

Unique encounters in liberated Limburg

A research on the interactions between African American soldiers and Dutch women in the liberation period, 1944-1945

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Abstract

This research focuses on the encounters between African American soldiers and Dutch women in the liberation period in the province Limburg in the Netherlands. By exploring a wide variety of primary sources, this thesis identified an absence in government discussions about the presence of African American soldiers in the Netherlands. This absence attributed to the disremembering of the presence of these soldiers in the aftermath of the war. Additionally, this thesis argues that the claim that *all* liberators were treated or regarded equally in the Netherlands can be criticised. This research uses the concept of the *Carnivalesque*, as introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin to explain what circumstances facilitated the contacts between African American soldiers and Dutch women, and what made them possible for a particular time period. The issues of ‘race relations,’ ‘inter-racial’ encounters and gender relationships are approached through the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis and placed within the framework of transfer history. After giving an overview of the context in which these associations took place, a close reading analysis of Limburg newspapers demonstrates that patronising language and the discursive construction of African American soldiers as ‘other’ were present in newspaper articles on African American soldiers. Therefore, this thesis indicates that present racial images about black people in the Netherlands affected the treatment of and interactions with African American soldiers in the liberated south in 1944-1945. However, this research concludes that these racial images did not have a profound impact on the moral panic that erupted almost simultaneously with the arrival of the American army in Limburg. Instead, this moral panic was directed to foreign soldiers in general. The last chapter examines the legacies of these encounters, with a special focus on the children that were born to African American soldiers and Dutch women. This thesis shows that in contrast to other European countries, no government or public debates took place about the existence and upbringing of these children.



Figure 1: Map of the Netherlands in early 1945. Image: Studio Christa Jesse. © Ingrid de Zwarte. The image was used with permission of Ingrid de Zwarte.



Figure 2: Detailed map of South Limburg, Frank van den Hoven, ‘Op ontdekkingstocht door Zuid-Limburg’, *Filatop*, no.3 Limburg (version 2019) <https://chorusgen.nl/plaatsen.html>, [accessed 19 June 2019].

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Abbreviations

- CDA Critical Discourse Analysis
- COOGENT Commissie tot Ontspanning en Ontwikkeling van Geallieerde en Nederlandse troepen
- ETO European Theater of Operations
- FIOM Federatie van Instellingen voor de Ongehuwde Moeder en haar Kind
- JAG Judge Advocate General
- KDC Katholiek Documentatie Centrum, Nijmegen
- KKK Ku Klux Klan
- KNIL Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger
- MG Militair Gezag
- MP Military Police
- NA Nationaal Archief, The Hague
- NIOD Instituut voor Oorlogs-, Holocaust en Genocide Studies, Amsterdam
- NSB Nationaal Socialistische Beweging
- QMSC Quarter Masters Service Company
- RHCL Regionaal Historisch Centrum Limburg, Maastricht
- SHAEF Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force
- SHCL Sociaal Historisch Centrum Limburg, Maastricht
- SS Schutzstaffel

Explanation of terminology

This thesis uses the words African American or Afro-American as, in my opinion, these are accurate and describing terms. These words indicate the African origin and heritage of someone, while at the same time recognising someone's American-ness.¹ The words 'negro' and 'coloured' are stated in between quotation marks to indicate that these words are no longer used today, however, in the 1940s these were generally acceptable terms in the United States to describe African Americans. When these words do appear, it is to provide a text or quote as original as possible. Moreover, cultural differences exist in the use of certain words. While 'mixed-race' is a common term to describe someone's heritage in the United States, the Dutch equivalent 'half-bloed' ('half-blood'), is in my opinion, less objective and has a negative undertone as it suggests that someone is only partially something.² Even more, this thesis employs the word 'black' to describe people of African American and African descent although I do want to note that 'black' is not an accurately describing word, as the people who are indicated with this term are people who have a wide range of skin-complexions, which actually never is black. In the same way, people who are described as 'white' have a broad range of skin-complexions which is never truly white. Furthermore, the boundaries of who belongs to the labels 'black' and 'white' have changed throughout history and are thus human constructs that tend to reflect power relations. The ideas of 'blackness' and 'whiteness' moreover assume that a racial order exists, in which there is also a racial 'other'.³ This idea of 'us' and 'them' is vital in this thesis to understand the dynamics of and reactions to the encounters between African American soldiers and Dutch women.

The words used to describe the children of African American soldiers in Europe vary per country. In the aftermath of the war, the term 'brown babies' became acceptable in Great Britain and Germany. The African-American press popularised this word in the late 1940s. Other more denigrating terms like 'half-caste' or '*Mischlingskinder*' were also commonly used in Great Britain and Germany. In current publications on these children in Germany, the name

¹ For an elaborated explanation of the word 'African American' see, Neil A. Wynn, *The African American Experience during World War II* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010) p.viii.

² For an elaboration on the word 'half-blood' and its historical connotation see, Diennek Hondius, *Gemengde Huwelijken, Gemengde Gevoelens: Aanvaarding en Ontwijking van Etnisch en Religieus Verschil Sinds 1945*, (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 1999) p.25.

³ Stephen Middleton, David R. Roediger and Donald M. Shaffer (ed.), *The Construction of Whiteness: An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Race Formation and the Meaning of a White Identity* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2016) p.4.

‘Afro-German’ is regularly employed. The Dutch equivalent of this term would be ‘Afro-Dutch,’ however, this word has not been used hitherto and in my opinion, it should be the descendants of African American soldiers themselves to decide whether this is a correct describing term for them, or if this word fails to account for what they identify with. Lastly, personally, I do not agree with ‘race’ as a biological category, but this thesis uses the concept as a political and cultural category constructed by humans to classify people. In other words, ‘race’ and racial differences are socially constructed, but a social and political reality.⁴ The word ‘race’ is therefore used within quotation marks to indicate that this word has a disputed history and is used in different countries with various purposes.

⁴ Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) p.11.

Introduction

After the liberation of Maastricht on September 14 1944, the Wetzels family from the village Heer, near Maastricht, had four African American soldiers billeted in their home.⁵ Friendships between the mother of the family, - a widow - her four daughters, and the soldiers quickly developed. Lenie, the youngest of the four Wetzels daughters fell in love with one of the soldiers, called Edward Moody. The two started dating, and when Lenie found out she was pregnant in January 1945, a marriage was arranged. After the arrangement was made, the American military authorities transferred Moody. Although the two continued to write after the birth of their son Ed Moody in September 1945, the two never met each other again.⁶

Stories of encounters and relationships between African American soldiers and Dutch women have long remained overlooked in the historiography of the Second World War in the Netherlands. Both the experiences of the African American soldiers and the Dutch women who associated with these soldiers have long remained outside the scope of scholarly publications. Further, personal testimonies of women who dated with African American soldiers are scarce, just like sources that feature the perspective of African American soldiers on this topic. Nevertheless, reactions on these particular interactions can be recovered by analysing government and church correspondence, newspaper articles and ego documents. Therefore, this thesis focuses on the responses of local communities, the Dutch media, and Dutch institutions towards these interactions to investigate in what context these encounters took place and how they were perceived. The consensual encounters between women and African American GIs are at the centre of this thesis, although the third chapter also deals with sexual violence and involuntary encounters.⁷ By focusing on these particular associations, this thesis sheds light on the gendered and racial hierarchies in the liberation period in the Netherlands.

The central theme of this thesis are the associations between African American soldiers and Dutch women in the liberation period (September 1944 until May 1945). Analysing the reaction and treatment of the Dutch population, government institutions and the church towards African American soldiers enables the examination of the responses towards these relationships. The main research question, therefore, is: 'In what ways did Dutch people react

⁵ Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders: Een Verzwegen Geschiedenis* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2017) p.117.

⁶ For an elaborate story on the parents of Ed Moody and his childhood see Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*, pp.117-124.

⁷ G.I. is the word used for American soldiers in the U.S. Army. The abbreviation stands for 'Government Issue.'

to the presence of African Americans as part of the American army and the relationships that followed between African American soldiers and Dutch women in the liberation period?

Unique encounters: a context

When the American army crossed the Atlantic Ocean to join the Allied forces to fight against Nazism, they brought a segregated army with them. The European countries where the American army would arrive were largely unfamiliar with legal racial segregation, although the Nazi's had installed segregationist practices for Jews in the countries that were under German occupation. In addition to this, most European countries at that time – with the exception of Nazi Germany – were not accustomed to a 'colour bar.'⁸ Consequently, the arrival and presence of the segregated American army caused heated debates among American and European governments. For example, in Great Britain, debates about the fraternisation of African American soldiers with British women erupted even prior to the arrival of the American army in January 1942.⁹ A question that arose was if Great Britain should adapt to and assist in constructing segregated facilities. Another question regarded the issue of 'inter-racial' dating. Should African American soldiers be allowed to date British women, while this was illegal in most American states at that time?¹⁰ A similar and even more pressing issue concerned the question of how to treat the children born out these intimate contacts. What was their civil status, and who was ultimately responsible for them?

The American army that freed the south of the Netherlands entered the country with two separated armies; a white army, and an army consisting of African Americans. The American Army placed black and white soldiers in distinct units, and these 'two armies' ate, slept and recreated in distinct facilities. At the outbreak of the Second World War, racial segregation was present in all aspects of daily life in the South of the United States.¹¹ This thesis investigates how the Dutch government and the Limburg population responded to this segregated army and if discussions similar to the ones in Great Britain also took place in the Netherlands.

Racism and racial violence in the Second World War are often linked to Nazi Germany and the Nazi ideology. The racial violence and discriminatory practices of the 'good guys' such

⁸ The term 'colour bar' refers to a social and economic separation between groups on the basis of skin colour. This separation can be constituted in legal terms, as was the case in for example the United States (Jim Crow Laws) or South-Africa (Apartheid), or it can be implicit social discrimination. Guido Bolaffi, *Dictionary of Race, Ethnicity and Culture* (London: SAGE Publications, 2003) p.40.

⁹ Graham Smith, *When Jim Crow Met John Bull: Black American Soldiers in World II Britain* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987). Especially chapter 3: 'Attitudes and Anxieties: Jim Crow and the British Government' focuses on the debates in Britain prior to the arrival of the American army.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.194-195.

¹¹ Walter Dean Myers and Bill Miles, *The Harlem Hellfighters: When Pride Met Courage* (Amistad, 2014) p.25.

as the American Army are often disregarded because of their part as liberators in the war. Nevertheless, the American army transferred distinct racial ideas and practices overseas from America. With the arrival of the American Army, the Limburg population came (often for the first time) in contact with non-white people. Before the war, the sparse black population in the Netherlands was primarily concentrated in western cities.¹² Experiences and encounters between Dutch people and different ‘races’ did take place outside the Netherlands in the overseas colonies in the context of colonial rule. This thesis examines to what extent the Limburg population was curious or cautious towards the non-white newcomers as part of the American Army. Moreover, this thesis analyses if stereotypes about black people were confirmed or abandoned by the presence of the black GIs.

In September this year, it has been 75 years since the 30th Infantry Division of the American army crossed the Belgian border into the Netherlands and freed the first villages in the southern province Limburg.¹³ Even though it took until May 1945 to liberate the northern part of the country, large parts of the south of the Netherlands were already liberated at the end of 1944. After more than four years of occupation, the Dutch population welcomed the American liberators with open arms. To celebrate the end of the German occupation, all kinds of festivities were organised and weeks of celebration began. During the liberation period, American soldiers and Dutch people came into contact on the streets, on dance evenings, but also within the sphere of the home, because American soldiers were occasionally billeted in the houses of Dutch civilians. The consequences of intimate relationships between Allied soldiers – specifically white American, Canadian or British soldiers – and Dutch women have been researched. Books about the so called ‘liberation children’ such as *Trees Krijgt een Canadees* (2012) and *Zij Die Achterbleven* (2005) focused on the intimate relationships that developed during the liberation between Allied soldiers and Dutch women and the children that were born from these encounters.¹⁴ However, scholarly research has long overlooked the friendships and intimate relationships between African American soldiers and Dutch women that took place during the liberation period. Even more, the presence of African American soldiers as part of the American Army in the Netherlands during the Second World War was until recently completely disregarded.

¹² Allison Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World: The Evolution of Racial Imagery in a Modern Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) p.xv.

¹³ On 12 September 1944, the first Dutch village Mesch was liberated by the First American Army.

¹⁴ Bonnie Okkema, *Trees krijgt een Canadees: Bevrijdingskinderen in Nederland* (Zutphen: Uitgeverij Walburg Pers, 2012); Olga Rains, Lloyd Rains and Rob de Ridder, *Zij die Achterbleven: Bevrijdingskinderen op zoek naar hun Canadese Vaders* (Huizen: Pica, 2005).

Although historians have written meticulously about the Second World War in the Netherlands and the liberation by the Allied troops, the presence of African Americans in the Netherlands, as part of the American army has long been regarded irrelevant in publications about the liberation. For example, Dutch historian Loe de Jong does not discuss the participation of African American soldiers in his twelve-part work on the Second World War in the Netherlands.¹⁵ Further, Dutch Air Force veteran John Gouverne does not mention racial segregation in the American army once in his book *U.S. Army in Zuid-Limburg 1944-1945*. Even the presence of African American soldiers within the American army is omitted from the entire publication.¹⁶ This negligence illustrates a broader tendency in history writing to disregard the experiences of minorities, such as African American GIs, but also the experiences women during the war.

Cees van Kouwen was the first to publish on the presence of African Americans soldiers in the Netherlands in 2000. In a small pamphlet, Van Kouwen focused primarily on African American soldiers in the area of Nijmegen during Operation Market Garden.¹⁷ In the aftermath of Van Kouwen's publication, only one book has appeared in the Netherlands that dealt with the interactions between African American soldiers and Dutch women. That is to say, Mieke Kirkels published in 2017 the first monograph on the legacies of African American soldiers in the Netherlands. In her book *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*, Kirkels described the stories of eleven children who were fathered by African American soldiers. Overall, Kirkels concluded that the African American soldiers were just as welcome as their white peers and that the Dutch population largely objected American-style segregation. The narrative Kirkels outlined was one of a 'hidden' history of the children of African American soldiers. Although Kirkels made a significant contribution to the knowledge about African American soldiers in the Netherlands, her narrative failed to account for an apparent discrepancy in her work. Specifically, how the welcoming attitude to *all* liberators related to the distant attitude towards the offspring of African American soldiers. Moreover, an explanation for why the presence of African American soldiers in the liberation period was erased from the historiography of the war, even though around 900,000 African American soldiers served in Europe in the war, remains partially unanswered in Kirkels publication.¹⁸ Furthermore, Kirkels' book was predominantly

¹⁵ Loe de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1969-1991).

¹⁶ John Gouverne, *US Army in Zuid-Limburg, 1944-1945* (Maarheeze: Gouverne, 2008).

¹⁷ C.J.P van Kouwen, *Vergeeten Bevrijders? De 39^e Q.M. Truck CO., 666^e Q.M. Truck CO. en 3103^e Q.M. Service CO. – Van 20 September tot 15 November 1944. Afro-Amerikaanse Militairen in Nijmegen en Omgeving tijdens Operatie Market Garden* (Nijmegen: Van Kouwen, 2000).

¹⁸ Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*, p.18.

based on oral testimonies of children of African American soldiers and their relatives and not on archival research. For this reason, this thesis aims to focus on archival sources to investigate what can be retrieved from the archives on this particular topic.

In 2014, Kirkels already focused on the contribution of African American soldiers at the military cemetery in Margraten. In *Van Alabama naar Margraten*, Kirkels described the experiences of African American gravedigger Jefferson Wiggins as part of the 960th Quartermaster Service Company (QMSC). Although Kirkels made explanatory steps in the research on African American soldiers in the Netherlands during the Second World War, the response of the Dutch government towards the presence of African American soldiers in the Netherlands remains under-researched. In other countries, such as Great Britain, France and Germany, the impact of the arrival and presence of African American soldiers, and the reactions of both the government and the population has been researched more in-depth.¹⁹ According to Kirkels and Van Kouwen, the Dutch population generally disapproved of the American-style discrimination and segregationist policies against African Americans.²⁰ These two authors portray the Netherlands as a tolerant country that equally welcomed every liberator. This representation underestimates the existence of ideas about ‘race’ and racial hierarchies in the Netherlands. Further, prejudices and stereotypes about black people did exist in the Netherlands when the American army arrived in 1944.

By examining the case study of the presence of African American soldiers as part of the American army during the liberation period, this research aims to explain the treatment of African American soldiers in the Netherlands in the Second World War and the relation to their remembrance in the post-war period. A study on the presence of these soldiers could reveal what impact the attendance of African American soldiers had for the perception and prejudices about non-white people. Studying their presence in the Netherlands, and in Limburg

¹⁹ Books and articles about the presence of African American troops in Great Britain and Ireland: Graham Smith, *When Jim Crow Met John Bull: Black American Soldiers in World II Britain* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987); David Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-1945* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), especially chapter 14, ‘Black and White’; Sonya O. Rose, ‘Sex, Citizenship, and the Nation in World War II Britain’, *The American Historical Review* 103.4 (October 1998) pp. 1147-1176; Simon Topping, “‘The Dusky Doughboys’ Interactions between African American Soldiers and the Population of Northern Ireland during the Second World War”, *Journal of American Studies* 47.4 (2013) pp.1131–1154; Lucy Bland, ‘Defying Racial Prejudice: Second World War Relationships between British Women and Black GIs and the Raising of their Offspring’, *Women’s History Review* (2017) pp.1-16. Books about the presence of African American soldiers in Germany; Maria Hohn, *GIs and Fräuleins: The German-American Encounters in the 1950s in Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Sabine Lee, ‘A Forgotten Legacy of the Second World War: GI Children in Post-war Britain and Germany’, *Contemporary European History* 20.2 (May 2011) pp.157-181; Heide Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Post-war Germany and America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

²⁰ Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*, p.63; Van Kouwen, *Vergeten Bevrijders*, pp.15-16.

specifically, exposes normative behaviour towards outsiders and especially non-white outsiders. Were racial prejudices about black people refuted because of the earlier contact with African Americans, or did the attendance of these soldiers reinforce certain stereotypes about black people? Thus, by focussing on the case study of African American soldiers in Limburg, this thesis aims to provide an insight into how racial prejudices developed in the liberation period. Lastly, attitudes towards African American soldiers could help to explain the historical roots of present-day Dutch racism.

War and warfare are often seen as masculine activities while the activities of women in wartime are regularly described as being at the ‘home front.’²¹ Although recent developments in scholarship have questioned this view on gender in wars, according to the editors of *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, even new waves of scholars agree that ‘in war as well as in peace there were sharp differences in the activities, responses, and status of women and men.’²² Gender relations are crucial to understand the social dynamics in a community. For this reason, the existing discourses around manliness and femininity in Limburg in the 1940s are vital to examine the encounters between African American soldiers and Dutch women in the liberation period. Sources on the intimate relationships between Dutch women and African American soldiers are rare. Therefore, this thesis researches what perceptions and reactions were projected on these relationships. Who determined what acceptable behaviour was and what kind relationships were allowed? For example, the liberation by the Allied armies gave Dutch women the opportunity to interact and engage in relationships that crossed ethnic and national boundaries. Nonetheless, existing authorities, such as the Catholic Church had a firm grip on the existing ideals surrounding acceptable behaviour.²³ In other words, in order to comprehend the encounters between African American soldiers and Dutch women, the implications of the liberation for the gender relations in Limburg are vital to understand.

Another focus point of this thesis is the representation of ‘the Other.’ Were the African Americans soldiers seen as ‘others’ and if so, why? It is possible that Dutch people saw people with a darker complexion altogether as a ‘different race’ without internal differences? Altogether, this thesis argues that although there is evidence that indicates that African American liberators were welcomed and friendships between Dutch people and African American GIs developed, there were also considerable feelings of antipathy towards the African

²¹ Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz (ed.), *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) p.3.

²² Ibid.

²³ Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*, p.93.

American soldiers and American GIs in general due to tensions between Allied soldiers and local men.

The practice of racism

African American soldiers in the American army had to encounter discriminatory and racist practices on a daily basis, from within and outside the army. The study on the treatment of these soldiers in the Netherlands by various institutions and communities can therefore be placed in the broader phenomenon of institutional racism. Although this thesis is not preoccupied with the individual actions of people and if they qualify as ‘racist’ or not, this research does examine patterns and interactions in which visible or invisible racist structures can be exposed. Attitudes towards outsiders or foreigners coincide with the present power relations in a certain era or culture. Consequently, this thesis sees racism as a factor present in the interactions between Dutch people and African American soldiers. The ways in which this racism manifested itself and took form in daily practices is part of the research.

The construction of the idea of different ‘races’ has been studied meticulously.²⁴ According to British sociologist Robert Miles, even though the idea of ‘race’ already appeared in the seventeenth century, the word ‘racism’ itself is relatively new, even though the practice is not.²⁵ As an example, he showed that there is no reference to the word in the *Oxford English Dictionary* of 1910.²⁶ This thesis focuses mainly on the ways in which racist practices are carried out in daily life, but will also examine institutional racism; racism that is kept in place by systematic policies, laws or practices on the basis of ethnicity, sex or age.²⁷ Institutional racism was first defined in the book *Black Power* (1968) by Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton. In their monograph, they explained the difference between individual racism and institutional racism as ‘the first [individual racism] consists of overt acts by individuals... The second type is less overt, far more subtle, less identifiable in terms of specific individuals committing the acts. But it is no less destructive of human life. The second type [institutional racism], originates in the operation of established and respected forces in the society, and thus receives far less public condemnation than the first type.’²⁸ This first definition of institutional

²⁴ A good overview of the historiography on racism and studies on ‘race’ can be found in Ellis Cashmore and James Jennings (ed.), *Racism: Essential Readings* (London: SAGE Publications, 2001) or Martin Bulmer and John Solomos (ed.), *Racism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

²⁵ Robert Miles, *Racism after ‘Race Relations’* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p.28.

²⁶ Robert Miles, ‘Racism as a Concept’, in Bulmer and Solomos (ed.), *Racism*, pp.344-354, p.344.

²⁷ Colin Wight, ‘The Agent-Structure Problem and Institutional Racism’, *Political Studies* 51 (2003), pp.706-721, p.711.

²⁸ Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, 1968) p.2.

racism emerged in the late 1960s and coincided with the race riots and the Civil rights movement in the United States.²⁹ Hence, this definition aimed to describe specifically American institutional racism and should be viewed in its own historical context.

A current, much more widely accepted, definition of institutional racism was initially defined in the Macpherson Report (1999) in Great Britain. This report was materialised as an inquiry into how the police treated the murder of a black teenager in London, Stephen Lawrence. The report stated that institutional racism is:

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.³⁰

This definition is widely accepted but also gained a fair amount of criticism as in this view institutional racism is solely regarded as an accumulation of individual views, and thus neglects the significance and impact institutional policies can have on people.

Moreover, a danger of using the concept 'institutional racism' is that the personal actor behind the implementation of discriminatory practices is ignored.³¹ As racism in this concept is allocated to an institution and not to a living person the question of 'who is responsible' becomes difficult.³² It makes it appear as if racist policies come out of the institution itself, while this is not the case. Decisions to implement, devise and execute racist acts and policies are made by people. In other words, the thoughts and actions of people determine the policies of institutions. Institutions are human creations and have no autonomy. On the other hand, to wholly dismiss institutions as being capable of racism is incorrect because there are racist legislations and policies implemented and executed by institutions. Therefore, by not overlooking the personal actors behind institutional policies, but neither by seeing individuals as solely capable of racist actions, this thesis aims to investigate the tension between individual racism and institutional racism.

²⁹ Miles, 'Racism as a Concept', in Bulmer and Solomos, *Racism*, p.352.

³⁰ John Solomos, 'Social Research and the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry,' *Sociological Research Online* 4.1 (1999) pp.1-5, p.2.

³¹ Martin Reissigl and Ruth Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001) p.8.

³² *Ibid.*

Methodology: Critical Discourse Analysis

In order to examine expressions of racism and to analyse discriminatory practices, this thesis uses *Critical Discourse Analysis* (henceforward, CDA) as a methodology. CDA is designed to analyse texts. Its primary goal is to reveal the hidden power structures behind language and to expose political and ideological sentiments in texts.³³ The method of CDA can thus help to reveal dominant discourses in a written text. For this reason, this method could help to divulge hierarchal structures in texts about African American soldiers and reveal how the words that were used to describe these soldiers structured the encounters between Dutch people and African American soldiers in the liberation period. CDA is however not a demarcated method, and many scholars have defined the method in their own way.³⁴ Consequently, multiple approaches can be identified as CDA. Nonetheless, the bottom line of this method is that it regards language as a means of social construction. As ‘language both *shapes* and *is shaped* by society.’³⁵ Therefore, this approach aims to expose language that appears to be neutral on the surface, but which may be ideological. Since CDA sees language as a social practice, the context of the language to express certain beliefs is crucial. Lastly, power is a crucial notion in this approach as the use of certain words establishes relations of inequality and domination.

In order to answer the main research question, this thesis examines newspapers articles from the *Delpher* website and uses CDA as a tool to analyse these written texts sources. The primary focus is on newspapers from Limburg. In the newspaper articles is especially focused on which words are used to describe African American soldiers, which metaphors concur with writings on African American GIs, and the context in which is written about these soldiers. An absence of coverage on these soldiers could also produce interesting questions. Were these soldiers regarded important enough to write about? If so, what language is used to write about the African American soldiers, their encounters with Dutch people, Dutch women in specific? A limitation of newspaper articles is that they only shed light on how was written about these soldiers and hence fails to account for how the local population actually thought about or acted towards these soldiers. Accordingly, by also incorporating ego documents and personal testimonies, this thesis integrates the opinion of civilians of Limburg. In addition to this,

³³ Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Malcom Coulthard (ed.), *Text and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) p.ix.

³⁴ Several influential publications on Critical Discourse Analysis are, Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Longman, 1995); Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Malcolm Coulthard (ed.), *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996); Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (Los Angeles and London: SAGE publications 2009).

³⁵ David Machin and Andrea Mayr, *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis: A multimodal Introduction* (Cornwall: SAGE Publications, 2012) p.2.

government documents such as war cabinet minutes, correspondence between military personnel and politicians and church records are used in order to obtain an insight into the Dutch practices surround 'race.' Thus, in this thesis, CDA is used to reveal social hierarchies and power relations in written texts on African American soldiers by analysing official government documents, media output of Limburg newspapers and local diaries.

Theoretical framework: Transfer history

The theoretical framework in which the interactions between African American soldiers and Dutch women are placed is *Transfer history*. Transfer history is, 'the history of transfers between nations.'³⁶ These transfers involve especially how knowledge and ideas cross national boundaries. Transfer history is as a form of comparative history. However, instead of taking nation-states as the starting point of the analysis, transfer history focuses on ideas and researches how certain kinds of knowledge travel from one country to another.³⁷ This thesis uses transfer history to research how ideas about African American soldiers travelled with the American army to the Netherlands, but also how perceptions of these soldiers moved through Europe. In addition to this, this thesis examines if the inherently racist practices of the American army transferred to the Netherlands and how the Dutch population responded to these practices. While ego documents of African American soldiers from the Second World War are rare, this research attempts to incorporate the perspective of African American soldiers by researching other existing sources such as newspaper articles and oral testimonies.

The objective of transfer history is to transcend the boundaries of the nation because a nation is not a sealed, isolated unit. Objects, people and ideas cross national boundaries. Therefore, transfer history is employed in this thesis to demonstrate how racial prejudices, discriminatory ideas and practices of exclusion crossed the Atlantic and travelled within Europe. Although this thesis focuses on a geographical area (Limburg), which is demarcated by borders of the Dutch nation, it tries to emphasise how in the liberation period, people, ideas and knowledge traversed these borders. For example, the first chapter concentrates on the tension between the moving American army through Europe and the 'static' Limburg province where the army arrived. The American troops that came through and to Limburg had often crossed various countries, and the soldiers had encountered numerous people and cultures. On the other hand, the people from Limburg were all of a sudden confronted with American

³⁶ Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor (ed.), *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2004) p.xiii.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.39.

soldiers and American customs. For this reason, focusing on exchanges and encounters between the American soldiers and the Limburg population could reveal how this affected each group and what ideas and prejudices were adopted or rejected.

Research questions and relevance

As previously stated, the main research question is: ‘In what ways did Dutch people react to the presence of African Americans as part of the American army and the relationships that followed between African American soldiers and Dutch women in the liberation period?’ To answer this question, several sub-questions are posed. The first chapter examines the background of the liberation and explains the unique circumstances surrounding the liberation in the southern part of the Netherlands. It is argued that the liberation in Limburg can be characterised as a *Carnavalesque* period that enabled relationships between African American soldiers and Dutch women which were unthinkable prior to the liberation. The liberation of Limburg is taken as the central focus because the American army was only stationed in this province for a longer period of time.

After this, the second chapter analyses racial images in the Netherlands. This chapter examines the role of racial prejudices and stereotypes about black people in general, and African American soldiers, in particular, by analysing Limburg newspapers and diaries. This chapter argues that ‘race’ did matter in Limburg in the liberation period, and that existing stereotypes about black people were maintained and even reinforced by the presence of African American soldiers. The third chapter goes into detail in the moral panic that erupted with the arrival of the American army in Limburg and traces the origins of this panic. This chapter moreover uses the theory of Danish historian Anette Warring, in which the female body is depicted as a combat zone in war, to explain the emergence of this panic.³⁸ In the second and third chapter, the analysis is for the most part based on newspaper articles and the ways in which was written about these soldiers and their contacts with Dutch women. After this, the last chapter deals with multiple legacies of the liberation of which the children of African American soldiers were one. The gap in historiography surrounding these children and their childhood can clarify how interactions between African American soldiers and Dutch women were regarded after the war. Unfortunately, not many written sources about these children or the women who gave birth to these children exist. Therefore, as an alternative, this chapter adopts a more top-down approach in which is focused on governmental and administrative

³⁸ Anette Warring, ‘Intimate and Sexual Relations’, in Robert Gildea, Olivier Wievorka, Anette Warring (ed.), *Surviving Hitler and Mussolini: Daily Life in Occupied Europe* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006) pp.88-128.

records. Nevertheless, by bringing together different types of sources, it is possible to shed light on the legacies of the interactions between African American soldiers and Dutch women.

This thesis sets out to make a further contribution to research on the experience of African American troops during the war by examining the case study of Limburg. In addition to this, this thesis provides new insights into the post-war normative discourses on issues such as blackness, illegitimacy, multi-racial society and kinship in the Netherlands. Lastly, by focussing especially on African American soldiers, this study aims to present a more inclusive image of the liberation in the Netherlands. In sum, the purposes of this research are twofold: first, to offer a thorough analysis of the ways in which the Netherlands reacted to the presence of a segregated army, and in particular the African American soldiers who were part of this army, and second, to research how was reacted to the encounters between African Americans and Dutch women.

Chapter 1 – THE LIBERATION

Every year on the 5th of May, the liberation of the Netherlands is celebrated. In the collective memory of Dutch people, 5 May 1945 was the day the Allied forces liberated the Dutch from the German occupier, regained their sovereignty as a country, and the Second World War ended. The history of the Dutch liberation is however much more complicated as the entire liberation of the Netherlands took nine months altogether. Even though parts of the southern provinces in the Netherlands were liberated by the end of 1944, other southern cities and the northern provinces remained under German occupation until May 1945. The first Dutch village that was liberated by the 30th Infantry Division of the First American Army on 12 September 1944 was Mesch, a small village right on the border with Belgium.³⁹ Continuing up north, the Allied troops encountered problems at the rivers the Waal and the Rijn in the province Gelderland. To conquer the bridges over these rivers Operation Market Garden was launched on 17 September 1944.⁴⁰ However, this operation did not succeed and the northern part remained under German control. The failure of Market Garden caused a delay for the advance of the Allied troops, and as a consequence, various American troops resided in Zuid-Limburg for several months to await further operations.

With the failing of Market Garden, the northern part of the Netherlands went into the winter which is known under the name of the *Hongerwinter* (Hungerwinter) as an estimated 20,000 people, mainly in the big western cities died of hunger.⁴¹ Moreover, the failing of Market Garden created an uncertain situation in which some parts of the southern province Limburg were still under German control, while other parts of Limburg were liberated. These months of uncertainty and active combat in the province brought forward a situation in limbo. Wedged between liberated, occupied and fighting zones, the last months of 1944 were anything but clear for the local Limburg population. This situation of uncertainty caused great distress and worries about when the rest of the Netherlands would be liberated. However, this period of uncertainty also produced new possibilities for people that would have been impossible prior to the liberation.

This chapter focuses on the causes and consequences of this time of uncertainty and analyses the exceptional circumstances during the liberation from which the interactions

³⁹ Mieke Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*, p.23.

⁴⁰ Eric Slot, *De Vergeten Geschiedenis van Nederland in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2007) p.317.

⁴¹ Ingrid de Zwarte, *De Hongerwinter* (Amsterdam: Prometheus-Bert Bakker, 2019) pp.74-75.

between African American soldiers and Dutch women could arise. It is vital to look at broader phenomena in society around the time of the liberation to understand the context in which these encounters took place. In this chapter is argued that a *Carnavalesque* period occurred in Limburg from September 1944 until May 1945. An up-side down worldview characterised this period in which new possibilities arose and pre-liberation social relationships and norms were challenged. The period of the liberation in Limburg was therefore a unique time in Dutch society in which social relations that were unthinkable before the liberation became temporarily possible. Thus, the liberation in Limburg brought momentary changes in the discourses on sexuality, gender and ‘race,’ since this period brought possibilities to both Dutch civilians and Allied soldiers.⁴²

To explain the causes and consequences of these momentary changes in discourses, the first part of this chapter provides a background to the situation around the liberation in the Netherlands. After this, the power structures between the Allied military forces and the Dutch authorities are further explained to show how the inequality of power in the liberation period caused social relationships to transform temporarily. Finally, the last part of this chapter explores what kind of possibilities arose for local Dutch people and arriving American soldiers in the Limburg province and how relationships between Dutch women and African American soldiers became possible.

Historiography

Historians have written extensively about the Allied military operations in the Netherlands.⁴³ After Loe de Jong’s first part of his famous twelve volume part series *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* until 1995, an estimated 5,000 publications appeared on the Second World War in the Netherlands.⁴⁴ About 1,000 of these publications centred around the liberation or the aftermath of the liberation.⁴⁵ In De Jong’s work, the central theme was the history of Dutch society during the war. Nevertheless, many publications have primarily focused on the military history of the Dutch liberation. In addition to military

⁴² Ismee Tames, *About Thresholds: Liminality and the Experience of Resistance*, Inaugural lecture given by Ismee Tames, marking her professorship in the Faculty of Humanities at Utrecht University, 17 May 2016, pp.1-45, p.6.

https://www.niod.nl/sites/niod.nl/files/Oratie%20Ismee%20Tames%20Over%20grenzen.pdf?_ga=2.222327771.1951555786.1560768844-67398627.1559744136 (accessed 18 June 2019).

⁴³ D.C.L. Schoonoord, *Het Circus Kruls: Het Militair Gezag in Nederland 1944-1946* (Amsterdam: NIOD, 2011) p.13.

⁴⁴ Christ Klep en Ben Schoemaker, *De Bevrijding van Nederland 1944-1945: Oorlog op de Flank* (‘s-Gravenhage: SDU Uitgeverij Koninginnegracht, 1995) p.11.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

histories, the enduring stream of publications on the Second World War in the Netherlands have long been dominated by moralistic writing on who was on the ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ side during the war.⁴⁶ Dutch historian Hans Blom called in 1983 for a ban on this dichotomous ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ writing and for a shift away from making judgements about people’s behaviour during the war.⁴⁷ Instead, Blom called for a focus on the complexity of the war.⁴⁸ Another approach put forward by Dutch historian Chris van der Heijden in 2001, to deal with this dichotomous classification, focused on the ‘grey’ areas of the war. According to Van der Heijden it was too simplistic to divide people into the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ side of the war.⁴⁹ According to Ismee Tames in her Inaugural Lecture about the experience of resistance neither approach is able ‘to relinquish the focus on a final verdict.’⁵⁰ For this reason, Tames introduced the concept of ‘liminality’, an intermediate area in which societal transformations take place.⁵¹ By placing ‘the experience of transgression and transformation’ central in research about the war, Tames argues that the complexity and ambivalence of reality can be exposed.⁵² The moralistic idea of ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ during the war is vital in order to understand the post-war attitude towards women who dated African American soldiers. Although this research is not preoccupied with the judgement of who behaved ‘good’ or ‘bad’ in their encounters with others. This thesis does examine how in the liberation period the boundaries of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ behaviour were demarcated and by whom.

In the Netherlands, the war still has a personal connotation for many people. This can be noticed in the many publications dedicated to describe the war or the liberation in a certain town or area in the Netherlands. Local histories about the Second World War still speak to people’s imagination and therefore, some topics from the war remain sensitive to write about. Even though much has been written on the Allied military actions in the Netherlands, almost no studies exist on the impact of the Allied presence for everyday life in the Netherlands. Nonetheless, the presence of thousands of foreign soldiers consecutively should not remain unnoticed as their attendance brought forward changes in the social hierarchy and affected many aspects of daily life. With the stationing of the U.S. Army in Limburg, for the first time in history, an actual significant presence of Blacks existed in the southern Dutch society. As

⁴⁶ Bob Moore, ‘The War that won’t go Away’ in *BMNG – Low Countries Historical Review* 128.2 (2013) pp.73-80, p.74.

⁴⁷ J.C.H Blom, *In de Ban van Goed en Fout? Geschiedschrijving over de Bezettingstijd in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Boom, 1983).

⁴⁸ Tames, *About Thresholds: Liminality and the Experience of Resistance*, p.7.

⁴⁹ Chris van der Heijden, *Grijs Verleden: Nederland en de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam: Contact, 2001).

⁵⁰ Tames, *About Thresholds: Liminality and the Experience of Resistance*, p.7

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.6

⁵² *Ibid.*

the second chapter will demonstrate further, the Dutch attitudes and social relationships towards non-white people in the Netherlands were historically marked by the physical absence of black people. The sudden influx of African American soldiers as part of the American army thus brought a temporary change in the demography of Limburg and thus forced people to think about ‘race’ and ‘race relations’ in ways that was not done before.

Power structures during the liberation

Since the Dutch government fled the Netherlands at the beginning of the German occupation in May 1940 and remained in exile in Great Britain until the end of the war, the occupied Netherlands had a civil administration supervised by National Socialists, and after a couple of weeks a German military administration.⁵³ In the upcoming four years, the Austrian Arthur Seyss-Inquart was appointed by Hitler as the *Reichskommissar* in the Netherlands. During the war, the Dutch administration had little control over what happened in the Netherlands. However, with the arrival of the American army in Great Britain in the beginning of 1942, and the preparations for an Allied invasion into the mainland of Europe, the Dutch government in exile wanted to create an institution that would act as a temporary administrator when the Netherlands would be liberated. Therefore, in 1943, the Dutch government created the institution the *Militair Gezag* (MG).⁵⁴ The idea was that as long as the Dutch government was in exile, the MG would be its representative in the liberated areas of the Netherlands. This temporary institution would function as the representative of the government after the liberation. The intended purposes of the MG were to preserve order amongst the Dutch population in direct aftermath of the liberation and to help to facilitate the war effort of the Allied forces in the Netherlands.⁵⁵ Ideally, the MG could take all necessary measures that were needed from a military point of view.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the MG became subordinate to the Allied commanders and the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) under the command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower.⁵⁷ The SHAEF was the highest commanding power of the Allied troops in Northern Europe from late 1943 until the end of the Second World War. After the liberation, the MG became largely responsible for the functioning of public services, the issue of evacuees and starting with the purging of the civil servants, while the

⁵³ Peter Romijn, *Burgemeesters in Oorlogstijd: Besturen onder Duitse Bezetting* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2006) pp.130-131.

⁵⁴ Schoonoord, *Het Circus Kruls*, p.10.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.11.

⁵⁶ De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, part 2, p.191

⁵⁷ Klep and Schoenmaker, *De Bevrijding van Nederland 1944-1945*, p.79.

military decisions were in the hands of the SHAEF.⁵⁸

Although these task divisions seem rather clear, the situation in which the Allied authorities arrived in the Netherlands can be characterised as a period of power vacuum, since the central German authorities had fled Limburg to the northern part of the Netherlands or to Germany, and the MG was not in the Netherlands when the U.S. Army arrived. Moreover, the role of the MG was ought to be temporarily however, the liberation took way longer than expected. For this reason, the tasks of the MG kept expanding as the Dutch government remained in exile until June 1945.⁵⁹

According to Dutch historian Dirk Schoonoord, in his research on the tasks and functioning of the MG, it was hard for the Dutch government to accept that Allied military officials would obtain the highest authoritative power in the Netherlands during the liberation. The Dutch government wished to retain their sovereignty without giving all decisive and administrative power to the SHAEF forces.⁶⁰ The MG was thus also created to partly secure the Dutch sovereignty while the government was not on Dutch soil. Nevertheless, the creation of the MG was not prohibitive to the SHAEF mission in the Netherlands as the American military had earlier used the tactic of indirect governance in the liberated areas. The Civil Affairs Agreement for Liberated Territories is one example of such an agreement for indirect governance. This agreement was put forward by the British War Office to make a distinction between countries which would be entered by the Allied armies as liberators and countries which would be entered as conquerors.⁶¹ In June 1944, the Dutch government in exile in London had signed the Civil Affairs Agreement that established the military control of the SHAEF over the Netherlands.⁶² Even more, the agreement gave the Allied troops full access to available resources, such as coal and food within the Netherlands. This agreement also expected to facilitate maximum cooperation from Dutch civilians and hoped to prevent interference in any military operations in the Netherlands by for example resistance fighters. As the Dutch government supported the agreement, the SHAEF commanders thought that the local population would be in favour of the Allied military actions. Thus, temporary military governance was the primary objection of the Civil Affairs Agreement.⁶³ The MG could therefore interfere in everything aside from the military missions of the Allied forces.

⁵⁸ Schoonoord, *Het Circus Kruls*, pp.9-10.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.85.

⁶¹ Harry Lewis Coles Jr., 'Civil Affairs Agreements for Liberated Territories', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 267 (January 1950) pp. 131-139, p.131.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.134.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.131.

In reality, from September 1944 onwards, when the American army arrived in the Netherlands, an unclear situation developed in which the Dutch daily administration was non-existent. The German officials and NSB administrators had fled the south prior to the arrival of the U.S. Army and caused an absence of local authority. Accordingly, the power structures in the south were thoroughly disturbed and unclear in the months after the liberation.⁶⁴ Although the SHAEF partly filled this power vacuum, the MG and the Dutch government – still remaining in exile - were unclear about who had the central authority in the Netherlands. One of the consequences of this power vacuum was that the Allied soldiers enjoyed respect, not only as liberators but also as temporary rulers.

African American soldiers in the Netherlands

Taking part in overseas military service was for many American soldiers the first time they went abroad. Even more, the Allied invasion into Europe provided encounters for the African American GIs that were unthinkable back in the United States. In the southern states, the ‘Separate but equal’ Jim Crow laws enforced racial segregation in all practices of daily life.⁶⁵ White and black people were separated and interaction between these two groups was ought to be minimalised. Interactions between African American men and white women were deemed inappropriate. For many African American soldiers, the absence of racial segregation in Europe was astonishing. A striking example is stated in Kirkels’ book. In the war diary of photographer Chris Verbunt from Landgraaf the following quote appeared.

It is not possible what I have seen. White girls going on photographs with coloured soldiers! If I write that in a letter home, people will not believe me. They will say to me that I am a liar; and that I cannot tell a bigger lie, because this is absurd to them.⁶⁶

The quote Verbunt wrote down came from an African American driver who saw other African American soldiers get their picture taken in Landgraaf during the war. The African American soldier asked Verbunt if he could have a copy of the photo to show to his friends and family at home in America what happened in Europe: white and black people taking their photographs together and getting along, something impossible in the southern part of the United States in

⁶⁴ Martin Bossenbroek, *De Meelstreep: Terugkeer en Opvang na de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2001) p.98.

⁶⁵ The Fourteenth Amendment addresses citizenship and the rights of citizens. A famous sentence from the Amendment is ‘equal protection of the laws.’ The Amendment was adopted in 1868.

⁶⁶ Cited from the diary of Chris Verbunt in *Heemkundige Vereniging Landgraaf, OCGL*, 1044, pp.104-105. Cited in Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*, p.35.

the 1940s. Moreover, the idea of African Americans associating with white women was unthinkable in the United States. Hence, both white and black American GIs were astonished by the ease with which European women befriended the African American soldiers. For the African American soldiers, especially the ones who came from the South of the United States, their overseas service in Europe was the first time they experienced how societal relations between black and white could differ from the United States. The possibility to associate and date white women was therefore a sign of racial tolerance and freedom for the African American soldiers.

Although the American customs of racial segregation travelled with the army overseas, African American soldiers learnt that the local population in European countries were largely unaccustomed with segregation policies. In letters sent to African American newspapers such as *The Pittsburgh Courier*, African American GIs wrote about what it was like to be in Europe without Jim Crow and structural discrimination.⁶⁷ In these letters, the tolerant and colour-blind aspects of Europe were emphasised to depict the discrepancy between the United States and Europe. In the same way, almost all testimonies from African American soldiers about the tolerant atmosphere in the Netherlands during the liberation are positive.⁶⁸ In these accounts, an image of the Netherlands as a tolerant country is affirmed by the African American soldiers. Even though these accounts will undoubtedly entail legitimate accounts, African American soldiers also promoted European countries as tolerant and colour-blind for their own gain. By portraying Europe as a continent without colour prejudices, they wanted to show people in America that it was possible to have a society in which everyone was equal by law and had equal democratic rights. Compared to the United States, the Netherlands was indubitably a tolerant country because no legal segregation or legal discrimination existed on the basis of skin colour. This does not mean however that racism and discrimination did not exist in the Netherlands. American racism and Dutch racism are two forms of racism which are almost impossible to compare due to historical differences in social relationships between black and white people in society. Nevertheless, both are forms of racism and have their own racist practices. The second chapter will go further into detail how racial images and ideas about black people were rooted in Dutch society, and how these imageries affected the treatment of African American soldiers.

After Operation Market Garden, the southern part of the Limburg province became an

⁶⁷ Phillip McGuire, *Taps for a Jim Crow Army: Letters of African-American Soldiers in WWII* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993) pp.272-287.

⁶⁸ Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*, pp.42-44.

important storage base for American troops and supplies. Furthermore, Limburg became the base for the American army from where operations into Germany were carried out.⁶⁹ Between October 1944 and February 1945, around 250,000 to 275,000 American soldiers were stationed in Limburg.⁷⁰ It is unknown how many of these soldiers were African Americans but since this region became a vital supply area there must have been a considerable number of supporting and service troops.⁷¹

From the 900,000 African Americans who were employed in the U.S. Army, the majority worked in the Quarter Master Service Company (QMSC).⁷² These were supporting companies responsible for the transportation of goods, and other auxiliary tasks such as cooking, cleaning and driving.⁷³ In addition to service troops, several fighting units consisting of African Americans were active in Europe in the Second World War.⁷⁴ The segregation in the American army which placed white and black soldiers in distinct units was in place until 1948, when President Harry Truman issued Executive Order 9981 which prohibited discrimination on the basis of 'race', colour, religion or national origin in the United States Army.⁷⁵

Knowing that the American army aimed to fill 10 percent of the army with African American soldiers, it can be estimated that circa 25,000 to 27,000 African American GIs could have been present in the Netherlands.⁷⁶ Altogether, the American army was stationed for almost a year in Limburg. American soldiers were housed in schools, hotels and factories. These facilities were however not sufficient to house all of the soldiers, and many were billeted in the houses of civilians. Hence, with the consecutive presence of the American army in Limburg, it was almost impossible to ignore the presence of the African American liberators and not interact with them in daily life.⁷⁷

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.32.

⁷⁰ Gouverne, *The US army in Zuid-Limburg 1944-1945*, p.68

⁷¹ The African American troops that were stationed in Dutch cities and can be found in scholarly literature: In Nijmegen, the 397th QM Truck Company, 666th QM Truck Company, and 3013th Quartermaster Service Company. In Venlo, the 784th Tank Battalion helped to liberate the city. In Maastricht, the 923rd Regiment Aviation Engineers helped to build an airport. In Margraten, the 960th QMSC and 3136th QMSC were employed at Margraten cemetery. In the 761st Tank Battalion. In Hoensbroek, the 28th Q.M. Truck Company and 432th Q.M. Truck Company. In Landgraaf, the 648th QM Truck Company.

⁷² Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte bevrijders*, pp.40-41.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.36.

⁷⁴ The Tuskegee Airmen are a well-known example. Further, the 784th Tank battalion was an all-black Tank battalion.

⁷⁵ Neil A. Wynn, *The Afro American and the Second World War* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1976) p.119

⁷⁶ Smith, *When Jim Crow Met John Bull*, p.21.

⁷⁷ Marian Omtzigt, 'Historisch Onderzoek naar de Omgang van Vrouwen met Geallieerde Militairen in het Bevrijde zuiden, September 1944 – Mei 1945', *FIOM* (1995) p.1.

Moving armies: the 761st Tank Battalion

This last section examines the movement and route of an African American unit that travelled through Europe. The aspect of a moving army is vital for this research since it exemplifies the crossing of borders and represents the discrepancy between the ‘static’ Limburg and the movement of the Allied armies through Europe. Moreover, the aspect of a moving army fits within the framework of transfer history as these units transcended national borders and conveyed their ideas and knowledge by interacting with European citizens. Thus, by focussing on an African American battalion, the experiences and encounters of the soldiers in these units can be traced.

The 761st Tank Battalion was the first African-American tank unit in American history. The battalion was placed under the command of General George S. Patton in the Third American Army. The 761st Tank Battalion became famous for their 183 days on the front in the ETO operation.⁷⁸ Created by the War Department in 1942, the battalion was the first African American unit to fight alongside white American troops, and one of few black American tank battalions in the Second World War.⁷⁹ In September 1944, the 761st arrived in Avonmouth, Great Britain. In *Brothers in Arms*, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar combined a military history of the unit with anecdotes about veterans of the 761st. Although the experiences of the soldiers are present in the book, the military accomplishments of the battalion are the focus of the monograph. Furthermore, personal anecdotes about how townspeople reacted to the tank battalion are outlined but read as side notes instead of a narrative that supports the story. For example, according to Abdul-Jabbar, ‘clashes between white and black American soldiers had been frequent in Great Britain’ since many white American soldiers resented the contact between British women and African American soldiers and tried to impose (southern) American social mores in Great Britain.⁸⁰ Abdul-Jabbar additionally described how

the men of the 761st found the citizens of Wimborne [Great-Britain] and the surrounding town wary of them at first. Over time, they got along well, dancing and drinking in the local pubs. The soldiers of the 761st discovered that the townspeople were not prejudiced themselves, but that some of the white American soldiers stationed nearby had warned the British townspeople that they were violent and untrustworthy.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Anthony Walton, *Brothers in Arms: The Epic Story of the 761st Tank Battalion, WWII's Forgotten Heroes* (New York, Paw Prints Baker & Taylor 2004) p.6.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.17.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.73.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.74.

The prejudices and wariness of British people is thus attributed to white American soldiers who discourage British people from associating with these soldiers. This particular example illustrates how American discriminatory practices transferred the Atlantic Ocean with the American army.

After being stationed in Great Britain for almost a month, in October 1944 the 761st arrived at the beaches of Normandy, France. They moved east into France and participated in battles in the province of Lorraine. After partaking in the Battle of the Bulge in the winter of 1944-1945, both Baker and Charlie company of the 761st got replaced from the front lines.⁸² In March 1945, Charlie company of the 761st received orders to move to Mheer in Limburg to give training to future tank personnel.⁸³ During their time in Mheer, two soldiers of the unit: William McBurney and Leonard Smith were billeted with townspeople, who according to Kareem Abdul-Jabbar ‘treated them with genuine warmth, welcoming them simply as Americans – honouring them, moreover, as liberators from the German occupation forces.’⁸⁴ After only one week in Mheer, Charlie company was requested back into France to participate in an attack on Germany. Shortly before arriving in Mheer, the unit had been stationed in Jabeek, near Sittard. Unfortunately, the experiences of the soldiers with the local Limburg population are described in only one sentence in the book. Conducting oral history interviews in Mheer and Jabeek could reveal the reaction of the Dutch population towards this tank battalion of African American soldiers. Nonetheless, following the journey of a battalion like the 761st reveals what kind of positive and negative experiences the African American soldiers had in the European countries they traversed. Further, the journey of a battalion exemplifies that when the American army entered Limburg, these soldiers already had previous experiences and encounters in Europe which had formed their expectations and ideas about European people. The last section of this chapter argues that altogether, the absence of the Dutch government, the unclear responsibilities of the MG, the supreme authority of the SHAEF, the ‘sudden’ liberation of the southern part of the Netherlands and the previous experiences and encounters of American soldiers in Europe brought forward a *Carnavalesque* period in Limburg.

The liberation as a Carnavalesque period

Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin introduced a period of Carnival or a Carnavalesque period

⁸² *Ibid.*, For a detailed description of the military operations of the 761st in the ETO see pp.71-243.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.211.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

in his monograph *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* in 1963. According to Bakhtin, a carnivalesque period is characterised by free interaction between people and interaction between groups who normally would not meet.⁸⁵ The carnivalesque eliminates barriers among people which are usually in place by social hierarchies. In a period of carnival, the central authority and social hierarchy are disrupted and social roles change. Moreover, in times of carnival, behaviour which would not be accepted in a different social context can become accepted to a certain extent. A carnival is thus a period in which the impossible becomes permitted and earlier conventions are broken down. Therefore, in times of carnival unacceptable behaviour can be performed without the consequences that were correlated with this unacceptable behaviour before the carnivalesque time.⁸⁶ Hence, the concept of 'liminality' used by Ismee Tames as an in-between area in which neither the laws and the mores of one side, nor the laws and mores of the other side apply, can be used to explain the occurrence of a carnivalesque period.⁸⁷ Lastly, Bakhtin argues that festivity is an important notion in the carnivalesque as life is lived as festive in this period.⁸⁸

The period September 1944 until May 1945 in southern Limburg could be defined as a carnivalesque period for three reasons. Firstly, because the central authority was unclear and disrupted in this period. Secondly, the 'normal' social hierarchy was disturbed since the SHAEF acquired military control and the dominant culture, which had been the four-year German rule, was broken down. Thirdly, since a tremendous feeling of festivity occurred with the arrival of the First American Army, the carnivalesque as defined by Bakhtin, is applicable to the liberation of southern Limburg. Overall, due to large influx and stationing of American soldiers, the absence of central Dutch authority and the commotion around the liberation, social and gender roles rapidly altered and the social hierarchies of everyday life became fluid. This could mean that usually suppressed voices, such as women and non-whites, benefited from the carnival period as they could act outside the normal social hierarchy in the Netherlands. In the carnivalesque period, authorities could be contested, partially as a result of the power vacuum. The encounters between the African American soldiers and Dutch women in a sense thus took place in an extraordinary situation and not an orderly setting. The carnivalesque period can furthermore be seen as a unique form of transfer history because with the encounters between Dutch people and African American soldiers, knowledge and ideas did not only cross national

⁸⁵ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, edited and translated by Caryl Emerson and Wayne C. Booth, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) pp.122-123.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.129-130.

⁸⁷ Tames, *About Thresholds: Liminality and the Experience of Resistance*, p.6.

⁸⁸ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.167.

boundaries but also boundaries of ‘race’ and gender.

The challenging of authority went hand in hand with the outburst of festivities that occurred in direct aftermath of the liberation. Young and old celebrated the arrival of the American troops and re-joined freedom. In almost every Dutch city photographs exist of people celebrating the arrival of the Allied armies by dancing in the streets, climbing on tanks and posing with the liberators. In order to celebrate the end of the occupation, liberation parties, dance evening and parades were organised. In Limburg, everyone was curious for the newly arrived Americans, who entered the cities with state-of-the-art tanks and in modern army uniforms. The American GIs additionally quickly came to be known for their generosity in handing out their rations of cigarettes and candy.⁸⁹

Nevertheless, the arrival of the foreign armies and the outburst of festivities were less appreciated by the Catholic Church who expected that their presumed norms and morals in regard to morality would be contested. The Catholic Church was a strong authority in the southern provinces of the Netherlands, and the morality of the Dutch citizens was high on their agenda. Furthermore, the church wanted to preserve the barriers of the existing social hierarchies and keep its moral authority. As the third chapter will demonstrate further, the earlier conventions – which were to a certain extent broken down in the carnivalesque liberation period – were countered by the Catholic Church by attempts to reinstate the moral responsibility of Dutch people and in specific, Dutch women. Simultaneously with the liberation of Limburg, a moral panic erupted in government institutions, religious institutions and the with local population. The third chapter will elaborate further on what measurements were taken as a result of this moral panic, and how these measurements impacted the relationship between Dutch people and Allied soldiers.

Many liberation parties were organised under the supervision of the Catholic Church or the MG. Even more, Catholic institutions hoped to preserve the boundaries of acceptable behaviour by providing for other activities than parties, such as sports events.⁹⁰ Further, Catholic institutions hoped in accordance with the MG to install measurement that would keep people under a certain age away from cinemas and cafes. In addition to measurements from religious institutions, the MG also called for an evening-clock to ‘protect’ the Dutch youth.⁹¹ By installing an evening-clock for people between certain ages or unmarried people, the MG

⁸⁹ Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*, p.25.

⁹⁰ KDC, Archief 1485, Landelijk Centrum van de Katholieke Actie. Document 27 August 1946 ‘Over de wensen van de Kerken t.a.v. de burgerlijke overheid ten aanzien van de zedenverwildering.’

⁹¹ National Archives, The Hague (henceforward NL-HaNA), Archief 2.13.25, inv.nr. 1191. Archief van het Militair Gezag (1943-1946). Letter from A.F.H. Blaauw to the MG on 12 January 1945.

hoped to reduce the number of people attending liberation festivities.⁹²

The ‘exuberance’ of the liberation can be recovered from the number of illegitimate children that doubled in the southern part of the Netherlands between 1945 and 1946.⁹³ According to *Federatie van Instellingen voor de Ongehuwde Moeder en haar Kind* (FIOM), established in 1930, the Allied presence was a significant contributing factor to this increase. Overall in the Netherlands in 1944, 20,5 percent of the babies who were born were illegitimate, and this percentage rose to 34,9 percent in 1945.⁹⁴ Further, the ‘exuberance’ of the liberation parties can be found in many accounts, of which nursery homes are one. A report from the Catholic institution *Vereeniging ter bescherming van meisjes* in Roermond provides an example of the increase in the birth of babies in Limburg after the liberation. This institution assisted in the birth of 220 babies in 1946, as opposed to 99 births in 1944. From this ‘baby boom’ in Roermond in 1946, 40 percent of the fathers of these babies were Americans.⁹⁵ The presence of the American GIs thus left behind a lasting memory in the form of their offspring. The phrase, ‘Het Noorden lijdt, het Zuiden vrijt’ became a well-known expression during the winter of ‘44/’45, when the south celebrated their liberation and the north was still under German occupation.⁹⁶ After the liberation of the northern part of the Netherlands, in May 1945, the churches and municipalities were cautious about liberation parties, and they implemented measures to control the festivities.⁹⁷ The ‘immoral’ self-indulgence in the south was not to be repeated in the northern part of the Netherlands and institutions tried to prevent a similar ‘baby-boom’ from happening.

By providing eyewitness accounts from Limburg civilians, white American soldiers and African American soldiers, Kirkels demonstrated that the liberation parties were not accessible to everyone since access was denied to African American soldiers.⁹⁸ In addition to the parties, the dancing halls and cinemas were also for white soldiers only.⁹⁹ However, not only African

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Omtzigt, ‘Historisch Onderzoek naar de Omgang van Vrouwen met Geallieerde Militairen in het Bevrijde zuiden, September 1944 – Mei 1945’, p.7.

⁹⁴ Omtzigt, p.5. In 1944, 220,000 children were born in the Netherlands of whom 4500 were illegitimate. This equals 20,5 percent. In 1946, 284,000 children were born in the Netherlands of whom 7300 were illegitimate. This equals 34,9 percent. For more statistics on the births of children during the war and the liberation period see article Omtzigt.

⁹⁵ SHCL, Archief EAN_1258, inv.nr. 9. Archief R.K. vereeniging ter bescherming van meisjes, jaarverslag 1955.

⁹⁶ Freely translated the quote would be ‘The south makes loves and the north is still suffering.’ Quoted from Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*, p.24.

⁹⁷ For example, municipalities would not give permission to organise a dance evening. Moreover, there would be restrictions on the sale of alcohol after certain hours.

⁹⁸ Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*, p.28.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Americans were banned from the parties, but access was also often denied to local Dutch men. Although no written sources, such as government documents or newspaper articles could be found which indicated that the liberation parties were only accessible for white American soldiers, from eyewitness accounts it became clear that liberation parties in Limburg were completely segregated.¹⁰⁰ As a result, Kirkels described how the African American soldiers organised their own parties and visited ‘illegal’ parties, mostly in the neighbourhoods of the lower social classes where the military officials had no supervision.¹⁰¹ The latter would indicate that the women these soldiers met were often from a lower social-economic class. If this was the case, there is a big change that children born to African American soldiers and Dutch women grew up in certain social-economic classes which could affect their upbringing. Still, it is hard to recollect information about these liberation parties since they were not advertised in local newspapers or pamphlets. In order to gain more information about these parties, oral history interviews with eyewitnesses should be conducted. However, these particular liberation parties remain out the scope of this research since interviews and oral testimonies are not a component of this thesis.

Possibilities

In the uncertain period that followed the liberation of the southern part of the Netherlands, relationships between Allied soldiers and Dutch women developed with the elements of uncertainty and unpredictability. The situation during the liberation was volatile and people were in a daze. As described earlier, the carnivalesque period altered social hierarchies and brought new possibilities for people. For instance, a large percentage of the local Limburg men had disappeared from the area since the young male population had been forced to work in Germany in the *Arbeitseinsatz*. The men who refused to enter forced labour often had to go into hiding to avoid repercussions.¹⁰² Consequently, in many villages in Limburg the local young male population was gone which altered the social relationships in the communities. This absence of a large part of the male population brought new (economic) responsibilities for women but also new opportunities.¹⁰³ When the American army arrived, local women directed their attention to these newly arrived young men. Nonetheless, intimate relationships with foreign soldiers challenged the accepted norms surrounding gender, sexuality and ‘race.’ The

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.29.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Warring, ‘Intimate and Sexual Relations’, p.89.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

liberation period thus produced a discontinuity with the old norms and social relationships. Even more, the festivity in the liberation period created a temporal release of the strict Catholic sexual morals.¹⁰⁴

Nevertheless, restrictions were installed to control the ‘exuberance’ of the liberation period. Historian Frans Roebroeks demonstrated that the MG established, together with the clergy from Maastricht, a committee called *Commissie tot Ontspanning en Ontwikkeling van Geallieerde en Nederlandse Troepen* (COOGENT). The committee was established to regulate the festivities and to provide surveillance on dance evenings.¹⁰⁵ One of the places where liberation activities were not under the watchful eyes of the MG or the Catholic Church, were the Rest & Recuperation centres for the American soldiers. In order to boost the morale of the soldiers and to give them rest after weeks at the front, several Leave Centres were established in southern Limburg.¹⁰⁶ These centres attracted not only soldiers but also local women who wanted to have a good time and hang out with the soldiers. Local men were often denied access to these centres and this brought the MG in a difficult position. On the one hand, the MG needed to keep the Allied authorities satisfied by providing enough facilities and entertainment possibilities for the Allied soldiers. While on the other hand, the MG needed to keep the Dutch population satisfied and deal with any friction that erupted due to the Allied presence.

Conclusion

This first chapter provided an overview of several historiographic debates surrounding the liberation in the Netherlands and sketched a context in which the encounters between African American soldiers and Dutch women could take place. The exceptionality of the liberation in the Netherlands in comparison to other European countries is that the liberation took place in two stages. These stages lead to the liberation of the Limburg by predominantly American troops, while the northern part of the Netherlands was mainly liberated by British, Canadian and Polish troops. The subordinate position of Dutch authorities in the liberation period could explain why the racist practices of the U.S. Army were not condemned openly. Although the carnivalesque period during the liberation brought forward momentary changes in the discourses around gender, sexuality and ‘race’, the Catholic Church installed measurements in an attempt to regulate social behaviour. Nevertheless, the liberation of the southern part of the

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Frans Roebroeks, ‘Strijdbare Geesten Contra GIs. De Slag om de Maastrichtse Meisjes, 1944-1945’ *De Maasgouw: Weekblad voor Limburgse Geschiedenis, Taal- en Letterkunde* 125.4 (2006) pp.130-137, p.130.

¹⁰⁶ In the southern part of Limburg, Leave Centres were established in Maastricht, Heerlen, Valkenburg, Kerkrade, Vaals, Brussum, Treebeek, Sittard and Geleen. Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*, p.78.

Netherlands brought forward a time of possibilities, not only for the local Dutch population but also for the Allied soldiers who arrived in Limburg. Previous unthinkable behaviour for women, such as going out to dances, dating multiple men or dating men with a different skin colour became possible behaviour during the liberation. Hence, the carnivalesque time made interactions between African American soldiers and local Dutch women possible, and to a certain extent permitted, since they were the liberators. Therefore, the liberation period in the southern part of the Netherlands was a unique historical moment as it was the first time that substantial numbers of black people were occupants of the Netherlands.

Chapter 2 – DUTCH PERCEPTIONS OF BLACK PEOPLE

In the liberation period, many Dutch people for the first time had personal contacts with non-white people. A passage from the diary of W. van Ringh, a resident of Groesbeek, near Nijmegen, provides valuable insight into how someone reacted towards the arrival of African American soldiers. Van Ringh noted, ‘in the village, it is a continuous traffic jam of army vehicles. Hundreds of boxes of ammunition are stored under the trees.’ He continued that the American army unit responsible for this consisted ‘only of Negroes.’ The author contemplated it was a ‘typical sight [to see] all those darkies with an inseparable white cigarette in their mouths.’¹⁰⁷ The Dutch version of the diary entry uses the word ‘kroeskoppen’ to describe the African American soldiers. Moreover, the author emphasised the contrast between the dark skin of the soldiers and the white cigarettes they smoked. Today, the word ‘kroeskop’ has a negative connotation and would not be used in the everyday Dutch language. Nonetheless, ‘kroeskop’ was used in the Dutch language in the 1940s. The word exemplifies that non-white people in the war period were observed both as ‘other’ and types and not automatically as individuals. Further, the usage of this particular word gives an insight into the unequal social relationship between black and white people within the Netherlands during the war.

This chapter examines Dutch attitudes regarding non-white people in general and African American soldiers in specific during and after the liberation of 1944-45. By examining the historical roots of racial prejudices and stereotypes of black people in the Netherlands, the reaction of the local Limburg population towards the presence of African American soldiers can be examined. The central argument in this chapter is that although a part of the Dutch population certainly welcomed all liberators regardless of their skin colour, newspaper articles, eyewitness accounts and diaries passages suggest that negative stereotypes about black people were prevalent in the Netherlands before, during and after the liberation, and that this affected the treatment of African American soldiers. The second part of this chapter focuses on newspaper articles and diary entries to research what words were used to describe non-white people, if the usage of these words changed after the arrival of the African American soldiers, and what certain words can reveal about social hierarchies. By focussing on written texts, this chapter analyses how language on African American soldiers affected social practices. One of

¹⁰⁷ NIOD, Archief 244, inv.nr. 1219, Europese Dagboeken en egodocumenten, diary of W. van Ringh, passage 5 October 1944, p.88. Freely translated: ‘In het dorp is het een voortdurende file van doorgaande legerwagens. Op de baan voorbij het gemeentehuis is meer te zien. Onder het geboomte staan honderden kisten met munitie opgeslagen, aangevoerd door een Amerikaanse leger-afdeling, welke alleen uit negers bestaat. Een typisch gezicht al die donkere kroeskoppen, die onafscheidelijke witte sigaret in den mond.’

the more significant findings to emerge from the newspaper analysis was that African American soldiers and the Dutch tradition of Black Pete – the servant of *Sinterklaas* - were directly and indirectly linked in newspaper articles in the liberation period.

This chapter is divided into three stages which all affected thinking about black people in the Netherlands. The first stage is the Dutch colonial period in which distinct ideas about non-white people developed. The second stage is the Nazi occupation period in which racial theories about superior and inferior people were transferred to the Netherlands. The third stage in this chapter is the liberation period in which a hybrid image, affected by the historical perceptions of the colonies, the images of the Nazi period, and new experiences by the actual presence of African American soldiers in the Netherlands conglomerated. Although the racialized images of black people in these three stages overlap, they are not identical. The purpose of this chapter therefore is to locate breaks and continuities in these three stages and to provide a context to the perceptions that people in the war had of black people.

The attitude of Dutch people towards African American soldiers in the American army is hard to recollect. Whereas in Great Britain, the Mass Observation systematically monitored the responses of the British population towards the presence of the American troops and the African American GIs, such a large-scale social questionnaire was not organised in the Netherlands. The only known survey in the Netherlands was held in Roosendaal, two months after the liberation.¹⁰⁸ This survey contained eighteen questions of which one was about what people thought of local women going to balls with Canadian soldiers.¹⁰⁹ The majority of the answers to this question held a disapproving stance towards the interaction between these soldiers and local women. The questionnaire is partly irrelevant for this chapter as American, or African American soldiers were not mentioned in the survey, and the survey showed more about ideas on moral behaviour regarding Dutch women. Consequently, the third chapter will go into further detail about this questionnaire and examine how ideas about the sexual autonomy of women and the right to the bodies of Dutch women took form in the liberation period. Nevertheless, the answers in the survey do display a general negative attitude towards foreigners, regardless of the fact if they were occupiers or liberators.

The colour-blind myth

The Netherlands was a predominantly white country until the middle of the twentieth century

¹⁰⁸ Rianne Oosterom, *Moffenmeiden: Over Soldatenliefjes, Knippers en Omstanders: Een Geschiedenis in Verhalen* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 2019) p.104.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

when immigrants from the former Dutch colonies became the first substantial number of non-white inhabitants in the Netherlands.¹¹⁰ Prior to the middle of the twentieth century, the physical presence of black people in the Netherlands was limited.¹¹¹ This, however, did not mean no prejudices existed concerning black people. Instead, ideas about racial differences and racial hierarchies were present in the Netherlands before and during the Second World War. Nonetheless, these images were based on whites being in the colonies; not non-whites being in the Netherlands.

Before the Second World War the sight of a non-white person was a rarity in the Netherlands. This was illustrated by the observation of Rudie Kagie that many Dutch people who were born in the 20th century could recall the moment they saw a black person for the first time.¹¹² Even though many people had seen images of non-white people in films or newspapers, personal encounters with black people were rare.¹¹³ Limburg as a province was no exception to having a predominantly white population. The arrival of African American soldiers as part of the American army was thus for many people in Limburg the first personal encounter with a non-white person. However, most books that deal with the history of non-white people in the Netherlands completely disregard the presence of African American soldiers in the Second World War. Almost all publications on the history of black people in the Netherlands focus solely on immigrants and not on temporary occupants, such as the African American soldiers. By disregarding the impact, or even the presence, of African American soldiers during the war a crucial moment within the history of Dutch 'race relations' is omitted since the presence of African American soldiers in Limburg possibly had an impact on the perceptions between blacks and whites in the Netherlands.

Both Mieke Kirkels and Cees van Kouwen deal with the fact that the presence of African American GIs in the Netherlands was a rare occurrence. Moreover, both authors conclude that Dutch people generally treated all liberators equally and that it was the American army which had distinct discriminating beliefs which the Dutch population was largely free from. An image of the Dutch population without having profound racial prejudices is thus presented. I will partially oppose these claims by demonstrating in this chapter that the language used in the

¹¹⁰ Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World*, p.39.

¹¹¹ According to Dutch historian Mark Ponte, a small African community existed in Amsterdam in the seventeenth century. Most of the men came from Africa to Amsterdam and were employed for the Dutch West-India Company (WIC) or Dutch East-India Company (VOC). However, their number remained little and they settled predominantly in Amsterdam. Mark Ponte, "Als de swarten hier ter stede comen" Een Afro-Atlantische gemeenschap in zeventiende-eeuws Amsterdam', *TSEG/ Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 15.4 (2019) pp.33-62.

¹¹² Rudie Kagie, *De Eerste Neger* (Amsterdam: Mets & Schilt, 1989) p.276.

¹¹³ Van Kouwen, *Vergeten Bevridders?*, p.6.

local Limburg newspapers in the liberation period reveals deeply rooted prejudices about black people, which made an equal treatment of all soldiers improbable. As this chapter demonstrates, local Limburg newspapers show that paternalism and infantilization were entrenched in the portrayals of black people. This perception made equal social relationships between African American GIs and Dutch people in the liberation period unlikely.

The public debate on past and contemporary racism in the Netherlands is distorted by several dogmatic assumptions on Dutch tolerance which have rooted in the collective memory of Dutch people. As is emphasised by scholars such as Dienke Hondius and Gloria Wekker, one of the current discourse on 'race' in the Netherlands centres around the idea that skin colour is not talked about and 'race' is considered 'unimportant, irrelevant and meaningless.'¹¹⁴ This supports the notion that race is not a problematic issue in the country, or as the Dutch put it: 'Ras, daar doen wij niet aan,' ('we don't do race.')¹¹⁵ In contrast to countries such as the United States or Great Britain, where 'race' is a commonly used word to describe people, and a term people use to talk about themselves, in the Netherlands, the word 'ethnicity' is often preferred. The general thought behind the use of the word 'ethnicity' is that it embodies culture, rather than the biological connotated word 'race.'¹¹⁶ However, a structural problem arises by systematically using 'ethnicity' rather than 'race.' According to American sociologist Melissa Weiner

The use of ethnicity in the Netherlands obfuscated unequal power relations rooted in the Netherlands' colonial history and precipitating contemporary racial ideologies and inequalities. A national identity based on the beliefs that white Dutch are tolerant and racism-free, though replete with centuries of parallel histories and intertwined belongings between white and non-white Dutch, results in a form of historical aphasia, an inability to reconcile and integrate colonial exploitation, genocide and oppression, or contemporary failings (as in Srebrenica) into their national histories and unfinished trajectories of emancipation.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Dienke Hondius, 'Black Dutch Voices: Reports from a Country that Leaves Racism Unchallenged', *Thamyris/Intersecting* 27 (2014) pp.273-294, p.273.

¹¹⁵ Dienke Hondius, 'Race and the Dutch: On the Uneasiness Surrounding Racial Issues in the Netherlands' in Sharam Alghasi, Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Maykel Verkuyten, *Paradoxes of Cultural Recognition: Perspectives from Northern Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009) pp.39-58, p.40.

¹¹⁶ Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016) p.22.

¹¹⁷ Melissa F. Weiner, 'The Ideologically Colonized Metropole: Dutch Racism and Racist Denial', *Sociology Compass* 8.6 (2014) pp.731-744, p.737.

According to Weiner, the usage of the word ‘ethnicity’ thus fails to account for the racism that has taken place in Dutch history. The shift towards the use of the word ‘ethnicity’ is nonetheless a post-war development. Therefore, this chapter examines how Dutch people regarded ‘race’ in relation to African American soldiers in the liberation period.

The post-war myth of the Netherlands as a country free of racism has affected the historiography on African Americans in the Netherlands during the Second World War. By portraying the Netherlands as a ‘colour blind’ nation, the impact of the arrival and stationing of African American soldiers is largely disregarded. Accordingly, the Dutch notion of ‘we don’t do race’ is important to this research as this notion has been projected backwards in time. Since ‘race’ is not regarded as a problem today, the general thought is that it was also not a problem back then. Another issue, according to anthropologist Gloria Wekker, is the dominant self-image of the Netherlands as an innocent victim of the German occupation during the Second World War. In this self-image, no room exists for the image of Dutch people as perpetrators of racism and racist ideologies.¹¹⁸

The myth of the Netherlands as a country free of racial prejudice has been researched in-depth by Rob Witte in his monograph *Al Eeuwenlang een Gastvrij Volk*.¹¹⁹ Witte concludes that racial violence is not seen as a structural national problem in the Netherlands even though it has occurred structurally since the Second World War.¹²⁰ Further, Witte argues that no place exists for racial violence as systematically part of Dutch history in the self-image of the Netherlands. The possible existence of it is simply denied.¹²¹ Several studies after Witte’s publication have dealt with this topic, and most studies concluded that racial violence and attitudes in the Netherlands and its colonies is an underexposed and under-researched area.¹²² Additionally, both the racist and violent part of the Netherlands in the history of slavery and colonial history did not feature prominently in the collective memory of Dutch people until recently. One of the reasons for this disremembering of the past could be that these practices had not taken place on Dutch soil but overseas. Therefore, the case study of African American soldiers in the Netherlands is appealing as it sheds light on how Dutch people reacted towards

¹¹⁸ Wekker, *White Innocence*, p.12.

¹¹⁹ Rob Witte, *Al Eeuwenlang een Gastvrij Volk: Racistisch Geweld en Overheidsreacties in Nederland (1950-2009)* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2010).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.193.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Melissa F. Weiner, ‘The Ideologically Colonized Metropole: Dutch Racism and Racist Denial’, *Sociology Compass* 8.6 (2014) pp.731-744, p.737; Dienne Hondius, ‘Black Dutch Voices: Reports from a Country that Leaves Racism Unchallenged’, *Thamyris/Intersecting* 27 (2014) pp.273-294, p.275; Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving, *Dutch Racism* (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 2014) and Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

the presence of a large group of non-white people within the Netherlands prior to the arrival of the first significant group of non-white immigrants.

Another topic which should receive more attention is the language that is used to describe non-white people in the Netherlands. As Hondius explains, the Dutch language to depict black people ‘came to a standstill’ over the past century, and within the Dutch language no alternatives have been created for outdated and ‘racist-sounding words’ such as ‘neger’ (‘negro’) or ‘half-bloed’ (‘half-blood’).¹²³ Although in the last ten years discussions about the language to address non-white people have occurred, the immutability of these words remains remarkable, and more attention should be devoted to why these words persist to be used, while the physical presence of black people has changed profoundly. Thus, the publications that deal with the history of ‘race’ and racism in the Netherlands currently focus on two themes. Firstly, addressing the issues of racism in the Netherlands and secondly, making people aware of the inherent racist constructions in language from which everyday behaviour and social practises derive.

Racial images in the Dutch colonies

As Dutch sociologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse argues in his book *White on Black*, the images that existed about black people in Europe were ‘not simply about images of blacks, but about white people’s images of blacks.’¹²⁴ In his monograph, Nederveen Pieterse examines how racial perceptions about black people developed in Western popular culture and in what ways these images created an imaginary view of Africa and its black population.¹²⁵ The ideas Dutch people had about African Americans thus say little about how African Americans actually were but reveal more about the relationship which existed between white and black people in the Netherlands in general. In other words, Dutch descriptions of black people do not reveal a lot about the subjects. Rather, they serve as a mirror to reveal the racial hierarchies and stereotypes nestled in the Dutch subconsciousness.

Images of black people were present within the Netherlands long before there was a significant physical presence.¹²⁶ One of the first images of a black person that occurred in the Netherlands was the one of Moriaen, a black knight who was the son of Aglovale, a knight of

¹²³ Hondius, ‘Black Dutch Voices: Reports from a Country that Leaves Racism Unchallenged’, p.275.

¹²⁴ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Black in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1992) p.10.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.8.

¹²⁶ Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World*, p.39.

the Round Table, and a Moorish princess.¹²⁷ Other famous depictions of black people since the Middle Ages were images of the Moor and the Gaper.¹²⁸ However, the most well-known image of a black person in the Netherlands today is the one of Black Pete, the servant of *Sinterklaas*. The image of Black Pete made his entrance in the second half of the nineteenth century, and his appearance has remained almost unchanged throughout two centuries.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, in the last ten years public and governmental discussions about the appearance and existence of Black Pete appeared.¹³⁰ As the last part of this chapter demonstrates, in the local Limburg newspapers in the liberation period, African Americans soldiers were associated with Black Pete.

From the beginning of the 20th century, Darwinist theories about ‘race’ became prevalent in the Dutch East Indies. The idea of white superiority began to spread and caused the notion that the local Indonesian population was inferior to the white inhabitants of the Dutch East Indies.¹³¹ More than ever before, the boundaries between white and non-whites were guarded and supported by informal rules, norms and values.¹³² These increasing boundaries along skin colour also caused ‘inter-racial’ relationships to be seen as not desirable, and ‘inter-racial’ people were seen as denigrating to the Dutch ‘race.’¹³³ This segmented society grew along racial and social lines in the Dutch East Indies from 1900. According to Dutch historian Hans Meijer, this separation reached its height in the interbellum in which groups of different racial origins lived *next* to each other and not *with* each other.¹³⁴ In the interwar years, a segregated society in the Dutch East Indies thus took shape.

In the Dutch East Indies, Dutch racial images of the indigenous inhabitants often implied that Dutch people naturally or by godly intervention had the right to rule over the indigenous population.¹³⁵ The colonial rule was moreover justified by the idea that the Dutch were helping or educating the indigenous inhabitants.¹³⁶ Paternalism thus became a significant theme in the

¹²⁷ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Wit over Zwart: Beelden van Afrika en Zwarten in de Westerse Populaire Cultuur* (Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen 1990) p.163.

¹²⁸ For a detailed explanation on the historical roots of these two depictions see Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch world*, pp.49-59.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.164.

¹³⁰ From 2013, the so called ‘Zwartepietendebat’ has annually returned in the Netherlands around the time of *Sinterklaas*. A result of this discussion is that in several Dutch cities the appearance of Black Pete has been adapted. Frequently nowadays, the traditional golden earrings, red lips and frizzy hair are omitted in the appearance of Black Pete.

¹³¹ Hans Meijer, *In Indië Geworteld: De Twintigste Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2004) p.49.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.51.

¹³⁵ Frances Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas: Colonial Practice in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995) pp.118-123.

¹³⁶ Esther Captain and Marieke Hellevoort, *Vertrouwd en Vreemd: Ontmoetingen tussen Nederland, Indië en Indonesië* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2000) pp.52-53.

justification of colonial rule. According to Hondius, ‘paternalism and infantilization are key terms within the Western, the European, and more specifically the Dutch history of ‘race’ and racism. Paternalism has been a long-term and successful strategy to manage inequality and to maintain order.’¹³⁷ In the West Dutch Indies, such as the Dutch Antilles and Suriname, the black population was brought to these countries in the context of slavery and official slavery existed until 1863.¹³⁸ In the West Dutch Indies, slavery was thus an important factor to install a racial hierarchy and maintain order.¹³⁹

Historically, the image of non-white people as having low intelligence and being mentally closer to children was in place in the Dutch colonies.¹⁴⁰ This seemingly benign portrayal created and maintained an unequal power structure as African American GIs were placed on the same level as children mentally. This image in which African Americans were depicted with the mental characteristics of children was both present in the United States and Europe. By portraying the African American GIs as child-like, they became less threatening for the prevailing social order.

An example of how racial images of black people were created in the Dutch colonies can be found in the article *Dapper maar zeer Brutaal*, by historian Ineke van Kessel. In this article, van Kessel examined an experiment in the Dutch East Indies to recruit African soldiers for the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL). Between 1831 and 1873 more than three thousand Africans were recruited for the KNIL from present-day Ghana to deal with the shortage of European volunteers.¹⁴¹ These soldiers came to be known under the name *Belanda Hitam* (Black Dutchmen) and were stationed in the Dutch East Indies. The ‘experiment’ was evaluated positively, but around 1915 African soldiers were no longer employed by the Dutch colonial army.¹⁴² One of the reasons for this was that the stationing of African soldiers in the Dutch East Indies caused a colonial paradox as, according to van Kessel, the African soldiers were encouraged to identify with the European soldiers to create a feeling of superiority with respect to the indigenous population.¹⁴³ Nonetheless, when the African soldiers, according to the Dutch military officials, actually identified in this way, they were seen as ‘uppity negroes’

¹³⁷ Hondius, ‘Race and the Dutch: on the Uneasiness Surrounding Racial Issues in the Netherlands’, p.44.

¹³⁸ Alex van Stipriaan, *Surinaams Contrast: Roofbouw en Overleven in een Caraïbische Plantage Kolonie, 1750-1863* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1993) pp.1-2.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Ineke van Kessel, ‘Dapper maar zeer Brutaal: De Afrikaanse Soldaten in het Nederlands-Indische leger’, *Armamentaria* 37 (2002) pp.128-153, p.146.

¹⁴¹ Ineke van Kessel, *Zwarte Hollanders: Afrikaanse Soldaten in Nederlands-Indië* (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2005) p.9.

¹⁴² Van Kessel, ‘Dapper maar zeer Brutaal’, p.144

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.147.

who did not know their place in the racial and social hierarchy of colonial society.¹⁴⁴ Their place within the army was thus contradictory as they were regarded higher in the social hierarchy than the indigenous inhabitants because of their social status as soldiers, but at the same time were regarded lower in the racial hierarchy because of their skin colour.

More than half a century later, at the beginning of the Second World War, plans were prompted to compose a Surinamese legion to serve overseas in the KNIL army as the Dutch colony Suriname in South America was not under German occupation. The plan was however dissuaded by the Dutch minister of Colonies Charles Welter in 1940.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, the Surinamese men who volunteered for the Dutch Irene-brigade in Great Britain were refused on the grounds that their presence could cause frictions with the white Dutch recruits from South-Africa.¹⁴⁶ Ultimately, the only Surinamese volunteers that were deployed in the Second World War were stationed in the Dutch East Indies.¹⁴⁷ Thus, in contrast to for example Great Britain, which had several legions consisting out of volunteers from the West Indies, the Dutch government during the war was cautious about employing people from the colonies in Dutch brigades.

Images of black people were not solely formed in the Dutch colonies but also by the Dutch and international media. In the first half of the twentieth century, the dominant image of white Europeans regarding black people centred around the image of a black person as an entertainer or servant.¹⁴⁸ This image of a servant was possibly affirmed in the Netherlands during the war because the majority of African Americans were employed in support and supply units. Consequently, Dutch people mostly witnessed African American soldiers in an auxiliary role. Moreover, the otherness of African Americans soldiers was frequently emphasised in the media by exaggerating facial and bodily characteristics. For example, a Belgian postcard from the war depicts an African American soldier with big red lips and a blunt facial expression (see appendix I).¹⁴⁹

Even though stereotypes about black people in the United States and Europe contain various similarities, a significant difference between these two geographical areas is that historically the United States was obsessed with black male sexuality, whereas Europe was

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Ben Scholtens, *Suriname tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Paramaribo, 1985) p.22.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* Scholtens gave no further explanation why the plan was dissuaded.

¹⁴⁸ Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black*, p.124,

¹⁴⁹ Belgian postcard depicting an African American soldier, Bevrijdingsmuseum Groesbeek, docu 2, rek 8, plateau 12, doos 5, object nr. 11.26.772A.

fixated on black female sexuality.¹⁵⁰ An example of this is the film *Birth of a Nation* (1915) which created the long-lasting stereotype of the African American male as sexual aggressor and brute. In the film, the rise of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) is celebrated. The main character, a white girl named Flora Cameron from the South, committed suicide by throwing herself off a cliff in order to not be raped by an ex-slave, who is played by a white actor who is black-faced.¹⁵¹ The film became a blockbuster and was even praised by President Woodrow Wilson as a masterpiece.¹⁵² Nevertheless, the film also generated protest among African Americans who thought the film created a degrading image of African American males as sexual aggressors and a danger to white women. The film produced the image of the black male as the ‘Buck,’ a brutal, oversexed and violent African American male which became – and to a certain extent still is – an occurring stereotype.

In contrast to the United States, in Europe, people were fascinated by the image of the black woman as an exotic, nymphomaniac female.¹⁵³ An example is Josephine Baker, an African American who became a famous dancer and entertainer in Europe, and in particular in France. These images of sexually attractive black females were absent in the United States because ‘acknowledging these culturally would go against the grain of ethnic stratification.’¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, white European and American stereotypes about black people differ because of the different relationships to black people in society. The historical presence of a black population in the United States affected the racialized images which appeared. On the other hand, in the Netherlands, racial images were characterised by the absence of any physical presence of black people.¹⁵⁵

During the war, within Europe, differences in the portrayal of African American soldiers existed. Whereas in France the sexual aggression of the American soldiers was publicly pinned down on the African American GIs in particular, in the Netherlands this image of the African American soldier as a sexual aggressor was largely absent, even though archival evidence indicates that white and black American soldiers did commit sexual crimes in the Netherlands.¹⁵⁶ As the third chapter will demonstrate further, the moral panic that occurred in

¹⁵⁰ Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black*, pp.179-186.

¹⁵¹ Catherine Squires, *African Americans and the Media* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009) p.96.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black*, p.228.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.224.

¹⁵⁶ Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) p.254. An archival source that mentioned a rape case involving an African American soldier in Maastricht: RHCL, 20.007, inv.nr. 1567, Secretarie Maastricht. Further a JAG ETO case exists about the conviction of two white American soldiers for rape in Limburg. ETO opinions, Board of Review, vol. 12, CM ETO 4386, 29 December 1944.

the Netherlands with the arrival of the American army was directed at the entire American army and did not scapegoat African American GIs specifically, as was done in France.

Propaganda

The four-year Nazi occupation in the Netherlands and the Nazi ideas about racial hierarchies and superior ‘races’ might have had implications for the acceptance of or objection to racial segregation in the American army. Furthermore, the persecution of the Jewish ‘race’ during the occupation could have affected people’s ideas regarding black people. From the end of the 19th century the eugenics movement had developed internationally and was mainly influenced by evolutionism and genetics.¹⁵⁷ From the 1930s, the eugenics movement gained popularity in the Netherlands, however, this movement was not closely associated with the Aryan ‘race’ politics which developed in Germany after 1933.¹⁵⁸ Instead, ‘eugenics in the Netherlands were class-oriented. Compared to Germany and the United States the racial factor was of minor importance.’¹⁵⁹ However, the German occupation did have an impact on the racial politics as becomes apparent from newspaper articles in the occupation period.

‘Put out the flags: The Negro civilisation is near’ was the headline of an article in the *Volk en Vaderland*, the weekly newspaper of the National Socialist party in the Netherlands on 6 October 1944.¹⁶⁰ The article stated that in general the Dutch dislike black people and that people who associate with black people were regarded negatively by their community.¹⁶¹ The article is full of denigrating and polarising language meant to present a negative portrayal of both the Anglo-American troops and African American soldiers. Remarkable is that the article mentioned that African Americans were maltreated in America and that lynching was still occurring there. By portraying the Americans as undemocratic and barbaric, the article tried to gain sympathy from its readers.

It is just as understandable that the negroes, now being released on Europe, do not have any limits, and, now they have been released, for the time being, they will fully enjoy themselves,

¹⁵⁷ Jan Noordman, *Om de Kwaliteit van het Nageslacht: Eugenetica in Nederland (1900-1950)* (Nijmegen: SUN, 1989) p.23

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.17.

¹⁵⁹ English Summary, Jan Noordman, *Om de Kwaliteit van het Nageslacht: Eugenetica in Nederland (1900-1950)* (Amsterdam, 1989).

¹⁶⁰ Delpher, ‘Steek de vlag uit: De Negerbeschaving is nabij!’, *Volk en Vaderland: Weekblad der Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging in Nederland* (version 6 October 1944)

<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110529854:mpeg21:a0029> [accessed February 2019].

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

without a single standard of decency. Their deep hatred of the white race, caused and fuelled by the inhumane action of the Americans, will break its course against the Europeans...¹⁶²

The article emphasised the ‘inhumane actions of the Americans’ and tried to polarise its readers by stating that African Americans have a ‘deep hatred of the white race.’ The article thus aimed to install fear of black people and African Americans in specific. The discrimination against black people within the United States is used to convince the reader that black soldiers are hostile against all white people and will use their employment overseas to seek revenge. This particular article appeared when large parts of the southern provinces in the Netherlands were already liberated, whereas the northern part was still under German control. A possible objective of the article could have been to establish hostile feelings towards the American army in general, and towards the African American GIs specifically.

In addition to propaganda directed to the Dutch population, the Nazi’s also used propaganda to convince African American soldiers to desert the American army and fight on their side.¹⁶³ Racial segregation and discrimination within American society were employed by the Germans to expose the hypocrisy of the American ideals of democracy. Thus, on the one hand, the Germans tried to use the segregation in the American army to expose the false pretence of America to ‘fight for democracy.’ On the other hand, the Germans used the stereotype of the black male as brutal, savage and a sexual predator to emphasise racial difference and the dangers of a black presence in Europe.

Personal narratives

As was mentioned earlier, it is hard to reconstruct the opinions of Dutch people towards the presence of African American soldiers since no social questionnaires were held after the war as was the case in Great Britain. Nonetheless, one way to gather evidence about people’s opinions on African American soldiers is through oral history. Oral history uses people’s testimonies to gather information about the past. One of the primary objections of oral history, when it appeared in the 1970s, was to give a voice to ‘ordinary’ people and to recover the histories of marginalised people. By focussing on the testimonies of marginalised groups, the aim was to

¹⁶² *Ibid.* Freely translated: ‘Even begrijpelijk is het, dat de negers, nu ze op Europa worden losgelaten, geen enkele rem bezitten, en, nu zij voorlopig zijn bevrijd, zich volkomen zullen uitleven, zonder enkelen norm van fatsoen. Hun diepe haat tegen het blanke ras, veroorzaakt en aangewakkerd door het onmenselijke optreden der Amerikanen, zal zich baan breken tegen de Europeanen...’

¹⁶³ Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*, p.55.

raise consciousness for people that remained unnoticed in history.¹⁶⁴ Within the practice of oral history, the fallibility of memory has been a matter of considerable debate since factors such as time, the media and other people can taint memory. Therefore, memory is both the subject and the source of oral history.¹⁶⁵ Although oral testimonies and interviews remain out of the scope of this research, their contribution to this topic is vital in order to understand the impact of African American soldiers in Limburg.

An example of how eyewitness accounts can contribute to knowledge about African American soldiers in Limburg concerns the issue of segregation. Although only one official document exists which deals with the segregation of the American army in the Netherlands, from eyewitness accounts and interviews it has become clear that the American army continued its strictly segregated practices in the Netherlands. Kirkels provided much of the information on the existence of separated facilities by interviewing people in Limburg about the African American GIs.¹⁶⁶ In addition to oral testimonies, diaries are a valuable source to examine opinions on African American soldiers and practices of segregation. At the beginning of this research, I expected to find passages in diaries about African American soldiers since their arrival in Limburg was for many people the first time they encountered and interacted with black people. However, from the ten diaries I examined often only one reference was made to the presence of African American soldiers as part of the American army and no further detailed accounts were given.¹⁶⁷ It appeared as if the African Americans were almost invisible to the local Limburg population. Conversely, local Limburg newspapers show that African American soldiers were visible because articles appeared on their presence in Limburg. Another significant lacuna in the sources is the perspective of the women who associated with African American soldiers. There are no diaries known of women who wrote about their friendship or relationship with an African American soldier.¹⁶⁸ A possible explanation for this silence in the current historiography could be the shame or harassment that these women had to endure during and after the war because of their associations.

Even though not many diaries deal extensively with the presence of African American soldiers in Limburg, some information about the segregation in Limburg could be found in the

¹⁶⁴ Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998) p.17.

¹⁶⁵ Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (ed.), *The Oral History Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) p. 211.

¹⁶⁶ Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*, p.41.

¹⁶⁷ For example, in the Diary of Marie van Kessel from Wijchen the only reference that is made is: 'Ook zwarte militairen zijn erbij' ('There are also black soldiers.') Bevrijdingsmuseum Groesbeek, Docu 1, rek 4, plateau 8, doos 1, object nr. 5.4.12603.

¹⁶⁸ Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*. p.45.

diary of Henk Menzel, a man in his twenties during the war.¹⁶⁹ In the diary itself nothing is written about African American soldiers but in a reflection on the diary made sixty years later by Menzel himself, a section titled ‘negro division’ was added to elaborate on the presence of the African American soldiers.¹⁷⁰ Sixty years after the war, in a different time-period, Menzel realised he had to elaborate on this topic despite the fact he had not mentioned anything regarding African American soldiers or segregation in the diary itself.

Henk Menzel was born in Rotterdam in 1925 and was 19 years old when he was called for mandatory service in the *Arbeitseinsatz*.¹⁷¹ In September 1944, Menzel was transferred to Valkenburg in Limburg, to work in the Valkenburg caves. After the liberation of Valkenburg on 16 September, Menzel was unable to go back to the occupied northern part of the Netherlands. Three weeks after the liberation of Valkenburg, Menzel and nine other men who were formerly employed in the *Arbeitseinsatz* were called to work for the American 91st Evacuation Hospital in the Jesuit convent in Valkenburg.¹⁷² In the reflection on his diary, Menzel described how the transport of goods and people of the 91st Evacuation Hospital relied on a unit of African American drivers who also had an African American commander. The African American soldiers slept on the attic of the convent on stretchers or the floor while the white staff of the division slept in beds in rooms of the convent.¹⁷³

Another telling example in Menzel’s reflection is the fact that he described how he and other Dutch boys who worked for the division would visit the African Americans in the attic. According to Menzel, ‘in the beginning we often went to visit these negroes, there were musicians and blues singers amongst them and we had a good time.’¹⁷⁴ The stereotype of the black male as a musician is present in the reflection of Menzel. Further, he described how the Dutch men working in the convent got along with the African American soldiers. However, after a while, one of Menzel’s Dutch friends had to come into the office of the captain of the 91st Evacuation Hospital. Captain Skewes informed the boy that their visits to the African Americans had to stop. It was unusual and ‘not done.’¹⁷⁵ After this instruction, the boys never revisited the African Americans again. In the reflection on his diary, Menzel commented that they (the Dutch boys working for the 91st division) were unfamiliar with racial discrimination

¹⁶⁹ NIOD, Archief 244, inv.nr. 1891. Naschrift verslag Jan. 44 t/m Mei ’45, p.5.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* Freely translated from Dutch ‘Negercompagnie’.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* Freely translated: ‘In ‘t begin gingen wij vaak bij deze negers op bezoek, er waren musici en blueszangers onder hen en wij amuseerden ons prima.’

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

and thought ‘it only existed in Germany.’¹⁷⁶ In this example, it is clear that although the Dutch boys might not have agreed with the order of the Captain, they did follow his orders. It appears as if the Dutch boys immediately respected the dominant power structures in the American army, even though they had positive personal experiences with the African American soldiers. The example of Menzel indicates that the American custom of physical segregation was able to transfer to the Netherlands. Further, in the case of Menzel, segregation was not objected even though he stated they were ‘unfamiliar’ with racial discrimination and he personally had a positive experience with African American GIs. Even more, from this example, it becomes clear that the American military authorities tried to prevent African American soldiers from associating with the local Dutch population, and in the case of Menzel it actually prevented further interactions.

A last example in the reflection is when Menzel described that he and other Dutch boys became regular visitors of a family in Valkenburg. Being away from their own families, who were in the still occupied northern parts of the Netherlands, the homely atmosphere of a family was pleasant to the young men. They spent lots of evenings at the house of the family Cobbenhagen, a family they knew through Mike, an African American driver from the 91st Evacuation Hospital. Mike introduced the Dutch boys to the family and he had a relationship with one of the daughters of the family called Tiny.¹⁷⁷ Menzel noted that the American military authorities suddenly transferred Mike to a different unit and that the relationship between Tiny and Mike soon ended. As the next chapter shows, this unofficial policy of transferring African American soldiers when they dated Dutch women occurred frequently. When Menzel wrote about his first encounter with Mike in the reflection on his diary, he described him as ‘a smiling man, whose brain shortage was more than compensated by the huge bundles of muscles, but who was very kind to us...’¹⁷⁸ Although he described the soldier positively, this depiction of Mike established a stereotypical image of a black male as somewhat naïve but kind.

Kirkels’ book similarly stated multiple accounts of people who had African American soldiers over for dinner or kept friendly relationships with them. One example Kirkels described was about the Spee family in Maastricht.¹⁷⁹ A unit of African American soldiers was stationed nearby their family home and soon a friendship between them and the African American soldier

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p.5. ‘Maar we vonden het wel vreemd, want rassendiscriminatie was ons toen nog onbekend of liever, wij dachten dat dat alleen in Duitsland bestond.’

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* Freely translated: ‘Ook maakten wij kennis met Mike, een goedlachse man, wiens tekort aan hersens ruimschoots gecompenseerd werd door enorme spierbundels, maar die heel aardig voor ons was en vertelde dat hij geregeld bij een familie in Valkenburg op bezoek ging.’

¹⁷⁹ Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*, pp.30-31.

Clifford Thompson developed. Gradually, Thompson began to sleep on the sofa of the family, because their house was warmer than the building where he was stationed. According to Gert Linssen-Spee, who gave the testimony of Thompson to Kirkels and who was a fifteen-year-old girl at the time of the liberation, various families in the neighbourhood had African American soldiers visiting and many friendships developed.¹⁸⁰

Even though from personal narratives it appears that the Dutch attitude was generally accommodating towards the African Americans, they were viewed as ‘other.’ An important factor that maintained the physical and discursive segregation was the stance of white American soldiers and U.S. Army officers. In the American army, white soldiers generally regarded and treated African American GIs as second-class soldiers with distinct characteristics. As was exemplified in the diary of Menzel, American army officers tried to prevent Europeans from associating with the African Americans. Simply, because it was not done back in the United States. The American army thus affected the ways in which African American GIs and Dutch people interacted by installing their segregationist practices in the Netherlands. Even more, discursive segregation is clearly visible from Limburg newspaper articles. In these articles, African Americans were portrayed as a distinct group with certain characteristics.

Limburg newspapers

From an advanced airbase in Italy, an American correspondent reports that the 99th Air Force Division, which is part of the 12th American Air Force, consists exclusively of Negroes.¹⁸¹

This short article appeared at the beginning of 1944 in the Limburg newspaper *De Nieuwe Koerier*. In the beginning of 1944, Dutch newspapers were still under German censorship. The article was only one sentence long, but its appearance in the newspaper is striking since it shows that the presence of African American soldiers in the American Air Force was already considered newsworthy. Several other articles about the existence and fighting of African American units appeared in several Limburg newspapers throughout 1944 and 1945. All these articles were small items, usually on the third or fourth page of the paper, yet the existence of these articles herald the conclusion that the presence of African American soldiers was

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.30-31. Testimony of Gert Linssen-Spee as quoted in Kirkels ‘Bij bijna alle gezinnen in de buurt komen regelmatig zwarte soldaten over de vloer. Er worden heel wat vriendschappen gesloten.’

¹⁸¹ Delpher, ‘Negervliegers in Italië’, *De Nieuwe Koerier/Maas- en Roerbode/ Provinciaal Dagblad* (version 2 February 1944) <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010692656:mpeg21:a0017> [accessed March 2019]. Freely translated: ‘Van een vooruitgeschoven luchtbasis in Italië meldt een Amerikaanse correspondent, dat de 99^{ste} luchtdivisie, die deel uitmaakt van het 12^{de} Amerikaanse luchtcorps uitsluitend uit negers bestaat.’

considered to be out of the ordinary in Dutch media.

All the newspapers that are examined in this chapter come from *Delpher*, a Dutch newspaper database. By focusing primarily on local newspapers from Limburg, an insight is provided into regional developments regarding ideas on 'race' and African American soldiers in general. Moreover, the regional newspapers display a broader impression of how was written about African American soldiers in the province Limburg. The timeframe of the examined newspapers is between 1943 and 1946. By increasing the timeframe from only the liberation period to a period which stretches into the German occupation and post-war period, continuations and alternations in the use of language can be monitored by focussing on the words that were used to describe African American Soldiers. Even more, this timeframe is chosen to compare newspapers which were under the control of the German authorities and the 'free' newspapers after the liberation. The majority of the local newspapers from the province of Limburg had a Catholic background. *Limburgsch Dagblad* and *Veritas* were both regional newspapers. In February 1945, *Limburgsch Dagblad* had an edition of 55,000 copies and *Veritas* 70,000 copies.¹⁸² *De Nieuwe Koerier: Maas-en Roerbode* and *De Nieuw Venlosche* courant were local newspapers with smaller publication numbers. In addition to Limburg newspapers, two national resistance newspapers, *De Patriot* and *Strijdend Nederland* were examined because both these newspapers featured articles about the presence of African American soldiers in Limburg. *De Patriot* had a circulation between 30 and 6,200 copies during the war and *Strijdend Nederland* had a circulation between 14 and 600 copies per issue.¹⁸³ Both newspapers were printed in the northern part of the Netherlands. Lastly, *De Waarheid*, a national communist paper was examined, which reached a circulation of more than 300,000 copies in 1945.¹⁸⁴ The circulation of these newspapers is crucial to grasp the magnitude and effect of certain articles and it can reveal how many people had access to certain news. The ideological background of the newspapers could reveal more about the intentions behind certain article. For example, providing charity for the less fortunate and the idea of equality are both significant Catholic virtues which could be underlying messages in the Catholic newspapers. Important while analysing written texts such as newspaper articles is that these are not neutral sources of information but these sources contain underlying assumptions and beliefs from the

¹⁸² Jan van der Plasse, *Kroniek van de Nederlandse Dagblad en Opiniapers* (Amsterdam: Cramwinckel, 2005) p.194.

¹⁸³ Lydia E. Winkel and Hans de Vries, *De Ondergrondse Pers 1940-1945* (Utrecht: Veen, 1989) p.210 and p.233.

¹⁸⁴ Van der Plasse, *Kroniek van de Nederlandse Dagblad en Opiniapers*, p.139.

author.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, articles are written with a certain purpose and ideological stance in mind. For this reason, the worldview which is presented and naturalised by a newspaper article reveals something about the proposed ideas on societal relations. Ideology and power are thus two decisive aspects in the analysis of newspaper articles. Both these aspects legitimise the prevailing distribution of power or question this structure.

Specific combinations of search words were used to gather the articles. Several terms such as ‘neger’, ‘negersoldaat’, ‘neger soldaten’, ‘kleurling’ and ‘zwarte Amerikaan’ were used to search for newspaper articles concerning African American soldiers. Altogether these search words for the period 1943 until 1946 generated around one hundred articles that contained these words. In addition to articles about African American soldiers also articles on African soldiers and soldiers from the West Indies appeared. The search term ‘zwarte soldaat’ (‘black soldier’) generated mostly articles on the SS and NSB soldiers and are consequently irrelevant for this research. Nevertheless, it does reveal that ‘zwarte soldaat’ was not a commonly used word to describe African American soldiers in the Netherlands. This research focused especially on articles which dealt with African American soldiers in Europe, and more specifically in the Netherlands. The labels used in Limburg newspapers to describe Allied soldiers reveal a pattern of racial distinction. Hence, the distinction is nearly always made between an ‘Amerikaans(che)e soldaat’ (‘American soldier’) and a ‘neger soldaat’ (‘negro soldier’). Altogether, around 40 articles about African American soldiers in Dutch newspapers were observed. The newspapers on the *Delpher* were consulted between February 2019 and June 2019.

One limitation of these newspaper sources is that *Delpher* does not contain all newspapers published during the liberation period. Therefore, the corpus which is examined for this thesis is a selection and fails to account for all regional newspapers in the liberation period. A last note which has to be kept in mind while reading newspaper articles is as Robert Miles explains in his publication on racism, that racist expressions in newspapers do not necessarily mean that all the readers will agree with the message that is articulated.¹⁸⁶ Nonetheless, attitudes expressed in the language of newspapers can shape the thinking of its readers. People use texts to make sense of their world, while at the same time texts construct ideas and certain versions of the world.¹⁸⁷ In addition to this, the usage of racialized words can result in normalising certain

¹⁸⁵ Rod E. Case, ‘How to Conduct a Critical Discourse Analysis of a Text: A Guide for Teachers’, *The CATESOL Journal* 17.1 (2005) pp.145-155, p.146.

¹⁸⁶ Robert Miles, *Racism* (London: Routledge, 1989) p.113.

¹⁸⁷ Allan Luke, ‘Chapter 1: Text and Discourse in Education: An introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis’, *Review of Research in Education* 21.1 (1995) pp.3-48, p.12.

words and cause these words to be continued to be used. Therefore, the emphasis in this newspaper analysis is on the usage or absence of certain words connected to the writings about African American soldiers.

Overall, in the Limburg newspapers during the liberation period, a striking paradox appears. On the one hand, several articles appear about how to treat and address African American soldiers respectfully. On the other hand, racial stereotypes and ‘funny stories’ about African American soldiers form a large part of the newspaper articles about African American GIs. These ‘funny stories’ affected readers because they produced a certain stereotype of African American soldiers. By normalising the depiction of African American soldiers as somewhat naïve and with low intelligence, it enabled readers to transfer this to social practices in everyday life regarding African American soldiers.

Already in 1943, newspapers in Limburg devoted attention to the frictions that occurred due to the presence of African American GIs in Great Britain. According to an article in the *Nieuw Venlosche Courant*, in March 1943, British people resisted American-style segregation in public transport, pubs and hotels which led to conflicts between white American soldiers and British people.¹⁸⁸ One example that is mentioned is a female bus driver who told African American soldiers not to stand up for white American soldiers because ‘this is my bus and we are in Great Britain.’¹⁸⁹ The tone in the article is somewhat surprised, and the article ends by stating that ‘among the American troops, however, people are outraged by the attitude that the British adopt with regard to the Negro problem, and people fear that as a result, discipline amongst Negro soldiers will weaken.’¹⁹⁰ Even though the article does not explicitly take a stand in favour of the white Americans, the general tone in the article suggests that the British complicate American customs by opposing them. Further, the existence of a ‘Negro problem’ is not questioned but stated as something that simply exists. In contrast to British newspapers, where items on conflicts between white Americans and Britons over racial segregation frequently occurred throughout the war, Dutch newspaper articles in which Dutch people refute American segregation are completely absent. There are no articles in Limburg newspapers which deal with the American customs of segregation or articles which contain any objections by Dutch civilians against these customs. The issue of segregation in the American army is thus

¹⁸⁸ Delpher, ‘Neger-sympathieën in Engeland’, *De Nieuw Venlosche Courant* (version 25 March 1943) <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010308920:mpeg21:a0040> [accessed March 2019].

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* Freely translated: ‘Dit is mijn autobus en we zijn hier in Engeland.’

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* Freely translated: ‘Onder de Amerikaanse troepen is men echter verontwaardigd over de langmoedige houding, die de Engelschen ten aanzien van het neger-vraagstuk aannemen en vreest men, dat de tucht onder de negerssoldaten als gevolg hiervan zal verslappen.’

not present in any local Limburg newspaper.

Although Limburg newspapers were not preoccupied with the issue of segregation within the American army, the newspapers did write about the presence of African American GIs in the Netherlands. In the Limburg newspapers, several months prior to the liberation and the months after the liberation articles about African American soldiers contain several stereotypes. The most common depiction was one of the African American soldier as child-like and playful. Interestingly, American stereotypes of African American males such as the 'Coon' or the 'Buck' barely appeared in Limburg newspapers. The stereotype of the 'Coon' depicts African Americans as being unreliable, dumb and lazy, and the 'Buck' is a brutal, oversexed and violent African American from whom white women especially needed to be protected.¹⁹¹ The absence of these two particular stereotypes reveals that American prejudices did not directly impact Dutch attitudes regarding African Americans since these stereotypes did not appear in Limburg newspaper.

While American stereotypes thus hardly travelled from America to the Netherlands, an obvious link is visible in the newspapers between the Dutch tradition of Black Pete (*zwarte Piet*) and African American soldiers. Even though some of the references are indirect, other newspaper articles contain direct links such as an article from December 1944 in *De Stem*, a local Brabant newspaper. This article mentioned a conflict between African American soldiers and local people who drove in an American army truck with someone dressed as Black Pete.¹⁹² The black-faced person offended the present African American GIs since black-face ridiculed having a black skin colour.¹⁹³ In the article it is stated that the Dutch people involved apologised and that it was explained to the African American soldiers 'that Black Pete is a highly innocent joke.'¹⁹⁴ The article from *De Stem* moreover illustrated that in case of criticism on the Dutch tradition, the excuse of an 'innocent joke' was used to justify why Black Pete was not racist. The idea that Black Pete was regarded by Dutch people as an 'innocent joke' and not as a racist manifestation, becomes apparent from more joking references to Black Pete in connection to African Americans in the liberation period.

For instance, an article in the *Limburgsch Dagblad* in November 1944 depicts an

¹⁹¹ For more on American stereotypes of African Americans in movies see: Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in American Films* (Oxford: Roundhouse, 1973) pp.8-13.

¹⁹² 'Zwarte Piet steen des aanstoots', *De Stem* (version 2 December 1944). Quoted in Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*, p.76.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.* 'De Nederlanders, zoo klaagden zij, hadden een blank individu zwart geschilderd. Deze surrogaat-neger reed door de stad tot schande en spot van alle real coloured gentlemen...'

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.* Freely translated '...dat pietermansknecht een hoogst-onschuldige grap is.'

African American soldier as a friend of children and makes an indirect reference to Black Pete. The article describes how an African American soldier is enjoying the sun, and children curiously come towards him to ask if he has candy. One of the children climbs on his lap, touches his face and exclaims: ‘his colour does not shed!’ Although the article made no direct reference to Black Pete, the article does indicate that the child associated the African American soldier with the Dutch *Sinterklaas* tradition. Considering Black Pete is a white person black-faced, the child believes this man will also have a black face because of paint.¹⁹⁵ Another striking reference to Black Pete was described in the book by Van Kouwen on African Americans in the region of Nijmegen. In Wijchen (a town near Nijmegen) where several African American units were stationed, many children did not believe anymore that Black Pete came from Spain, as is the case in the *Sinterklaas* myth. Instead, according to Van Kouwen, many children said that Black Pete was a ‘black Tommy from America.’¹⁹⁶ A last remarkable article that linked black people and Black Pete directly was an article in the *Limburgsch Dagblad* in October 1944. The article is headed ‘children’s fantasy’ and described a boxing match between a white man and a ‘coloured person.’¹⁹⁷ In the article it is stated how after the victory of the black person a young spectator exclaimed: ‘Black Pete has won!’¹⁹⁸

The fact that several newspaper articles in the winter of 1944 directly or indirectly linked African American soldiers to Black Pete is captivating for two reasons. First of all, it is relevant for the current discussions in the Netherlands around the appearance of Black Pete. These newspaper articles from the liberation period reveal that historically Dutch people associated Black Pete with black people. Second of all, Black Pete is often portrayed as a child-like and is characterised by his funny and clumsy behaviour. By also portraying African American soldiers as child friends, it is assumed they are mentally close to children. This assumption once again placed them lower in the social hierarchy and established a non-threatening image of African Americans. The American stereotype of the African American male as a ‘sexual predator’ is largely, if not wholly, absent from the Limburg newspapers about African Americans. Instead, the image of the African American as somewhat naïve and foolish was present.

From an article from the *Patriot* in May 1945, it appeared that the presence of African

¹⁹⁵ Delpher, ‘Kinderlijk’, *Limburgsch Dagblad* (version 6 November 1944)

<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010416584:mpeg21:a0034> [accessed April 2019].

¹⁹⁶ Van Kouwen, *Vergeten Bevrijders?*, p.16. ‘Iets anders was dat veel Wijchense kinderen niet meer geloofden dat Zwarte Piet uit Spanje kwam! “Zwarte Piet, is inne zwarte Tommy uit Amerika!”, zeiden ze.’

¹⁹⁷ Delpher, ‘Kinderfantasie’, *Limburgsch Dagblad* (version 24 October 1944)

<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010416573:mpeg21:a0036> [accessed April 2019].

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.* ‘Terwijl alle toeschouwers nog even ingehouden staren naar dit nooit geziene schouwspel, draait t jochie zich om en kraait tot de menschen: Zwarte piet heeft gewonnen!’

American soldiers was remarkable since their physical appearance stood out in the streets. The article noted that ‘Maastricht is – generously expressed – a city of negroes. The big support routes which run along and through the city, enable this. The black Americans appear to have extraordinary stamina as drivers, etc., and thus are better suited [to be a driver] than for the actual fighting.’¹⁹⁹ The article reversed the American reason for employing African American soldiers in support units. The article made it appear as if the African Americans were selected as drivers because of their endurance. In reality, this division in the American army was based on racial prejudices and partly on the conclusions from a 1925 Army War College study, which argued that African Americans had neither had the ability nor the character to fight to the equal capacity of their white peers and therefore should be placed in support troops instead of fighting units.²⁰⁰

One of the articles which regarded the issue of addressing African American soldiers appeared in the *Limburgsch Dagblad*, published one month after the liberation. According to the author of the piece, the word ‘black-people’ that many Dutch people used to address the African American soldiers has an unsympathetic sound. For this reason, the writer of the article called the readers to address these soldiers as ‘coloured people’ since this was what the African American soldiers were called back home in America. Although the author signalled a problem and wanted to inform the readers of the right words to address these soldiers, the article ended with a diminutive sentence, in which indirectly the power inequality and discriminating nature of the article became apparent. In the final sentence the author stated ‘let’s repeat after the Americans and the “little blacks” will be pleased.’²⁰¹ The word ‘little blacks’ (‘zwartjes’) which the writer used is a diminutive word and is in contrast with the proposed aim of the article to properly address African American soldiers. Even though American stereotypes of African Americans thus hardly travelled to the Netherlands, American customs of how to address African Americans did transfer the Atlantic. In four Limburg newspapers in the liberation period was called to address the African Americans soldiers as was done back home in

¹⁹⁹ Delpher, ‘Met De Patriot naar het Zuiden’, *De Patriot* (version 30 May 1945) <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMNIOD05:000143543:mpeg21:a0006> Freely translated: ‘Maastricht is – royaal uitgedrukt – een stad van negers. De grote bevoorradingsroutes, die lang en via de stad lopen, brengen dit met zich mee. De zwarte Amerikanen blijken een buitengewoon uithoudingsvermogen te hebben als chauffeur etc. en daarvoor beter geschikt te zijn dan voor de eigenlijke strijd.’ [accessed February 2019].

²⁰⁰ Allison J. Gough, “‘Messing Up Another Country’s Customs:’ The Exportation of American Racism During World War II” *World History Connected* 5.1 (2008).

²⁰¹ Delpher, ‘Colored-people’, *Limburgsch Dagblad*, (version 19 October 1944) <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010416570:mpeg21:p002> [accessed February 2019]. Freely translated: ‘Laten wij het de Amerikanen nazeggen en de “zwartjes” zijn content.’

America.²⁰²

The preoccupation with how to address the African American soldiers also becomes apparent in other articles from the newspaper *Veritas*, a Catholic newspaper in Maastricht and from the *Limburgsch Dagblad*. In *Veritas*, in November 1944, an article headlined ‘Our Black Friends’ appeared on the third page of the newspaper. The article had a positive tone and stated that ‘in the American army are also a couple of black soldiers who provide excellent services for the transport, which is needed for a modern army.’²⁰³ The article argued that some Dutch people called these soldiers ‘niggers,’ which the African American soldiers themselves considered a swearing word and therefore should not be used. The article ended with the question: ‘why shouldn’t we consider them just like all the other American soldiers and treat them the same way, they are after all fighting for the same good cause.’²⁰⁴ The author of the article thus called for equal treatment of all American soldiers.

The issue of insulting African American soldiers by wrongly addressing them was also evident in an article in the *Limburgsch Dagblad* which was headed ‘complaint of a coloured person.’ The writer tried to explain why black soldiers were sometimes uncomfortable in a white environment such as Limburg. According to the article, people often called the African Americans ‘niggers’ or ‘black’ which to them are offensive words. Instead, according to the article, the words ‘coloured-man’ or ‘negro-soldier’ should be used. Moreover, according to the writer of the piece, many people spread false rumours about the African American soldiers. Although the author does not specify what kind of rumours were spread, the author called the readers to help to combat these untrue accusations.²⁰⁵ A testimony from the African American veteran Henry Vanlandingham stated in Kirkels’ book, described a similar rumour spreading. According to written testimony given by Vanlandingham, people in Berg en Terblijt were first cautious about approaching the African American soldiers. Vanlandingham presumed that one of the reasons for their prudence was the rumour that had spread that black people would have

²⁰² Delpher, ‘Colored-people’, *Limburgsch Dagblad*, (version 19 October 1944); Delpher, ‘Zijn de negers OOK onze bevrijders?’, *De Waarheid* (version 24 February, 1945); Delpher, ‘Onze Zwarte vrienden’, *Veritas/Katholiek 14-daagsch blad voor Maastricht* (version 6 November 1944) and Delpher, ‘Klacht van een Kleurling’, *Limburgsch Dagblad*, (version 3 November 1944).

²⁰³ Delpher, ‘Onze Zwarte vrienden’, *Veritas/Katholiek 14-daagsch blad voor Maastricht* (version 6 November 1944) <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010452440:mpeg21:a0054> [accessed April 2019]. Freely translated ‘In het Amerikaansche leger is ook een aantal zwarte soldaten. Die o.a. uitstekende diensten bewijzen bij het geweldige transport, dat voor een modern leger noodig is.’

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* Freely translated ‘Waarom hen niet beschouwd als de andere Amerikaansche soldaten en hen op dezelfde wijze behandeld. Zij strijden immers voor dezelfde zaak.’

²⁰⁵ Delpher, ‘Klacht van een Kleurling’, *Limburgsch Dagblad*, (version 3 November 1944). <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010416582:mpeg21:a0022> [accessed March 2019].

tails like monkeys.²⁰⁶ Nonetheless, after a couple of weeks the cautiousness faded away and the African Americans soldiers were treated welcoming.

On the whole, around ten newspapers articles appeared in Limburg newspapers in the months after the liberation that expressed the discontent of African American soldiers as to how they were addressed. As a solution, the newspaper articles which covered these complaints called upon their reader to address the African American soldiers in terms that were common in America. The existence of these articles, which appeal the readers to address African American soldiers properly firstly suggests that people wanted to make other people aware of the discriminatory terms they were using. Secondly, the existence of these articles suggests that the usage of derogatory words to address African American soldiers were regularly used in everyday language.

An article that does focus on the racial prejudices of Dutch people could be found in *De Waarheid*, a communist newspaper in the Netherlands. The article exposed a certain aloofness towards African American soldiers. The article was a letter sent by a man named C.M. Baaten with the title: ‘Are the negroes also our liberators?’²⁰⁷ In the letter, Baaten signalled a problem: African American soldiers were often denied accommodation at people’s houses, while there was room when white American soldiers asked for shelter. Baaten asked the readers why this was done?²⁰⁸ Moreover, he posed the question of who actually is civilised? According to Baaten, the civilisation of the Germans slaughtered thousands of people on behalf of the Aryan ‘race’ and therefore he argued that Dutch people should not brag about being a part of the white ‘race’. In the article, Baaten requested everyone to help the African American soldiers because they have as much right to help and support as other American GIs. From this particular newspaper article, it becomes apparent that in everyday social practices African Americans were sometimes disadvantaged by the local Dutch population. The fact that a letter sent to a newspaper wanted to bring to light this problem indicates it must have been a common problem. Even though the letter suggested the issue was based on racial prejudices, the language used in the article itself was degrading. The word ‘zwartjes’ (‘little blacks’) was used to describe the African American soldiers.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*, p.44. Written testimony of Vanlandingham translated by Mieke Kirkels ‘Weet je, in het begin bekeken ze ons een beetje achterdochtig. We wisten van de praatjes die de ronde deden, dat zwarten een staart zouden hebben, zoals apen. Maar toen we hier [in Berg en Terblijt] een paar weken waren, werden we overladen met alle mogelijke Nederlandse vriendelijkheid.’

²⁰⁷ Delpher, ‘Zijn de negers OOK onze bevrijders?’, *De Waarheid* (version 24 February, 1945) <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMNIO05:000166317:mpeg21:a0016> [accessed March 2019].

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ The word ‘zwartjes’ is a diminutive of the word ‘zwart’ which means black.

Nonetheless, although the majority of articles concerning African American soldiers were positive or called upon readers to equally treat all American liberators. In *Advertentieblad voor Limburg*, a denigrating article was published in December 1944 referring to multiple stereotypes about black people. According to the author, before the liberation, the only ‘negroes’ Dutch people ever saw was with *Sinterklaas*. Additionally, the author questioned where the good old time was when ‘negroes’ were ‘dreaming about twilight days in the jungle, campfires in the evening, the hunt and the savage wailing of parties and women.’²¹⁰ The image the author created resembled European fantasies of a savage and wild Africa. The author does not make any connection to the American heritage of African Americans but solely regarded them as ‘negroes’ from the jungle. The otherness of the African American GIs is thus emphasised as their desires were portrayed to be exotic and primitive. The otherness of African Americans also appeared from an article in *Strijdend Nederland*. In this article it was stated that you could hear the ‘cackle of the negroes’ who had a hard time sleeping in the open trucks near their military camp during the harsh winter of 1944-1945.²¹¹ The word ‘cackle’ is closely connotated with animals and constructed an image in which African American soldiers were racially ranked lower than the readers of the article.

Although negative stereotypes did occur in local Limburg newspapers, African American soldiers were not portrayed as a danger to Dutch people or Dutch women. Not a single article referring to African American soldiers in connection to sexuality was found. As is elaborated further in the next chapter, the thought was that the ‘overall’ moral danger came from the Allied army in general, and not specifically from African American GIs. This is remarkable since in British and French newspapers, articles concerning the sexual behaviour of African American soldiers did occur in a predominantly negative manner.

In sum, in the regional Limburg newspapers, one reoccurring paradox is evident. On the one hand, the complaint that the African American soldiers were not treated equally compared to other liberators. On the other hand, the language used in the articles that call for an equal treatment used derogatory and diminutive words to describe the soldiers. Hence, it can be argued that although it was stated that African American soldiers had to be treated equally as liberators, they were seen as ‘other’ and therefore different. The process of othering is

²¹⁰ Delpher, ‘Largo in Jazz’, *Advertentieblad voor Limburg*, (version 9 December 1944) <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMNIOD05:000070014:mpeg21:a0004> [accessed March 2019]. Freely translated: ‘Waar is de goede oude tijd toen een neger nog weemoedig droomde over de schemerend dagen in het oerwoud en de laaiende kampvuren in den zwoelen avond, over de jacht en de strijd en stuiptrekkende lianen, over de woeste bedwelmeling der feesten en vrouwen...?’

²¹¹ Delpher, ‘“Maar Juffrouw toch....!”’, *Strijdend Nederland* (version 3 February 1945) <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMNIOD05:000150638:mpeg21:a0013> [accessed March 2019].

unmistakably present in newspaper articles about African Americans. Othering is ‘the process whereby the “foreign” is reduced to a simplistic, digestible, exotic or degrading stereotype.’²¹² From Limburg newspapers articles, it appeared that ‘they’, the African Americans, were certainly not like ‘us’, the Dutch people. Although this depiction of the ‘other’ is not necessarily negative, it is an image in which two groups are constructed separately. Furthermore, the majority of the newspapers articles that wrote about African Americans had a paternalistic tone or depicted African American soldiers as somewhat infant-like and playful. Accordingly, a visible power structure in the local newspaper is a feeling of ‘us’ and ‘them’ in which the African American soldiers were seen as utterly different.

Conclusion

In the Netherlands, prior to the liberation and after the liberation, ‘race’ did matter. By analysing local Limburg newspapers, the dominant representation of how African American soldiers were treated in the Netherlands can be challenged. White and black American liberators were not seen as equal. Partially, because of the discriminatory practices in the American army which were transferred to the Netherlands, but also because of existing prejudices about black people in the Netherlands. From the Limburg newspapers, it appeared that distinct racial images were present in Limburg prior to and during the presence of African American soldiers in the Netherlands. These racialized images have historical roots in colonial practices but were also shaped by national and international media. Although the arrival of African American GIs sparked debates on how to address these newcomers, discussions about racism and discrimination remained absent from the Limburg media. Although American-style segregation could be objected to on individual grounds, the overall Dutch attitude towards segregation was permitted without any objections. Even though certain newspapers articles were engaged in the correct naming of African American soldiers, one recurring stereotype of black people in newspapers depicted the African American soldiers as infantile. It can thus be concluded that the majority of Limburg newspapers did not express an explicit racist attitude towards African American soldiers. Nonetheless, the newspapers did reveal a patronising attitude towards African American in general was apparent in the newspapers in which African American were seen as utterly different. In addition to this, the language in these newspapers reveals an unequal power relation in which the African American were regarded as distinctly ‘other.’ Therefore, both physical and discursive segregation practices were present in Limburg. Physical

²¹² Adrian Holliday, ‘Small cultures’, *Applied Linguistics* 20.2 (1999) pp.237-264, p.245.

segregation as implemented and carried out by the American army, and discursive segregation in the form of othering and the creation and maintaining of certain stereotypes of black people in newspaper articles and diaries. These stereotypes depicted African Americans as a group instead of treating them as individuals and as a consequence established an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ attitude towards the African American soldiers.

By analysing Limburg newspapers, the ‘colour-blind’ myth of the Netherlands as was presented by Hondius, Witte and Wekker can be supported. ‘Race’ in the Netherlands during the liberation was not meaningless, but it was neither recognised as an issue. Lastly, the absence of diary passages that wrote about the presence of African American soldiers during the liberation is revealing because it shows that African American GIs were to a certain extent ‘invisible,’ just as the American army wanted them to be. Nevertheless, the fact that newspapers did cover articles in which African American soldiers appeared means that they were visible in everyday life.

Chapter 3 - MORAL PANIC

‘To our mothers, youth leaders and social workers’ is how M.H.C Vendrik, chairwoman of the *Katholiek Vrouwelijk Jeugdwerk* in Utrecht started her letter to all the members of the Catholic organisation. In the letter, she expressed her concerns regarding the morality of Dutch women in the liberation period.²¹³ According to Vendrik, ‘soldiers, especially foreign soldiers, women and girls are attracted to by a great charm. The appeal of the uniform, the attractiveness of the new and the strange has large effects on this charm.’²¹⁴

This third chapter discusses the moral panic, which arose in the Netherlands prior to the arrival of the Allied troops, and which intensified after the arrival of the American army in Limburg. The emergence of this moral panic is visible from government, church and newspaper sources. This chapter uses Anette Warring’s concept of the female body as a combat zone to explain this moral panic.²¹⁵ According to Warring, the female body itself can be seen as a site of combat in a wartime period over which multiple parties fight.²¹⁶ Warring explains that the female body can be seen as a combat zone because women can safeguard the continuity of the nation-state by giving birth.²¹⁷ Therefore, women can secure the heritage and national origins of children. Even though Warring focussed on intimate relationships between European women and German soldiers, this chapter argues that her idea is also applicable to Allied soldiers in relation to European women.²¹⁸ This chapter shows that the bodies of Dutch women were a site of (verbal) combat in the liberation period between Dutch men and Allied soldiers. Further, this chapter demonstrates that the moral panic erupted within Dutch institutions, such as the church, the *Militair Gezag* (MG) and in Dutch newspapers. However, the moral panic was also fuelled by the local population, specifically by men. Hence, the resentment of local Limburg men caused Dutch institutions to adopt a precarious attitude towards the Allied presence. Altogether,

²¹³ KDC, Archief 414, inv.nr VEND. 27. Letter from M.H.C Vendrik (no date)

²¹⁴ *Ibid.* Freely translated: ‘Van soldaten vooral vreemde soldaten, gaat op vrouwen en meisjes een groote beking uit. De aantrekkingskracht van het uniform, de aantrekkelijkheid, dat het nieuwe en vreemde heeft, doet juist hierin groote mate haar werking.’

²¹⁵ Warring, ‘Intimate and Sexual Relations’, p.89

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.121.

²¹⁸ Anette Warring deals predominantly with the relationships between occupying soldiers and European women. Other works on the relationships between German soldiers and European women: Fabrice Virgili, *Shorn Women. Gender and Punishment in Liberation France* (Oxford: Berg, 2002); Monika Diederichs, *Wie Geschoren Wordt Moet Stil Zitten: Nederlandse Meisjes en Vrouwen Die in de Periode 1940-1945 Omgang Hadden met Duitse Militairen* (Soesterberg: Uitgeverij Aspekt, 2015); Maren Röger, ‘The Sexual Policies and Sexual Realities of the German Occupiers in Poland in the Second World War’, *Contemporary European History* 23.2 (February 2014) pp.1-21.

this chapter asserts that Dutch people in general disapproved of Dutch women having relationships with foreign soldiers and that being ‘foreign’ was a more important issue than the skin colour of the soldier.

By examining newspaper articles, church correspondence and government documents, the consequences of this moral panic for the interactions between Dutch women and Allied GIs in general, and African American GIs in specific are studied. Unfortunately, almost no written sources on the interactions between African American soldiers and Dutch women exist. Their encounters are barely described in newspaper articles or government documents. For this reason, this chapter focuses on the moral panic which occurred with the arrival of the American army in Limburg and the Netherlands more broadly. The last section of this chapter researches how was dealt with the arrival of the American army in two other European countries because in both Great Britain and France, a similar moral panic occurred. However, specific differences can be traced in how these two countries framed the moral danger of the Allied soldiers for the population. For example, the ‘black scare’ regarding white female sexuality was present in France but remained out of official and public discussions in the Netherlands. As this chapter demonstrates, only in a few instances, African American soldiers were mentioned in correlation with sexuality in the liberation period in the Netherlands. However, nothing compared to the scale as this was discussed in Great Britain or France.

An important aspect of this chapter is the movement and travelling of the American army across nations through Europe. American soldiers who arrived in the Netherlands had already experienced what it was like to be a liberator in other countries since most of the American troops entered the mainland of Europe through France or Italy. The previous experiences of American soldiers with women in other countries affected the way in which American GIs interacted with Dutch women. For example, American GIs were astonished to what degree women offered their ‘services’ in Italy and France.²¹⁹ Both in Italy and France, prostitution became a disputed issue for the governments of these countries after the arrival of the American army.²²⁰ The Dutch MG was preoccupied with the earlier experiences of the Allied soldiers in other European countries prior to the arrival of the American army. For example, the MG was afraid that the influx of vast contingents of foreign soldiers would cause an increase in prostitution and venereal diseases.

²¹⁹ Mary Louise Roberts, ‘The Price of Discretion: Prostitution, Venereal Disease, and the American Military in France, 1944-1946’, *The American Historical Review* 115.4 (October, 2010) pp.1002-1030, p.1007.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.1004.

The fear of increasing prostitution

On 3 April 1944, the MG held a meeting about the possible dangers of the increasing prostitution after the liberation. Overall, this meeting was concerned with topics such as entertainment facilities for Allied soldiers, relationships between foreign soldiers and Dutch women, and how to prevent an increase of venereal diseases. Even though the leading general of the MG, Hendrik Kruls, was not present at this particular meeting. Several other key figures of the MG, such as sous-chef W. Chr. Posthumus Meyjes, Maj. Oudraad and Colonel Bueninck were attending. Even the leader of the health department, Dr. van den Belt and a medical advisor named A.M. Meerlo were present.²²¹ Although no location is stated on the document, the meeting was presumably held in London where the MG was seated until September 1944. The finding of this document is significant since it is the first and only discovered document in which Dutch authorities expressed their thoughts on the segregation in the American army.²²²

The document drafted after the meeting stated that the Allied armies themselves were responsible for any ‘hotels’ and women they wanted to bring to entertain their soldiers with.²²³ Although stated indirectly, ‘hotels’ as referred to in between quotation marks hinted at the establishment of brothels or organised prostitution for the Allied soldiers. Even though official brothels had been forbidden in the Netherlands since 1911, prostitution itself was still tolerated.²²⁴ By stating that organised prostitution was an affair for the Allied troops themselves and would not be facilitated or supported by the Dutch government, the MG hoped to restrain the increase of prostitution after the arrival of the Allied armies. Moreover, the document shows that the MG was aware of the fact that the arrival of the Allied troops could cause an increase in venereal diseases. Providing information to Dutch citizens and Allied soldiers was mentioned as a solution to prevent these diseases from spreading. Furthermore, the document mentioned that the arrival of Allied troops could cause hostility from the male Dutch population towards the Allied soldiers since these soldiers could offer the women ‘better and more material goods.’²²⁵ The second part of this chapter demonstrates that this hostility against Allied soldiers

²²¹ NL-HaNA, Archief 2.13.25 inv.nr. 307, Militair Gezag, Stukken betreffende de bestudering van maatregelen om zedenverwildering, prostitutie en geslachtsziekten tegen te gaan. Memo from 3 April 1944, ‘Bespreking over het gevaar van toenemende prostitutie na de bevrijding.’

²²² Schoonoord, did not use this document in his work on the MG or made any reference to this particular document. Further, Kirkels predominantly focused on oral history in her book and did not research archival material in the National Archives in The Hague.

²²³ NL-HaNA, Archief 2.13.25, inv.nr. 307.

²²⁴ H. W. J. Volmuller, *Het Oudste Beroep: Geschiedenis van de Prostitutie in Nederland* (Utrecht Oosthoek, 1966) p.43.

²²⁵ NL-HaNA, Archief 2.13.25, inv.nr. 307. Freely translated ‘Nieuwe vijandigheid van de mannelijke bevolking jegens de nieuwe bezetter, vooral als deze met meer en betere materiele middelen de meisjes kunnen verlokken.’

indeed took place as is visible from local Limburg newspapers and government correspondence. In the document appeared a paternalistic stance from the MG. The MG saw it as its task to guide the behaviour of both Dutch citizens and Allied soldiers. A visible relation in the document between the MG and the Allied authorities was that the MG wanted to point out the dangers of attracting Dutch women to the parties of the Allied troops.²²⁶ The stance of the MG was one of consideration and communication and not stern authoritarian attitude. The document wanted to create a guideline for the upcoming liberation period. Altogether, the document of the MG from 3 April 1944, reveals that the MG was preoccupied with the consequences of the approaching liberation and the influx of thousands of foreign soldiers.

The final sentence of the document is the most intriguing since this sentence stated that ‘a colour-bar is rejected.’²²⁷ The statement is not accompanied by any further elaboration on why, or how the MG was planning on ‘rejecting’ the colour bar. Nevertheless, the statement is there. The proclamation that the MG rejected social and economic separation between groups on the basis of skin colour. This is a bold statement which indicates that the MG was aware of the segregation in the American army and that they initially rejected it. Interestingly, in no other documents was referred to this rejection, to a colour-bar or to racial segregation in the American army. Eventually, as was shown in the previous chapter, the American army remained completely segregated and transferred their segregationist practices to the Netherlands. It thus can be argued that the statement was not communicated to the American military authorities because no discussions about the instalment of a colour-bar took place in the Netherlands. Even more, this particular document and the following versions of the document can only be found in Dutch, and no English translation was drafted. The absence of any other references in Dutch government documents to the segregation in the American army could indicate that the American military authorities could impose their customs in the Netherlands without major discussions. The subordinate position of the MG, as opposed to the SHAEF, could moreover explain why no further references were made to racial segregation in the American army. The MG knew they were not in a position to negotiate with the American Army on this topic and that the segregation was inevitably an aspect of the American army that they had to accept. Altogether, the document is valuable to provide insight into how the Dutch government reacted to a segregated army because it shows that the MG initially rejected racial segregation. However, the existence of only one document discussing this subject indicates that the matter was not found important enough to cause a commotion over.

²²⁶ NL-HaNA, Archief 2.13.25, inv.nr. 307.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

In addition to the document of the MG, which discussed the possible consequences of the Allied presence after the liberation, the MG published several information pamphlets about the liberation to prepare people for what they could expect after the liberation. One of these information pamphlets was called ‘be aware for the hangover’ and prepared people for what would happen after the initial celebrations were over and ‘normal’ life would start again.²²⁸ By providing these pamphlets, the MG hoped that people would think about the consequences of their actions and behaviour during the liberation. In addition to these information leaflets, the MG also initiated the establishment of the Entertainment Committee, which had the task to provide alternative activities than dance evenings.²²⁹ Although initially created as a government institution, the Entertainment Committee and the MG were sometimes at odds with their interests.

For instance, in a letter from H. Götzen, the chairman of the Entertainment Committee, to the Dutch President Willem Schermerhorn, a tension between the Entertainment Committee and the Dutch government over the leniency towards the American army emerged. In the letter from August 1945, Götzen insisted on the removal of American Leave Centres in the coal-mine area in Limburg which still housed around 2,100 American soldiers.²³⁰ In earlier correspondence, Götzen was asked to think about a solution for the shortage of coal available for the Dutch population. Instead of providing a solution for this issue, the majority of the letter was concerned with the mine-workers in Limburg who were dissatisfied with the American soldiers. According to Götzen, two reasons existed why the work ethos of the mine-workers had declined. First of all, the mineworkers were dissatisfied with the difference in clothing and rations between them and the American soldiers. Second of all, the American army had taken all the cafes and entertainment facilities in the area. Although local women were welcome to these facilities, access was denied to local men, including the coal miners. To calm the situation and boost the morale of the mine-workers, Götzen insisted that the only solution was the removal of the American Leave Centres from the coal-mine area. The letter illustrates the existence of resentment of a part of the local Limburg population towards the American soldiers over both resources and entertainment. Moreover, the letter demonstrates a general fear for the

²²⁸ NL-HaNA, Archief 2.13.25, inv.nr. 347. Freely translated ‘Hoedt u voor den kater’.

²²⁹ R.P.M. Rhoen, ‘Poging tot Vermaak van Canadese Militairen in 1945: Entertainment Committee of the Netherlands, Afdeling Zeist’, *Seijst: Bulletin ter Bevordering van de Kennis van de Geschiedenis van Zeist* 33.2 (2003) p.37-56.

²³⁰ NL-HaNA, Archief 2.03.01, inv.nr. 5246. Ministeries voor Algemeene Oorlogvoering van het Koninkrijk (AOK) en van Algemene Zaken (AZ): Kabinet van de Minister-President (KMP). Letter from H. Götzen to W. Schermerhorn 2 Augustus 1945. Freely translated: ‘De eenige effectieve maatregel bleek mij te zijn, verwijdering der Amerikaansche leave-centres uit het kolendisicrict.’

revolt of the mineworkers. A revolt would result in a decrease in coal production, which would lead to an increase in the already present shortage. According to Götzen, the morale of the coal-miners had to be increased in order to prevent the situation from escalating. The needs of the local population were thus placed above the Allied requests.

Moral panic and the Catholic Church

Preservation of the morality of Dutch citizens after the liberation was not only a worry for the Dutch government. In the Netherlands, religious organisations were also preoccupied with the impending arrival of the Allied troops and the festive sphere that would arise after the liberation. In Limburg, the majority of the population was Catholic, and the Catholic Church was a great authority in many people's lives. Before and during the presence of the American army, Catholic institutions warned for the dangers of 'moral decay.' However, not the foreign soldiers were held responsible for these encounters, but Dutch women. Although women were called to be assisting, kind and companion-like to the Allied soldiers, women were also prompted to be aware of the temptations of their newly acquired freedom after the liberation.²³¹ The new possibilities and responsibilities that had arisen during the war, partially because of the absence of a large part of the male population, had altered gender relations and gave women more independence. However, in the direct aftermath of the liberation, the Catholic Church wanted to restore the pre-war gender roles to control the behaviour of women.

The idea that encounters between women and soldiers had to be 'friendly but brief', as defined by British historian Wendy Webster, was also prominent in the Netherlands.²³² A report of the *Unie van Vrouwenverenigingen* (Union of Women's Associations) in 1944 warned women that the encounters with the soldiers were momentary and that the soldiers should be received in a way which would not lead women to be ashamed of their behaviour towards their men, fiancés or friends.²³³ A pamphlet titled 'Meisje...look out for a baby!' discussed the consequences of intimate associations with Allied soldiers and warned women of sexual relations with the soldiers.²³⁴ The pamphlet additionally stated that immoral behaviour regarding foreign soldiers could result in the fact that Dutch men would not want to date them

²³¹ NIOD, Archief 227, inv.nr. 303, Archief Bureau Inlichtingen Maastricht/Nijmegen, Rapport met een oproep van de Unie van Vrouwenverenigingen om de geallieerde soldaten na de bevrijding hulpvaardig, vriendelijk en kameraadschappelijk tegemoet te treden, maar op te passen voor de verleidingen van de nieuw verworven vrijheid bij het overgeven aan de vreugderoos, 1944.

²³² Wendy Webster, "'Fit to Fight, Fit to Mix': Sexual Patriotism in Second World War Britain', *Women's History Review* 22.4 (2014) pp.607-624, p.609.

²³³ NIOD, Archief 227, inv.nr. 303.

²³⁴ NIOD, Archief 249-0098A, inv.nr. 251. Dossier – Bevrijding, 'Meisje...look out for a baby!'.

anymore.²³⁵ Since the presence of the foreign soldiers would only be momentary, ‘immoral’ women would therefore be unable to find a Dutch partner in the future. Women were thus prompted to think about their behaviour towards the foreign soldiers and think about what consequences their behaviour had. By spreading such information pamphlets, the Dutch religious authorities wanted to make women aware of the consequences of their actions but also control their behaviour to a certain extent. Female bodies were thus seen as a place over which Dutch authorities had, or could, exercise power. On the other hand, these information pamphlets show that women themselves were held accountable for associating with foreign soldiers.

Even though the interests of the MG and Catholic institutions in the Netherlands largely aligned, these two institutions did not agree on all measures that had to be taken in order to ‘protect’ Dutch citizens. Although both the MG and Catholic institutions thought that sexual escapades of Dutch women with Allied soldiers were worrisome, these two institutions had discussions about to what extent precautionary measurements had to be taken in order to prevent the GIs and women from interacting too closely. In a letter from 20 December 1944, from the Lieutenant Commander of the MG, A.H. Stok, to the military commissar of Brabant D. van der Schueren, the tension between the government and a Catholic institution becomes clear. Stok wrote if van der Schueren could ask for some more leniency from the local clergy regarding dance evenings with Allied soldiers.²³⁶ According to Stok, the Allied troops were eager to organise ‘innocent parties’ and he was afraid that the strict stance of the Catholic Church in the region on the population would lead to ill-feelings between the population and the Allied troops.²³⁷ This letter exemplifies the tensions that existed between the national authorities, like the MG, and local institutions like the church. The MG had to keep the Allied armies satisfied, even though the needs of these foreign troops were something in sharp contrast with the desires of the church. From archival documents, it appears that according to the MG, the Catholic clergy could be too strict regarding morals. For instance, in several communities, priests prohibited women to go to the dance evening were Allied soldiers would be present.²³⁸ As a consequence, the dance evening had to be called off because no women would show up. This generated displeasure with the Allied soldiers. The MG feared these kinds of situations would result in weakening the alliance between the Netherlands and the United States.²³⁹

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ RHCL, Archief, 07.E09, inv.nr. 16. Rijksarchief Limburg, Militar Gezag. 20 December 1944. Letter from A.H. Stok to D. van der Schueren.

²³⁷ *Ibid.* Freely translated: ‘de onschuldige dansapertijen die de troepen zoo graag willen organiseren’

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ RHCL, 07.E09, inv.nr. 168.

In documents about the danger of Allied soldiers for the behaviour of Dutch women, Allied soldiers, in general, were portrayed as a possible threat for moral behaviour. Nevertheless, a direct reference to the danger of African American soldiers was made by a Catholic Dean from Roermond. Dean Rhoen was so worried about the presence of African American soldiers in the town that he wrote a letter to the Military commissary of Middle-Limburg B.J.J.M Derks, asking to deny women permission to the residence of African American soldiers in Roermond on the Minderbroedersingel.²⁴⁰ The letter does not state why these soldiers were specifically dangerous, but the Dean was clear that he wanted to deter local women from visiting the place. The Dean wrote that he wanted ‘to promote that girls are no longer admitted to the residence of the American negro soldiers in the building of the public school...’ Military commissary Derks responded to the letter of the Dean that the issue was presented to the Mayor of Roermond and that he would have the authority to grant an exemption.²⁴¹ If the exemption was eventually admitted could not be traced in the archives. For this reason, it remains unknown if the request of the Dean was eventually implemented, and if women were averted to visit the building. Nevertheless, the document depicted African American soldiers as a danger to women which they needed to be protected from. What explicit danger these soldiers would pose is not mentioned, but both the Dean and the Military commissary agreed that these soldiers were a danger to local women.

Overall, most Catholic documents that referred to the dangers of the liberation period were solely preoccupied with the possible dangers for Dutch women. Documents often warned that Allied soldiers had a wife or fiancé at home and that they were only temporarily in the Netherlands.²⁴² Dutch girls and women were advised to preserve their ‘virtue’ for Dutch men and were urged to keep up the good name of the Dutch people. Even more, several documents warned women that their future could be endangered by inappropriate behaviour towards Allied soldiers.²⁴³ The Dutch precautionary measures to prevent ‘immoral’ behaviour and sexual encounters out of wedlock were thus predominantly directed towards Dutch women and not towards the foreign soldiers. Women overstepped the boundaries of acceptable behaviour by associating with foreign soldiers. It can therefore be argued, that in the Netherlands, the

²⁴⁰ RHCL, 07.E09, inv.nr. 20. Correspondence between G. Rhoen and B.J.J.M Derks 16 to 18 July 1944, Freely translated: ‘U zult me ten eerste verplichten door te willen bevorderen, dat meisjes niet meer toegelaten worden tot het verblijf van de Amerikaanse negersoldaten, het gebouw van de Openbare school aan de Minderbroederssingel.’

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² NIOD, Archief 249-0098A, inv.nr. 251.

²⁴³ NIOD, Archief 227, inv.nr. 303.

fraternisation of women with Allied soldiers was seen as a mistake at the hands of Dutch women of which they needed to be protected.

Resentment of local men

After the initial euphoria of the liberation faded away, some of the local Limburg population began to develop unsympathetic feelings towards the Allied soldiers. A probable reason for these feelings was the association of local women with American soldiers. This shift in attitude towards the Allied soldiers is visible in local Limburg newspapers. In the first weeks after the liberation, the newspapers celebrated the American soldiers as brave men who put their lives on the line to save Europe from the Nazi occupation. Around three weeks after the liberation of Maastricht, the first newspaper articles appeared that discussed the tensions between the local population and American soldiers.

Tensions ran even higher when a pamphlet was distributed in Maastricht in November 1944, in which an anonymous group threatened women to stop the ‘immoral’ behaviour regarding American soldiers. The pamphlet called women from Maastricht cowards for sneaking around in the dark with American soldiers.²⁴⁴ It moreover stated that if women would not comply with the conditions in the pamphlet, the women who dated American soldiers would be publicly announced and scorned for their behaviour. This action would be similar to what was done to the *Moffenmeiden* (women who associated with German soldiers) in direct aftermath of the liberation.²⁴⁵ A group called ‘Strijdbare Geesten’ signed the pamphlet.²⁴⁶ Although no woman was eventually condemned in public by the group, the pamphlet caused reactions amongst both Dutch people and Americans. After the distribution of the document, several American newspapers reported about the pamphlet. Even the American military newspaper *Stars and Stripes* mentioned the pamphlet and the resentment local Maastricht men felt towards American soldiers.²⁴⁷ This particular pamphlet demonstrates that the tensions between local men, local women and American soldiers ran high in the liberation period.

²⁴⁴ Roebroeks, ‘Strijdbare Geesten Contra GIs’, pp.131-132.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.* For more on the treatment of ‘*Moffenmeiden*’ in the Netherlands see Rianne Oosterom, *Moffenmeiden: Over Soldatenliefjes, Knippers en Omstanders: Een Geschiedenis in Verhalen* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 2019) or Monika Diederichs, *Wie Geschoren Wordt Moet Stil Zitten: Nederlandse Meisjes en Vrouwen Die in de Periode 1940-1945 Omgang Hadden met Duitse Militairen* (Soesterberg: Uitgeverij Aspekt, 2015).

²⁴⁶ Roebroeks, ‘Strijdbare Geesten Contra GIs’, p.132

²⁴⁷ *Stars and Stripes* 15 December 1944 reported: ‘Dates with GIs to get Holland girls. A distinct and growing movement, backed by church officials, to prevent Dutch girls from associating with American troops in the Maestricht area of Holland has come to a head with the appearance of unsigned posters warning that girls seen in the company of GIs would have their heads shaved as did women who collaborated with the Nazis, according to a dispatch from John M. Mecklin, Chicago Sun correspondent of Maestricht...’ Quoted in Roebroeks, ‘Strijdbare Geesten Contra GIs’, p.132.

Although these tensions were apparent from newspaper articles and pamphlets, no evidence was found of any physical confrontations between Limburg men and American soldiers.

Warring's idea a woman's body as a national property appropriately explains these hostile feelings of the local Limburg men. Men in Limburg believed they had the right to associate with local women and not foreign soldiers. By fraternising with foreign soldiers, 'the women challenged the national and masculine ownership of women's sexuality.'²⁴⁸ The national loyalty of women who dated foreign soldiers was thus questioned. The restoring of traditional gender roles after the war can therefore be seen as a way to re-establish male dominance and re-claiming Dutch women for Dutch men. Warring's concept of the female body as a combat zone is visible from sources such as the pamphlet of the *Strijdbare Geesten*, since Dutch men became jealous when Dutch women associated with American soldiers.

Dutch historian Chris van der Heijden similarly described an incident in the liberation period in which women who dated Allied soldiers were equally condemned to women who had dated German soldiers. In Utrecht on 16 September 1945, a large group of people tried to shave the heads of 'yankeegirls.'²⁴⁹ According to Van der Heijden, the incident caused a real battle between two thundered Canadian soldiers and an unknown number of Dutch people.²⁵⁰ This event exposes the tensions between foreign soldiers and Dutch people in the liberation period. Not only women who had associated with the occupier were scorned, but also women who associated with the liberators were condemned. The example of Van der Heijden and the empirical data presented in this chapter revealed that the concept of Warring, in which the occupier and occupied fight over women's bodies, can also be applied to liberator versus liberated. It could even be argued that the battle over women's bodies was a battle between national and 'foreign' men.

Discontent in regional newspapers

Local Limburg newspapers clearly display the dissatisfaction of local men in the liberation period. The primary discontent was that women no longer had attention for them. An example of local male dissatisfaction was an anonymous pamphlet written by a group named B.O.B on 1 January 1945. The pamphlet directed its attention to Dutch women who associated with

²⁴⁸ Warring, 'Intimate and Sexual Relations', p.121.

²⁴⁹ Van der Heijden, *Grijs Verleden*, p.337.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

American soldiers.²⁵¹ The authors of the pamphlet blamed women that they led the soldiers seduce them too easily and that they forgot about Dutch boys and their war effort. The authors of the document made clear that they did not blame the American soldiers, since ‘they could imagine that they would do the same if they had been so far away from home for such a long time.’²⁵² Instead, they blamed women since they made decisions that affected local men. The pamphlet ended with a short rhyme which summarises the feelings towards women and their encounters with foreign soldiers. Although it was thought that women should welcome and assist the Allied soldiers, the line was drawn at romantic and sexual relationships.

Vergooi niet ’t geluk
Door te breken de band
Met hem, die je liefheeft:
Een zoon van JOUW land!!

Laat Yankee en Tommy
Je vriendschap ervaren;
Maar wil toch je LIEFDE
Voor ’n Dutch Boy bewaren!²⁵³

That it was the responsibility of Dutch women to uphold the dignity of the Dutch people can also be perceived from an article in the Catholic newspaper *Veritas* in November 1944. In the article, it is stated that the American army, together with local Catholic organisations, would organise leisure evenings in several Limburg cities for American soldiers who were on leave. Local women were invited to these evenings but in the article it is stated that ‘it cannot be insisted enough that a woman should uphold her dignity: in the interest of our people and in the interest of the soldiers whom we as liberators thank and appreciate.’²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ RHCL, Archief 04.11, inv.nr. 601. Commissaris van de Koningin in Limburg 1944-1990. Stukken betreffende de verhouding met het Amerikaanse leger inzake vriendschappen, “restcenters”, inkwartieringen etc, 1944-1945. Pamphlet titled ‘Aan alle goede Nederlanders’, 1 January 1945,

²⁵² RHCL, 04.11, inv.nr. 601, page 3. Freely translated ‘Let wel! Wij verwijten de Amerikanen niets! Ook WIJ zijn lang genoeg soldaat geweest en staan lang genoeg in het volle leven, om te beseffen, dat een soldaat in deze niets kan verweten worden! Wij zouden hoogstwaarschijnlijk, neen, zeker hetzelfde doen, wanneer wij zover van huis waren, in een vreemde wereld, zoals zij, onze bevrijders. Wij begrijpen die soldaten volkomen.’

²⁵³ RHCL, 04.11, inv.nr. 601, page 5.

²⁵⁴ Delpher, ‘Ontspanning voor frontsoldaten’, *Veritas/Katholiek 14-daagsch blad voor Maastricht*, (version 6 November 1944) <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010452440:mpeg21:a0032> [accessed March 2019]. Freely translated: ‘Er kan niet genoeg op aangedrongen worden, dat het meisje haar waardigheid hooghoudt: In het belang van ons volk én in het belang van de soldaten, die wij als bevrijder danken en waarderen.’

Nevertheless, not all newspaper articles tried to uphold a positive depiction of American soldiers. In *Advertentieblad voor Limburg* in December 1944, an item was headed ‘Uit de stad van Sint Amor.’ The tone in the article was sarcastic and hostile against both women and American soldiers. The author of the piece mockingly stated that ‘if you were engaged and your girl moved over to one or more Americans, black or white, forgive her, she lived four years without chocolate.’²⁵⁵ The article is especially denigrating about women and the morality of women from Maastricht is questioned in the item. From the next issue of the newspaper becomes apparent that this particular item caused negative reactions. In the following issue one week later, multiple reactions to the article were published on the front page of the newspaper, and even an American soldier had sent a letter to the newspaper to respond to the article. According to private Sidni J. Raiken, the article generated hate speech and encouraged unfriendly feelings towards American soldiers.²⁵⁶ At the end of the letter, the editors of the newspaper reacted to the letter of Raiken, and according to them, only the circumstances surrounding the liberation and the end of the occupation could be blamed for the current situation. Not the American soldiers or women from Maastricht.²⁵⁷

Altogether, in the media, government documents and church records was emphasised that women should behave friendly towards the American soldiers but that this friendly behaviour had a limit which was drawn at an intimate relationship. Women who showed interest in partners outside their ‘own’ group were often criticised.²⁵⁸ Newspaper articles concerning the interactions between Dutch women and American soldiers were not specifically referring to African American soldiers. Instead, foreign soldiers in general were seen as a threat to the moral behaviour of Dutch women. Nevertheless, Dutch women were hence held accountable for their encounters with the Allied soldiers. Thus, even though the American soldiers were heralded as liberators, frictions between the American troops and local population did occur at the same time.

The frictions between the local population and American GIs did not only include

²⁵⁵ Delpher, ‘Uit de stad van Sint Amor’ *Advertentieblad voor Limburg*, (version 2 December 1944) <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMNIOD05:000070012:mpeg21:p001> [accessed March 2019]. Freely translated ‘Als je verloofd was en je deed je meisje noodgedwongen over aan een of meer Amerikanen, zwarte of blanke, vergeef het haar, zij leefde vier jaar zonder chocolade.’

²⁵⁶ Delpher, ‘Problemen der liefde’, *Advertentieblad voor Limburg*, (version 9 December 1944). <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMNIOD05:000070014:mpeg21:p001> [accessed March 2019].

²⁵⁷ Ibid. Freely translated ‘Maar... de problemen der liefde tusschen Amerikaansche soldaten en Maastrichtse meisjes zijn met sympathie alléén niet op te lossen. Er zijn misstanden, gróve misstanden. En de schuld ervan ligt niet bij de Amerikanen, eenzamen in ’n bevriend land, en ook niet bij de meisjes, die nu eenmaal niet nadenken, maar bij de omstandigheden.’

²⁵⁸ Marga Altena, *A True History Full of Romance: Mixed Marriages and Ethnic Identity in Dutch Art, News Media, and Popular Culture (1883-1955)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012) p.14.

discussions about dating. Incidents of robbery, traffic incidents and disputes also created discontent amongst the Dutch population. As the jubilation of the liberation began to fade away and 'normal' life started again, some difficulties with the presence of thousands of foreign soldiers in Limburg started to surface. A source which provides information into the committed crimes by American GIs in the Netherlands is the Judge Advocate General (JAG) of the European Theater of Operation (ETO). These military court cases contain files on crimes committed during the Second World War in Europe. The JAG ETO files also contain several reports on cases that occurred in the Netherlands.

For instance, one ETO case involved an African American soldier from the 648th Quarter Master Truck Company. This private was charged with the murder of the 14-year old Dutch boy 'Wimpy' Houterman in Nieuwenhagen, Limburg.²⁵⁹ No local or national newspaper reported on this particular incident even though the motive given by the perpetrator for the murder was absurd. The family Houterman lived on the Voorstraat 85, and several African American soldiers were quartered in the Voorstraat 77, only a few houses further down the street, of which private James W. Williams was one. On 11 February 1945, William had called Wimpy to get his rifle from across the room and open the door for him. When Wimpy refused to do this several times, Williams shot him from about two feet distance.²⁶⁰ The testimony for the crime came from three girls from who were present in the room with Williams and Wimpy when the incident happened.²⁶¹ According to the witnesses, the youngsters were upstairs in the room of three African American soldiers who had promised them a piece of chocolate. In the JAG ETO file, it is stated that the 'accused asked one of the girls to kiss him and she refused.'²⁶² The testimony of the girls resulted in the confinement of private Williams with hard labour for life and a dishonourable discharge from the American army. The reference in the file to the testimony of the witness that the accused wanted to kiss her, affirmed the idea of the African American male as a sexual predator. The absence of any coverage in Dutch newspapers indicates this case was handled by the American military police (MP). This example shows how an event that took place in Limburg was not covered at all by the Limburg media. It therefore

²⁵⁹ ETO opinions, Board of Review, vol.19, CM ETO 8630, 19 May 1945. pp.349-351. In record of the ETO trial is stated 'What follows is told by one of the little girls sworn as a witness as: Q. Then what happened? A. Then he said to Wimpy he should take the rifle back of his chair. Q. Then what happened? A. Then Wimpy said do it yourself. Q. Then What happened? A. When the soldier took the rifle himself Wimpy stood at the door. Q. Then what happened? A. Then the soldiers asked Wimpy to open the door. Wimpy gave the answer do it yourself. Then he said again to open the door for me and Wimpy answered do it yourself. Then he shot Wimpy. Wimpy cried out and hung around the neck of the soldier, then he fell to the floor.'

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.350-352.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.350.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p.351.

partially reveals the interest of the American army not to expose the crimes committed by American soldiers but dealing with these crimes internally.

Moral panic in Great Britain and France

The previously discussed document of the MG on page 66 revealed that the Dutch government was to a certain extent aware of the situation that had occurred in Britain and France when the American army arrived in these countries. Although the document made no direct references to the situations in these two countries, the MG discussed the same issues of venereal diseases and prostitution. This last section examines how in Great Britain and France, the fear of male sexuality regarding females was framed mainly in fear of black male sexuality towards white women. To a certain extent in Great Britain, and a more considerable degree in France, African American soldiers were scapegoated for the sexual violence committed by the American troops. The stereotype of the ‘buck’, the brutal, oversexed and violent African American was transferred from the United States to France, and a certain extent to Great Britain. How is it possible that in the Netherlands this particular image is absent from government, church and media sources? A possible explanation could be that people in France already had previous experiences with African American and African soldiers during the First World War.²⁶³

Similar to the newspaper articles in the Netherlands, the British press blamed women for associating too freely with the Allied soldiers. Nevertheless, in contrast to the Dutch press, newspaper articles in Great Britain were worried about British women associating with African Americans. In July 1944, an article in the *Evening Despatch* headed ‘Girls in soldiers’ tent: All Gaoled’ described how four British women from the Dudley district were found in a tent with ‘coloured’ Americans and therefore sent to jail for three months.²⁶⁴ Further, the women were charged with trespassing on the property used by the American services.²⁶⁵ In general, British women who associated with African American GIs were regarded to be morally degraded and assumed to be from a low social class.²⁶⁶

In Great Britain, the scare regarding black male sexuality is evident in newspaper articles. Articles reporting on sexual violence or murder cases nearly always state when ‘a negro’ committed the crime, whereas when a white American GI committed the crime, his skin

²⁶³ In *What Soldiers Do*, Roberts stated that ‘American GIs had grown up hearing stories of sexual adventure from fathers who fought in France in 1917-1918’, p.17.

²⁶⁴ The British Newspaper Archive, ‘Girls in Soldiers Tent: All Gaoled’, *Evening Despatch*, (version 12 July 1944) p.3.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, p.307.

colour is omitted. Within the publications on the presence of the American army in Great Britain, the most significant dispute is about the ‘colour-blindness’ of the Britons. According to British historian Graham Smith, while the French objected the segregation policies of the American army, and some sections of the French government even ignored instructions of the American army to facilitate separate facilities, the British authorities, were quite willing to cooperate with the establishment of segregated facilities.²⁶⁷ Nevertheless, according to Smith, the evidence ‘points overwhelmingly to the conclusion that the blacks were warmly welcomed in Great Britain, and the action of the white Americans in furthering a colour bar was roundly condemned.’²⁶⁸

In France, the issues of prostitution, sex and ‘race’ were closely related to the agenda of the American authorities. For example, France established segregated brothels when the American army arrived.²⁶⁹ Furthermore, during the summer of 1944, African American soldiers in France were framed as the primary perpetrators of the rapes. From the 21 American soldiers who were executed in France for rape, 18 were black, and only 3 were white.²⁷⁰ According to American historian Mary Louise Roberts, a certain hypocrisy was at the heart of the American army’s policy towards sex. ‘The army did not really care if a GI had sex with a French woman. What it did care about was that a soldier not contracted a venereal disease.’²⁷¹ Moreover, Roberts argues that ‘at every turn, military policy on sex vacillated between official regulation and unofficial disregard. Brothels were ‘off limits’ but segregated by race; sex was condemned, but condoms were made available; prostitution was banned but covertly organized; brothels were publicly denied but privately supported.’²⁷² This tension between official regulation and unofficial disregard was also present in the Netherlands. However, in the Dutch archives, no accounts of segregated brothels were found. The ban on legalized brothels is an explanation for why the MG was not occupied with this topic. Further research by conducting oral history interviews could indicate whether, in reality, segregated brothels existed in the Netherlands in the liberation period or not.

The sexual crimes committed by American GIs in Europe in the Second World War is a sensitive and controversial topic. The subject is so sensitive that the book *Taken by Force:*

²⁶⁷ Smith, *When Jim Crow Met John Bull*, pp.8-9

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.118.

²⁶⁹ Roberts, ‘The Price of Discretion: Prostitution, Venereal Disease, and the American Military in France, 1944-1946’, p.1003.

²⁷⁰ J. Robert Lilly, *Taken by Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe during World War II* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) p.107.

²⁷¹ Roberts, ‘The Price of Discretion’, p.1006.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, p.1016

Rape and American GIs in Europe during World War II by American sociologist J. Robert Lilly was first published in Italy and France before it was printed the United States. This topic is controversial because American soldiers risked their lives to liberate European citizens from the Nazi occupation. Even more, in the post-war commemoration, these soldiers were heralded for their bravery and service. Nevertheless, it is crucial to also acknowledge the darker side of the liberation. Sexual violence in war areas is still a present-day issue and should therefore be researched in order to create more awareness for this topic. Lilly estimated that American soldiers raped between 14,000 and 17,000 women in Great Britain, France and Germany between 1942 and 1945.²⁷³ Lilly based his estimation on the assumption of two criminologists, Thorsten Sellin and Sir Leon Radzinowicz, that only five percent of the rapes in the war were reported. By taking the official JAG reported rapes as five percent, Lilly came to his estimation.²⁷⁴ In comparison, Lilly stated that during and in the aftermath of the war only 461 American GIs were convicted of rape.²⁷⁵

This number of rape convictions in the American army compared to the estimated rapes that took place is not the only discrepancy surrounding the rape charges. From the 121 rape convictions during the war in Great Britain, 41 of the convicts were African Americans, even though black GIs only constituted 10 percent of the total American GIs present in Great Britain.²⁷⁶ In his monograph, Lilly showed that African American soldiers were far more likely to receive a severe punishment for sexual violence than white American soldiers. For the American military authorities, this disproportionate conviction rate of African Americans was a confirmation of the sexual danger that African Americans posed for white women. In reality, this discrepancy shows the thorough discriminating nature of the American army and the unequal treatment of white and black suspects. For example, Lilly demonstrated that African American soldiers most of the time only had one-day trials without witnesses or a chance of appeal.²⁷⁷ Hence, while the sexual transgressions of white American soldiers were often put under the label of ‘boys will be boys’ behaviour, the sexual transgressions African American soldiers caused an affirmation of the idea that black men were naturally violent and sexual aggressors.²⁷⁸ The JAG ETO files only contain one conviction of rape in the Netherlands.²⁷⁹

²⁷³ Lilly, *Taken by Force*, pp.11-12.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.11.

²⁷⁶ Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, p.232.

²⁷⁷ J. Robert Lilly, ‘Military Executions During WWII: The Case of David Cobb’, *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 20.1 (1995) pp.89-104, p.89.

²⁷⁸ Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, p.32

²⁷⁹ ETO opinions, Board of Review vol.12, CM ETO 4386, 29 December 1944, p.333.

The two offenders were white American soldiers and they were both sentenced with a dishonourable discharge from the army and ‘confinement at hard labour for 15 years.’²⁸⁰

Military control over the sexual and personal relations of soldiers was a way to exercise power. For example, the American military authorities had the power to grant or deny permission for a marriage between a European woman and an American soldier. Regarding personal relationships of African American soldiers with European women, the American army was unwilling to deviate from American segregation customs. For this reason, requests for marriages between European women and African American soldiers were denied, even in the case of a pregnancy.²⁸¹ The example in the introduction of Lenie Wetzels and Edwards Moody illustrates this eminently. Furthermore, when American army officials learned of an African American soldier having a relationship with a local woman, the soldier was often transferred. Although no official policy existed in the American army to prevent African Americans soldiers from marrying European women, a gentlemen’s agreement was in place which averted these marriages.²⁸² One telling example that shows how the U.S. Army reacted if a couple ignored these orders is the story of Margaret Goosey, an English woman, and her fiancé Thomas Johnson from Virginia. Johnson had been stationed in Great Britain during the war where the two had fallen in love and got engaged. When Goosey travelled to Virginia in 1947 to marry her African American fiancé, she was jailed and sent to a state industrial farm while Johnson on his turn was incarcerated.²⁸³ This all happened because the proposed marriage was in defiance with the local Jim Crow laws, a general fear of miscegenation was present in America, and anti-miscegenation laws were in place in 30 of the 48 American states at that time.²⁸⁴ These laws made no exception for Goosey who was a British citizen. The example of Goosey and Johnson shows what significant consequences the relationships between African American soldiers and European women could have. The next chapter focuses on the consequences of the encounters between African American GIs and Dutch women and the most tangible legacy that occurred; the children born from their relationships.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ Lee, ‘A Forgotten Legacy of the Second World War’, p.163.

²⁸² Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, p.231.

²⁸³ Smith, *When Jim Crow Met John Bull*, p.206.

²⁸⁴ Lucy Bland, ‘Thousands of mixed-race British babies were born in World War II – and adoption by their black American fathers was blocked’ (version 16 May 2019) <https://theconversation.com/thousands-of-mixed-race-british-babies-were-born-in-world-war-ii-and-adoption-by-their-black-american-fathers-was-blocked-116790> [accessed 2 June 2019].

Conclusion

In sum, in the liberation period there was an overall disapproval of Dutch women dating foreign soldiers. Although this disapproval included African American GIs, the discontent was not directed to African American specifically as was done in France and Great Britain. Instead, the fear of 'moral decline' was directed towards the presence of American soldiers in general. The Dutch clergy was worried that the presence of foreign soldiers in combination with the liberation would lead to an increase in 'immoral' behaviour and sexual activities among young women. Moreover, from government and church sources appeared a general fear for increasing prostitution and venereal diseases as a result of the Allied presence. However, this fear was not connected to the issue of 'race,' as it was done in Great Britain and France. Remarkably, the stories about rape and misconduct by American soldiers in other European countries hardly transferred to the Netherlands.

The moral panic that occurred within the Dutch government and Catholic organisations was characterised by a fear of female sexuality and loose sexual behaviour. In contrast to this, the resentment of local men against Allied soldiers was based mainly on feelings of jealousy. Nevertheless, although considerable moral panic arose in the Netherlands, in the remembrance of the liberation the Allied soldiers were heralded and thanked for the liberation. In short, in the Netherlands, the emphasis of the moral panic was more on the relationship between women and men than a moral panic regarding white and black.

From this chapter, it became clear that the Dutch government in exile seems not to have dealt extensively with the issue of segregation in the American army. In the archives of the MG, only one document could be found about the rejection of a colour-bar. No further references to segregation or discrimination on the basis of 'race' in the American army could be located. On the whole, the MG was more concerned with the behaviour of Dutch citizens that would arise with the arrival of the American liberators than the racial practices in the American army. Dutch authorities tried to prevent loose sexual behaviour by installing measurement and providing for other leisure activities than balls and dance evenings. Nonetheless, the liberation produced a unique carnivalesque period in which people behaved outside social and moral conventions. In sum, in the case of the Netherlands it cannot be argued that a general moral panic triggered institutional racism towards African American soldiers in particular. This chapter revealed that no explicit racist policies were carried out by the MG or the Catholic Church in the Netherlands. Segregationist policies in the Netherlands were essentially at the hands of the American army.

Chapter 4 – LEGACIES



Figure 3: Carriage in a Liberation parade in Elsoo 1945, Stichting Streekmuseum Elsoo, *Bevrijdingsoptochten*, image 010050100059 ‘Bevrijdingsoptocht Elsloo (Limburg) Zondag 12 Augustus 1945, Black-Boys’, <https://www.streekmuseumelsloo.nl/5-bevrijdingsoptochten/247--black-boys> [accessed May 2019].

The picture above displays a carriage that was part of a parade of the *Grote Oranje-feesten* in Elsloo, Limburg on 12 August 1945. The parade celebrated the liberation of the Netherlands and consisted of 45 carriages all displaying different aspects or events of the war.²⁸⁵ This carriage with number fifteen was titled ‘black-boys’, and displayed inhabitants of Elsloo dressed up as black GIs.²⁸⁶ The photograph displays black soldiers and women affectionately on the carriage. This particular carriage from a liberation parade shows that the Limburg population did not forget the African American liberators in the aftermath of the war. Moreover, the carriage reveals that the encounters between Dutch women and African American GIs could be publicly displayed and reenacted. The legacies of the interactions between African American soldiers and Dutch women are central in this last chapter. Their encounters affected not only the Netherlands but also the United States. Therefore, this chapter examines what happened to the African American soldiers and Dutch women in the aftermath of the liberation. The second section of this chapter concentrates specifically on the most tangible legacy of these encounters: the children that were born to African American soldiers and Dutch women. This chapter argues that with the ending of the carnivalesque period in Limburg, the relationships between Dutch women and African American were no longer permitted, and as a consequence, the children born from these relationships became unmentionable.

In order to understand the position of these children in Dutch society after the war, the Dutch case is placed in the context of other European countries, such as Great Britain and Germany. In contrast to other European countries, sources on the children of African American soldiers in the Netherlands barely exist. At the outset of this research, I was hoping to find sources from child-caring institutions regarding these children, or gain information on the mothers who had chosen to give up their children. Unfortunately, although several archives of orphanages and Catholic child-rearing institutions were examined, nothing on these children could be found. Consequently, discovering the absence of any archival sources on these children changed the direction of my research early on and opted me to focus on the encounters between African Americans and Dutch women more broadly. For this reason, this chapter examines the construction of a racialized and national identity for the children of African American GIs. In regard to these children, their skin colour led in Britain and Germany to

²⁸⁵ Other names of carriages in the parade: ‘Mei 1940’, ‘De vluchtelingen van Berlijn’, ‘Irène-brigade’, ‘Twee minuten na de bevrijding. Hier wordt men in 2 minuten geknipt’ and ‘Hitler met zijn kwasten.’

²⁸⁶ Stichting Streekmuseum Elsloo, *Bevrijdingsoptochten*, image 010050100059 ‘Bevrijdingsoptocht Elsloo (Limburg) Zondag 12 Augustus 1945, Black-Boys’, <https://www.streekmuseumelsloo.nl/5-bevrijdingsoptochten/247--black-boys> [accessed May 2019].

debates about their national identity. In contrast, in the Netherlands such questions were not publically asked.

Enduring Tales?

After the ending of the Second World War, the African American men and women who served overseas returned to a country where they were still regarded second-class citizens. Upon return in America, they found pre-war racial hierarchies in place and similar to before the war, racial subordination was expected from African American veterans. African American veteran Oliver W. Harrington expressed the sentiment that was felt by many African American soldiers when they returned to America in the collection of his autobiographical essays: ‘you fought, if you are a Negro veteran, to tear down the sign ‘No Jews Allowed’ in Germany, to find in America the sign ‘No Negroes Allowed. You fought to wipe out the noose and the whip in Germany and Japan, to find the noose and the whip in Georgia and Louisiana.’²⁸⁷ Comparable to the aftermath of the First World War, racial violence increased and spread across America in direct aftermath of the Second World War.²⁸⁸ Between 1945 and 1947, at least twenty-five racial killings took place in the United States and several victims were African American veterans.²⁸⁹ Many white southern Americans feared the effects that the military service had on African Americans in their desire for equality. It was thought that, since African American veterans had experienced how society was like without legal segregation in Europe, they would no longer accept the discrimination at home and consequently, increasingly demand full citizenship and equality in America.

In the aftermath of the war, the stories, war effort and experiences of African American soldiers were disregarded in America. For example, African American units were often not invited to the military parades organised to herald and welcome back the soldiers from their overseas service. Even in war memorials, African Americans soldiers who died during their service were not included, placed on the bottom of the memorial, or a separate list.²⁹⁰ Even though the America to which the African American soldiers returned to had changed little regarding racial discrimination, the overseas experience of African American soldiers had confronted them with the racial practices in the United States and had taught them how a society

²⁸⁷ Oliver W. Harrington, *Why I Left America and Other Essays* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993) pp.90–91. Quoted in Brenda Gayle Plummer, ‘Brown Babies: Race, Gender, and Policy after World War II’ in Brenda Gayle Plummer (ed.), *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) pp.67-92, p.75.

²⁸⁸ Neil A. Wynn, *The African American Experience During World War II*, p.85.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ Wynn, *The African American Experience during World War II*, p.90.

without racial segregation was like. Therefore, after the war, the Jim Crow system of ‘race relations’ came under pressure in America, and increasingly, African Americans began to demand full citizenship and the abolishment of segregation. The disappointment after the war thus spurred black activism and was one of the main catalysts for the Civil rights movement.²⁹¹

Without any doubt, the war effort of African Americans was placed at the background in America. Hazel Carby argues in her essay on the emergence of Great Britain as a modern racialized state that the wartime activities of black people in Great Britain were similarly erased from the collective memory of British citizens.²⁹² The narrative created after the war disregarded the wartime activities of African American soldiers, but also of Great Britain’s colonial soldiers. The idea of the black man as a hero who saved Europe was not a possible narrative in both Europe and the United States after the war.

In the same vein as in the United States and Great Britain, African American soldiers were omitted from the collective memory of the liberation in the Netherlands. The segregationist and racist policies of the U.S. Army during the war played an important part in the after-war imagery of the Allied soldiers altogether. However, the Dutch portrayal of the Allied soldiers also affected the post-war image of the American army. For instance, hardly any pictures taken by Dutch photographers exist which depict the presence of African American soldiers in the Netherlands. The photographs that Kirkels displayed in her book of African Americans together with Dutch citizens mostly came from private family collections. Further, the ‘famous’ liberation pictures in the Netherlands predominantly display white soldiers in liberation parades, on dance evenings and festivities. Only a few photographs exist that exhibit the presence of African American soldiers in Limburg. Despite the fact that white American soldiers made up the majority of the soldiers in the American army, it is remarkable that the photographs that exist of African American soldiers in Limburg mostly display African American soldiers in a working setting. Photographs of African American soldiers in liberation parades or on the streets with civilians are largely, if not wholly, missing.

Photographs of the war affect people’s memories of the war. By disregarding African American soldiers from liberation pictures, their presence fell into oblivion. One example that reveals how the war contribution of African Americans was forgotten in the Netherlands is a

²⁹¹ Christine Knauer, *Let Us Fight as Free Men: Black Soldiers and Civil Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014) pp.53-54.

²⁹² Hazel V. Carby, ‘Becoming Modern Racialized Subjects: Detours Through Our Pasts to Produce Ourselves’, *Cultural Studies* 23.4 (2009) pp.624–657, p.642.

report from the *Nationaal Instituut* in 1946.²⁹³ This report discussed the construction of the military cemetery in Margraten and the responsibility for the care of these graves. The report nowhere even mentioned the African Americans who built, worked and buried almost 20,000 fallen soldiers on this cemetery.²⁹⁴ By disregarding the presence of these soldiers in written sources and photographs, these soldiers became neglected in the after-war narrative of the Allied soldiers. As a consequence, in the Dutch collective memory, the ‘liberators’ became white soldiers.

Children born of war

The children born to Dutch women and African American GIs were the most noticeable and tangible legacy of the African American soldiers in the Netherlands. According to Kirkels, around 70 children in Limburg were fathered by African American soldiers. How many of these children were born in other parts of the Netherlands remains unknown. Nevertheless, several African American units were shortly stationed in the area of Nijmegen, and although Van Kouwen stated that several children were born in this area, the number of these children remains unidentified.²⁹⁵ Compared to other European countries, the number of Afro-European children in the Netherlands was small. An explanation for this difference in number is the duration of the presence of the American army, and the fact that American troops were predominantly stationed in the southern parts of the Netherlands. In comparison, it is estimated that in Great Britain from 1942 until 1945, around 1,700 children between British women and African American soldiers were born.²⁹⁶ In Germany, around the middle of the 1950s, about 4,000 children between African American GI’s and German women were born.²⁹⁷ The children of African American soldiers are a small percentage compared to the number of children fathered by other Allied soldiers. Even though this group might be insignificant as a societal phenomenon in the post-war era, they are not irrelevant as these children were often the first residents with a dark(er) complexion in predominantly white countries. This group of ethnically mixed GI children has been largely ignored in the scholarly research on children born during and in the direct aftermath of the Second World War. More specifically, research on the lives

²⁹³ The *Nationaal Instituut* was established shortly after the war to deepen the Dutch national awareness and to strengthening national solidarity.

²⁹⁴ NIOD, Archief 197, inv.nr. 428-435, Nationaal Instituut and Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders*, p.20.

²⁹⁵ Van Kouwen, *Vergeten Bevrijders?*, pp.16-17.

²⁹⁶ Bland, ‘Interracial Relationships and the “Brown Baby Question”’, p.429

²⁹⁷ Lee, ‘A Forgotten Legacy of the Second World War’, p.170.

and treatment of this particular group of children has only begun in the last fifteen years.²⁹⁸

Nonetheless, from almost every conflict ‘children born of war’ exist. This definition was coined by political scientist Charli Carpenter in 2005, to describe children born to foreign soldiers and local women. The definition constitutes an appropriate and neutral term for these children.²⁹⁹ Children who are fathered by foreign soldiers often become victims of social harassment, as they are seen as ‘other’ and alien. Still, if the soldier has the same complexion as the mother, the child can appear to be from a local man and a local woman. Conversely, when the foreign soldier has another complexion than the majority of the population in a country, and thus, the child has a deviant complexion, it is harder ‘to hide’ that the child is from a foreign soldier. Therefore, the children born in and after the Second World War to African American soldiers and European women stood out in the streets because of their skin colour. It was evident that their fathers were not Caucasian.

The ‘brown babies’ of Europe

‘Children came quickly, but solutions didn’t’ is how Graham Smith described the discussions about the ‘brown babies’ – the name used for these children in the African American press – in Great Britain.³⁰⁰ This attitude towards the children of African American soldiers prevailed throughout Europe and although in numerous countries these children were labelled as a ‘problem,’ solutions on what to do with these children were hardly, if not at all, executed. One of the issues surrounding the children of African American GIs was their unsure civil status.³⁰¹ Since legal paternity was denied to African American soldiers who fathered children with European women, these children were not American citizens. Moreover, their ‘mixed-race’ heritage complicated their national identity as their skin-colour was deviant from the normative European standard. In the United States, the ‘one-drop rule’ ruled that any person with traceable

²⁹⁸ The most important studies on this topic are Janet Baker, ‘Lest We Forget: The Children They Left Behind: The Life Experience of Adults Born to Black GIs and British Women during the Second World War (MA thesis), (University of Melbourne, 1999); Heide Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Sabine Lee, ‘A Forgotten Legacy of the Second World War: GI Children in Post-war Britain and Germany’, *Contemporary European History* 20.2, (May 2011) pp.157-181; Silvana Patriarca, ‘“Brown Babies” in Postwar Europe: The Italian Case’, *Max Weber Programme*, 2, (2016) pp.2-12; Perry Taylor, (MA Thesis), ‘Brown Babies A Thematic Analysis of Newspaper Articles Concerning Afro-German Children’ (Linköping University, 2016); Niko Wahl, Phillip Rohrbach and Tal Adler, *Schwarz Österreich. Die Kinder Afroamerikanischer Besatzungssoldaten* (Vienna: Loecker Erhard Verlag, 2016); Mieke Kirkels, *Kinderen van Zwarte Bevrijders: Een Verzwegen Geschiedenis* (Nijmegen: Vantilt: 2017) and Lucy Bland, *Britain’s Brown Babies: The Stories of Children Born to Black GIs and White Women in the Second World War* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2019).

²⁹⁹ Charli R. Carpenter (ed.), *Born of War: Protecting Children Born of Sexual Violence and Exploitation in Conflict Zones* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2005).

³⁰⁰ Smith, *When Jim Crow Met John Bull*, p.187.

³⁰¹ Plummer, ‘Brown Babies: Race, Gender, and Policy after World War II’, p.67.

African descent and thus ‘one drop’ of ‘black blood’ was considered black.³⁰² This social concept became codified into the law of several states in the beginning 20th century to ‘maintain social distinctions’ between white and black in America and to justify the legal prevention of inter-racial marriages.³⁰³ The European offspring of African American soldiers were thus in the U.S. viewed as ‘black.’ This meant that the adoption of these children could only take place into African-American or ‘mixed-race’ families as adoption agencies were cautious for ‘inter-racial’ adoptions.³⁰⁴ In Germany, the civil status of these children was complicated by the laws regarding paternity. These laws stated that although an illegitimate child was the responsibility of the mother and her family, the mother was not the legal guardian but guardianship was at the hands of the state.³⁰⁵ As this chapter will demonstrate, the right to paternity was a reason why the discussion about the ‘brown babies’ was also held in the African-American press in the United States.

British historian Graham Smith in 1987 extensively examined the debates surrounding the offspring of African American soldiers and British women. Smith discussed these ‘brown babies’ in his work on African American soldiers in Great Britain during the Second World War.³⁰⁶ In his monograph, Smith illustrated how soon after the arrival of the American army in Great Britain, the first ethnically mixed babies were born. The birth of these ‘mixed-race’ babies was seen as a problem, and both the British and American government discussed possible solutions to prevent more babies from being born.³⁰⁷ According to Smith, a suggested solution in the British War Cabinet was to start a ‘whispering campaign.’ The whispering campaign was an unofficial programme that spread rumours about black GI’s to deter British women from associating with the African American soldiers.³⁰⁸ From the outset of the war, British Home Secretary Herbert Morrison was concerned about the ‘difficult social problem’ that would be created by the birth of these ‘mixed-race’ children.³⁰⁹ Foreseeing that the stationing of African American soldiers in Great Britain would result in the birth of ‘mixed-race’ children, the British War Cabinet had lobbied with the American government for not

³⁰² Daniel G. Reginald, *More Than Black?: Multiracial Identity and the New Racial Order* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002) pp.x-xi.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ Linda J. Seligmann, *Broken Links, Enduring Ties: American Adoption Across Race, Class, and Nation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013) p.286.

³⁰⁵ Lee, ‘A Forgotten Legacy of the Second World War’, p.172.

³⁰⁶ ‘Brown Babies’ was the name given by the African-American press to children who were of mixed-race decent and born between African American soldiers and European women.

³⁰⁷ Smith, *When Jim Crow Met John Bull*, pp.188-190.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.195-196.

³⁰⁹ Herbert Morrison quoted in Smith, *When Jim Crow Met John Bull*, p.73.

taking African American soldiers to Great Britain at all.³¹⁰ However, the American authorities made clear from the beginning that this was not an option, and that African American troops would be stationed in Great Britain. From 1947 onwards ideas to ship the ‘mixed-race’ babies who were in orphanages to the United States occurred in the British Cabinet. The idea was that these babies could be adopted by African-American and ‘mixed-race’ families in the United States where they would ‘fit in’ better.³¹¹ However, these ideas were not consolidated and only in 1949, the first ‘brown baby’ from Great Britain was adopted in the United States.³¹² According to Carby, from the ending of the war until the mid-1950s, the ‘brown babies’ in Great Britain, ‘were not imagined as present and future citizens but as “problems” that should be exported.’³¹³

In contrast to the Netherlands, where the American army liberated the population, and the Dutch population was regarded as an ally, Germany was a defeated country and the German population was therefore seen as the enemy. A non-fraternisation policy was even composed by the U.S. military authorities to prevent the American soldiers from associating with German women.³¹⁴ Even though this policy was installed, many intimate relations between American soldiers and German women took place. A survey in 1955 reported that American soldiers had fathered 37,000 children to German women in post-war Germany. From these children, approximately 4,000 children were of African American descent.³¹⁵ These Afro-German babies, or *Mischlingskinder*, as they were called in Germany, posed a ‘human and racial problem of a special nature’ according to discussions in the Bundestag.³¹⁶ German parliamentarians expressed the concern that ‘the West German public was not yet capable of assuming a posture ‘free of racial prejudice.’³¹⁷

In post-war Germany, debates on these children occurred from 1947 onwards and they established the ‘Brown baby plan’ in 1951.³¹⁸ The idea of this plan was to arrange for the adoption of the ‘brown babies’ into the Afro-German and African American families. Even

³¹⁰ Smith, *When Jim Crow Met John Bull*, pp.37-89, 50-51. For a recent publication on this topic see Lucy Bland, *Britain’s ‘Brown Babies’: The Stories of Children Born to Black GIs and White Women in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).

³¹¹ Lee, ‘A Forgotten Legacy of the Second World War’, pp.165-166.

³¹² Lucy Bland, ‘Interracial Relationships and the “Brown Baby Question”: Black GIs, White British Women, and Their Mixed-Race Offspring in World War II’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 26.3 (2017) pp.424-453, p.432.

³¹³ Carby, ‘Becoming Modern Racialized Subjects’, p.650.

³¹⁴ Lee, ‘A forgotten Legacy of the Second World War’, p.167.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.170.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.174-175.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.175.

³¹⁸ Yara-Colette Lemke Muniz de Faria, “Germany’s ‘Brown Babies’ Must Be Helped! Will You?”: U.S. Adoption Plans for Afro-German Children, 1950-1955”, *Callaloo* 26.2 (2003) pp.342-362, p.354.

though this plan did not induce a large number of adoptions, it did arrange for the adoption of several hundred Afro-German children into African American and African-German families by 1954.³¹⁹ Post-war Germany was supposed to distance itself from the racist practices and policies of the Hitler years and redefine their relationship to ‘race’.³²⁰ Paradoxically, in the post-war years, West Germany was democratized by America, a country that was overtly racist itself and whose principles and practices of democracy were far apart.³²¹ Overall, the ‘brown babies’ of Germany generated considerable governmental and public debates on how to treat these children, and what place ‘race’ would and should have in post-war German society.

Even though ‘race’ was a disputed issue in post-war Germany, current research has concluded that around 75 percent of the ‘brown babies’ were kept by their mothers in Germany versus 50 percent in Great Britain.³²² Why mothers in Germany more often chose to keep their children of mixed offspring remains unknown.³²³ It is unknown what percentage of the children was kept by their mothers in the Netherlands. In Kirkels’ book, from the ten stories of Dutch children fathered by African American soldiers, eight grew up with their mothers or with relatives. In only two of the cases that Kirkels described, the children were given up by their mothers. Further research on this topic could reveal what considerations were crucial in keeping or giving up these children.

The responses in Britain and Germany to the children born to African American soldiers and local women differed in the sense that in Britain few public debates on these children took place, while in Germany government and public discussions about these children were frequent.³²⁴ The international press was vital in creating awareness around the ‘brown babies’ in Germany and Great Britain. In the United States, the discussions about these ‘mixed-race’ children took predominantly place in the African-American press. An important aspect of this discussion was the right to paternity. Since the U.S. military authorities did not grant African American soldiers permission to marry white European women, their chance at having a legitimate child was taken away, and the children that were born automatically received the status of being a ‘bastard.’ This deprivation of legal fatherhood stemmed from the slavery era, in which black fathers had no legal authority over their offspring and were denied the legitimacy

³¹⁹ Lee, ‘A Forgotten Legacy of the Second World War’ p.178.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.173-174.

³²¹ Fehrenbach, *Race After Hitler*, p.17.

³²² Lemke Muniz de Faria, “Germany’s ‘Brown Babies’ Must Be Helped! Will You?”, p.344.

³²³ Sabine Lee and Lemke Muniz de Faria both mention this discrepancy between Germany and Britain, but do not give an explanation for the difference.

³²⁴ Lee, ‘A Forgotten Legacy of the Second World War’, p.180.

of their children.³²⁵ The African American press after the Second World War concentrated on responsible fatherhood and urged for the need for these fathers to claim responsibility for these children. By reclaiming their right to paternity, African American men wanted to demand full citizenship rights. Nonetheless, only a few cases are known in which African American soldiers adopted the children they fathered in Europe.³²⁶

Although ideas for the realisation of adoption programs were prompted, in neither Great Britain or Germany, large-scale adoptions actually took place. Several reasons underlie the deficiency of these programs. First of all, ‘inter-racial’ or even international adoptions rarely took place before the 1950s. Before this time, adoption had merely been a national or familial affair.³²⁷ Second of all, the stance of the U.S. government towards these babies was that they were a European problem and not an American one. Consequently, the U.S. government saw no urgent need to be involved or assist in these adoption processes. Lastly, the initial U.S. military response – already during the war – regarding these European ‘brown babies’ involved secrecy and suppression and not nationwide attention in the form of promoting adoption.³²⁸

Until today, the topic of children of African American soldiers has received little to no attention in Belgium. Although Peter Schrijvers mentioned the encounters between African American soldiers and Belgian women in his book *Liberators: The Allies and Belgian Society, 1944-1945*, he did not refer to any children that were possibly born.³²⁹ Kirkels does mention the existence of these children in Belgium but she gave no further elaboration on their possible numbers.³³⁰ Given that the American army spent a considerable amount of time in Belgium before the invasion of Germany, it is almost impossible that no children were born with African American soldiers as their biological fathers. A possible fruitful place to start research on the children born in Belgium would be in Eisden, where the only rest centre for African Americans in American history was based throughout 1945.³³¹ The establishment and existence of this rest

³²⁵ Plummer, ‘Brown Babies: Race, Gender, and Policy after World War II’, p.85.

³²⁶ Lucy Bland stated she only found one case in her research on ‘brown babies’ in Great Britain, in which a British ‘brown baby’ was adopted by his American father. Bland, ‘Thousands of Mixed-race British Babies were Born in World War II – and Adoption by their Black American Fathers was Blocked.’

³²⁷ Arissa Oh, *To Save the Children of Korea: The Cold War Origins of International Adoption* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015) p.2.

³²⁸ Plummer, ‘Brown Babies: Race, Gender, and Policy after World War II’, p.67.

³²⁹ Peter Schrijvers, *Liberators: The Allies and Belgian Society, 1944-1945* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

³³⁰ Kirkels, *Kindere van Zwarte Bevrijders*, p.88.

³³¹ For more information on the R&R Centre in Eisden see Pierre Janssen, Jan Kohlbacher, Flor Vanloffeld, *De Bevrijding van het Limburgse Maasland: De Verslaggeving uit Militaire Archieven en de Ooggetuigenverslagen* (Maasmechelen: Stichting Erfgoed Eisden, 2004) pp.148-156.

centre must have affected the small village of Eisdon and friendships and intimate relationships almost inevitably must have occurred.

The Dutch case

In contrast to other European countries, governmental and public discussions about these children were absent in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, the existence and stance towards the children of African American soldiers and their mothers is an important case study for the history of 'race relations' in the Netherlands for several reasons. Firstly, from the small number of 'inter-racial' people that were present in the Netherlands prior to the Second World War, most of them were born from unions between Dutch people and people from the Dutch colonies. The colony was an absent factor in the birth of children of African American soldiers. Secondly, the military regulations – such as not granting permission to marry white women – caused the offspring of the African American soldiers to be increasingly vulnerable. As a consequence of these military regulations, the children of African American soldiers were left without the support of one or more parents. Thirdly, research on these children in the Netherlands is important because these children can reveal how issues of kinship, citizenship and national identity in the case of 'mixed-race' children were dealt with. These children grew up in a completely white environment, often surrounded by only white relatives. Further research on this topic could investigate what impact the absence of black role models had on forming their identity.

Kirkels focused in the first Dutch publication on the existence of these children in the Netherlands predominantly on the life stories of these black GI children and the struggles they had growing up in a completely 'white' community. Her approach emphasised individual circumstances and peculiarities. A result of this history from below is that Kirkels paid little attention to the attitudes of the Dutch government towards these children. Although Kirkels has contributed extraordinarily to the knowledge about the relationships between African American soldiers and Dutch women, the experiences of the women who dated African American soldiers remain largely outside the scope of her research. The experiences of these women are often recollected through stories told by their relatives or children. With the upcoming 75th celebration of the liberation of Limburg, the number of women who dated African American soldiers and who are still alive become sparser. The upcoming years might thus be the last chance ever to speak to these women.

The discrepancy between the welcoming attitude towards the African American liberators and the distant attitude towards the children of the African American soldiers could

be explained by the contrast in temporal versus lasting presence. The African American soldiers were in the Netherlands temporarily. They were not immigrants who came from another country to settle in the Netherlands, but from the moment of their arrival it was known that their stay was temporary. More importantly, they were Allied soldiers, who liberated the Netherlands from the German occupation. The birth of their children was by way of contrast lasting and therefore, other attitudes regarding these children arose. Further, these children were not regarded as ‘truly Dutch’, since Dutchness assumed whiteness.³³² In addition to the ‘mixed-race’ stigma that surrounded these children, the stigma of illegitimacy was also added. As the previous chapter demonstrated, although the American army had no official policy to deny African American soldiers from marrying European women, in reality, no permission was granted for such a marriage.³³³ In other cases, which were also demonstrated by Kirkels, the children of African American GIs were the living proof of the ‘infidelity’ of Dutch women and the occurrence of ‘inter-racial’ sex.³³⁴

After the liberation, it was hard for women to get legal financial support from Allied soldiers, both black and white, who fathered their children. The American and Canadian government saw financial support for these European children as a ‘private affair’ and not as a national concern.³³⁵ Nevertheless, a case can be found in the RHCL archive in which the Dutch minister of Home Affairs, L.L. Franx in 1947, wrote a letter to the adjutant-general of the War-Department of the United States to ask for recognition of paternity by an African American soldier.³³⁶ In the letter, it is stated that the Mayor of Maastricht requested Franx to write this letter on behalf of a woman from Maastricht who was ‘violated by an American negro-soldier.’³³⁷ The letter stated the believed name and address of the African American soldier. Further, Franx requested if the adjutant-general would inquire into the matter to see ‘if you could put the man in position to assume the responsibility by contracting a marriage, or by the recognition of the paternity in order that the child may be granted an allowance under the servicemen’s Dependents Allowance act.’³³⁸ No response to the letter could be found in the archive, and it is unknown if the woman ever received an allowance, or if the soldier recognised his child. However, from previous findings, it can be concluded that ‘contracting a marriage’

³³² Wekker, *White Innocence*, p.7.

³³³ Chamion Caballero and Peter J. Aspinall, *Mixed Race Britain in the Twentieth Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) p.214.

³³⁴ Lucy Bland, ‘Interracial Relationships and the “Brown Baby Question”’, p.453.

³³⁵ Okkema, *Trees krijgt een Canadees*, pp.100-101.

³³⁶ RHCL, Archief 20.007C, inv.nr. 1567, Secretarie Maastricht.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

was probably not seen as an option by the War Department since marriages between African Americans and European women were averted at every cost.

The despair in which some women were who were pregnant by an African American soldier can be found in an advertisement from *De Waarheid* on 14 September 1946. The advertisement stated: ‘Unmarried mother wants to give up her in half Sept. expected baby (half-breed).’³³⁹ The advertisement partially shows the context in which the mother wanted to give up the baby. Her ‘unmarried’ status probably had something to do with her wanting to give up her baby because legitimacy held considerable social weight, and almost every child of an African American soldier automatically was illegitimate by the inability of the two parents to marry one another.³⁴⁰ What does not become clear from the article is if giving up the baby is the mothers own choice or if she was pressured by her parents, relatives or other people. The writer of the advertisement moreover found it worthy to note that the baby was ‘mixed-race.’

In the Netherlands, newspaper articles about the offspring of African American soldiers and Dutch women remain completely out of the scope of the newspapers. No references at all to the existence of these children can be found in *Delpher*. Further, the popularised term ‘brown babies’ that was used in Germany, Great Britain and the United States is not present in Dutch newspaper after the war. Only one small item on a child of an African American soldier and an Italian woman in Italy appeared in the *Arnhemsche Courant* in August 1948.³⁴¹ In this article, it is stated that an Italian man filed for a court case against his wife to divorce her because she gave birth to a ‘mixed-race’ child.³⁴² The small item further stated that the man lost the case and had to accept the child as his own. The article asserted that ‘the poor man had to accept the *nikkertje* (‘little nigger’) as his legitimate child’ and that he had to pay the litigation costs for the past three years.³⁴³ According to the article, ‘the law could be cruel.’³⁴⁴ The article explicitly sympathises with the Italian man.

Although questions about nationality and citizenship were raised concerning the

³³⁹ Delpher, *De Waarheid*, (version 14 September 1946) <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010851572:mpeg21:p011> [accessed May 2019]. Freely translated: ‘Ongehuwde moeder wil afstand doen van haar in half Sept. te verwachten baby (halfbloedje).’

³⁴⁰ Plummer, ‘Brown Babies: Race, Gender, and Policy after World War II’, p.77.

³⁴¹ Delpher, ‘Ons kort verhaal’, *Arnhemsche Courant* (version 12 August 1948) <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB08:000112295:mpeg21:a0027> [accessed May 2019].

‘Maar nu nog wat anders. Italiaanse vrouw kreeg baby die was gelijk een neger. Echtgenoot van Italiaanse schone kreeg woede-aanval, huilbui en rende naar de rechter. Dat was vlak na de oorlog. Na een drie-tal jaren is de aanvraag tot echtscheiding afgewezen, is bepaald dat de arme man het nikkertje als zijn wettig kind moet aanvaarden en bovendien moet hij de proceskosten over drie jaar betalen. De wet kan wreed zijn.’

³⁴² *Ibid.*

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

children of African American soldiers in Germany and Great Britain, these discussions were non-existent in the Netherlands. The discussion about 'brown babies' was not held publicly or within the Dutch government. A possible explanation for the absence of this debate could be the small number of children that were born. Another significant difference between the countries is the time-span in which African American soldiers were present in the Netherlands. Even though American troops were stationed in the Netherlands for more than a year, the presence of the American army in Great Britain and Germany was even longer. From January 1942 onwards, American troops were present in Great Britain, and in Germany, American troops were stationed long after the ending of the Second World War. Another possible explanation for the absence of any discussions about these children is the fact that the American army has only spent a considerable amount of time in Limburg and not in other parts of the Netherlands. The existence of these children was thus a southern Dutch occurrence and not a national affair. A similarity between the Netherlands and other European countries is the existence of these children and the often difficult upbringing these children had. From the eleven life-stories in Kirkels' book appeared that these children had to deal with the absence of their biological father, or not knowing who their father was at all. Further, a returning element in the life-stories described by Kirkels were the unanswered questions these children grew up with.

A comparative analysis which examines the similarities and differences in governmental intervention and policies regarding these children of African American soldiers across nations is currently missing. Accordingly, a comparative analysis could reveal how government policy, or the absence of any official policy, affected the lives of these children. Moreover, research on this topic could show the racial attitudes and prejudices that existed in Europe in and after the Second World War. Still, the wellbeing and upbringing of these children all over Europe is hard to recollect due to a lack of quantitative and qualitative data about their circumstances.³⁴⁵

Conclusion

A tangible legacy of the presence of African American soldiers in the Netherlands was their offspring. The children of African American soldiers were the living proof of the carnivalesque period that had occurred in the liberation period, and the turmoil the war had caused in the Netherlands. These children were the reminder of the disorder and disruption of the war, and consequently, they did not fit in the post-war 'normal' society that reinstalled pre-war

³⁴⁵ Lee, 'A forgotten Legacy of the Second World War', p.179.

discourses on gender, illegitimacy and 'race.' This chapter has shown that the disapproving stance towards these children was the result of two reasons. First of all, the illegitimacy of the children was an issue. In Limburg stigma existed on babies born out of wedlock. Second of all, the children bore the proof of 'inter-racial' sexual relations and therefore stigmatised the mothers. The fathers of these children predominantly went back to America after the war and never saw their children again. The return to pre-war norms and values concerning sexuality, gender and 'race' eventually established a narrative of silence surrounding these children that was only publicly addressed in the 21st century. With the return to 'normal' life, the interactions between black and white became increasingly taboo again. Furthermore, the national and racial identity of the children of African American soldiers in Europe was questioned because of their appearance.

The silences surrounding this topic mainly revolve around the experience of the mothers after the war. Little is known about their experience and if something is known, this testimony is often given not by the mothers themselves but by their children or relatives. In contrast to other countries such as Great Britain and Germany, the Dutch children of African American soldiers caused no nationwide debates and these children were not perceived as a significant 'problem group.' One possible explanation could be their small number in comparison to other countries or their geographical concentration. In the Netherlands, discussions about questioning the Dutch citizenship of these children did not take place. Nevertheless, the existence of these children in other provinces, although probably scarce, remains overlooked. In the Netherlands, official government policy or public debates regarding these children was missing in the post-war era. In the process of this research, no reference to deportation or grand-scale adoption of these children was found. Overall, barely anything was written about the children of African American soldiers in the Netherlands.

In the post-war remembrance of the war, there was little place for the commemoration of African American soldiers in the Netherlands. First of all, because these soldiers were excluded from the memory of the war in the U.S. itself and second of all because pre-war 'race relations' in which black and white were discursively segregated were reinstalled. In this research, almost no official post-war documents were found on African American soldiers or the children they fathered. This silence in the archival material demonstrates the largest issue with research on this topic. The main challenge is the lack of quantitative and qualitative data on this topic. For this reason, research on this topic in the Netherlands is inevitable highly reliant on eyewitness accounts and oral testimonies. This causes an additional problem that with the upcoming 75th year of the liberation, more and more eyewitnesses of the war are passing away

and thus also the chances of speaking to a mother of a child of an African American soldier. In addition to this, the topic remains sensitive and many women are reluctant to talk about their experiences.

To conclude with, the combination of oral history and a top-down study can benefit the historical research on the topic of children of African American soldiers born in Europe since this approach can expose details, exceptions and the context in which individual experiences took place. Further research into child-rearing institutions and orphanages could reveal if these institutions had specific policies regarding these children. The lives of the children of African American soldiers and European women in Europe thus developed at the complex intersection of discourses surrounding 'race' and gender after 1945.

Conclusion

The unique circumstances of the liberation in Limburg enabled the encounters between African American soldiers and Dutch women. Nonetheless, these encounters were regulated and restricted by several authorities, such as the Catholic Church and the *Militair Gezag*, but also by existing social and racial orders. Even more, official and unofficial American policies and practices structured the encounters between Dutch women and African American soldiers. This thesis has shown that skin colour mattered in the Netherlands, before, during and after the war. The empirical data used in this thesis revealed how pre-existing stereotypes about black people affected the treatment of African American soldiers in the Netherlands. Through a detailed analysis of primary sources, this thesis argued that black people were regarded as ‘other’ and were attributed specific characteristics solely on the basis of their skin colour. By analysing Limburg newspapers, this thesis showed that ideas about ‘race’ and racial differences were present in the Netherlands when the American army arrived in 1944.

The innovative character of this thesis lies in the fact that it presented vital primary sources regarding the treatment and reception of African American soldiers in the Netherlands that have not been exhibited earlier. Consequently, this thesis served as an exploratory study into archival material on the encounters between African American soldiers and Dutch women. By focussing especially on documents of the *Militair Gezag* this thesis revealed that the issue of segregation in the American army did not generate significant discussions in the Netherlands. Lastly, this thesis has added to the knowledge about racial stereotypes in the liberation period in the Netherlands.

From the examined primary sources, it appeared that the first stance towards African American soldiers as part of the American army was tentative. This research displayed that the normative behaviour towards outsiders and especially non-white outsiders in Limburg was cautious. This cautiousness was sustained by prevalent stereotypes about black people and by portraying non-white people as altogether ‘different.’ The liberation period was the first time in the history of the southern part of the Netherlands that a large non-white population temporarily inhabited the area. In the liberation period, both physical and discursive segregation were present in Limburg. Physical segregation in the way that the American military authorities tried to refrain Dutch people and African Americans from interacting too freely and too closely. Discursive segregation arose partially as a consequence of the physical segregation, which led Dutch people to regard African American soldiers as a distinct group. Further, discursive

segregation was fuelled and maintained by Limburg newspapers in which African Americans altogether were portrayed as a distinct group with specific characteristics and not as individuals with distinctive personalities.

Even though the Limburg population adopted a generally welcoming attitude towards the American liberators, the idea that *all* liberators were regarded equally can be criticised on several grounds. First of all, the idea that differences existed between ‘races’ was deeply rooted in Dutch society. Second of all, existing Dutch stereotypes such as Black Pete affected how people regarded African American soldiers. By attributing African American soldiers and Black Pete the same typical features, such as being naïve, a child friend and happy, a cartoonish image was created of African Americans. The recurring stereotypes in Limburg newspapers suggest a patronising perception of African Americans prevailed in which they were attributed certain characteristics. The presence of African American soldiers moreover reinforced stereotypes such as Black Pete. This thesis thus can add to the current debate about Black Pete in the Netherlands that historically, Black Pete was associated with black people. Third and last of all, the treatment of and response to women who dated African American soldiers are barely traceable in archival sources compared to the interactions with white American soldiers.

The American army was able to transfer their racial segregationist and discriminatory practices to the Netherlands. They were partially able to do so because of the subordinate position in which the Dutch government and MG found themselves, and partially because of indifference towards the discriminatory policy in the American army. In contrast to other countries such as France and Great Britain, the segregation in the American army was not a point for considerable debates in the Dutch government or the MG. Only one document was found in which the segregation in the American army was even mentioned. Although this particular document scorned racial discrimination on the basis of skin colour, the document did not generate traceable discussions between the American army and the Dutch government. An absence of any response thus characterised the responses of the Dutch government towards the segregated army. Although Dutch people condemned practices that they agreed on to be racist, Dutch people did not publicly object the discriminating customs of the American army as was done in Great Britain. Thus, although the segregationist practices of the American army might have been refuted on individual grounds, they were not objected in public debates.

Important to realise is that this thesis cannot – and does not aim to – provide a definitive answer to how ‘racist’ the Netherlands was or to what extent racism was carried out by the Dutch population. Conversely, this thesis has shown that no explicit racist policies were carried

out by the MG regarding African American soldiers. Furthermore, although the MG initially rejected segregation, American style segregation did transfer to the Netherlands without causing considerable governmental debates. In contrast to Dutch government documents, the Limburg newspapers did respond to the interactions between African American soldiers and Dutch women. Overall, intimate relationships with foreign soldiers were condemned regardless of the skin colour of the soldier. In Limburg newspapers, the blame of ‘immoral’ behaviour was attributed to women and not the Allied soldiers. Opposed to Great Britain and France, a fear regarding ‘black sexuality’ was missing in Dutch newspapers. The moral panic that erupted with the arrival of the American army in Limburg was directed to foreign soldiers in general and was not connected to the issue of ‘race.’ Inspired by Warring’s concept of the female body of the combat zone, this thesis revealed that although the female body was the main component in the moral panic that erupted in the liberation period in the Netherlands, women were attributed responsibility over their own bodies. It was their obligation to behave morally towards foreign soldiers and keep up the good name of the Dutch people.

One of the hardest aspects of this thesis was to use Critical Discourse Analysis as a method. A disadvantage of CDA was that it offered no explicit techniques or guidelines. Further, it remained ambiguous what needed to be done in order for an analysis to qualify as a CDA. Although these limitations were clear from the outset of this research, this thesis was slightly unsuccessful to move from seeing language used in newspaper articles, diaries and government documents as an abstraction of reality, to conclude what this particular language meant for social practices. How did language used in written texts affect people’s behaviour towards African American soldiers? This aim could have been met by focussing more on people’s individual behaviour towards African American soldiers. Overall, it can be concluded that CDA was merely used in this thesis as a tool to interpret text critically and to be aware of the power that language had in constituting social relations. Moreover, the method helped me to look at the function of language in written texts critically and to reflect on my role as researcher and interpreter.

This thesis used transfer history to show how specific ideas about ‘race’ and racial prejudices travelled with the American army through Europe. However, why certain transfers did or did not take place remained out of the scope of this thesis. It would be interesting to investigate why the image of the African American male as sexual aggressor was transferred from the United States to France and Great Britain but remained absent in the Netherlands. The main goal of transfer history to transcend the boundaries of the nation-state is something that this thesis has partially failed to account for since this research focused on one province in the

Netherlands in particular. Consequently, in further research on this topic, it would be valuable to focus on border areas in Limburg in particular. By focussing on villages on the borders of Belgium and the Netherlands, specific similarities and differences in the reaction towards the offspring of African American soldiers can be examined.

A significant downside in the process of this research was what could be found in the archives. At the outset of this research, I was determined that sources on the interactions between African American soldiers and Dutch women, and on the children that were born from these encounters could be found in archival records. Unfortunately, only small traces could be found, and these traces often led to more questions than being able to answer my proposed research questions. Nevertheless, this gap in archival sources is astonishing and revealed much about history. Why were sources on these encounters or these children not preserved? Did they exist in the first place, or was this topic too taboo or too irrelevant to document or even write about? The geographical concentration of this social phenomenon might be an explanation. Since the majority of these children were born in Limburg and not in other provinces, it was a regional matter and not a national one. Furthermore, research into the diaries of people was less fruitful than assumed. At the beginning of this research, I thought that the sight of African Americans would be so extraordinary for people in Limburg that they would write about it in their diaries. However, even if people wrote about these soldiers, it was in only one or two sentences. Lastly, the perspective of the women who associated with African American soldiers could not be retrieved from archival sources. Even in the newspaper articles, the opinions and viewpoints of the women who dated these soldiers remained unexplained.

Consequently, further research on this topic would benefit from more interviews and oral testimonies. Oral history interviews could display more about the social practices that surrounded the encounters between African American soldiers and Dutch women. Therefore, this thesis could have taken a step further by conducting oral history interviews. Nonetheless, incorporating interviews would have affected time-planning and methodology. Conducting oral history interview is time-consuming and should be conducted properly and meticulously. An advantage of oral history interviews is that the researcher can interact with their source in a dynamic conversation.³⁴⁶ Conversely, oral history interviews look back on events from the past, whereas letters and diaries display concurrent feeling and thoughts. Furthermore, oral history interviews should, in my opinion, not be the only source in research but primary and secondary

³⁴⁶ Perks and Thomson (ed.), *The Oral History Reader*, p. 5.

sources are needed to contextualise people's individual experiences and gain a better understanding of the past. Oral testimonies of later generations, such as children or grandchildren, could moreover reveal how memories are transferred to one generation to another.

Mieke Kirkels made vital steps in conducting interviews with children of African American soldiers in Limburg. Her monograph was the first publication that shed light on the existence of children fathered by African American soldiers in the Netherlands. Still, further research on this topic would benefit from research on the existence of these children in other provinces. Even though the American army has been stationed predominantly in Limburg, no research regarding possible children of African American soldiers has been conducted in other Dutch provinces. The surroundings of Nijmegen and Breda could be two valuable places to research since African American units were stationed there too.

In addition to oral history interviews, a microhistorical approach could provide valuable insights into the lives of the women who dated African American soldiers or gave birth to children of African American soldiers. Microhistorical approaches eminently can bring to light exceptions and abnormalities in history that otherwise remain unnoticed. A comparative approach that systematically analyses European countries regarding this topic could also reveal striking differences and similarities in countries regarding the reaction and treatment of these children. Further, a comparative analysis between two villages in which several children were born, or a comparative analysis between a Dutch village and a British village could reveal striking differences or resembles in their youth. Steps can also be made by researching ego documents of African American soldiers who were stationed in the Netherlands. Since Dutch sources about the interaction between African American soldiers and Dutch women are scarce, ego documents from African American soldiers could reveal their perspective on Dutch society and how Dutch people treated them. Further research on brothels in the Netherlands could reveal whether – as in France – they were segregated on the basis of 'race.' This research could moreover reveal if the American army did establish their 'own hotels' with their 'own girls' as was proposed by the MG in April 1944. Lastly, an analysis of the JAG ETO case files could offer an insight into the crimes committed by American soldiers in the Second World War in the Netherlands.

From the extensive list of research recommendations stated previously it appears that research on this topic is far from saturated. With the upcoming 75th year of the liberation, it is time to present an inclusive history of the liberation and alter the narrative that has dominated the post-war remembrance of the liberation regarding the Dutch liberators. For this reason, I

would like to end with the urgency that is accompanied with collecting oral testimonies from people who experienced the war, because in a few years no witnesses of the war will be able to tell their story or answer questions that have not been asked until today.

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Figure 3: Carriage in a Liberation parade in Elsoo 1945, Stichting Streekmuseum Elsoo, *Bevrijdingsoptochten*, image 010050100059 ‘Bevrijdingsoptocht Elsoo (Limburg) Zondag 12 Augustus 1945, Black-Boys’, <https://www.streekmuseumelsloo.nl/5-bevrijdingsoptochten/247--black-boys> [accessed May 2019].

Appendix

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1. Belgian postcard depicting an African American soldier. Bevrijdingsmuseum Groesbeek, docu 2, rek 8, plateau 12, doos 5, object: 11.26.772A.

