fit the mold. These State-sponsored models include behavioral components, such as following laws, participating in elections, paying taxes and etc., but can also extend to physical features as well.

For example, I have learned here that the stereotype that comes to mind when one says "Dutch" refers to a white person from the Netherlands. Despite the fact that many different bodies of color live here and possess Dutch citizenship, and may have also been born here, their physicality is not referred to as the given image of a Dutch individual. Historically it is the State who acts a producer of a script that designs some "characters" as more entitled to belong in society, to count as native and to be more predisposed to possessing desirable and acceptable qualities. Framing citizenship as a script controlled and provided by the State provides us with an insightful lens to learn what counts as an "acceptable performance" by

the diverse bodies within a society, specifically Dutch society in this case.

John H. Gagnon and William Simon, in "Sexual Scripts," explain how a script can serve as "a metaphor for conceptualizing the production of behavior within social life" (Gagnon 53). Additionally, the aforementioned theorists claim that "[c]ultural scenarios are the instructional guides that exist at the level of collective life...through which the requirements and the practice of specific roles are given" (53). Within the narrative of citizenship, the State can be seen both as the playwright as well as an actor, thus establishing the rules and bounds of acceptable conduct in addition to intervening when norms have been transgressed. Common in many dramas, a script frequently contains good characters as well the bad, characters to be praised and others condemned. Throughout history in the United States, persons of color have been regarded as troublesome, laggard and even incompatible with dominant notions of citizenship. One need only look at accounts of slavery, or even most recently one can research the controversy surrounding legislation in Arizona (SB 1070) which has marked Latinos within the state as likely to be "illegal" and thus worthy of immediate deportation. Granted the United States has made significant progress in recent decades in regards to the way it treats its marginalized communities, but the nation still has a long way to go and more SB 1070'esque behaviors to address. If one looks back in time in the Netherlands, she will find that the Dutch also had racial struggles and did not always preach openness and mandate a script of tolerance.

In the 1960s and 70s the Netherlands made large scale legal and social strides in accepting sexual diversity and liberalism. Prior to this period the country generally had a stronger Christian morality, a script that prescribed heteronormative behaviors and

expectations (Hekma, 2008, p. 1-2). Therefore being a good citizen involved a Dutch heritage, heterosexuality, religious piety, and strict interpretations on how to conduct oneself as a proper man or proper woman. As the 1960s progressed, Dutch society went through a period "depillarization" which brought about the decline of religious rigidity and segregation and replaced it with greater secular values and openness to sexual difference. The dominant strategy gays and lesbians used at the time was to claim and show that they were "normal" in order to gain recognition and inclusion. As a consequence this tactic minimized sexual difference and maximized other aspects of life to promote a script of respectability worthy of social acceptance i.e. decent employment and not drawing public attention to one's "gayness" (2). Normalization worked to illuminate how gays and lesbians were indeed acceptable, non-pathological folks whose same-sex/same-gender love did not cause any significant disruption to status quo. They did everything straight people did except in the case of sexuality and certain gender practices.

The key benefit of the aforementioned gay liberation strategy is its success in extending tolerance and that legal and political recognition and privileges were granted to gays and lesbians in the Netherlands. "Normalization, [however], does not indicate the end of normative heterosexuality, but a new organizing principle" (Seidman, 2001, p. 321). If we apply Seidman's claim as a lens to view the gay, Dutch movement of normalization, then I argue that activists of that time did little to undo hegemonic, ranked constructions of citizenship. Steven Seidman's work, "From Identity to Queer Politics: Shifts in Normative Heterosexuality and the Meaning of Citizenship," explains how moral hierarchies remain in place by which gender and sexual ideology and performance remain criteria for judgment

when no direct actions are taken to deconstruct the intersectional value system attached to citizenship (p. 322). Dutch gay liberation achieved inclusion by minimizing non-heterosexuality in a manner that made it more palatable through its isolation and nominal visibility. Thus the romantic and sexual interactions of those marked/identified as gay were able to remain inferior.

Foreseeably so, Dutch gay liberation also lacked in actively challenging the intersecting/accompanying struggles brought on by ethnicity/race. If we take being the stereotypical white Dutch man as the native, normal and privileged, then we can understand how normalization would do so little for queer men of color; their ethnicity/race contained non-normative struggles likely too complicated, politically infeasible or just not even conceived of for the mainstream movement to tackle. Consequently, the typical gay success story involves a white Dutch man of affluence who lives in a gay enclave and exists in society as another consumer rather than as a social agitator/activist (El-Tayeb, 2012, p. 85). The ideal, most successful citizen remained cast as natively Dutch, a participant in Dutch capitalism, and imbibed in all Dutch social norms. Such a stereotype must generate significant barriers for interactions between those who are recognized as normatively Dutch and those who are not. In order to get a glimpse of my assumed, potential obstacles within interethnic/interracial communication, I decided to research the consequences of this script in the intimate spheres of romance and sex.

## **METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS**

In order to explore the complications around ethnicity/race between men in romantic and sexual circumstances I decided to conduct in-depth storytelling interviews with men in the

Netherlands. The criteria to participate entailed identifying as a man who pursues romantic and/or sexual encounters and interactions with other men and to be from the Netherlands, (or to have at least lived here for a significant amount of time), to discuss romance and sex in the Dutch context. I decided not to have an age requirement because having a spectrum of ages provides insight into how ethnicity/race and sexuality operate during different periods of time. Ethnically/racially speaking, however, I did place constraints upon my project. Initially I sought to conduct six interviews with four men of color and two white Dutch men, but due to cancellations and timing I was only able to secure interviews with four men. Two identified as black men and the other two as white Dutch men. Despite not representing my ideal mix of ethnicities, I was truly excited and grateful to be able to conduct research that provided me with insight into the perspectives of men who identify as black and white. For future researchers I suggest that they include men who identify as members of brown communities. The voices of Moroccan and Turkish men, for example, definitely would have added perspectives that my subjects could not speak to, such as migrant perspectives as opposed to colonial ones. Although people of color are often grouped together, my time here has taught me that there are significant differences between persons of colonial backgrounds and those of migrant communities living within the Netherlands.

The participants in my study were acquired through my advisor, Rudd Tevreden. As an intermediary Ruud reached out to colleagues and friends to explain my project and see if anyone would be interested in sharing their stories with me. After finding potential subjects, Ruud provided me with contact information and I used it to speak with participants via WhatsApp first (a smartphone text message application) followed by e-mail. Prior to

confirming an appointment, I sent interviewees my informed consent form so that they could read what the study entailed and have the opportunity to ask questions or address any concerns. The consent form explained confidentiality rights, assuring them that my data would be privately maintained and informed them that they had the right to create a pseudonym of their choice. Fortunately I had barely any concerns or objections and am very thankful to Ruud for providing me with four willing and talkative participants.

In approaching this project, I did my best to conduct myself as an oral historian, framing open-ended questions for my interviewees in order to allow them the comfort and freedom to share their relevant life stories. This style creates an environment catered to detailed responses and rich recollections of one's past. Concise and quick survey-style interviews risk missing insightful nuances and I could not afford to lose any details from my participants' descriptions of their romantic and sexual interethnic/interracial experiences. So many times during my interviews my participants had to pause and sit in silence for a few moments to scour their memories to retrieve the information necessary to answer my probing questions. Having extra time for said pauses always proved beneficial as interviewees followed up silence with a powerful, personal recollection. Participants were asked to set aside two hours, one and a half at minimum, for their respective interviews and this window of time proved to be accurate; each conversation significantly exceeded the one hour mark.

With exception of the phone interview I held in my own room, all interviews took place in Amsterdam. Two were held at the SIT office and another in a restaurant chosen by one interviewee, Marlon, in the Bijlmer. Unfortunately my phone call with Robert did not record and thus I was not able to have an audio file to transcribe, but I was able to take detailed

notes throughout our conversation. The rest of my interviews were recorded using sound recording applications on my Android cellphone and tablet. If possible, I definitely recommend dual recording interviews because technology and microphone sensitivity are incredibly finicky; having two files to choose from was nice since the volume of my participants often fluctuated. Once recording began I made sure to remind my participants of their confidentiality rights to in order to obtain consent one more time, allowing me to be on the safe side so to speak. Lastly I reminded them of their rights to pass on any question and to withdraw from the project at any time. Albeit formal, this step helped establish a comfortable rapport by reminding interviewees of their autonomy throughout the ensuing conversation.

As with all research, I faced some notable limitations as I conducted this study. The first would have to be my sample-size as previously mentioned. More narratives would have been invaluable to maximizing my understanding and deconstructing the Dutch romantic and sexual scripts pertaining to ethnicity, race, gender and sexuality between men. Qualitative research is not made for making large generalizations but the more narratives we have, the more we can see how social phenomena affects the way people live and experience Dutch citizenship. That being said, another limitation was time. The ISP research period flies by quickly, and due to my delay in finding an advisor and participants, it was difficult to satisfy all of the requirements of this paper. I recommend to future SIT students to work on their assignments piece by piece as early as possible, for peace of mind and also to have more chances to seek help when necessary. If the ISP period were longer I likely would have held follow-up interviews as well because each interviewee brought up themes worthy of future investigation into ethnic/racial politics and complications. Lastly, I feel as though my lack of



speaking Dutch and short time living here may have hindered my ability to fully relate to what information I received from my participants. All of my participants fortunately spoke fluent English, but with Dutch being the language they use most frequently I feel as though I could have connected with them more if I spoke it too. Many words and phrases can be translated, but certain connotations, feelings and meanings may be lost in the process. I only hope that my representation of my interviewees' narratives do their stories justice.

This report is a mere glimpse into the lives of men who pursue men for romance and/or sex in the Dutch context, as recounted by a visiting student from the United States. I encourage more students to contribute to research exploring interethnic/interracial relations on the most intimate of levels. Doing so will help debunk the myth that ethnicity/race is no longer a challenge for society at large and individuals in their daily lives. Clearly I am not a fan of such denial. If social cohesion and intermingling in equal and equitable fashion is the goal of progressive nations, specifically the Netherlands and the United States, then the silence surrounding ethnicity, race, romance and sex must be shattered so that people learn how to interact and understand each other beyond the surface-level. What better way to shatter the silence than by sharing how people pursue experience love, lust and everything in between those feelings?

## **FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

### **SCENES AND SPACES FOR MEN SEEKING MEN**

#### **SERGIO**

Sergio is a 26 year-old black man born, raised and currently living in Rotterdam from a

family of Surinamese descent. He also identifies as gay and provided me with the longest interview out of all of my participants. I only wish I had enough to space to dive into everything he presented to me.

Since interethnic/interracial relations are the key component of my research, I asked Sergio to describe to me his first experiences in spaces catered to men seeking men and how the diversity operated within them. Unexpectedly, Sergio first described to me how he used the internet to find information and people to talk to during his exploration of sexuality around the age of 15.

"There was a website called Party Peeps, have you heard of it? [No, I have not.] It's closed -- it closed this year and it's similar to Black Gay Chat...I guess you could say it was a frontrunner of Facebook, but it was more party-oriented. They posted pictures of parties and agendas and stuff like that, but they also had profiles...I met people there and talked to them."

It was on this site where Sergio spoke to an ethnically diverse group of men around his age, giving him a space to develop his sexual identity and to find others in similar positions. It was also through this medium where Sergio made an acquaintance who accompanied him to his first gay club. Albeit a "scary" experience and "such a different world" to him at first, Sergio began to go out more and more and established a community for himself.

There was one club in particular that Sergio frequented and I asked him to describe the ethnic/racial layout to me. He told me that:

"It was mixed, mostly Dutch, but it was like 60% Dutch and 40% mixed. A mix of Surinamese, guys from Curacao and Aruba, Bonaire and from Turkey

and Morocco."

To take things a step further, I wanted to know if the interactions were just as diverse/interethnic as the club's population to which he immediately said "No." Sergio then went on to say that:

"The blacks had a corner. I don't why it was, they just had a corner where they were always sitting and around that there was just everybody...Well I guess that corner was probably just set up because when the blacks came they mostly came in big groups...It was like they all knew each other and didn't interact with anyone else."

At this time he also explained how black to him means men from Suriname and the Antilles, whereas brown was meant to refer to men from Cape Verde, Morocco, Turkey and the Mediterranean. The brown men, in addition to the white Dutch men, in the club did not have their own separate cliques and freely mingled throughout the space. I found this difference to be quite striking, but Sergio attributed it to the familiarity and close ties of the particular blacks at that club as opposed to an intangible force keeping blacks in that one corner. Moreover, he explained how most men stayed within like company ethnically/racially speaking, so white with white, brown with brown, blacks with blacks, or oftentimes the various peoples of color would mix but the same could not be said for whites and people of color typically.

When I asked him to delve deeper into romantic and sexual interactions between the men at the club, Sergio explained to me that:

"Within ethnic groups it would have been a lot easier to connect with other

guys instead of with a Dutch guy, just because you would have used other connections to get to someone for example."

Here Sergio's account reflects the strong bonds and avenues of communication people develop along ethnic/racial lines. Although there are multiple groups sharing a physical space, there are invisible forces at play causing them to feel more comfortable with those they perceive to belong to the same or similar cultural groups. Something must be inhibiting these men from going beyond their comfort zones and approaching each other cross-culturally in a flirtatious manner.

### **MARLON**

Marlon is a 43 year old black man originally from Curacao who has lived in the Netherlands since coming here for studies at 18 years of age. He was going through exploring and accepting his sexuality at the time and informed me that he did not go out seeking committed relationships with men then but did want to meet other guys on an intimate level.

When I asked where he went to meet other men, Marlon told me that:

"I was living in Enschede at the time. There was only one gay bar around...it was a student city and predominantly white."

To follow up, I asked if the space was mixed and he said:

"No, it was totally white. There were one or two exceptions; you knew the other black people, you knew who they were...[The men of color] mingled with whites and avoided each other. Very peculiar thing back then or back there."

Compared to Sergio's club experience that reflected a sense of ethnic/racial familiarity, if not

solidarity, Marlon's experience shocked me.

"I remember once there was this Somalian guy and I went up to get to know him and he acted so coldish."

When I asked if he knew why, Marlon stated:

"I don't really know. I can deduct now. Ideas about financial security, white men being more able to afford them maybe. Some people are also afraid of homophobia in their own communities and that's why they want to mate outside of their community."

Although he was not certain in his deductions, Marlon's self-analysis provides key insight into the attractiveness white men embody. Here we see the assumption of economic success attached to white Dutch men in addition to the fact their ethnic/racial community has been portrayed as more accepting of gayness/queerness than communities of color. If we refer back to the gay liberation's normalization tactic, Marlon's points seem plausible because the affluent, white Dutch gay man prototype was promoted as a beacon of a new successful form of citizenship. Furthermore, from the eyes of a hypothetical man of color in Marlon's scenario, a white Dutch man can be seen as offering a better life fiscally as well as mentally/emotionally.

## **ROBERT**

Robert is a 50 year old white Dutch man born and raised in a little village in the Netherlands and currently lives the Zeeland province. Sadly, the information I have from Robert will be rough paraphrases as my phone did not properly record our conversation, leaving me without an audio file to transcribe. He did describe to me that Zeeland has only

"370,000 inhabitants," of which only 8% are gay. Most gay people end up leaving because the community is so small and barely visible there. It makes it quite difficult to find gay friends and potential partners.

In his 20's, Robert used to frequent a bar in Goes that was not exclusively gay but notably "open and liberal." There he would hang out or do homework and feel comfortable around other gay folk. The only other bars in the province he knew of was one operated by the COC, a popular gay activist organization throughout Holland, in the capital of Zeeland and one COC bar that did not last long in Goes due to low patronage. Aside from not receiving a lot of business, Robert described that COC Goes bar as awkward and uncomfortable because it generally had older men there, giving off a "looking for young flesh vibe."

In his early 30's Robert began visiting Amsterdam purely for the gay scene in hopes of meeting nice men to find significant connections with. He viewed the scene as ethnically/racially mixed and appreciated such diversity. When asked about interethnic/interracial interactions, Robert shared that he saw connections made in both the dating and sexual spheres. In particular he told me about how he attended functions at the Long Yung Club, a venue catered to connecting European men to Asian men. On Sunday afternoons he would to eat, drink and sometimes dance and it was there that he first acquired a relationship with a man of color, a man of Vietnamese background if I remember correctly.

"A"

My final participant, who prefers to be referred to as "A," is a 28 year-old white Dutch man from Heerlen, born and raised there until about 20 years of age. His interview was

fascinating because many of his responses were either vague or did not address what I was looking for in a direct fashion. "A" was friendly and participatory, but compared to the rich details offered by the other participants, his narrative did little to demystify men seeking men spaces in the Netherlands. For example, after explaining to me that he came to Amsterdam around 21/22 years of age for studies and work, I asked "A" to describe his impressions of interactions between men in romantic and sexual contexts. He then responded by stating:

"I was very closed at first, especially when I first moved here. Very protective. So I went about [participating men who seek men spaces] the same way as I did in Heemskerk [his living space prior to moving to Amsterdam], so gradually expanding you could say."

He then told me that he went out more after being in Amsterdam for a "year or two," prompting me to ask again for impressions of the scenes he observed. "A" replied with:

"I really didn't see romance I think, so my first maybe gay pride...my image of gay men was a bit weird, or the gay community or gay life, so the gay pride is one of the most important, but in a bad way, images I saw of gay life here in Amsterdam. It hasn't got much to do with romance but more like with these flamboyant, yeah, and a bit overreacting, exaggerated men being or trying to be sexy you could say."

Here "A" explicitly states his observation of romance lacking in gay spaces, while implicitly revealing a negative judgment of flamboyant behaviors. The use of the words "weird" and "exaggerated" mark the gay men he is discussing as undesirable and outside the bounds of what is perceived to be normal.

Later on in the interview, "A" managed to discuss the spaces in Amsterdam a little bit more, claiming that they are "mixed but not as much as they could be" considering how diverse the city's population is. He also spoke of the Reality Bar, stating that it is:

"...famous for being more diverse [but it depends] on the night. I've been there once and it was all the same guys, and by that I mean white, old and creepy. So you can't say [that] any space is more diverse than another; it depends on the night that you go out."

On the one hand "A" reveals that some spaces in Amsterdam may have reputations for being more diverse or catering to persons of color, but then he is quick to withdraw that point by saying that things vary depending on the night of the week. The main thing I can draw from "A" is that Amsterdam contains an ethnically/racially diverse population of men seeking men and that they do share the same physical spaces at times. The extent to which interactions occur remains unknown though in regards to "A's" testimony.

## **STANDARDS OF BEAUTY AND DESIRE**

### **SERGIO**

Going into my research I expected white Dutch men to be the most desirable because they represent the norm in regards to the Dutch sexual script which sets the standards for beauty and the general bar to aspire to. In continuing to provide me with his assessment of the aforementioned club, Sergio explained to me what he believed the ideal type of man most men pursue in gay spaces in Rotterdam to be:

"I guess you could say someone who doesn't look like he's gay, so that means a masculine build, Dutch, a pretty boy I guess, a popular guy."



This description provides evidence that what is considered to be the most attractive in Dutch men seeking men spaces inherently contains an ethnicized/racialized citizenship component. Sergio's account delineates how white physical features ascribed to a Dutch background, in addition to a gender performance [which I read as non-effeminate and/or having the ability to be perceived as a normative straight man] that would not mark someone as stereotypically and visibly gay are the ultimate men to approach and captivate in a bar or club. If this is the archetype then men of color are consequently less desirable by comparison to this script.

Another example of this beauty power/value dynamic is illustrated by Sergio's opinion that "It's a rarity when a Dutch man is interested in a...black guy" but not rare at all when the races are flipped. Continuing along with the notion that white Dutchness represents the ultimate catch, it makes sense as to why most white Dutch men at this club would not desire black men; black men are cast as beneath them. For blacks then, obtaining a white man could be viewed as an upgrade or at least a serious bonus if they are successful in attracting a white Dutch man. This potential, internalized racism black men face in regards to their own beauty could seriously hinder self-esteem and loving other black men as well. Lastly, men of both races who view beauty in such disparate ways will likely face power dynamic issues if a relationship is pursued because one may worship and respect the other more. This is not guaranteed to happen but if men of color are being taught to cherish white men more than themselves and each other, there is little hope for establishing equal and equitable interpersonal, interethnic/interracial relationships.

## **MARLON**

Marlon, like Sergio, provides insight into the effects of white beauty standards men of

color face by sharing a story from his childhood in Curacao:

"My uncle was married to a Portuguese woman, which is considered white in Curacao. And Curacao still has white beauty standards, and so men will go after white women as trophies. So I saw my uncle married to the woman and he had light-skinned, nearly white-skinned offspring and they were considered beautiful and things like that."

As a Dutch colony, Marlon explained how Curacao is taught to strive for and venerate all Dutch norms and standards, especially beauty. Whiteness is the ideal and if you cannot be white personally, having a white partner is the next best thing.

Lastly, the aspect of colorism Marlon introduced also affirms the fact that white features are considered to be the most attractive for those operating within Dutch/Dutch-influenced contexts. The fact that his cousins were seen as exceptionally beautiful automatically implies/reveals that darker features and those associated with African roots are less attractive.

## **ROBERT**

From what I can recall from Robert's interview, he specifically described Asian men as beautiful. Additionally, it was during his time in Amsterdam when Robert learned that he was viewed as attractive by Asian men and recognized how his identity as a white Dutch man afforded him positive treatment from this community. This positive treatment, however, sometimes was received because of economic and citizenship expectations placed upon white Dutch men. Robert explained how many attractive, young Indonesian men pursue older white Dutch men for a relationship in hopes of gaining citizenship and upward mobility. The Indonesian men, as Robert described, have an exaggerated perception of European wealth as

compared to their own economic situations and as a result seek out partners to depend on financially.

This Asian narrative posited by Robert certainly struck me as problematic and troublesome to say the least, but it did reify the idea that white Dutch men are viewed as ideally attractive in aspects beyond the physical. I suggest more research be done by future students to uncover the dynamics between white Dutch and Asian men; many layers of desire and citizenship can be explored within that relationship.

"A"

Unlike the other interviewees, "A" did little to reveal any information on what standards of beauty he observed in interethnic/interracial romantic and sexual situations. It is frustrating as a researcher because a large goal of my project is to learn who is considered desirable in the Dutch context, but I respect "A's" decision not make generalizations. Even when I asked him explicitly to share any stereotypes he has encountered in romantic and sexual situations, "A" said:

"Yeah, I'm not sure...but I think there are stereotypes and preconceived ideas about different types of groups."

Beyond this I could not draw any specificity out of "A." The acknowledgement of stereotypes confirms to me that there must be dominant attitudes and scripts out there casting particular bodies as more or less desirable. It would have been helpful if "A" could recall and feel comfortable enough to tell me what he perceives of romantic and sexual norms to be in an interethnic/interracial context.

## **PREFERENCES IN CASUAL RELATIONS AND DATING**

### **SERGIO**

A major curiosity throughout my research was if there is a significant difference between who a man would hook up with casually v. who a man would pursue for a more committed connection/relationship in an interethnic/interracial lens. For Sergio, there were clear differences between his hookup and dating preferences. He told me that:

"In terms of a hookup, [he prefers] masculine men, understanding of the deal/what's going on, Dutch or black, around the same age. That's it...In terms of dating...someone who's a little older, not too old, black and unpopular. Also that he's there but not there; mysterious... [Additionally someone] your mother likes, [has] manners, cares about their physical appearance, ambitious, but also someone on the same level."

Clearly there is a higher level of scrutiny for Sergio when it comes to dating, but interestingly enough, he does not seem to be caught in the white beauty pursuit previously mentioned. He is open to white Dutch men casually but for a relationship seeks another black man, leading me to believe that shared cultural identities can be quite important and may aid in interpersonal relatability conducive to intimate communication.

Throughout his interview Sergio explained how it is easier for men of color to connect than it is to do so interethnically/interracially with white Dutch men. When I asked if it were possible for a black and white couple to be together in a long term relationship, Sergio responded:

"I definitely think it's possible, only if you have an understanding of each

other's history or cultural background in that case. I know a couple [black and white] who's engaged, I know two couples actually, and I know that both those white men have had previous relationships with blacks before and I know that they are aware of other ethnic backgrounds. They have appreciation and much more understanding of ethnic backgrounds, so if a couple would marry from black or white backgrounds or have a relationship there would have to be an understanding. When you're black you're raised differently...It's possible but it takes time and energy."

This piece of narrative addresses the fact that differences do exist and do not have to be insurmountable. They must be recognized and critically discussed between interethnic/interracial partners so that potential moments of disconnect due to different lived experiences in Dutch society do not bring lovers too far apart. Rather than ignoring ethnicity/race, Sergio teaches us that success requires recognizing these facets of identity directly, and based off of my own personal experiences I have to agree. Connections between men of color may be easier due to shared cultural narratives and histories but those are not and should be the only viable options for having a long term relationship.

## **MARLON**

Marlon's narrative revealed that his own personal preferences in romance and sex have been open-minded although he has typically been with men of color during the majority of his adult life. When asked to recall some of his earliest memories of ethnicized/racialized romantic and sexual politics, Marlon shared his observation that:

"I started to notice a lot of black guys had relationships with white men but

[only] had sex with black men. So the black circle could offer sex but not relationships...What I saw was that black men are good enough for the sex but not for relationships."

When I followed up to ask if he had any ideas why, Marlon replied:

"White men being [viewed as] more stable, more secure, providers. Fear of your own community. Stereotypes about black sexuality -- they exist for black people too, so maybe that's why they don't date each other."

As captured by the standards of beauty section and reiterated here, white men are seen to possess both physical as well as economic privileges not ascribed to black bodies. Black bodies, as shown by Marlon's perspective, are to be used for a fun time and were not seen as adequate enough to bring something substantial to the table for a longstanding relationship; black male attractiveness was limited to their physical hypersexuality, stereotypically speaking. This is tragic to hear because it demonstrates potential internalized racism and the worship of a system of desirability made to limit/impede the beauty black bodies can achieve.

Like Sergio, I asked Marlon if he thought an interethnic/interracial relationship is possible between a black man and a white man, to which he responded:

"It can [be] and I know a lot of examples. I know also black guys that after ten years in a relationship say that they got tired of explaining things because, especially with the Dutch idea of colorblindness and denying racism, yeah, your feelings are disrespected because they say you are overreacting, you are too emotional and things like that."

Once again we see the need for active recognition and awareness surrounding ethnicity/race in order for this type of coupling to work out for a long term relationship. Marlon's story,

paired with Sergio's, implies that ignoring difference only allows tension to breed. Addressing the issues head on is the best bet in bridging ethnic/racial gaps in understanding.

## **ROBERT**

When discussing his preferences, Robert hinted that his romantic and sexual criteria were the same ethnically/racially speaking. He was "curious of colored men," particularly Asian men with "smooth skin. That aside Robert listed his interest in "young, fit, not fat, tall, handsome, intelligent" men. Color is not an issue for Robert; he does not believe himself to be biased. I would, however, want to examine the Asian dynamic in greater depth if I had the time because Robert's earlier narrative revealed interesting power relations between these two races.

In a different vein, Robert did not have a positive view of Muslim men, particularly young Muslim men in Amsterdam. Having heard stories of aggressive street harassment and gay bashings, he began to view this group as particularly dangerous due to their supposed cultural/religious opposition to gayness. Taking into account what we have learned from lectures through SIT this semester, I worry that Robert's fear is amplified due to the negative stereotypes perpetuated by the Dutch media and politicians against Muslim youth to cast them as more violent and incompatible with Dutch values of tolerance. Citizenship frequently requires defining "others" and Muslims have been the most contemporary target group in the Dutch context for many of nation's social ills.

Lastly Robert offered his perspective on interethnic/interracial relationships and their potential feasibility. He finds that color is not important to founding a relationship; instead sharing the same values and world concept are more significant and allow for the formation

of a "heart connection." Robert also shared that he believes "love conquers all." Although I want to take such rosy words to heart, the skeptic in me wonders if that love will strive for consciousness and active recognition. Without true understanding and affirmation of partner, I do not believe that a successful relationship will ever be achieved.

"A"

Similar to Robert, "A's" responses erred towards revealing more romantic as opposed to strictly casual preferences. He explained that during his early years of exploring his sexuality:

"I already kind of figured out that I was not attracted to Dutch white guys or Dutch white girls for that matter... At first I didn't have any clue and then I started to think about it and I still don't really know, but both in terms of looks and personality, it [white Dutchness] was not doing it for me."

The only faint indication "A" gave as to why he was not drawn to other Dutch men is that he sometimes associates them with pretension, but for the most part he does not understand his lack of interest at this point in life. He does acknowledge fully his attractions to black men though, based on looks and personality, and believes that a past experience had a profound effect on establishing the criteria for his future attractions:

"When I moved to Amsterdam I fell in love with one guy in particular [Surinamese background] ... I think falling in love with him -- even though we didn't end up being together or anything like that -- I think that was definitely a point where [I realized] this is it [Point dictating future attractions]...So these past years I will always look back and be like okay...I always wonder maybe if I didn't fall in love with him maybe it would have gone a different way. I'm not



sure. It was definitely a big deal because everything about him, yeah, I was attracted to."

I found this part to be very instructive because it deviates explicitly from my theoretical framework. As opposed to noting any outside sources in shaping desire, "A's" narrative actively reflects the power of firsthand experiences in determining what we continue to find attractive as we mature. I am not saying that "A" is immune to societal scripts and messages, but it was intriguing that his narrative provided little evidence in supporting those theories.

Lastly, when I asked "A" if he viewed an interethnic/interracial relationship between a black and white man as possible he responded that it is:

"Very possible. Especially when both are open to it...and they have to find each other and they both have to have the same intentions or it won't work....It makes me think of a friend [of color] of mine who was with a Dutch guy who is very narrow-minded and they broke up for that in the sense that he couldn't come together -- they couldn't find each other or find common ground where both of their cultures or cultural backgrounds and all of the baggage they carry to come together."

Although not as explicit in how to make relationships work as Sergio or Marlon, "A's" narrative reveals that interethnic/interracial relationships require diligence in order to gain cultural competency between the partners involved. Denial of ethnicity/race and its accompanying issues will only lead to failure because it continues to invalidate integral parts of one of, if not both, the partner's lives. If I could go back and speak with "A" again I would like to ask how he believes culturally competency can be acquired and if it existed in his

previous interethnic/interracial relationships.

## CONCLUSION

This research has truly been an exhausting and insightful experience. I am once again very grateful to my participants for allowing me to present their stories and analyze them in this report. The amount of insight I gained into the Dutch context and into interethnic/interracial relations within romantic and sexual spheres is immeasurable. My participants' interviews confirm the fact that ethnicity/race does matter in the pursuits of romance and sex, simply to varying extents dependent upon the actors involved. I also walked away knowing that colorblindness and the denial of ethnic differences and racism is a large factor in the failure of interethnic/interracial relationships. It takes awareness, consciousness, and active validation of the ethnic/racial identities of the men involved to produce and maintain a stable connection.

Going forward I would suggest researchers to consider uncovering the specific sexual citizen scripts different ethnic//racial groups have assigned to them in Dutch society. The narratives in this project certainly reified the privilege of white Dutch men, but seeing the specific sexual ideologies surrounding black men and Asian men for example would be quite insightful in further analyzing Dutch racial histories and politics. As a culture that prefers to remain silent on issues surrounding ethnicity/race, more research needs to be conducted to share the voices of the individuals living and suffering under oppressive social constructions.

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*APA formatting by BibMe.org.*

## **APPENDIX**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. Please state your age.
2. Where were you born?
3. Where were you raised?
  - a. What was your home/family composition like? Siblings, parents, grandparents and etc.?
4. What were people like there? Friendly and connected, individual and separated?
5. What did diversity look like there?
  - a. What background do you consider yourself from and was that the majority in the area you grew up in?
6. What is your earliest memory of encountering racial/ethnic difference?
  - a. How did you feel about it?
  - b. Who, if anyone, explained difference to you?
7. How did people of different races/ethnicities interact where you grew up?
  - a. How possible was it?
8. Now to switch gears a bit, How, if ever, did the idea of men being together romantically/sexually come up in your neighborhood?
  - a. How about at home?
9. What is your earliest memory of thinking about the possibility of men being together?
  - a. How did you feel about it at that time?
10. When did you personally start to feel interested in men in a romantic and/or sexual

nature?

a. How did you feel about it?

b. Who, if anyone, did you share your feelings with?

11. What happened after you started to feel and acknowledge your attraction to men?

12. To move a bit further into the future, when did you arrive in Amsterdam/start frequenting Amsterdam? Or have you always been here?

a. What brought you here? OR What made you want to stay here?

b. Were romantic/sexual interactions between men a part of your decision to come/stay here?

13. How, if at all, did race/ethnicity play a part in your decision to come to/remain in Amsterdam?

a. If it mattered, why? If not, why not?

14. What did you think of romantic/sexual interactions between men during your first encounters with such exchanges in Amsterdam?

a. What did those sexual interactions with other men look like?

b. What, if any, preferences did you observe men having in their pursuit of other men? What was considered desirable?

c. What role, if any, did race/ethnicity play in those interactions and preferences?

d. How, if at all, did race/ethnicity play a role in regards to your own preferences and interactions?

15. How welcome did you feel, if at all, in your earliest memories of Amsterdam?

a. How did you feel, if at all, your race/ethnicity affected your treatment?

16. How do you feel today in comparison to your earliest memories of Amsterdam?
  - a. How do you feel your race/ethnicity affects your treatment today, if at all?
17. What do romantic and/or sexual interactions between men today look like now in comparison to your past?
  - a. How, if at all, do you view race/ethnicity as a factor in all of this?
  - b. What, if anything, is better and what is worse?
18. How do you predict romantic/sexual interactions between men to change over time?
  - a. How, if at all, do you view race/ethnicity in this change?