



FORUM

A Science of Reform and Retrenchment: Black Kinship Studies, Decolonisation and the Dutch Welfare State

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This paper charts the emergence of social scientific studies on Black kinship from its origins in the United States and colonial Caribbean to its revivification in the decolonisation-era Netherlands. Demonstrating how racial knowledge was from its inception a tool of transnational governance, the author argues that Black kinship studies also informed the development of the Dutch welfare state in the aftermath of decolonisation. Drawing upon Dutch state – and municipal – archival sources as well as the private papers and published works of key figures in Black kinship studies, she charts how publicly-funded sociologists and anthropologists tracked Dutch citizens from Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles through the metropolitan welfare state, producing a corpus of knowledge that connected kinship and welfare reliance. Though Caribbean-born Dutch citizens opposed the racist assumptions of state-funded scholarship, research on Black kinship ultimately informed the course of Dutch welfarism from the expansion of interventionist programmes in the 1970s to retrenchment in the 1990s.

In January 2021, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and his cabinet resigned in the wake of a startling scandal. For six consecutive years between 2013–19, Dutch tax authorities had wrongfully accused over 26,000 families of fraudulently collecting childcare allowances. Authorities in the Tax and Customs Administration alleged that thousands of families had pocketed a benefit that paid working parents for a percentage of the cost of childcare, which is not publicly funded in the Netherlands. Many of the families accused were ordered to repay tens of thousands of euros in childcare allowances, plunging households into enduring financial ruin.¹ But perhaps the most striking fact of the childcare benefits scandal (*toeslagenaffaire*) was the seemingly deliberate targeting of people of non-European ethnic origin – including citizens from Caribbean territories under Dutch sovereignty – and individuals holding dual nationality. Despite this, the parliamentary investigation into the scandal declined to explore the role of ethnic or racial discrimination.² The question of how a government institution came to equate

¹ Jon Henley, 'Dutch government resigns over child benefits scandal', *The Guardian*, 15 Jan. 2021, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/15/dutch-government-resigns-over-child-benefits-scandal> (last visited 15 Jan. 2023) and Sam Jones, 'Veel Caribische Nederlanders slachtoffer toeslagenaffaire', *Caribisch Netwerk*, 1 Feb. 2021, available at: <https://caribischnetwerk.ntr.nl/2021/02/01/veel-caribische-nederlanders-slachtoffer-toeslagenaffaire/> (last visited 27 Jan. 2023).

² Instead, the question of whether racial profiling operated at the heart of the welfare state was entrusted to the Dutch Data Protection Authorities. Their ambit was to investigate whether tax authorities had abused personal information that is to be treated neutrally by the state (including the possession of dual nationality; racial identifications are not tracked in Dutch records). Their report concluded that tax authorities had, indeed, factored ethnicity into algorithmic programmes to survey and detect fraudsters, amounting to an illegal use of personal data. See Autoriteit Persoonsgegevens, *Belastingdienst/Toeslagen. De verwerking van de nationaliteit aanvragers van kinderopvangtoeslag*, https://www.autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl/sites/default/files/atoms/files/onderzoek_belastingdienst_kinderopvangtoeslag.pdf (last visited 27 Aug. 2021).

non-European born Dutch citizens with abuse of the welfare state remained, to the great consternation of victims and racial justice activists, unaddressed.³

This was not the first time in the Netherlands that perceived outsiders were accused of exploiting social assistance. Similar assumptions played a formative role in shaping the Dutch welfare state as it overlapped with the end of empire. After 1965, the Dutch welfare state transformed from one of Europe's smallest to one of its largest social safety nets. But the universal insurance and disability schemes that made the Dutch welfare state the envy of continental progressives would be called into question by the 1970s and significantly eroded by the mid-1990s.⁴ In the 1970s, shocks to the global oil and gas economy coincided with decolonisation and growing migration from the former Dutch colonies of Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles.⁵ The tens of thousands of people who moved from the Caribbean to the erstwhile metropole sought relief from looming restrictions on the rights of citizenship and economic redress in a highly stratified commonwealth forged through centuries of colonialism. As Dutch citizens, they possessed ostensibly unfettered access to the Dutch welfare state. Yet, throughout the following decades, social scientists commissioned by state and municipal actors fastidiously tabulated Caribbean interactions with the welfare state. Their most abiding preoccupation was the 'matrifocal' family structure of Dutch citizens from the Caribbean, imagined as fundamentally heterosexual if not properly heteronormative.⁶ Although growing numbers of white European Dutch women were also uncoupling marriage and reproduction during this time, social scientists drew on an existing corpus of Black family studies developed decades earlier, contributing to perceptions of a fundamental incompatibility between Caribbean kinship and the demands of mainstream Dutch society. The result was an eroded faith in the ability of welfare to solve social inequality.

In order to understand this trajectory, it is important to consider the transnational itinerancy of racial knowledge that informed expert assertions in the Netherlands. Emerging in the 1930s and 1940s in the United States and colonial Caribbean, Black family studies was initially designed to inform policy in the context of accelerating urban migration and labour rebellions that threatened the stability of white hegemony and colonial rule.⁷ This very same knowledge circulated in an enlarged transimperial geography, travelling not just north and south across the Caribbean Sea but also east

³ BIJ1, 'Institutionalised Racism within Tax Administration: Hold Those Responsible Accountable', available at <https://bij1.org/racisme-belastingdienst/> (last visited 27 Aug. 2021); also https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=186179268595421&story_fbid=821148401765168 (last visited 27 Aug. 2021).

⁴ Although the initial response to the first 'oil shock' (1973–4) saw the expansion of public spending under the leftist government of Prime Minister Joop Den Uyl, these policies were contested from the start within economic institutions. See Merijn Oudenampsen, 'Between Conflict and Consensus: The Dutch Depoliticised Paradigm Shift of the 1980s', *Comparative European Politics*, 18 (2020), 785. On the chronology of welfare retrenchment, see Sanneke Kuipers, *The Crisis Imperative: Crisis Rhetoric and Welfare State Reform in Belgium and the Netherlands in the Early 1990s* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 119.

⁵ The Netherlands Antilles was a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands initially comprising six islands: Curaçao, Aruba, Bonaire, St. Maarten, St. Eustatius and Saba. In 1986, Aruba left the Netherlands Antillean federation and became an autonomous country within the kingdom. In 2010, the Netherlands Antilles dissolved and each of the remaining islands pursued a range of bilateral ties with the Netherlands. The term 'Antillean' is thus historically specific and, in this article, refers to people from the former Netherlands Antilles before the dissolution of that state. Though most people identified with their island of origin and many criticised the Netherlands Antilles as a state borne of administrative convenience rather than meaningful cultural unity, Dutch state records did not disaggregate islanders, thus homogenising islands with different language, cultural and religious practices. After Aruba's separation from the Netherlands Antilles in 1986, people from Aruba were no longer regarded in administrative records as 'Antillean'.

⁶ Roderick Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 87.

⁷ Deborah Thomas, 'The Violence of Diaspora: Governmentality, Class Cultures and Circulations', *Radical History Review*, 103 (2009), 84. See also Barbara Bush, 'Colonial Research and the Social Sciences at the End of Empire: The West Indian Social Survey, 1944–57', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 41, 3 (2013); Christine Barrow, *Family in the Caribbean: Themes and Perspectives* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1996), 3–8; D. Alissa Trotz, 'Behind the Banner of Culture? Gender, "Race" and the Family in Guyana', *New West Indian Guide*, 77, 1/2 (2003), 5–29 and Lara Putnam, 'Caribbean Kinship from Within and Without', *History Workshop Journal*, 66 (2008), 279–88.

across the Atlantic. In the age of decolonisation in Europe, the revival of this intellectual programme remained wedded to policy objectives but now became oriented toward a different task. Over subsequent decades, authorities in the Netherlands used this knowledge to assess prospects for integrating Caribbean Dutch citizens into metropolitan society, in the 1970s defending more interventionist social programs but, in the 1980s, as the welfare state was dismantled, supporting claims that economic improvement would not alter ‘cultural’ practices.⁸ Eventually, these studies were deployed to illustrate that the putatively unchanging qualities of Caribbean kinship would tax the European welfare state. A science of colonial reform thus became a science of retrenchment.

Focusing on the science that informed state policy yields new insights about Dutch society in the postwar era. As scholars of Britain and France have recently shown, empire’s end was intimately intertwined with the trajectory of welfarism.⁹ In the Netherlands too, the circulation of racial knowledge informed the supposedly colour-blind development of the welfare state as decolonisation inaugurated significant *internal* movements across the Kingdom of the Netherlands, a commonwealth encompassing the Netherlands, Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles bound by Dutch sovereignty and common citizenship.¹⁰ While scholars have often heralded the reduction of social spending in the Netherlands as a ‘miracle’ achieved through stunning social consensus and resulting in impressive wealth and job creation, the perception that welfare retrenchment was especially benign and immune to racist manipulation (in marked contrast to the US ‘War on Welfare’) appears dubious when considering how the welfare state and its scientists responded to Caribbean migration.¹¹

By tracking the movement of racial knowledge and notions of public obligation imperilled as a result, this article joins a growing body of scholarship that contends that assumptions about race and racism have palpably shaped Dutch society and its institutions – evident not least in the qualification of the rights of Caribbean Dutch people, who are frequently understood as ‘outsiders’ despite their Dutch citizenship.¹² Though Dutch authorities no longer employed the word ‘race’ or used it as an administrative category following the violence of the Holocaust and the Second World War, in publicly-funded research, the consolidation of group identities based on kinship offers powerful evidence for the process by which ‘family becomes racial ontology’,¹³ ushering in racist essentialisms through the backdoor of culturalist arguments about family life.

Finally, this paper shows that, contrary to the consensual narrative of welfare retrenchment in the Netherlands, state expertise and the reduction of social spending did not go uncontested.¹⁴

⁸ For a similar argument about the United Kingdom, see Bush, ‘Colonial Research and the Social Sciences at the End of Empire’, 467.

⁹ Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 1; Amelia Lyons, *The Civilizing Mission in the Metropole: Algerian Families and the French Welfare State during Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013) and Minayo Nasiali, *Native to the Republic: Empire, Social Citizenship and Everyday Life in Marseille Since 1945* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016). On the transformative impact of decolonisation on European Dutch society, see Elizabeth Buettner, *Europe after Empire: Decolonization, Society and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

¹⁰ Inaugurated in 1954, the Kingdom of the Netherlands included the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles and Suriname as constituent countries of a commonwealth polity. Locally elected governments in Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles oversaw laws and affairs deemed ‘internal’ to these countries (including, quite crucially, national budgets), while the Netherlands retained control over key aspects of kingdom-wide governance, including defence, foreign relations and diplomacy, and the maintenance of citizenship and good governance.

¹¹ Jelle Visser and Anton Hemerijck, *A Dutch Miracle: Job Growth, Welfare Reform and Corporatism in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 1997) and Timothy Smith, *France in Crisis: Welfare, Inequality and Globalization since 1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 120.

¹² See, among others, Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving, ‘Innocence, Smug Ignorance, Resentment: An Introduction to Dutch Racism’, in Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving, eds., *Dutch Racism* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), 10, 19; Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press) and Guno Jones, ‘Unequal Citizenship in the Netherlands: The Caribbean Dutch as Liminal Citizens’, *Frame*, 27, 2 (2014), 65–84.

¹³ Trotz, ‘Behind the Banner of Culture?’, 23.

¹⁴ For particularly trenchant studies contesting the ‘consensus’ narrative of Dutch welfare state retrenchment, see Rose Kösters, Bram Mellink, Merijn Oudenampsen and Matthias van Rossum, ‘Not So Consensual after All: A New

Oppositional voices emerged among social welfare organisations established by Caribbean Dutch people who identified state-funded knowledge production as uniquely harmful, promoting stereotypes of pathological dependency while weakening institutional support for Caribbean families. But activists did not dismiss expertise entirely. They called for a renewed intellectual agenda that studied racism within Dutch society and advocated for public services like childcare, community centres and family allowances. Ultimately, activist efforts to claim emancipation through the welfare state ran aground on the erosion of social spending throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Drawing upon archival sources from Dutch state and municipal bodies as well as the published works and personal papers of prominent figures in Black family studies in Europe, the United States and the Caribbean, this paper tracks how knowledge about race and the family moved and to what ends. It argues that expert knowledge played a role in the organisation of the welfare state from the onset of increased Caribbean migration in the early 1970s to 1996, when important social legislation was overhauled. It begins by surveying the origins of a Black family studies programme and its relationship to racialised systems of governance in the United States and the Caribbean to outline the debates that captivated social scientists and bureaucrats in the Netherlands decades later. Secondly, the article turns toward Dutch state investment in social scientific research in the 1970s, which emerged to track Caribbean Dutch citizens in the welfare state. It then examines expert attempts to define and categorise the family in view of administrative demands and changing norms in European Dutch society, a process that constructed race through the taxonomy of kinship. Finally, it concludes by exploring the strident defence of public obligation launched by Caribbean Dutch organisations in the Netherlands, who at once criticised the effects of hegemonic knowledge production while reimagining the emancipatory potential of expertise in a climate of austerity.

Black Kinship Studies in an Age of Rebellion and Reform

Before racial knowledge settled in the Dutch welfare state, a significant literature on working-class Black kinship practices had already begun to develop earlier in the twentieth century. Hardly a neutral focus of scholarly investigation, social scientific fixation with Black kinship stemmed from colonial-racial tropes that constructed Blackness through ascriptions of sexual laxity and gender deviance.¹⁵ From its inception, the Black family studies programme of the 1930s and 1940s was a transnational effort aimed at concrete policy objectives.¹⁶ During the era of Great Migration in the United States, which saw millions of African Americans leave the rural south for urban metropolises, social scientific study of Black family life expanded precipitously. Prominent institutions funded research on changing urban landscapes and even expanded the scope of their efforts to the Caribbean, where US presence in the region and increased emigration to the United States also galvanised the production of knowledge in the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁷ US social scientists collaborated with European and elite Caribbean interlocutors after labour disturbances rocked the British Caribbean in the late 1930s, prompting colonial authorities to conscript knowledge production for the purpose of colonial development and reform. These studies set the agenda for future research in the United States, the Caribbean and Europe for many decades to come.

One of the most significant disputes to shape the emerging study of Black kinship concerned the origins of the so-called matrifocal family. The widely publicised debate between the US sociologist

Perspective on the Dutch 1980s', *TSEG*, 18, 1 (2021), 5–18; Oudenampsen, 'Between Conflict and Consensus' and Bram Mellink, 'Towards the Centre: Early Neoliberals in the Netherlands and the Rise of the Welfare State, 1945–1958', *Contemporary European History*, 29 (2020), 30–43.

¹⁵ Kempadoo, *Sexing the Caribbean*, 29.

¹⁶ For this argument, see also Thomas, 'The Violence of Diaspora', 84 and Trotz, 'Behind the Banner of Culture?', 10.

¹⁷ By the mid-1950s, the US Conservation Foundation sponsored research on overpopulation in Puerto Rico and Jamaica, which experts believed was the main reason for economic problems. Bush, 'Colonial Research and the Social Sciences at the End of Empire', 463 and Thomas, 'The Violence of Diaspora', 96.

E. Franklin Frazier and anthropologist Melville Herskovits initiated the discussion in the 1930s.¹⁸ Frazier's landmark *The Negro Family in the United States* (1939) expounded on the role of slavery and racial and economic subordination in shaping what were, in Frazier's view, unstable ties within Black families. In the context of US urban environments, the alleged marginality of biological fathers and the centrality of women bred cyclical social ills that independently perpetuated poverty. Frazier's thought was, in fact, more complex than the caricatured version of his argument that would long survive him; and, as others have pointed out, for Frazier and other Black social scientists seeking institutional and financial support in a highly segregated academic landscape, 'embracing the standards of objectivity meant adopting – and adapting – the idioms of social ecology, human development and personality and culture as analytic frames'.¹⁹ Contrary to Frazier, Herskovits insisted in his *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1941) that the endurance of West African cultural practices habituated women of African descent to closer bonds with their children. Where Frazier saw various social and economic forces 'disorganising' the Black family in the United States, Herskovits saw continuities, or 'survivalisms', that linked the cultures of the African continent to the African diaspora in the Americas, albeit to varying degrees.²⁰

This debate between two titans of US social science played out as labour rebellions swept the British Caribbean between 1934 and 1939, launching a new wave of Caribbean-based studies tethered to an agenda of late-colonial reform. The Royal Commission sent to investigate the causes of unrest focused overwhelmingly on the working-class African-Caribbean household, recommending interventionist welfare programmes and a vigorous campaign against 'the social, moral and economic evils of promiscuity'.²¹ In the wake of rebellion, the Colonial Office sought to abate these perceived impediments to progress through the West Indies Development and Welfare Organisation and, later, a massive social scientific study, the West Indies Social Survey (WISS).²² Studies such as Thomas Simey's *Welfare and Planning in the West Indies* (1946) and Edith Clarke's *My Mother Who Fathered Me* (1957) resulted from this marriage of social science and social policy.²³ Simey, a British sociologist and social welfare advisor in the West Indies between 1941 and 1944, and Clarke, a British-educated Jamaican anthropologist from a prominent plantation-owning family, embraced Frazier's theory that 'matricentric' households adapted to the economically weak position of men while producing other social maladaptions, a conclusion shaped not least by the close contact that these researchers maintained with the US sociologist.²⁴ At the same time, Clarke – like other anthropologists informed by structural functionalist approaches – sought to understand the working-class Jamaican family as fulfilling certain functions that 'embodied its own order, principles and structures'.²⁵ Despite this, researchers understood the

¹⁸ On the debate between Frazier and Herskovits, see Jerry Gershenson, *Melville J. Herskovits and the Racial Politics of Knowledge* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 113–21 and Daryl Michael Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880–1996* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 45–6.

¹⁹ O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, 75. See also Roderick Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 22–3; Scott, *Contempt and Pity*, 42–50 and Thomas 'The Violence of Diaspora', 102, fn22.

²⁰ Melville Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1941), 167–84. Frazier conceded that the retention of African 'survivalisms' may be stronger in the Caribbean than in the United States in E. Franklin Frazier, 'Introduction', in Vera Rubin, ed., *Caribbean Studies: A Symposium* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1957), vii.

²¹ Bush, 'Colonial Research and the Social Sciences at the End of Empire', 453.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Another example of this was the WISS-funded research of Madeline Kerr, whose *Personality and Conflict in Jamaica* (1952) influenced educational policies regarding the children of West Indian migrants in British schools; see Bush, 'Colonial Research and the Social Sciences at the End of Empire', 465–6.

²⁴ Correspondence between Edith Clark and E. Franklin Frazier, 1950–7, Correspondence 131–8; and Grant-in-Aid to Frazier for Research on Race Relations in the West Indies, 18 Oct. 1948, Subject Files 131–46, Howard University, E. Franklin Frazier Papers. Frazier even travelled to Jamaica to consult with Clarke and the research team working on the WISS in the field; see also Bush 'Colonial Research and the Social Sciences at the End of Empire', 467, fn1.

²⁵ Kamala Kempadoo, *Sexing the Caribbean: Gender, Race and Sexual Labor* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 17.

'West Indian family' largely by analogy, assuming proper family life involved a coresidential conjugal couple and prescribed gender roles.²⁶

Projects like the WISS were initially intended to revitalise the colonial project in the Caribbean. But, with growing demands for independence and accelerating migration to Europe, the Black family studies programme was henceforth remade into a project of metropolitan assimilation.²⁷ In Britain, social scientists with experience in the West Indies, such as Thomas Simey and Kenneth Little, a physical anthropologist appointed to serve on the supervisory committee of the WISS, helped to establish the study of 'race relations', a research programme that garnered significant state support and continued collaboration with US researchers like Frazier.²⁸ Like their British and US counterparts, French officials once again turned toward the social scientific study of African-Antillean family life as the overseas departments (*départements d'outré mer*, DOM) integrated into France in 1946. Authorities viewed studies like Frazier's as a cautionary tale applicable to a distinct Caribbean context: social policy, they argued, should help to instil reverence for French family values and paternal duty among Antillean men so that children would not grow up without fathers and perpetuate cycles of criminality and poverty.²⁹

In the Dutch Caribbean, the zeitgeist of decolonisation also resulted in increased social scientific knowledge production. In 1953, one year before a new constitutional order proclaimed Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles as constituent countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Dutch parliament ratified the creation of the Foundation for the Advancement of Research in Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles (*Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek Suriname – Nederlandse Antillen*, WOSUNA). This state-funded initiative to encourage scientific research in the Caribbean was believed vital to the postcolonial development project.³⁰ Within a decade of its creation, WOSUNA and its successor organisation, the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (*Nederlandse Stichting voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek van de Tropen*, WOTRO), called for research on family 'adaptation' as unemployment soared alongside racialised anxieties about overpopulation.³¹ Influential studies resulted from this push, including Willem F. L. Buschkens' *The Family System of the Paramaribo Creoles*, A. F. Marks' *Male and Female in the Afro-Curaçaoan Household* and Eva Abraham-van der Mark's *Yu'i Mama (Mother's Child)*, each of which meditated extensively on the origins and contour of the 'Afro-American' family while exploring local specificities in view of economic trends.³² Like other sociologists and anthropologists working in the region, concern with Black kinship often reflected late- and post-colonial

²⁶ Barrow, *The Family in the Caribbean*, 24.

²⁷ Baillkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, 8, and Bush, 'Colonial Research and the Social Sciences at the End of Empire', 467.

²⁸ Jenny Bourne and A. Sivanandan, 'Cheerleaders and Ombudsmen: The Sociology of Race Relations in Britain', *Race & Class*, 21, 4 (1980), 331–52; Baillkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, 25 and 30 and Letter from Little to Frazier, 20 Feb. 1953, Howard University, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Speaking Engagements 131–52.

²⁹ Kristen Stromberg Childers, *Seeking Imperialism's Embrace: National Identity, Decolonization and Assimilation in the French Caribbean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 158.

³⁰ *Wosuna 1954–59* (Amsterdam: WOSUNA), 32; Johanna Felhoen Kraal, 'De WOSUNA als een vorm van samenwerking in het Koninkrijk', *Christoffel*, 1, 5 (1951), 206–7 and Johanna Felhoen Kraal, 'Netherlands Antilles and Surinam', *Revista Geográfica*, 24, 50 (1959), 130.

³¹ H. C. Van Renselaar and J. D. Speckmann, 'Social Research on Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles', *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids*, 47, 1 (1969), 30–40 and Chelsea Shields, *Offshore Attachments: Oil and Intimacy in the Caribbean* (Oakland: University of California Press, forthcoming), ch. 3.

³² Research for these studies was largely carried out in the 1960s, prior to increased migration. See A. F. Marks, *Male and Female and the Afro-Curaçaoan Household*, trans. Maria J. L. van Yperen (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), 326; Willem F. L. Buschkens, *The Family System of the Paramaribo Creoles*, trans. Maria J. L. van Yperen (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974) and Eva Abraham-van der Marck, *Yu'i Mama: Enkele facetten van gezinsstructuur op Curaçao* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1972). Harry Hoetink's, *Het patroon van de oude Curaçaoese samenleving. Een sociologische studie* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1958), together with Surinamese sociologist and WOSUNA executive committee member Rudolf van Lier's *Samenleving in een grensgebied. Een sociaal-historische studie van Suriname* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1949) paved the way for research on kinship and acculturation that would become subjects of WOSUNA and WOTRO-funded studies in the 1970s.

concerns that bleak economic prospects would prevent men from fulfilling their supposedly natural roles as heads of household, husbands, fathers and, by extension, national leaders.³³

These examples illustrate how the study of working-class Black family life, often publicly subsidised, emerged alongside shifting social, political and economic goals ultimately to produce the Black family ‘as an object of knowledge and a problem of national security’.³⁴ Transnational from the start, expert exchanges contributed, as Barbara Bush has written, ‘to an emergent transnational discourse of family dysfunction in the African diaspora in the Americas’ that powerfully influenced government policies.³⁵ This is perhaps nowhere more controversially rendered than in the ‘Moynihan Report’ of 1965, in which sociologist and Assistant Secretary of Labour Daniel Patrick Moynihan elaborated on existing assumptions in Black kinship studies: that matrifocal families constituted a ‘tangle of pathology’, perpetuating male marginality, youth delinquency and poverty across generations.³⁶ Although this report represents a significant inflection point on debates on race and welfare in the United States, neither Moynihan’s arguments nor his trajectory from a defender of Great Society programmes to a resolute critic of the welfare state were exceptional.³⁷ Returning to the circulation of Black kinship studies in decolonisation-era Europe brings into focus a similar evolution of social science and social policy.

Finding the Family in the Welfare State

Long a mainstay of Caribbean livelihoods, it was in the 1970s that migration from the Dutch Caribbean turned in the direction of the metropole. Renowned European Dutch anthropologist André Köbben, a professor at the University of Amsterdam who supervised, among others, Eva Abraham-van der Mark’s dissertation on working-class Afro-Curaçaoan families, recognised before authorities did that migration from kingdom territories would likely be significant and long-lasting. In 1970, the cultural anthropologist appealed for funding from WOTRO to investigate whether Caribbean migration to the Netherlands altered perspectives on family life, believing this to be a potent metric of assimilation.³⁸ At the same time, Köbben collaborated with the municipal social service department in Amsterdam – home to the largest number of overseas nationals in the 1970s – to enlist social scientists in reviewing the department’s case files.³⁹ City bureaucrats hoped to leverage the partnership to assess the unique needs of Caribbean Dutch citizens who were not otherwise distinguished in administrative records.

Pleas for enhanced knowledge emerged as the Netherlands experienced growing postcolonial and guest worker migration. Family reunification policies enabled spouses and children to join former guest workers from Turkey and Morocco. But migration from the Caribbean colonies differed in one crucial respect. For much of the decade, families from Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles

³³ Buschkens, *The Family System of Paramaribo Creoles*, 246.

³⁴ Tiffany Lethabo King, ‘Black “Feminisms” and Pessimism: Abolishing Moynihan’s Negro Family’, *Theory & Event*, 21, 1 (2018), 68.

³⁵ Bush, ‘Colonial Research and the Social Sciences at the End of Empire’, 465–6; Thomas, ‘The Violence of Diaspora’.

³⁶ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Washington, DC: United States Department of Labor, 1965), 29. On the unoriginality of Moynihan’s arguments, see Priya Kandaswamy, *Domestic Contradictions: Race and Gendered Citizenship from Reconstruction to Welfare Reform* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), 165–6.

³⁷ Melinda Cooper, *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism* (London: Zed Books, 2017), 46–7 and 51.

³⁸ A. J. F. Köbben subsidy request to WOTRO, 28 Aug. 1970, National Archive of the Netherlands (NA), Interdepartementale Commissie Coordinatie ten behoeve van Beleidsmaatregelen Antillianen en Surinamers (Commissie Hendricks), 1970–4, 2.10.41, inv. nr. 1013. On Köbben, see Peter Scholten, *Framing Immigrant Integration: Dutch Research-Policy Dialogues in Comparative Perspective* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2011), 103.

³⁹ Ineke Gooskens, *Surinaamse vrouwelijke gezinshoofden in Bijstand en W.V.V. te Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Gemeentelijke Sociale Dienst, Afd. Beleidsvoorbereiding en Wetenschappelijke Onderzoek, 1975), Universiteits Bibliotheek Leiden (UBL), KITLV/Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) Collection, 4.

entered the country not as foreign nationals but as Dutch citizens.⁴⁰ The expansion of Dutch citizenship to the Caribbean dated to decolonisation-era reforms implemented in 1948 – when Dutch subjects in the Caribbean became Dutch citizens – and 1954, when a new constitutional order turned Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles into internally self-governing member states of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and protected freedom of movement between the kingdom's Caribbean and European theatres.⁴¹

By the end of the 1960s, this commonwealth arrangement drew criticisms on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1969, a strike at Curaçao's Shell-owned oil refinery expanded into an outpouring of discontent with abiding racial inequality and colonial attitudes. Local police on Curaçao requested the 'mutual support' promised in the kingdom's constitution by summoning the Dutch marines to subdue the uprising. Though dissatisfaction with racial and economic inequality was widespread, demands for complete independence were unevenly shared. In the Netherlands, however, European Dutch progressives rued their obligation to deploy what could be perceived as 'colonial force' and insisted that the transatlantic kingdom dissolve according to nation-state models.⁴² In 1973, the newly elected cabinet of Dutch Prime Minister and Labour Party leader Joop den Uyl announced that it would initiate talks with Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles about a transfer of sovereignty. European Dutch politicians did not just believe that independence aligned with anti-imperialist principles but many also hoped that the transfer of sovereignty would stem potential migration from the Caribbean to Europe.⁴³

This attempt to confine Dutch citizenship to the European continent produced the opposite intended result. In Suriname, some politicians welcomed sovereignty and announced in 1974 that the country would achieve independence by the end of the following year. The decision had never been put to a vote and, by 1980, one-half of Suriname's population – over 160,000 people – left to claim citizenship in the Netherlands. Dutch citizens in the Netherlands Antilles watched sceptically as sovereignty resulted first in the exodus of Suriname's population and, by 1980, in the violent consolidation of a military dictatorship.⁴⁴ Concerns about the eventual loss of citizenship and worsening economic circumstances on the most populous islands of Curaçao and Aruba accelerated migration to Europe in the 1970s, which saw a rise in the migration of people from the most vulnerable socio-economic circumstances. Family rather than individual migration brought with it a concomitant increase in migrating women, who outnumbered men after 1973. Emigration from the Netherlands Antillean islands reached its own exodus level in 1985 after the shuttering and sale of two mammoth oil refineries on Aruba and Curaçao. From 1984 to 1999, the number of Dutch citizens from the Caribbean islands living in the Netherlands – the vast majority of them from Curaçao⁴⁵ – tripled to nearly 106,000, one-third of the total population of the Netherlands Antilles.⁴⁶ Though significant in terms of the population of the Netherlands Antilles, the number of Dutch citizens from the islands constituted a small percentage of the total population of the Netherlands, a fact obscured by

⁴⁰ Residents of Suriname could enter the Netherlands without a visa until 1980. Unlike Suriname, the Netherlands Antilles did not become independent. Citizens from the Dutch Caribbean islands thus continue to possess the right of abode in the Netherlands.

⁴¹ See fn.10.

⁴² Gert Oostindie and Inge Klinkers, *Decolonising the Caribbean: Dutch Policies in Comparative Perspective* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), 102.

⁴³ This fear was already present among Dutch officials in the 1960s, who anxiously looked toward migration trends in the United Kingdom. See W. Duk on entry of Surinamese and Antilleans, 2 Jan. 1963, NA, Cabinet of Surinamese and Antillean Affairs (*Kabinet voor Surinaamse en Nederlands-Antilliaanse Zaken*, KabSNA), 2.10.41, inv. nr. 1012.

⁴⁴ Rosemarijn Hoefte, *Suriname in the Long Twentieth Century: Domination, Contestation, Globalization* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 106, 133–58. On 25 Feb. 1980, sixteen noncommissioned officers ousted the Henck Arron government and established a military dictatorship under the de facto control of Desi Bouterse. Bouterse's power was further consolidated after the extrajudicial murder of fifteen opponents of his regime in 1982.

⁴⁵ Hans van Hulst, 'A Continuing Construction of Crisis: Antilleans, Especially Curaçaoans, in the Netherlands', in Han Vermeulen and Rinus Penninx, eds., *Immigrant Integration: The Dutch Case* (Amsterdam: Spinhuis, 2000), 99–100.

⁴⁶ Michael O. Sharpe, 'Globalization and Migration: Post-Colonial Dutch Antillean and Aruban Immigrant Political Incorporation in the Netherlands', *Dialectical Anthropology*, 29, 3/4 (2005), 219.

the outsized and often negative attention this group received.⁴⁷ However embattled, the right of Dutch citizenship, as Guno Jones and Michael O. Sharpe have argued, remained a critical protection in an unequal multinational state shaped by colonial exploitation.⁴⁸

As growing numbers of Caribbean Dutch citizens settled in Amsterdam in the 1970s, the municipality collaborated with researchers at the Anthropological and Sociological Centre of the University of Amsterdam to index interactions between Caribbean-born Dutch citizens and welfare providers. In the 1970s, Den Uyl's cabinet expanded social policies and modest social welfare measures for migrant groups, but the assumption remained that the Netherlands should not become a 'country of immigration' and that migrant welfare should be encouraged, with the aim of incentivising return migration.⁴⁹ While the Dutch citizenship of people from Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles facilitated access to certain rights, municipal bureaucrats argued that the common citizenship prevented public servants from assessing the ostensibly unique needs of Caribbean families. Civil servants in Amsterdam repeatedly bemoaned that among the perceived problems resulting from Caribbean migration, 'the most important is that Surinamese and Antilleans are, rightly, not separately registered in the Regional Labour Office or the Municipal Housing Services, nor in municipal social service departments or schools'.⁵⁰

These efforts to track Caribbean families emerged at the start of the 1970s in connection with the Social Assistance Act (*Algemene Bijstandswet*; ABW). Established in 1965, the ABW transformed the Dutch welfare state by entrusting the provision of social assistance to the government and not, as was previously done, to religious and other charitable organisations. This social insurance legislation was initially intended to strengthen the financial position of the nuclear family by offering the presumed male breadwinner financial assistance in the event of unemployment. But the implementation of the ABW instead undermined the importance of marriage by extending economic security to single women, a phenomenon accelerated by the relaxation of divorce law six years later.⁵¹ Under the ABW's social insurance provisions, single parents with dependent children under the age of sixteen were entitled to 87.5 per cent of the minimum income.⁵²

Responsible at the national level for the welfare of 'postcolonial' migrants from Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles, the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work (*Ministerie van Cultuur, Recreatie en Maatschappelijk Werk*, CRM) requested detailed information in 1971 about 'the extent to which migrating kingdom partners appeal to the ABW'.⁵³ The social service departments of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht were asked to participate in the study, though only Amsterdam was able to marshal the resources to employ an academic researcher to review the department's case files.⁵⁴ Circulated internally in 1972, the report identified the 'family situation'

⁴⁷ Guno Jones, 'Tussen onderdanen, Rijksgenoten en Nederlanders: Nederlandse politici over burgers uit Oost en West en Nederland, 1945–2005', PhD thesis, Vrije Universiteit, 2007, 303.

⁴⁸ Jones, 'Unequal Citizenship in the Netherlands', 69–71 and Michael O. Sharpe, *Postcolonial Citizens and Ethnic Migration: The Netherlands and Japan in the Age of Globalization* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 76.

⁴⁹ Scholten, *Framing Immigration Integration*, 71.

⁵⁰ Inventory of the problems created by the settlement of Surinamese and Antilleans in Amsterdam, NA, KabSNA, 2.10.41, inv. nr. 1013, 3.

⁵¹ Sarah van Walsum, 'Sex and the Regulation of Belonging: Dutch Family Migration Policies in the Context of Changing Family Norms', in Albert Kraler, Eleonore Kofman, Martin Kohli and Camille Schmoll, eds., *Gender, Generation and Families in International Migration* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 60–1 and Jet Bussemaker, *Betwiste zelfstandigheid. Individualisering, sekse en verzorgingsstaat* (Amsterdam: SUA, 1999), 164.

⁵² Jet Bussemaker, Annemiek van Drenth, Trudie Knijn and Janneke Plantenga, 'Allenstaande moeders en sociaal beleid in Nederland. Van verzorgers naar kostwinners?', *Beleid en Maatschappij*, 26, 1 (1996), 45.

⁵³ Inventory of the problems created by the settlement of Surinamese and Antilleans in Amsterdam, NA, KabSNA, 2.10.41, inv. nr. 1013, 3.

⁵⁴ Amsterdam's Department of Social Services frequently collaborated with the Anthropological and Sociological Centre of the University of Amsterdam, where André Köbben, who held the Chair of Cultural Anthropology from 1955 to 1976, led a research project on the causes and consequences of migration from Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles to the Netherlands. Han F. Vermeulen, 'Anthropology in the Netherlands: Past, Present and Future', in Aleksandar Bošković, ed., *Other People's Anthropologies: Ethnographic Practice on the Margins* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 51.

of overseas nationals as the most important predictor of demands on social services.⁵⁵ According to Amsterdam's social services department, at least half of the Caribbean-born clients seeking relief through the ABW were comprised of 'female heads of household'. This constituency also formed the largest group of clients not registered for unemployment assistance, a wage-related benefit that offered recently unemployed people financial provisions for a period of six months to two years.⁵⁶ The caretaking duties of single mothers, the report contended, prevented their entry into the workforce and caused 'structural' dependence on welfare.⁵⁷

Intended to provide a portrait of migrant welfare that could facilitate economic participation and eventual return migration, European Dutch authorities in this decade of increased movement conceived of single motherhood as a problem of welfare reliance. Furthermore, they identified single motherhood as the essential framework by which Caribbean Dutch citizens, otherwise indistinguishable from European Dutch in official records, could be defined and made legible in administrative accounting.

Kin and Categories as 'Racial Ontology'

The growing recognition by the end of the 1970s that the Netherlands would be a permanent rather than a temporary home to migrants spurred state investment in research on so-called 'ethnic minorities' and resulted in an unusually close relationship between social science and state policy.⁵⁸ Under the auspices of the Ministry CRM, the Dutch government became the primary sponsor of social scientific research on migrant groups. Created in 1965, the ministry was initially tasked with reorienting European Dutch families to urban and industrialised societies through the expansion of social work and nationally-organised social insurance legislation. In the next decade, the ministry would extend these approaches to the management of non-European Dutch populations. Informally advised by social scientific experts since 1976, the ministry formalised the connection between policy development and expertise in 1978 through the establishment of the Advisory Committee on Minorities Research (*Adviescommissie Onderzoek Culturele Minderheden*, ACOM) under the chairship of anthropologist André Köbben, who brought to the position an existing interest in African diasporic kinship.⁵⁹ The ministry held a monopoly position in determining what research would receive state funding.⁶⁰ Starting in 1981, the government earmarked the equivalent of 28 million euros annually for research on people with a migration background. After 1984, Dutch authorities mandated that publicly funded research should be relevant to policy formation.⁶¹ With simultaneous spending

⁵⁵ Report 'Rijksgenoten in de bijstand en de WWV te Amsterdam', Feb. 1972, Stadsarchief Amsterdam (SA), Archief van de Sociale Dienst, 30047, inv. nr. 3676.

⁵⁶ Romke van der Veen and Willem Trommel, 'Manged Liberalization of the Dutch Welfare State: A Review and Analysis of the Reform of the Dutch Social Security System, 1985–1998', *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration*, 12, 3 (1999), 303.

⁵⁷ Report 'Rijksgenoten in de bijstand en de WWV te Amsterdam', Feb. 1972, SA, Archief van de Sociale Dienst, 30047, inv. nr. 3676.

⁵⁸ Philomena Essed and Kwame Nimako, 'Designs and (Co)Incidents: Cultures of Scholarship and Public Policy on Immigrants/Minorities in the Netherlands', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 47, 3–4 (2006), 284. The term 'ethnic minorities' replaced references to 'immigrants' and was standardised in government language after the 1983 Memorandum on Minorities (*Minderhedennota*).

⁵⁹ Scholten, *Framing Immigrant Integration*, 91. In addition to supervising dissertations on this topic, Köbben conducted fieldwork in Suriname and wrote about kinship systems among the Djuka maroon community; see, among others, A. J. F. Köbben, 'Unity and Disunity – Cottica Djuka as a Kinship System', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 123, 1 (1967), 10–52.

⁶⁰ Rinus Penninx, *Minderheidsvorming en emancipatie. Balans van kennisverwerving ten aanzien van immigranten en woonwageneigenaren 1967–1987* (Alphen aan den Rijn: Samsom, 1988), 17; Van Walsum, 'Sex and the Regulation of Belonging', 59–60 and Marja Gastelaars, *Een geregeld leven. Sociologie en sociale politiek in Nederland, 1925–1968* (Amsterdam: SUA, 1985), 180.

⁶¹ Rinus Penninx, *Wie betaalt, bepaalt? De ontwikkeling en programmering van onderzoek naar migranten, etnische minderheden en woonwageneigenaren, 1955–1985, met speciale aandacht voor de rol van de overheid* (Amsterdam: UvA, Inst. voor Sociale Geografie, 1988), 25, 30.

cutbacks at national universities, academic researchers grew further reliant on state funding and tailored their research programmes to the priorities of the Dutch government. From 1980–5, the government funded nearly 800 studies on migrant groups, virtually doubling a bibliography produced in 1978 that documented 350 government-sponsored studies since the Second World War.⁶²

If Caribbean-born Dutch citizens were ultimately disaggregated from their European-born counterparts in these studies, they were not always considered apart from each other. For social scientists, it was precisely the perceived similarities in family structures that cohered ‘ethnic’ groups. The authors of *Surinamese and Antilleans in Amsterdam* (1979) commissioned by the Ministry CRM contended that the key differences between Surinamese, Antillean and ‘other Dutch’ families lay in the ‘composition of families and households’. Even on this terrain, the report argued, there was a ‘big difference between Creoles and Hindustanis’, referring to the sizeable population of Surinamese of South Asian ancestry, who also moved to the Netherlands but featured less frequently as objects of state concern.⁶³ Though the term ‘Creole’ was not used to describe people of African descent in the Netherlands Antilles as it was in Suriname, the authors nevertheless slotted islanders into this deracinated category and argued that ‘Antilleans belong almost exclusively to the Creole population group’. Warranting their inclusion in this designation was the alleged ubiquity of single motherhood: ‘It is generally accepted in Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles that a Creole woman is the head of the household.’⁶⁴

Just as people from the Netherlands Antilles and Suriname were increasingly collapsed together on the basis of kinship and race, so, too, were differences among the Antillean islands effaced, with people from Curaçao and Aruba (as well as Bonaire, St. Maarten, Saba and St. Eustatius, who moved to the Netherlands in much smaller numbers) corralled into a category long accused of reflecting administrative convenience rather than meaningful cultural unity.⁶⁵ A small cohort of care providers with a Caribbean background asserted that such categorisations impacted the everyday experience of racialisation for Caribbean Dutch citizens in the Netherlands. In addition to racist discrimination in housing and employment in cities like Amsterdam, where authorities in 1978 reluctantly admitted before an audience of Caribbean Dutch protesters that they deliberately limited the number of non-European families in public housing, differing notions of race in Europe could clash with one’s self-understanding.⁶⁶ At a 1988 workshop for care providers in The Hague, Mary Aitatus touched on the long-standing but in the Netherlands lesser known history of racialised nationalism that divided Aruba, reductively imagined by many as a ‘mestizo’ island, and the majority Black island of Curaçao.⁶⁷ ‘Among my own colleagues, it was unknown that “light-skinned” people, especially Arubans, understand themselves as “white”.’ Aitatus alleged that, in order to effectively administer care, European Dutch welfare providers needed to better understand Caribbean modes of self-fashioning before imposing their own understandings.⁶⁸

The state’s enlistment of sociologists and anthropologists for research on Caribbean communities in the Netherlands proved particularly consequential, resulting in a near constant obsession with the concept of the matrifocal household that had deep roots in both disciplinary traditions. While an

⁶² Penninx, *Minderheidsvorming en emancipatie*, 13.

⁶³ For a parallel argument on racialisation of African-Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean families in Guyana, see Trotz, ‘Behind the Banner of Culture?’, 13.

⁶⁴ Ineke Gooskens, Jenny Hoolt and Marielle Freeman, *Surinamers en Antillianen in Amsterdam: Verkorte versie* (Amsterdam: Afd. Sociale Zaken, Dec. 1979), UBL, KITLV Collection, 8.

⁶⁵ Oostindie, *Postcolonial Netherlands: Sixty-Five Years of Forgetting, Commemorating, Silencing* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 37.

⁶⁶ ‘Protest tegen discriminatie bij woning-toewijzing’, *De Waarheid*, 24 Feb. 1978, 7 and Call for Protest, 30 Jan. 1978, SA, Archief van de Sociale Dienst, 30047, inv. nr. 845.

⁶⁷ Michael O. Sharpe, ‘Race, Color and Nationalism in Aruban and Curaçaoan Political Identities’, in Philemona Essed and Isabel Hoving, eds., *Dutch Racism* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), 119.

⁶⁸ ‘Van frustratie naar communicatie: Verslag themadag psycho-sociale hulpverlening aan Surinaamse en Antilliaanse vrouwen’, Haags Vrouwen Steunpunt (held 28 June 1988, pub. May 1989), 19, Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (IISG).

earlier generation of researchers devoted entire books to defining ‘matrifocality’, researchers commissioned by Amsterdam and the Ministry CRM explored these distinctions but ultimately embraced the term to describe households where the biological mother was not coresident with the biological father.⁶⁹ One consequential debate that was reanimated, however, was that between Herskovits and Frazier. European Dutch researchers found in these theories tools for anticipating future demands on social assistance. If economic circumstances determined family forms, as Frazier contended, then professional and educational success may result in higher numbers of dual-earning, cohabitating couples. In a report commissioned by the city of Amsterdam, the University of Amsterdam-trained sociologist Ineke Gooskens predicted in the 1970s that economic prosperity in the Netherlands would witness the rise in ‘legal relationships’ among ‘Creole’ populations in the Netherlands.⁷⁰ With funding from the newly renamed Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Culture (*Ministerie van Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Cultuur*, WVC, until 1982 CRM), researchers like Maria Lenders and Marjolein van Vlijman-van de Rhoer instead maintained in the 1980s that cultural patterns would override economics and lead to the endurance of single motherhood in the Netherlands.⁷¹ Such predictions were not left to speculation. As internal movements across the kingdom continued into the 1980s, demographers housed at the Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS) tracked marriage rates and fertility levels among Dutch citizens of Caribbean origin. The annual reports published by the CBS and other demographic institutes continued to separate Caribbean-born Dutch citizens and their descendants from their European-born counterparts over three generations.⁷²

This redeployment of racial knowledge was attended by efforts to fix and typologise the seemingly diverse ways that Caribbean women organised their romantic lives. This approach, too, drew from earlier anthropological studies in the Caribbean. As Christine Barrow has written, anthropological research conducted in the early twentieth century strove to classify family forms by conjugal union type and household composition – a schema that framed the Caribbean family as fundamentally

⁶⁹ Raymond T. Smith, often credited with defining matrifocality, emphasised the emotional importance of women in binding household relationships. In this way he argued that even homes with a coresidential heterosexual couple could still be considered ‘matrifocal’. R. T. Smith, *The Negro Family in British Guiana: Family Structure and Social Status in the Villages* (London: Routledge, 1971 [1956]), 223.

⁷⁰ For this argument, see Gooskens, Hooft and Freeman, *Surinamers en Antillianen in Amsterdam*, 35; W. D. van Hoorn, ‘Het kindertal van Surinamers en Antillianen in Nederland’, *Maandstatistiek van de bevolking*, 36, 1 (1988), 18–21; Hans van Leusden, ‘Indicators of Marriage and Marriage Dissolution of the Female Population of Curaçao, 1960–1962, 1970–1972, and 1980–1981: A Multidimensional Analysis’, Working Paper no. 66 (Voorburg: NIDI Netherlands Interuniversity Demographic Institute, 1985) and Tulip Patricia Olton, *Minderheidsstatus of stijgingsdrang. Antilliaanse en Arubaanse vrouwen in Amsterdam en hun gezinsvorming* (Delft: Uitgeverij Eburon, 1994), 18–19.

⁷¹ Maria Lenders and Marjolein van Vlijmen-van de Rhoer, ‘“Mijn God, hoe ga ik doen?” De positie van Creoolse alleenstaande moeders in Amsterdam’, PhD thesis, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1983, 17–18. Many researchers supplemented this discussion with that of Oscar Lewis, who concluded that matrifocality responded to the economically precarious positions of both biological parents while also creating a cyclical ‘culture of poverty’ that could sustain and perpetuate itself even in changing economic circumstances; Oscar Lewis, *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty* (New York, NY: Random House, 1966); Daniëlle van ‘t Hoofd and Jolanda Westerlaken, ‘“Mi Ta Lóra Koene” Een onderzoek naar de leefsituatie van ongehuwde moeders met een onderstandsuitkering op Curaçao’, PhD thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Brabant, 1988.

⁷² In 1986, the CBS published a two-part, nationwide report on Surinamese and Antilleans in the Netherlands: *De leefsituatie van Surinamers en Antillianen in Nederland 1985, Deel I en II* (The Hague: Staatsuitgeverij/CBS-Publikaties, 1986). After 1985, annual reports on the demographic development of Surinamese and Antillean populations in the Netherlands appeared in *Maandstatistiek van de bevolking* and *Statistisch magazine*. From the 1990s until 2016, Dutch state records used the terms *allochtoon* and *autochtoon* – terms originally coined to refer to geological phenomena – to classify ‘nonnative’ and ‘native Dutch’, respectively. These categories further distinguished citizens born in the European Netherlands and those born in Dutch overseas territories. Someone would be considered *allochtoon* if one of their parents or grandparents was born outside the European Netherlands, casting ‘allochthonous’ status as a multi-generational inheritance. See Guno Jones and Betty de Haart, ‘(Not) Measuring Mixedness in the Netherlands’, in Z. L. Rocha and P. J. Aspinall, eds., *The Palgrave International Handbook of Mixed Racial and Ethnic Classification* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 378, and Sharpe, *Postcolonial Citizens and Ethnic Migration*, 83.

heterosexual.⁷³ European Dutch researchers employed these same frameworks to organise information about Caribbean Dutch welfare clients. They were particularly interested in identifying the prevalence of ‘concubinage’, defined as a nonmarital cohabiting relationship of varying length, or the ‘visiting relationship’, a nonmonogamous sexual relationship of short duration that did not involve cohabitation of the couple. The Dutch welfare state deemed these taxonomies important for its effective administration. In 1979, sociologists employed by Amsterdam’s Department of Social Services made a case for correct classification:

Because only legal relationships are registered, concubines without children are, for example, registered as two single people, while a concubine relationship with kids is registered as a single-parent household with an additional single resident. Illegitimate children and foster children are not registered as children living at home, but as singles.⁷⁴

Civil servants reasoned that this categorical confusion might entitle some to claim or be denied benefits based on the incorrect registration of household relationships.

The Dutch welfare state encountered supposedly anomalous forms of Caribbean conjugality at precisely the moment when sexual and family norms were radically contested within mainstream European Dutch society. This was not lost on some contemporaries. Researcher R. A. de Moor’s (1985) volume *Marriage and Family: What Is Their Future in Western Europe?* contended that growing acceptance of nonmarital, nonreproductive intimacies in the aftermath of the sexual revolution would lead to increased tolerance of immigrants and their equally varied romantic lives.⁷⁵ Even the 1979 report by Amsterdam’s Department of Social Services proposed a ‘new definition of family’ in view of social transformations that have diminished ‘the differences in family composition between Surinamese and indigenous Dutch people’.⁷⁶ Yet these seemingly progressive invitations to redefine the family would eventually become disentangled from public obligation altogether.

In the 1980s, critiques that had begun to develop in the previous decade about expansive social policies now found concrete expression. Under the premiership of Christian Democrat Ruud Lubbers, issues once regarded as national responsibilities (including family housing and health care) came to be formulated as private initiatives.⁷⁷ In 1987, a major social security reform was implemented in order to increase labour market participation. The duration of unemployment benefits henceforth became contingent on the work history of recipients. With criticism of public spending continuing into the next decade, in 1993 the Dutch parliament launched an enquiry into social security that would result in the overhaul of core programmes like the ABW, a subject revisited in this paper’s conclusion.⁷⁸ Parenthood thus came to be regarded as an individual choice and an individual responsibility. As Sarah van Walsum has pointed out, from the 1980s on, the Dutch state ‘reconcile[d] individual rights to sexual freedom with the public task of controlling economic interdependency by disassociating the one from the other’.⁷⁹

⁷³ Barrow, *Family in the Caribbean*, 48. On the assumed heterosexuality of the Caribbean family within these typologies, see Tracy Robinson, ‘The Properties of Citizens: A Caribbean Grammar of Conjugal Categories’, *Du Bois Review*, 10, 2 (2013), 425–46. An exception would be the literature on kinship in Suriname, which often devoted attention to the social–sexual institution of *mati* among working-class Creole women. See, for example, Buschkens, *The Family System of the Paramaribo Creoles*, 247 and Van Lier, *Tropische Tribaden* (Dordrecht: Foris, 1986). For an ethnography of *mati* and a lucid meditation on earlier scholarship, see Gloria Wekker, *The Politics of Passion: Women’s Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006), 209–14.

⁷⁴ Gooskens, Hooft and Freeman, *Surinamers en Antillianen in Amsterdam*, 9.

⁷⁵ R. A. de Moor, *Huwelijk en gezin: Wat is hun toekomst in West-Europa* (Baarn: Uitgeverij Ambo, 1985), 9.

⁷⁶ Gooskens, Hooft and Freeman, *Surinamers en Antillianen in Amsterdam*, 33, 37.

⁷⁷ Oudenampsen, ‘Between Conflict and Consensus’, 781, 784.

⁷⁸ Kuipers, *The Crisis Imperative*, 144 and Van der Veen and Trommel, ‘Managed Liberalisation of the Dutch Welfare State’, 303.

⁷⁹ Van Walsum, ‘Sex and the Regulation of Belonging’, 62. See also Bussemaker, *Betwiste zelfstandigheid*, 136–50.

Knowledge and the Defence of Welfare

Far from evoking broad social consensus, anticipated changes to the welfare state were met with opposition within Caribbean Dutch communities in the Netherlands. Quite crucially, activist groups organised under the banner of ‘categorical work’ – a Dutch approach to multiculturalism that subsidised various social welfare groups for each ‘category’ of migrants in the Netherlands – criticised the funnelling of resources toward research on migrant groups.⁸⁰ The reasons for funding categorical organisations varied over time. In the 1970s, authorities believed the maintenance of cultural identities was crucial to eventual return migration. In 1983, the Dutch government issued its first Memorandum on Minorities (*Minderhedennota*) which recognised that immigrants would remain permanently in the Netherlands as ‘ethnic minorities’.⁸¹ By 1987, with growing political ambivalence about ‘ethnic minorities’ policy and pervasive public spending cutbacks, funding for categorical organisations disappeared.⁸² Prime Minister Lubbers announced in a radio interview in 1990 a new approach to ‘minority policy’ fully in line with austerity politics yet terribly dissonant with the lived realities of ‘ethnic minorities’ themselves: ‘the State should stop pampering minorities, and . . . minorities should assume their own responsibility’.⁸³ Despite criticisms of government policy and knowledge production during these years of retrenchment, categorical groups did not dispense with the importance of knowledge production altogether. Instead, they insisted that expertise be redefined to allow migrants themselves to serve as experts and to fund research on racism in Dutch society.

Activists persistently criticised state authorities for focusing on perceived ‘problems’ within Caribbean communities without interrogating the historical origins of inequality. These concerns were already pronounced at the start of the 1970s. In 1971, Dutch companies abruptly ended recruitment drives in Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles due in part to growing moral panic surrounding Caribbean labourers in the Netherlands.⁸⁴ As early as 1962, the deputy prime minister of the Netherlands called for the limiting of Caribbean labour migration, even exploring legal options to restrict the right of abode in the Netherlands.⁸⁵ In a government working group convened to explore the living conditions of Antillean labourers in 1967, some officials made the case that the primary obstacles blocking Antillean assimilation in Europe ‘lie on the terrain of sex, including sex education and education about marriage’.⁸⁶ Another official lambasted the population of ‘failed students’ from the Caribbean territories whose Dutch citizenship prevented these ‘asocials and delinquents’ from being returned to their home countries. This same official alleged that, once in the Netherlands, women from the Caribbean frequently abandoned jobs in the health sector in order to sell commercial sex.⁸⁷

In view of these damaging representations, the National Foundation for Antillean Welfare (*Landelijke Stichting Welzijn Antillianen*, LSWA) argued that greater emphasis should be given to the difficulties Caribbean Dutch people encountered in Europe, including racial discrimination. As one LSWA worker wrote, ‘Only by studying the structural set-up (colonial situation) do the current conditions become abundantly clear’.⁸⁸ Activists in the 1970s and 1980s would further develop this argument, insisting that colonial history also explained the differential development of the

⁸⁰ The policy of creating distinct organisational structures for perceived groups had its precedent in the ‘pillarisation’ of the Dutch state along religious lines. See Sharpe, *Postcolonial Citizens and Ethnic Migration*, 86.

⁸¹ Duyvendak and Scholten, ‘Beyond the Dutch “Multicultural Model”’, 338–9.

⁸² Ulbe Bosma, *Terug uit de koloniën. Zestig jaar postkoloniale migranten en hun organisaties* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2009), 205.

⁸³ Cited in Essed and Hoving, ‘Innocence, Smug Ignorance, Resentment’, 17.

⁸⁴ For an extended discussion, see Jones, ‘Tussen onderdanen, Rijksgenoten en Nederlanders’, 213–17.

⁸⁵ Interdepartmental Workgroup on the Reception of Surinamese and Antilleans, 1967–72, NA, KabSNA, 2.10.41, inv. nr. 1012.

⁸⁶ Report on the meeting of the Antillean working group, 16 May 1967, NA, KabSNA, 2.10.41, inv. nr. 1012.

⁸⁷ Note on the trip of Min. of Social Work to Suriname and the Neth. Ant., 7 Feb. 1963, NA, KabSNA, 2.10.41, inv. nr. 1012.

⁸⁸ Report of the Fieldworkers Unit, 7 Dec. 1972, NA, Landelijke Stichting Welzijn Antillianen (LSWA), 2.19.01, inv. nr. 65.

Caribbean territories and the European Netherlands – an argument made both by earlier anticolonial critics and more recent racial justice activists advocating for a serious reckoning with the colonial history that has shaped the European Netherlands socially and economically.⁸⁹ The Platform of Antillean and Aruban Organisations (*Plataforma di Organisashonan Antiano i Arubano*, POA), formed in 1983 as an umbrella organisation for Antillean categorical groups, opined, ‘In part because of riches accumulated in the overseas territories, people in the Netherlands were in a position to develop robust collective provisions through which the less productive Dutch citizen could be insured and cared for by the state.’⁹⁰

A topic of recurrent criticism, state-funded research featured regularly in activist critique. Activists highlighted how publicly-funded research, myopically fixated on welfare, racialised and imperilled social assistance. In 1988, Moluccan scholar Julia de Lima argued that this overwhelming emphasis misplaced attention away from pressing issues of discrimination in the labour market and inadequate educational opportunities, contributing to assumptions that Surinamese, Dutch Antilleans and Moluccans⁹¹ were simply ‘abusers’ profiting from the Dutch welfare state.⁹² Originally published in Dutch in 1984, Philomena Essed’s pathbreaking *Everyday Racism* offered a powerful framework for apprehending racism at a time when many Europeans insisted racial prejudice was no longer operative in Dutch society.⁹³ A Surinamese-Dutch sociologist, Essed, coined the concept of ‘everyday racism’ to describe the quotidian ways in which assumptions of white superiority and its entanglements with sexism surfaced in Euro-American societies, including in academic research and popular discourse that portrayed Black people as ‘people who refuse to adapt to Dutch culture while abusing the benefits of the Dutch welfare system’.⁹⁴ Chairman of the Association for Surinamese and Antillean Social Workers (*Vereniging Surinaamse en Antilliaanse Welzijnwerk(st)ers*: VSAW), Keith Carlo, lamented that these associations had even soured relations within the Caribbean Dutch community, with some Antilleans accusing the Surinamese of drawing ‘welfare vouchers’ and proclaiming that ‘they (Surinamers) have ruined it here for us (Antilleans)’. For Carlo, Caribbean Dutch communities urgently needed to militate against the divisions stoked by categorical policy and the competition for resources that it engendered, seeing in this a reprisal of colonial history itself.⁹⁵ Carlo’s comments

⁸⁹ These comments should thus be located in a longer history of Caribbean Dutch anticolonial critique, including arguments made in the first half of the twentieth century for enhanced parity in economic rights (made, for instance, by the Curaçaoan leftist critic Amador Nita) and, more recently, for demands that European Dutch people grapple with the oft-silenced history of racial slavery and colonialism. See Rose Mary Allen, ‘The Trinta di Mei Labor Revolt and Its Aftermath: Anticipating a Just and Equitable Curaçaoan Nation’, in Yvon van der Pijl and Francio Guadeloupe, eds., *Equality in the Dutch Caribbean: Ways of Being Non/Sovereign* (Newark, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2022), 74; Margo Groenewoud, ‘Decolonization, Otherness and Neglect of the Dutch Caribbean in Caribbean Studies’, *Small Axe*, 64 (2021), 102–15; Alex van Stipriaan, Waldo Heilbron, Aspha Bijnaar and Valika Smeulders, eds., *Op zoek naar de stilte. Sporen van het slavernijverleden in Nederland* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Kwame Nimako and Glenn Willemsen, *The Dutch Atlantic: Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 7–8 and Artwell Cain, ‘Slavery and Memory in the Netherlands: Who Needs Commemoration?’, *Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage*, 4, 3 (2016), 227–42.

⁹⁰ POA, *Genoeg lippendienst, nu nog daadkracht! Aanzet voor een gericht beleid met betrekking tot Antilliaanse vrouwen in Nederland* (Utrecht: POA, 1986), UBL, KITLV Collection, 15.

⁹¹ The Moluccan presence in the Netherlands dates to 1951, when 12,500 Moluccan soldiers who had fought with the colonial army against nationalists in the Dutch East Indies immigrated with their families to the Netherlands. The Dutch government assumed that Moluccans would eventually return to an independent Moluccan state and were thus not absorbed in settlement programmes. Confined to encampments, in the 1970s a younger generation of Moluccan nationalists in the Netherlands staged several violent protests, including highly publicised train hijackings. This helped to catalyse the formation of a national ‘minority’ policy in the Netherlands. See Fridus Steijlen, *RMS: Van ideaal tot symbol. Moluks nationalisme in Nederland, 1951–1994* (Amsterdam: Spinhuis, 1996).

⁹² Julia de Lima, ‘Als de nood hoog is. Onderzoek naar hulpverlenings-mogelijkheden bij sexueel geweld voor Surinaamse, Antilliaanse, Arubaanse en Molukse vrouwen’, Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid (Mar. 1988), IISG.

⁹³ Philomena Essed, *Alledaags Racisme* (Amsterdam: Feministische Uitgeverij Sara, 1984).

⁹⁴ Philomena Essed, *Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), 20.

⁹⁵ *Vereniging Surinaamse en Antilliaanse Welzijnwerk(st)ers Bulletin*, 3, 1 (May 1985), 10–11, UBL, KITLV Collection.

highlighted the ambivalent effects of European Dutch policy, at once homogenising *and* silo-ing diverse groups.

Not least because of the deleterious impact of knowledge production, activists proposed that researchers study racism in the Netherlands and not racialised minorities themselves. Under the headline 'Research on minorities: In whose interest?', the POA insisted that 'ethnic groups are too often considered at a distance' and that, despite claims to expertise, European Dutch researchers lacked sufficient familiarity with Caribbean experiences. Still, the POA maintained that white researchers and their traditional research subjects both had important roles to play in a progressive intellectual agenda. European Dutch researchers could be made useful by uncovering and eradicating institutional racism, a topic that was seldom addressed in state-funded research.⁹⁶ Key figures in what became known as 'minorities studies', including anthropologists and ACOM members André Köbben and Rinus Penninx, believed that researchers should feel a strong identification with the cause of immigrant 'emancipation'.⁹⁷ Yet, while attentive to issues of 'prejudice' and instances of racial discrimination, scholars often rejected the existence and study of *systemic* racism, whether because of personal belief or the priorities of public funding bodies, where accepted research paradigms often 'divorced the issue of how to achieve the integration of minorities from the larger issue of the transformation of society'.⁹⁸ For these reasons, activists challenged the state's definition of expertise, insisting on the importance of experiential knowledge while criticising the convenient delimiting of problems to include only those alleged to belong to migrant groups and not wider European Dutch society.

Some publicly-funded experts utilised their positions to meet the needs of Caribbean Dutch communities rather than the state or municipality that they served. Celebrated anthropologist Fridus Steijlen confronted these limitations while working on a Ministry WVC-funded project as a graduate student at the University of Amsterdam in the late 1980s. Like Steijlen, graduate students at Dutch universities studying anthropology and 'non-Western sociology' (a precursor to development sociology) often found short-term employment on research projects funded by the ministry or municipal social service departments. According to Steijlen, it soon became apparent that the 'subjects' of this research had distinct concerns from the public bodies funding it.⁹⁹ Contracted to explore juvenile delinquency among Curaçaoan teens in Amsterdam,¹⁰⁰ Steijlen utilised his expert capital to help a group of teenagers develop a proposal for a community centre named after Tula, the leader of a (1795) slave rebellion on Curaçao. Originating among Curaçaoan Dutch youth themselves, this idea fitted squarely within the tradition of 'community development' (*opbouwwerk*) endorsed by many liberal researchers and social workers of the era, and which was also transplanted from US experiments in welfare state building. In its US and European instantiations, 'community development' sought to encourage the participation of community members in their own social and economic betterment.¹⁰¹ Despite liberal

⁹⁶ *Plataforma*, Apr. 1988, UBL, KITLV Collection, 19–20.

⁹⁷ Scholten, *Framing Immigrant Integration*, 127. On the rejection of systemic racism and the study of 'prejudice' and instances of personal racial discrimination, see Essed and Nimako, 'Designs and (Co)Incidents', 300–1 and the response by Rinus Penninx to the publication of Philomena Essed's *Alledags Racisme* in Penninx, *Minderheidsvorming en emancipatie*, 41.

⁹⁸ Scholten, *Framing Immigrant Integration*, 127.

⁹⁹ Interview by the author with Fridus Steijlen, Leiden, the Netherlands, 23 Feb. 2016.

¹⁰⁰ Steijlen was one of many researchers commissioned to study delinquency among Caribbean Dutch youth. Like studies conducted in the United States, the Caribbean, Britain and France, this research often connected 'matrifocal' family structures to increased criminality. The premiere example of this was the sensationalist dissertation by Marion van San, *Stelen en steken. Delinquent gedrag van Curaçaose jongens in Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1998). For other publicly funded studies on criminality and Caribbean-born youth in the Netherlands, see Jeanette Bos and Hans van Hulst, *Pan i Respect. Criminaliteit van geïmmigreerde Curaçaose jongeren* (Utrecht: Onderzoeksbureau OKU, 1993); Nasrin Tabibian, *Criminaliteit en Antilliaanse jongeren. Feit en fictie* (Amsterdam: Amsterdamse Bureau voor Onderzoek en Statistiek, 1994) and Wiebe de Jong, Fridus Steijlen and Kees Masson, *Hoe doe je je ding? Antilliaanse jongeren en criminaliteit in de politieregio Rotterdam-Rijnmond* (Delft: Eburon, 1997).

¹⁰¹ Interview by the author with Fridus Steijlen, Leiden, the Netherlands, 23 Feb. 2016. For a criticism of the influence of this idea in Dutch social work, see 'Duur en onsuccesvol welzijnsbeleid', *Vrij Nederland*, 19 Aug. 1972, NA, LSWA, 2.19.01,

commitment to this programme of ‘self-help’, the municipality of Amsterdam rejected the proposal. Steijlen clarified that the title of his resulting 1988 report, ‘Missed Opportunities’, related not to the failure of Caribbean-born youth to integrate into Dutch society (this opportunity, he argued, had never been made meaningfully available to them), but to the shortsightedness of the municipal government to support their stated needs.¹⁰²

In part in response to activist and expert critique of knowledge production, the Ministry WVC saw an advantageous opportunity to enlist categorical organisations in research on single mothers, given the latter’s proximity to the target demographic.¹⁰³ Far from refusing the ‘single mother’ as an object of state knowledge production, activist organisations like the POA instead argued that single mothers emblemised the struggle for emancipation in the Netherlands. With funding from the Ministry WVC, researchers partnered with categorical organisations to publish several studies on single motherhood. In 1990, POA collaborated with several researchers to write *Mama Soltera*, a book-length study of Antillean- and Aruban-born single mothers in the Netherlands. Unlike the first generation of Black kinship studies, activist organisations sought to convey ‘single motherhood’ not as an unwanted tragedy but rather as an important aspect of feminine identity and a desirable alternative to patriarchal relationships, from which, the authors noted, white European Dutch women were also increasingly seeking escape.¹⁰⁴

Yet, given the urgent goal of strengthening state supports for Caribbean Dutch families, there were necessary limits to this emancipatory portrayal of alternate family forms. In 1985, POA circulated a statement by an anonymous single mother with two growing children. Providing a snapshot of her daily budget, she asserted, ‘I spend practically nothing on entertainment, going out, etcetera. My expenses include primarily living essentials. I’m glad to receive a child stipend every quarter, but what a shame that, with all of these budget cuts, the government keeps reducing it’.¹⁰⁵ As the Dutch government reduced social spending in the 1980s, categorical organisations took up discussion of single mothers to remind the Dutch state and those who staffed its institutions that ‘a strong economic position is, without exception, necessary to achieve emancipation’.¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

Despite these appeals, in the early 1990s, the broad social insurance provisions of the ABW came under the scrutiny of the Dutch parliament. The Dutch government once again commissioned research examining social welfare and the ends to which it was used. In a 1992 report on Surinamese, Antillean, Aruban and Moluccan welfare clients, authors R. A. Wong and J. Arends concluded, ‘Antilleans form the migrant group with the most problems’.¹⁰⁷ Wong and Arends argued that

inv. nr. 65. In the United States, ‘community development’ and the ethos of ‘self help’ were themselves products of development experiments in Latin America and the Caribbean; for a comprehensive history, see Amy C. Offner, *Sorting Out the Mixed Economy: The Rise and Fall of Welfare and Developmental States in the Americas* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), especially ch. 7. Eventually, these ideas drew fierce criticism from radical Black activist groups, including the Black Panther Party. See Ananya Roy, Stuart Schrader and Emma Shaw Crane, “‘The Anti-Poverty Hoax’: Development, Pacification and the Making of Community in the Global 1960s’, *Cities*, 44 (2015), 140.

¹⁰² Fridus Steijlen, ‘Gemiste kansen. Een onderzoek naar randgroepvormingsprocessen onder Antilliaanse jongeren in Amsterdam Zuidoost’, 1988, UBL, KITLV Collection.

¹⁰³ Penninx, *Wie betaalt, bepaalt?*, 48.

¹⁰⁴ Anke van Dijke, Hans van Hulst and Linda Terpstra, *Mama Soltera. De positie van ‘alleenstaande’ Curaçaose en Arubaanse moeders in Nederland* (The Hague: Warray, 1990), 19, 23. See also the poignant critique of the term ‘single mother’ as eliding other familial intimacies in the writings of feminist Curaçaoan scholar and activist Jeanne D. Henriquez, ‘Motherhood is a State of Mind: Testimonies of Single Curaçaoan Mothers’, in Richenel Ansano, Joceline Clemencia, Jeanette Cook and Eithel Martis, eds., *Mundu Yama Sinta Mira: Womanhood in Curaçao* (Willemstad: Fundashon Publikashon Curaçao, 1992), 90–2.

¹⁰⁵ M. Aitatus, *Union di Muhé: Ban Demonstrè* (1985), UBL, KITLV Collection, 28.

¹⁰⁶ POA, *Genoeg lippendienst, nu nog daadkracht!*, UBL, KITLV Collection, 1.

¹⁰⁷ R. A. Wong and J. Arends, *SAAM-Groepen in de Bijstand. Een exploratief onderzoek naar de financieel-materiële en uitstroombroblematiek van Surinamers, Antillianen, Arubanen en Molukkers in de bijstand* (The Hague: Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 1992), 59.

Antillean 'problems' emerged from the changing demographic profile of Antillean arrivants after 1985, when mothers and their children formed over 80 per cent of those moving to the Netherlands. With popular and political discussion urging reform of the ABW to encourage labour participation and to reduce the fraudulent collection of social assistance, researchers studying welfare reliance now made new recommendations to assist these objectives. Wong and Arends recommended reducing financial payouts to single parents and enhancing childcare services and education on pregnancy prevention for Caribbean women.

In 1996, the ABW was overhauled in line with these recommendations. Single parents with children over age five would now be required to work in order to access assistance through the act. Assistance payments were decreased by roughly 20 per cent in order to incentivise parental participation in the labour market.¹⁰⁸ As Romke van der Veen and Willem Trommel have argued, such reforms to the Dutch welfare state stemmed from a paradigm shift in conceptions of individuals as rule-following social actors to manipulative and self-interested parties.¹⁰⁹ This article has insisted that, in order to understand this shift, we must also attend to the role of race in all its intersections with class and gender and sexual norms. Although Dutch debates did not play out in the same highly politicised way that they did in the United States, it was – as Merijn Oudenampsen has also observed – in the 'depoliticised' but no less ideologically-charged language of expertise that the economic rights of Caribbean Dutch citizens were called into question.¹¹⁰

As this article has shown, European Dutch policy makers singled out Caribbean-born Dutch citizens, insisting that Caribbean cultural practices placed unique demands on social services. Researchers based this contention on a corpus of state-funded research undertaken throughout the 1970s and 1990s that explored the connection between single motherhood and welfare reliance. In their effort to explain the perceived correlation between these referents, researchers relied on assumptions about the similarities of Black people across space and time.

Two aspects of this research and its capacious geographic reach bear mentioning. The first is its disturbing constancy, which raises important questions about the development of racial formations (perpetually bound up with notions of gender, sexuality and class) across the Atlantic world. Showing how knowledge of Black families circulated across the United States and Caribbean to other European contexts heeds theorist David Theo Goldberg's call to study racial formations relationally rather than comparatively – to see the connections that informed notions of race across distant locales.¹¹¹ As Europeans dispensed with the vocabulary of race after the Second World War, the *work* of race was nevertheless accomplished through the creation of expertise on Black family life.¹¹² That racial difference centred in the Dutch case on kinship, allegedly unstable family forms and the cyclical production of poverty delivers a halting rejoinder to those who maintain the specificity of European racialisation. For, in the Netherlands, it was precisely the perceived similarities of Black people across space and time that warranted the transfer of racial knowledge – and ultimately with similar outcomes. This occurred even as many researchers believed they were undermining racism by challenging biological notions of difference. But, by emphasising individual behaviour in the resolution of social ills, social scientific knowledge presupposed the answers in the questions themselves, locating the 'problem' and its putative solution in the social realm of the family and not in the dismantling of systems of racial and economic inequality.¹¹³ In this way, despite the

¹⁰⁸ Anneke van Doorne-Huiskes and Laura den Dulk, 'The Netherlands', in Quentin Skinner, ed., *Families and States in Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 136–7.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 294. For a similar argument about the ABW in particular, see Bussemaker, *Betwiste zelfstandigheid*, 157.

¹¹⁰ Oudenampsen, 'Between Conflict and Consensus', 774.

¹¹¹ David Theo Goldberg, 'Racial comparisons, relational racisms: Some thoughts on method', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 32, 7 (2009), 1274–5.

¹¹² Hazel Carby, *Imperial Intimacies: A Tale of Two Islands* (London: Verso, 2019), 65.

¹¹³ On the way that 'culturalist' arguments retrenched rather than destabilised race in the postwar period, see Thomas's engagement with Penny von Eschen in Thomas, 'The Violence of Diaspora', 91–2 and Étienne Balibar, 'Is There a Neo-Racism?', in Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, eds., *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*

varying intentions of individual researchers, knowledge of the ‘Black family’ came easily to serve revanchist agendas.

Second, from its colonial origins to its postcolonial afterlife, the production of knowledge was a policy-oriented project with a distinct ‘imperative of governance’.¹¹⁴ The Black family studies programme that developed in the United States and the Caribbean was a tool of governance forged in the crucible of post-slavery societies experiencing population movements and widespread activism and uprisings. As Black and Caribbean feminist scholars have noted, this first wave of scholarship viewed pejoratively any conjugal practices that diverged from the model of the white Western nuclear family.¹¹⁵ Research undertaken on Black kinship was thus overwhelmingly geared toward ‘resolving’ these perceived deficiencies to pursue broader social objectives. In the Dutch case, research on Black families also evolved in step with state prerogatives. In the 1960s, knowledge of kinship practices was sought to aid ‘development’ in the Caribbean territories of the kingdom, a programme shaped by a legacy of racial slavery that identified road blocks to modernisation in Black sexual and reproductive practices.¹¹⁶ With increased migration and looming Caribbean independence in the 1970s, studies of Black kinship were now put in service of metropolitan institutions, with social scientists once again identifying the family situation as an obstacle toward achieving economic integration in the Netherlands. By the 1980s and 1990s, despite opposition from Caribbean Dutch groups and some experts, studies of Black kinship were more often used to allege that the unchanging ‘cultural’ qualities of Black families would render social welfare inefficient in resolving inequality. Decolonisation thus did not break this tight bond between social science and social policy. Instead, the field of Black kinship studies was to serve a new end: the remaking of the welfare state after empire.

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(London: Verso, 1988), 17–28. On framing the problem in the ‘social’, see David Scott, ‘On the Question of Caribbean Studies’, *Small Axe*, 41 (2003), 3–4.

¹¹⁴ Trotz, ‘Behind the Banner of Culture?’, 10.

¹¹⁵ Barrow, *Family in the Caribbean*, 22 and Kempadoo, *Sexing the Caribbean*, 17.

¹¹⁶ Rose Mary Allen, *Di ki manera? A Social History of Afro-Curaçaoans, 1863–1917* (Amsterdam: SWP Publishing, 2007), chs. 6 and 8.