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Identity experiences of black people in the Netherlands

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In this study, we used the tri-dimensional model of identity and acculturation strategies to explore how black people living in the Netherlands define themselves. We used a qualitative survey design in which 14 participants (females = 8; age range 21 to 58) completed open-ended questions about their experiences of being black in the Netherlands. Data was analysed using hermeneutic phenomenology in three steps: naive understanding, structural analysis, and comprehensive understanding. We derived several main themes: Acceptance; Inclusion; Stereotypes; Social membership; Person-specific characteristics; Separation (Contributors); and Social Status. We associated the themes Acceptance, Inclusion, and Separation (Contributors) with acculturation and acculturative strategies. The other themes can be connected to the tri-dimensional identity model. Social membership and Social status are related to the social and relational aspects of identity, while Person-specific characteristics can be linked to personal identity. Lastly, the theme Stereotypes can be related to both acculturation and racism, but also personal identity as it shows how the participants perceive their self-concept to contradict the beliefs that mainstream Dutch society holds about them. We conclude that identity construction among the black respondents was reliant on both their ethnic community membership and their membership of the mainstream Dutch community.

Keywords: identity, identity experiences, acculturation, black people, the Netherlands

Introduction

Recently, an Aruban man was killed by police in the Netherlands. This event caused controversy in the media as well as in the Dutch Antillean and Aruban communities (Quekel, 2016). Antillean and Aruban immigrants are citizens of former Dutch colonies from South America and the Caribbean. The protestations following the shooting of the Aruban man were reminiscent of those that have characterised ongoing racial turmoil in the United States of America (US) (Gandbhir & Peltz, 2015). Although this was an isolated incident, it comes alongside another closely linked national discussion: The Dutch children's festival *Sinterklaas* (somewhat similar to the American Santa Claus), at which he and his helpers *Zwarte Pieten* (translated Black Peters) have also been marred by controversy (The Economist, 2013). The presence of *Zwarte Piet* has come under fire from the Dutch media and racial minority communities for promoting black subjugation and implicit racism. These highly publicised events that implicate questions of implicit racism in the Netherlands bring to the fore the question of what it means to be black in the Netherlands; a multicultural society considered open and tolerant. Thus, the objective of this study was to explore the experiences of black people living in the Netherlands and the ways they construct their identities.

To frame this study, we drew upon the tri-dimensional model of identity, which constructs identity at three intersecting levels: personal, relational, and social (Adams & Van de Vijver, 2015). We also considered existing findings from studies on acculturation strategies (Berry & Sam, 1997).

Identity and identity dimensions

Identity can be described as an internal continuity that regulates behaviour so that people show stability in their interactions and roles (Dunkel, 2005). However, identity is also fluid since people's roles and situations change throughout their lifetime. Identity is what makes people unique and simultaneously that which makes them similar to others (Beijers, 2015).

Personal identity encompasses the meanings people give to their experiences or context through intrapersonal expressions of identity, such as personal values, goals, or aspirations that make a person unique (Adams & Van de Vijver, 2015). In contrast to relational and social identity, personal identity is more complex and often more concealed than relational and social aspects of identity (Jones & McEwen, 2000). The second dimension, relational identity, is concerned with the roles people play in society (e.g. student, parent, or lawyer). Stryker and Burke (2000) postulate that the self derives meaning from the expectations associated with these roles. The third dimension, social identity, accounts for people's similarities to others and their group membership. As people may experience a sense of belonging to particular groups (e.g. religion, culture, or friends) they act in accordance with these groups' norms and values, which become an internalised part of the self (Bennett & Sani, 2011).

Identity is negotiated in the interaction between the individual, their interpersonal relationships, their social groups, and the social context in which they find themselves. This is particularly important for how individuals negotiate their ethnic and racial identities. For example, Walsh (2001) studied the degree to which black Britons defined themselves as black in comparison with

African Americans from a previous study. They found that in terms of personal identity, the British sample was less likely to find their skin colour an integral part of their self-concept. In another study, Jones and McEwen (2000) investigated how identity may be negotiated within a context by considering identity experiences. They found that the social and relational identity aspects seemed less important for participants' experience of identity. Only when certain labels were used in specific contexts, did it become central for how they saw themselves. Context, therefore, becomes important to a person's experience of identity, as both the national and direct situation can alter the centrality of ethnicity and race for identity.

Acculturation and identity

Acculturation is defined as the psychological process by which contact between people from different cultures results in changes in the values and norms of people from one or both of those cultures (Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006). It also results in behavioural changes such as language acquisition or engaging in cultural festivals (Adams & Van de Vijver, 2015). In Western contexts (both North American and Western European) the acculturation of immigrant or minority groups is studied. However, depending on the immigration and integration policies of the host nation, the mainstream culture might influence the acculturation strategy adopted by the immigrant group (Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Senécal, 1997).

There are four acculturation strategies people utilise: assimilation, integration, marginalisation, and separation (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2007). Assimilation is the adoption of the new mainstream culture instead of one's heritage culture. Separation is the maintenance of one's heritage culture instead of the mainstream culture. Marginalisation is the disengagement from both the mainstream and heritage cultures; while integration is the combining or adopting of certain aspects of both the heritage and mainstream cultures.

Acculturation and identity are often associated (Ward, 2008). Acculturative strategies are linked with changes in cultural identity as people negotiate their own group's cultural identity in relation to the host group's cultural identity (Berry & Sam, 1997). In a study of second generation Filipino immigrants in the US, Espiritu (1994) examined the identity experiences of Filipinos from a narrative perspective. While the Filipino immigrants self-reported to be well integrated into the US society, their physical characteristics distinguished them quite clearly as a minority. Nonetheless, they maintained their cultural heritage as taught by their parents, while sufficiently adapting to the American culture.

The present study

In the Netherlands, immigrants make up approximately 21% of society. While the majority of non-Western immigrants originate from Turkey and Morocco; there are also Surinamese, Antillean, and Aruban immigrants from South America and the Caribbean. As citizens of former Dutch colonies, these black people are well adjusted to the Dutch context and society. They are educated in Dutch; additionally, Antillean and Arubans have rights to Dutch

citizenship on arrival. While they make up the larger portion of black migrants in the Dutch context, there are also black immigrants that have made their way to the Netherlands from Africa (in this case sub-Saharan Africa). As a group, black people may experience the world differently from other immigrant groups. Our main research objective was to explore the identity-related experiences of black people in the Netherlands and understand how these relate to our theoretical understanding of identity and their acculturation experiences. The study was guided by the following questions: (i) How do the experiences of black people contribute to how they construct their identities; and (ii) How does the construction of these identities relate to their acculturative experiences?

The answers to these questions would provide insight into the challenges and opportunities unique to this group as they construct their identities in the Netherlands and other similar international settings. The findings might be an equally useful contribution to the socio-political discussion on racism towards black people in the Netherlands (Essed, & Hoving, 2014; Weiner, 2014).

Method

Research design

We utilised a constructivist approach (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) to answer our research questions. Within this approach, reality is constructed from interconnected mental and social constructs held by people. The approach was appropriate for this study in which we sought to gain an understanding of how black people in the Netherlands construct their identities.

Procedure and sample

Purposive snowball sampling was used (participants were asked to name other people who might be interested in participating). People were invited in person or through acquaintances to participate. Therefore, participants were a convenience sample of black residents of the Netherlands ($N = 14$; mean age 33.64 (SD = 11.37) (see Table 1)). They included eight female participants. Half of the participants were first generation immigrants[1] but had lived in the country for an average of 25 years. All participants joined on a voluntary basis, were informed about the purpose of the study and provided their consent, in line with APA ethical guidelines. To safeguard anonymity for the participants' responses, data will be reported using pseudonyms. Although 32 participants started the questionnaire, 18 were excluded, either because they only completed the demographic section or because they indicated that they were of Indonesian descent.

Measures

As part of the Inclusive Identity Project, data was collected in Dutch, either using an online or paper-and-pencil format. The participants provided data on their socio-demographics; including their age, gender, religion, country of birth, cultural/ethnic group, highest educational level, and current occupation. They also completed an *Experiences in Dutch Society* questionnaire. This questionnaire consisted of seven open questions (see Table 2 for the English translations). The first set of questions

Table 1. Socio-demographics of final sample

Nr	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Country of birth	Highest education	Current occupation
1	Lia	Female	27	Curacao	Vocation Training	Sales person
2	Therese	Female	44	Curacao	Not given	Teacher
3	Dona	Female	36	Netherlands	Vocational Training	Employee
4	Graciela	Female	44	Netherlands	High School	Journalist
5	Okello	Male	25	Netherlands	University	Teacher
6	Afia	Female	21	Netherlands	High School	Waitress
7	Amadi	Male	31	Guinea	Vocational Training	Entrepreneur
8	Kenley	Male	23	Netherlands	Vocational Training	Student
9	Raymi	Male	23	Curacao	University	Student
10	Suzanna	Female	38	Cape Verde	University	Delivery coordinator
11	Jabulile	Female	21	Netherlands	Vocational Training	Nurse
12	Talib	Male	33	Netherlands	University	Civil Servant
13	Rufino	Male	58	Suriname	University	Prison Warder
14	Amable	Female	47	Suriname	Vocational Training	Prison Warder

Table 2. Open questions included in questionnaire as translated from Dutch

1	Note a few examples of positive experiences you have had as a coloured person in the Netherlands.
2	In which way do these experiences influence who you are?
3	In which way do these experiences influence who you are as a coloured person?
4	Note a few examples of negative experiences you have had as a coloured person in the Netherlands.
5	In which way do these experiences influence who you are?
6	In which way do these experiences influence who you are as a coloured person?
7	Please give in the following any further information you consider as important related to your experiences in the Netherlands, which you have not shared before.

related to the participants' positive experiences as a black person and their identity. Subsequently, three similar questions were given, emphasising negative experiences and their identity. In the final question, participants could share any further information related to their experiences in the Netherlands that they considered important. Participants were also debriefed in a short statement at the end of the questionnaire.

Data analysis
First, the data were translated into English by one author; translations were evaluated by a second author. For data analysis, a hermeneutic phenomenological method was employed (Layerty, 2003). Here data is interpreted considering the specific situation, and results thus disclose a personal meaning of the phenomenon (Annells, 1996). This personal meaning reveals how participants are situated within their world, how they engage with others, and live within a particular context associated with the phenomenon (Diekelmann, Allen, & Tanner, 1989). This method suits the constructivist approach of this study. To interpret the participants' responses in an objective manner, we followed the method of Ricoeur (1976).

Three steps were used to analyse data: the naive understanding, the structural analysis, and then the comprehensive understanding. During the naive understanding, we aimed to get a grasp of the meaning of the text as a whole, by reading responses several times and taking notes of our understanding. In the structural analysis, presented in the results section, we extracted subthemes and related these to each other to develop overarching themes that would provide structure to

the responses. In both steps the coders were required to communicate their understanding of the (sub)themes in order to assess their similarity. During the final step, the comprehensive understanding, the results are re-interpreted based on the established literature and presented in the discussion section.

Strategies to ensure data quality
To ensure the quality of data we employed certain strategies: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004). To meet the credibility criterion, which entails presenting a true picture of the phenomena under scrutiny, we ensured that participants completed the questionnaire voluntarily and at their leisure. Regarding transferability (whether the study could be applied to other contexts) and dependability (explicating the research design), we provide extensive descriptions of the context, the design, and the analysis process to enable others to repeat the study, or to decide on the generalisation of results to other settings.

To warrant confirmability, we took the following measures to ensure that conclusions on answers remain true to participants, and are not based on the subjective judgments of the researchers. As proposed by Ricoeur (1976), these measures are that the coders (the first two authors) initially analysed the data independently at every stage. Secondly, these analyses and coding decisions were discussed in a reflective meeting with the third author. Also, the first two authors kept personal notes on their behaviour, thoughts, and impressions during the data analysis process.

Findings

Our analyses of the experiences of black people in the Netherlands yielded 22 subthemes, subsequently categorised into seven main themes: Acceptance; Inclusion; Stereotypes; Social membership; Person-specific characteristics; Contributors to Separation; and Social Status. The (sub)themes and their definitions are presented in Table 3 and discussed below in order from the most commonly to the least commonly extracted (sub) themes.

Theme 1: Acceptance

The first theme, acceptance, refers to absence of negative experiences living in the Netherlands; getting support or feeling welcomed by mainstream Dutch. It is based upon the perceived attitudes of the mainstream Dutch towards the participants, and the participants' attitudes towards the mainstream Dutch. Acceptance was defined by four subthemes: others' acceptance of me, no acceptance, acceptance of others, and dual acceptance.

Others' acceptance of me

The "others' acceptance of me" subtheme was exemplified by statements such as: "*I feel accepted in the Netherlands*" (Dona; female, 36). Many participants indicated that they did not experience any negative event because of their skin colour, as shown in statements such as: "*I*

never felt discriminated in the Netherlands and neither abroad (holiday)" (Amable; female, 47), or "*No negative experiences*" (Therese; female, 44). These responses seemed to indicate that some participants feel welcome in the Netherlands.

No acceptance

Some participants felt different from the majority, and as if they would never fit in. One woman expressed:

> *Since my youth I always and every day had the feeling that I am different from White Netherlanders. Just as a woman feels that she is different from a man every day. And yes, it is always negative – because it is always about being different* (Graciela; female, 44).

Acceptance of others

Some respondents also mentioned feelings of acceptance towards the mainstream society. For example, Kenley (male, 23) indicated: "*I think the Dutch are really chill, and often they do not realise themselves that they have certain prejudices of people.*"

Dual acceptance

The reciprocal nature of acceptance was highlighted by a participant who observed: "*I think for me it is important*

Table 3. Themes and sub-themes of experiences of black people in the Netherlands

Main theme	Sub-theme	Definition
Acceptance	Others accepting me	Feeling accepted by the white majority, not feeling discriminated against or feeling welcome in the Netherlands either through support or no negative experiences
	No acceptance	Feelings of not fitting in, being different and people treating you differently because of skin colour
	Acceptance of others	Acceptance from the participant towards the majority and trying not to impose an ideal on them
	Dual acceptance	Experience or hope for acceptance that simultaneously comes from the majority and them
Inclusion	Forced integration or adaptation	A difference in personality and behaviour because you either want to prove or disprove certain stereotypes
	Integration	Both keeping own norms and values while also adapting to a new culture. Connecting the old culture with your new one
	Adaptation	Trying to fit in, in order to receive better support or live easier
	Dutch social system	Perceived stance of Dutch social system with their policy towards minorities
Stereotypes	Negative stereotypes	Explicit racism or negative experiences based on negative views about blacks present in the white majority
	Positive stereotypes	Experiences of positive attention or positive preconceptions
	Processing stereotypes	Strategies adopted to understand why there are preconceptions, stereotypes and discrimination
Social membership	Racial membership	Skin being either important or not important to your identity
	Family	Having a close family as proof that you have settled in the Netherlands
	Maintaining cultural heritage	Perceiving cultural heritage as part of the self
Person-specific characteristics	Determination	Being part of a minority making you stronger, more motivated or more independent
	Personality	Personality traits acquired or strengthened by being part of a minority
	Role models	Seeing oneself as capable of promoting diversity or a good example
Contributors to separation	Mistrust of White out-group	Suspicion about white people and institutions to not treat them fairly
	Separation from out-groups	Feelings of being detached from the out-group and focusing more on the in-group
	Separation due to the context	A difference in treatment from whites, influenced by the environment, such as media, living area or exposure to diversity
Social Status	Legal status	Usage of birthplace and nationality to emphasise either fitting in or not
	Socio-economic status	Your material standing in society, including education housing and having a job

that people should be less quick to make judgements about others. Both whites about coloured², and coloured about whites" (Afia; female, 21). This two-way acceptance was expressed by the participants as a form of hope, not actual incidents.

Theme 2: Inclusion
The second theme, inclusion, referred to actions of immigrants aimed at fitting in and adapting to Dutch society, but also the Dutch policies regarding immigration. Inclusion has four subthemes: forced integration or adaptation, integration, adaptation, and the Dutch administration and policy system.

Forced integration or adaptation
In the eyes of some participants, they perceived that they were forced to integrate with mainstream Dutch society. For instance, a participant observed: "*[I] sometimes suffer from imposter syndrome… sometimes I wear a mask to remove prejudices beforehand – for example, behaving 'extra' Dutch*" (Okello; male, 25). Another said, "*Native people often mix up integrating and assimilating*" (Talib; male, 33).

Integration
Some of the participants reported a sense of integration when they had the opportunity to combine their cultural heritage with the culture of mainstream Dutch society to their advantage. For instance, Afia (female, 21) said: "*I get the best of both worlds*". Those participants with a more Dutch cultural background, such as participants from Suriname, reported to integrate more easily: "*Due to my [Dutch culture] norms and values and cultural background I easily find connections in the Dutch Society*" (Rufino; male, 58).

Adaptation
Some participants expressed that they were more inclined to take up values present in their current environment, and discard old or foreign values. This is contrasted to integration, where old and new values are combined. For example, a participant observed: "*Everyone has to adapt to its surroundings and if you can [with any ethnicity whatsoever around you] then you live easier*" (Lia; female, 27). Another observed: "*It is a country in which everything is done for you, if you live along within [assimilate to] the community*" (Kenley; male, 23).

Dutch administration and policy system
The stance of the Dutch administration system, such as welfare state, with their policy towards minorities; can be influential on adopted integration strategies and finding a place in society. Overall, participants seemed to think the Dutch social system is supportive and inclusive. For example, a participant said: "*As an African, I think that human rights are much respected in the Netherlands*" (Amadi; male, 31). Other participants shared this impression of the Dutch administration system: "*I moved back from Curacao to the Netherlands without any help, and with the help of DUO [Dutch Executive service for Education] I could pay for my school*" (Susanna; female, 38).

Theme 3: Stereotypes
Participants reported having experienced being stereotyped both positively and negatively. Here, subthemes include negative stereotypes, positive stereotypes, and participants' stereotype processing.

Negative stereotypes
Most stereotypes mentioned by participants were negative. For example: "*Underestimating abilities, patronising, trying to approach me Street-like (I hate this...)[sic]*" (Okello; male, 25). From Okello's example and those of others it is clear that some Dutch underestimate the capabilities of black people.

Another negative stereotype that participants mentioned was that they feel more under suspicion to engage in criminal behaviour than mainstreamers. "*Police control is more focused on me than on my white Dutch compatriots. In the city centre, there is more attention from Security or Shopkeepers on me*" (Amadi; male, 31).

Explicit racist comments are also mentioned: "*I once got a racial slur from a man. He shouted: 'Go back to your country!'*"(Dona, female, 36).

Positive stereotypes
Certain stereotypes are positive in the sense that participants have the preconception that black people are perceived to be better at certain things or have superior characteristics. "*People often think that you are good, 'cool', and that you are a good dancer, for example*" (Raymi; male, 23). Also, a certain exoticisation seems to take place: "*Interested in your roots. Sometimes positively noticed, often popular with mainstream Dutch women*" (Okello; male, 25).

Processing stereotypes
To deal with these stereotypes and possible discrimination, participants reported developing certain rationales to understand why people have stereotypes about them. One such rationale is prejudice as a human disposition: "*There will always be things people will tribute to skin colour and sometimes for a reason, but to not keep worrying about it, you just have to keep on going*" (Kenley; male, 23) and: "*I know that prejudice occurs everywhere and with everyone – including me*" (Afia; female, 21).

Theme 4: Social membership
The theme social membership deals with topics related to factors that contribute to participants' identity regarding groups to which they belong. These factors are divided into three sub-themes: ethno-cultural membership, family, and maintaining cultural heritage.

Ethno-cultural membership
Some participants perceived their skin colour to be insignificant to their identity: "*I see myself as a human being, the person in the mirror. Moreover, I see no colour in there*" (Afia, female, 21).

On the other hand, Dona (female, 36) reported skin colour to be salient to her identity: "*It made me who I am now!*" Another participant observed that skin colour can also have a negative impact on one's self-concept as "*being black is an ongoing burden*" (Graciela; female, 44).

Family

Belonging to a family that lives in the Netherlands and having a close bond with them seemed to be an important aspect to the identities of the participants: "*I feel at home in the Netherlands, because I have everything here. In particular, because I am lucky to have a big family, with whom I have a good relationship*" (Dona; female, 36). Strong emotional bonds within the family gave participants the feeling that they have a place in a small social group, as Talib (male, 33) writes (when talking about his family): "*[they] have ensured that who you are is of influence.*"

Maintaining cultural heritage

For some participants their roots, their or their family's native country or birthplace, and cultural heritage were important for their identity. Remembering these things contributed to the self-image. "*Always being proud of your roots, no matter where you are*" (Okello, male, 25). This does not refer to their acculturation strategy, but to the importance one ascribes to the effect of one's roots on self-image.

Theme 5: Person-specific characteristics

Participants' person-specific characteristics focused on internal processes related to the experience of being black in the Netherlands under three subthemes: personality, determination, and role models.

Personality

Personality deals with the traits participants claimed to have acquired as a result of being part of a minority. The trait most often mentioned was the openness to experience trait. "*It can be that has an influence on me as a coloured person, that I am more compliant and am more open to any kind of questions/discussions*" (Amadi; male, 31). One other trait mentioned was a general positive disposition to life: "*It is hard to name a few positive stories as a coloured person because I see all of living as positive*" (Talib; male, 33).

Determination

Apart from an influence on personality, there was also an influence regarding motivation and strength. This influence is more behavioural and holds that people felt they were more motivated to persevere towards a goal despite obstacles, being stronger, and more independent. Dona (female, 36) mentioned that motivation can come from acceptance: "*This makes me who I am: an independent, strong woman*". Others perceived that determination could also originate from negative experiences with the mainstream society: "*I know that in this society I have to work harder than a white man to progress*" (Raymi; male, 23).

Role models

Some participants viewed themselves as having a role model identity. For example, Okello (male, 25) said:

> *I always show the positive of the 'immigrant', in this case: highly educated and having mastered perfect Standard Dutch [language skills]. I am also connected to young people who are of foreign origin like me and (un)consciously act as a role model this way.*

Theme 6: Contributors to separation

Some of the participants reported conscious separation from the mainstream Dutch culture. We identified three subthemes to be associated with separation: mistrust of, and separation from Mainstream Dutch society, and the separation due to context.

Mistrust of (Mainstream Dutch) out-group

Discrimination, prejudice, or fear of both led some of the participants to be mistrusting towards mainstream Dutch, compared to other black people. Participants were suspicious about either mainstreamers or Dutch institutions not to treat them as fairly as members of their in-group would: "*It causes me to not trust white people that quickly*" (Afia; female, 21).

Separation from (Mainstream Dutch) out-group

In some instances, participants mentioned that separating themselves from mainstream society was a conscious choice. As Graciela (female, 44) said*: "I try to lighten my burden by not focusing on the white majority of society too much, but more on its Coloured part*" and "*I keep a certain mental and emotional distance in an environment with (primarily) white people*" (Okello; male, 25).

Separation due to context

In the eyes of the participants, there were factors in the environment of the mainstreamer that influenced their treatment towards black people, which led to further separation by the mainstream Dutch. These context influences could be positive: "*I often experienced that whites growing up in a multicultural society often are/ act more 'normal'*" (Afia; female, 21). They could also be negative, such as in: "*I namely see how stereotypes [about black people] are always reinforced in the media*" (Raymi; male, 23).

Theme 7: Social status

Participants reported their social position in the Netherlands. A distinction is made between the subthemes of legal and socio-economic status (SES).

Legal status

Participants spoke about the right to call themselves Dutch in relation to their legal nationality and place of birth: "*I was born with a Dutch nationality in Suriname*" (Amable; female, 47). Others distanced themselves from Dutch society using their legal status: "*According to the [Dutch] Central Agency for Statistics (CBS) I can't do so,*

too, because my mother comes from the wrong part of the kingdom (overseas)" (Graciela; female, 44).

Socio-economic status

Participants also used their SES to express belonging to a certain position and role in Dutch society. As Talib (male, 33) observed: *"Stable living environment, newly-built neighbourhood at a young age, stimulating to go to school."*

Discussion

Our main research objective was to explore the identity-related experiences of black people in the Netherlands and to understand how these relate to our theoretical understanding of identity and their acculturation experiences. From examining identity experiences of black people, we found seven themes in the participants' responses. On the one hand, acceptance appeared to be the most frequently mentioned theme. To us, it seems that black people experience acceptance as both directed towards them and coming from themselves. On the other hand this reciprocal acceptance was not always present; which supports Weiner's (2014) belief that the Dutch society is not as "colour-blind" as many claim it is.

Inclusion was another theme derived. Two of the acculturation strategies were mentioned in our sample (namely integration and adaptation). As was also suggested by Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, and Vedder (2001), the way in which people perceive acculturation is influenced by both the mainstream society and support system.

Third, participants reported to be stereotyped by mainstream Dutch society. This theme confirms that Dutch whites hold stereotypes of black people, and thus supports other scholars in their claims on "Dutch racism" (Essed & Hoving, 2014; Weiner, 2014). On the other hand, positive stereotypes were also present, but these were not experienced as such when they were perceived to conflict with the participants' view of themselves or made them feel objectified. This is in line with evidence from an American study on positive stereotypes, which showed that in individualistic cultures especially (such as the Netherlands), positive stereotypes may result in negative responses, since people feel that they are not evaluated on their personal qualities but on generalisations (Siy & Cheryan, 2013).

The following two themes are related to the tri-dimensional model of identity (Adams et al., 2015). Social membership appeared important to identity experiences in terms of their relational (e.g. family) and social identities (e.g. racial membership and cultural heritage). Furthermore, in the theme person-specific characteristics, personal identity aspects were revealed (e.g. personality and motivation).

Additionally, the sixth theme, separation (contributors) revealed that some participants separated themselves from mainstream Dutch society. This might be explained by the Rejection-Identification Model (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999), which predicts an increase in in-group identification when people perceive a higher level of discrimination from society. Another contributor to separation that was apparent in our results is mistrust. This

mistrust towards whites might be explained by the positive distinctiveness model (Oakes & Turner, 1980). Positive distinctiveness is the tendency of individuals to strive for a positive comparison between the in-group compared to the out-group. Black people may be distrusting of the mainstreamers, which might have negative consequences for them in terms of integration; however, they can see their group (and by extension, themselves) as more trustworthy than the other.

Finally, our analysis revealed social status to bear importance on black people's identity experiences, more specifically legal, and SES. This finding is of a similar bearing as that of Phinney, Romero, Nava, and Huang (2001), who found a small positive effect of SES on ethnic identity in Mexican adolescents living in the US.

Implications for theory and research

We found support for the tri-dimensional model in our exploration (Adams et al., 2015); since participants used a mixture of personal, relational, and social aspects in descriptions of their experiences. It was evident that personal aspects of identity were central for how individuals presented their experiences (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Individuals experienced a change in these personal aspects in terms of their openness and strength. In the process of acculturation one might take on new values (Berry, 1997). When one behaves in accordance with new values, they might conflict with old values from the heritage culture that people regard as integral to the self. As suggested by the Identity Control Theory, people might adapt their self-concept to match their behaviour (Burke, 2006). Consequently, a wider range of values and norms might lead one to see oneself as more open.

Aspects of the relational dimension of identity were mainly centred on finding a place in society. The negotiation of such a place was partly dependent on social roles (presented under social membership and social status); such as being a mother, a student, having a stable job, people's place on the social ladder, or their status as an immigrant. The roles people negotiate are important as they have been legitimised by others in the society. They give the individual the feeling that they are a member of society by contributing to it (e.g. having a job) and place them in the social order (e.g. socioeconomic status) (Beijers, 2015).

The social dimension of identity was the most commonly dealt with in participants' responses. This could be mainly because social identity aspects become most salient when people are faced with or make contact with out-group members (Wagner & Ward, 1993). Racial and ethnic identity aspects seemed particularly important. Some participants seemed to find the colour of their skin more influential on their lives and identities compared to others. Demo and Hughes (1990), in a study on African Americans, suggest that the strength of one's racial identity and personal regard towards black people is influenced by upbringing, interracial contact in pre-adulthood, and social status in adulthood. In our study, ethnic and racial identity played an important role for how individuals remained true to their cultural origins and negotiated their integration into Dutch society.

It is also within the social dimension of identity that we gain a better understanding of the acculturation strategies (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2007) used by black people as they negotiate their identities within Dutch society. The main contributor to why people chose to separate themselves from Dutch society are that (a) prejudice seemed to leave people with a sense that they had no control over the level of acceptance towards them, (b) both the mistrust of Dutch mainstream society towards them as well as their own mistrust of Dutch mainstream society and institutions, and (c) their own negative view of the out-group resulted in their often misinterpreting neutral situations as negative. As mentioned above this might contribute to a higher identification with their racial group than one might expect based on Rejection-Identification Model (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999).

It seemed evident that the desire to integrate into Dutch society was accompanied by the need of black people to remain connected to their heritage culture. However, the Dutch were perceived to favour assimilation, while the black group favoured integration. These findings are in line with those of Arends-Tóth and Van de Vijver (2003), who found that when it comes to acculturation strategies, Dutch adults preferred assimilation above integration; at least when it comes to Turkish immigrants, indicating that similar preferences within the mainstream group apply to blacks. When there is an overlap of values and norms, it was easier to connect with out-groups and to feel accepted. Openness coming from the majority group towards other cultures and the willingness to adapt policies to support minorities has an impact on the acculturation strategy adopted (Berry, 1997). The Dutch immigration policies are, for example, already experienced as being fair towards immigrants and minorities. However, by reducing discrimination in institutions like the police force and the labour market, integration would be supported.

Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research
Firstly, the sample in this study is small and many participants provided very brief (or no) answers that were often not contextualised. Thus, we would not generalise the results to all black people in the Netherlands and suggest future studies to investigate a bigger sample with more extensive data. Secondly, participants subscribed to various religions, but only one participant explicitly mentioned religion within the qualitative interview. We speculate that immigrant identities may be influenced by religion followership and future studies should examine the influence of religion on identities in the context of Dutch culture.

Also, there were great discrepancies between the levels of perceived acceptance felt across participants. The aspects that contributed towards the black person's acceptance in Dutch society require further exploration. One aspect could be the difference in heritage nationality. Participants from Suriname mentioned that their values and language were close to those of the mainstream Dutch society, allowing them to integrate more easily.

Finally, when asked to provide any additional aspects which they thought may be substantial for their experience within the Dutch context, many mentioned the influence of media. Participants expressed that there was a tendency to represent minorities more negatively in the Dutch media than majority groups (ter Wal, d'Haenens, & Koeman, 2005). There is a need to understand how their experience of who they are as black people, is influenced by how they are represented in the media.

Conclusion
This study's findings indicated that experiences of black people in the Netherlands differed greatly in terms of perceived acceptance, and cultural maintenance and adaptation. In general, experiences of black people seemed relatively positive. However, in the light of recent events and the results of this study it is apparent that mainstream Dutch society is not free of prejudice towards black people. On the other hand, participants' views on mainstream Dutch society also played a role in this process. Possible changes in trust from both groups toward the respective other, and suspicion towards the police could be detrimental to (future) integration attempts. Both integration and identity formation depend on how mainstream and minority groups interact with one another, and negotiate the context in which group membership is defined. While we may not gain a holistic view of the complexity that informs identity of black people in the Netherlands in general; the snapshot this study provides goes a long way in helping our understanding of some aspects to consider when studying black identity in the Netherlands.

Endnotes
1   Among all Dutch immigrants the ratio between first and second generation is about 50% for each subgroup; our sample conforms to the national distribution among the two generations (CBS, 2015). More detailed comparisons between our sample and the whole population of Dutch immigrants cannot be drawn as the sample is too small.
2   The term Coloured is language used by the authors and by participants to indicate participants not being White in the Dutch context.

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