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## **ETHNICITY AND LEISURE TIME AMONG SURINAMESE ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG MEN IN AMSTERDAM\***

### **SUMMARY**

This paper follows change in ethnic identity and leisure time patterns among lower class young men and adolescent children of migrants of Creole Surinamese origin over the last fifteen years in Amsterdam.

The ethnic identity of young ethnics is created not only in relation to the parent culture but also to youth culture, that is to say, popular culture and visible youth subcultures among white youth.

The »magic« of second generation young Creoles is their ability to create a form of ethnicity which can be coupled with their little participation in the traditional organizations of the Surinamese community.

Up to 1986 the population of Surinamese origin in Amsterdam totalled 45,700 (approximately 200,000 in the Netherlands), 35% of whom in the age group 15—29 (source CBS, Dutch Central Bureau for Statistics). Their immigration from Surinam, until 1975 a Dutch colony, is quite recent, having reached its peak in 1973-5, and different from that of the West Indians to Britain. Nevertheless, their colonial past, the position of Surinam at the edge of the Caribbean, the large Afro-Caribbean population (in Surinam called the Creoles) among the immigrants (in Amsterdam circa 65%), the »visibility« of Creole youth and their position as to »youth culture«, show some similarities with the situation of the West Indians in Britain.

I have chosen to render the social and cultural situation of Surinamese youth as constituted by three dimensions, the techno-economic structure, the social organization, and ideology as an aspect of ethnic identity or ethnicity. An important aspect of social organization is ethnic cohesion, that is, the degree of participation in the Surinamese community at the formal and informal levels. Ethnic identity is one of the social identities a group can experience, which can be based on age, gender, religion, *etcetera* (20); it has therefore to be related to these three dimensions and encompasses a social and a cultural-symbolic aspect. Moreover, as Althusser puts it, I have tried to hold on to both ends of the chain: the relative autonomy of ideology and its determination in the last instance by economics. And in the situation of Surinamese youth, though

\* The research lasted from June 1981 to November 1984. It was carried out on behalf of the Anthropological Sociological Centre of the University of Amsterdam and the Council of Amsterdam. The methods were participant observation, individual and group interviews.

the influence of the techno-economic structure on the other two dimensions is obvious, one notices a fair deal of autonomy of the three dimensions with respect to each other, or, rather, one notices a two-way causation by which dynamics within the ideology dimension inform ethnic cohesion. But there is more to that. Seen over a period of 15 years, the historical depth I can allow for here, from the moment the Surinamese community in Holland became sizeable to 1986, it seems that the influence of the social organization on ideology has become less direct — it functions in new ways. That is to say, in the urban »post-industrial« context of Amsterdam the ethnic identity of second generation Surinamese youth, and what might be seen as their ethnic revival, is often paired with less ethnic cohesion (participation in the Surinamese community) than is the case of their parents. This is even more so if one looks at the participation in the organizations of the Surinamese community. In the study of changes in the ethnic identity of youth ethnics in a western urban context, one must identify two dimensions in ethnic identity, ethnic cohesion and an ideological (and symbolic) dimension (which Vermeulen calls »ethnic consciousness«).

The life and ethnicity of Creole youth are conditioned by a substantial paucity of opportunities, by their parent culture, by the way Dutch majority society looks at them and acts towards them, by their own intellectual penetrations as to their position in Dutch (white) society and finally by their subjective choices within the above mentioned limitations. These choices are sometimes magical solutions. Here I deal with the last aspect and in particular with *the difference in ethnicity and life orientations between average lower-class Creole young men in the age-range 13—20, most of whom grew up and spent most of their life in Holland, and Creole young adult men in the age-range 20—27, most of whom grew up in Surinam where they received at least part of their education.*<sup>1</sup> This initially simple typological division will become crucial in the course of the research.

*Ethnicity* is not something fixed in time and space, it is geared to general and local circumstances; it is conditioned by the overall social setting and by the available options in one particular country and/or area and for one particular age group and/or sex group (18); there is also an ideological dimension to it deriving from a constant redefinition of the self perception of the minority group and of its »public image« in the context of an *us* and *them* (minority and majority) confrontation. In this paper I deal principally with this »subjective« or, rather, symbolic aspect of ethnicity. The following quote should enlighten my approach to it:

»Ethnicity is the subjective, symbolic or emblematic use by a group of people of any aspect of culture, in order to create internal cohesion and differentiate themselves from other groups« (Brass, quoted in 16).

The belief that ethnicity can be used for buttressing one's status in the eyes of the white Dutch peers and/or contemporaries and to improve one's position as a minority group or individual ethnic in Dutch society is very important in the case of second generation young ethnics (cfr. Banton's Rational Choice Theory).<sup>2</sup> For this generation it is essential to obtain a position in

<sup>1</sup> In Amsterdam approximately 30% of the Surinamese youth are Hindustani. For a matter of space in this paper I cannot pay to them attention it would have been necessary to do

<sup>2</sup> The use of the term »second generation« has become a convention, although till 1986 in the Surinamese community in Holland there were only very few second generation young people in the age-range 15—30.

society that does no harm to their cultural specificity and colour, one that is also consistent with the position and cultural orientation of those mainly working-class white Dutch contemporaries with whom they interact at school, in the neighbourhood or in leisure time facilities. This adjustment of ethnic identity is not only the prerogative of the most visible section of Surinamese youth (which does not only consist of those who are more street-wise) but is also particularly evident in the style and subculture of school-going teenagers who for obvious reasons interact a lot with white peers.

The more interaction with, and information on, Dutch majority society increases, the more ethnicity varies significantly: this is the case for most of the informants. The ethnicity of 15 year-old adolescents in the inner city differs from the ethnic identity of young adults in the modern outer area Bijlmermeer, and of course the ethnic identity of second generation Surinamese will be different from that of their parents. This combination of use of ethnicity and fast acculturation in Dutch society requires for them a constant negotiation of spaces, roles and values with the majority group and in particular with white youth. In other words, the Surinamese young people to whom I refer here are forced, as Epstein puts it, »into a fresh confrontation of the self« (8: 2).

This »use of ethnicity« can be seen more easily if we consider ethnicity as a quasi-scarce resource (i.e. there is a limited quantum of ethnicity), which, together with time and certain sources of information, is one of the few resources that all young Surinamese people have within their reach in Dutch society.

They tend to believe that there is a certain number of choices and opportunities when dealing with these three resources — that they are somehow to choose. This is even more the case when relating to the leisure time arena — the social and cultural dimensions of leisure time.

This symbolic interaction — the most appropriate definition of their transaction with their peers — does not occur in a power vacuum. The struggle of Creole youth for cultural hegemony (a notion from Gramsci's Prison Notebooks which has been rediscovered by the CCCS) is conducted starting from a disadvantaged social position. Very often their magical solutions are an attempt to bridge the gap between expectations and actual opportunities (e.g. in the labour market).

*Leisure time* is the free time after school or work, the terms of which are much vaguer for the young unemployed, which, mainly in the case of the young men, one spends in public in the leisure time arena. This public aspect is very often an experience shared with peers or contemporaries. It was chosen as an area of research because it is one of the main moments in patterning the personality, the image of Dutch society and eventually the lifestyles and careers of Surinamese youth. The impression one gets while doing field-work is that during leisure time there are more opportunities than at school or at work for dreaming, estimating, looking around, testing aspects of Dutch society and coming to terms with the whites — in particular with white peers (14). During leisure time one interacts with a variety of groups in terms of age, sex, ethnic origin, class and style. In a sense, on the arena of leisure time social mobility seems possible. In his sociological study of pop music Simon Frith (9:57) shows that leisure time »is a matter of choice«. That is, a number of social constraints recognizable and acknowledged elsewhere in society seem less effective on the leisure time arena. In addition, in the case of young Creole males this can also be accounted for by the characteristics of urban life orientation for young Afro-Caribbean of the lower classes in the

Caribbean area itself which in a sense still bear on the young ethnics of this research as an aspect of their parent culture (cfr. for the situation in Paramaribo 4, for Amsterdam 3, for Rotterdam 6, for the more settled West Indian community in Bristol 12).

Some of the conclusions I draw are based on a more visible section of the Creole male youth. Creole girls have been part of the research only indirectly, one of the reasons being that they form a minority of those who create the spectacular youth subculture on which this paper is centred. Other researchers have demonstrated that although Creole girls, and West Indian girls in Britain (11:10) are interested in youth culture, the majority of them tend to be less active on the public scene and spend much of the leisure time with their kith and kin.

The object-group is representative of the majority of lower-class Creole male youth in Amsterdam. Several youth workers have labelled many of the informants as »unclubable« within the present youth work. In spite of such stigma and of the few opportunities both age-groups have, almost none of the 100 young people concerned can be considered »deviant«. Almost none of them had experienced hard drugs at all — a serious problem in Amsterdam as much as in many other cities — and only a minority has had trouble with the police. I based my field-work on half a dozen peer groups in the inner city area of Oud West and later in the newer suburb Bijlmer. In the two areas the percentage of immigrants ranges from 20 to 35.

In spite of a higher degree of ethnic cohesion in the Bijlmer, which can be accounted for by the higher concentration of Surinamese people, by less sociological variety among the residents and, up until 1985, the presence of a range of ethnic-based facilities, also in this area the main point of difference among the informants is age.

Let us now look at what has changed in the way Creole young people have participated in the leisure time arena over the last 15 years, and at the origin and development of what can be seen as a new social and cultural variety among these young people. I will then sketch how ethnic frontiers and the terms of ethnic identity are redefined in the leisure time arena, and conclude with some considerations on the specific forms of ethnic identity created by the »second generation« Creole youth.

### **Subcultures and styles**

In considering the spectacular socio-cultural expressions which have characterised Creole youth in the Netherlands one can speak of three stages. Until approximately 1974—75, that is, the first few years after the arrival of the large immigration wave from Surinam, the public image of Surinamese youth was determined by one single spectacular socio-cultural expression: the groups of young adult Creole males who were seen »hanging around« in some neighbourhoods. It was a way of killing time and getting together which conjured up the corner shop street-wise subculture of Creole males in Paramaribo (cfr. de »winkel« subculture in 4). It was a way to »look around« in groups and to evaluate with your peers the opportunities Dutch society had to offer. It was by no means deviant behaviour, although different sorts of hustlers had quite an influence on the atmosphere of these informal gatherings, to the point that most mass media tended — wrongly — to associate this visible section of Surinamese youth with illicit activities. At the end of the Seventies—beginning of the Eighties a larger phenomenon started determining the public image of Surinamese youth in most areas of Amsterdam. Many groups of

younger Creoles of approximately the same age (15—20), with a sprinkling of Hindustanis, who had already spent a few years in Holland where they had followed most of their education, got together in what often were called youth gangs for relating, again, in groups to Dutch society. The youth gang represented a kind of shielded peer group for making the first steps towards getting to know white working class youth. In a few years, 12 to 15 »gangs« were formed and successively disbanded again: they had no internal hierarchy, the members could only occasionally be recognized by a garment (a hat and more often a kind of jacket like the bomber jacket) and merely a few group members somehow had to do with petty crime. They focused on youth work facilities and on discotheques, meanwhile they borrowed social organization and symbols both from the culture of the *volkscreolen* (the Afro-Caribbean lower class of Paramaribo) and from the activities and expectations of white contemporaries in the same neighbourhoods. The youth gangs started developing the rudiments of a (Creole) youth style — for example, by the use of distinguishable names (Monks, Cobras, Black Brothers — most names were English), by the use of graffiti mainly of expressing a feeling of territoriality and by the use of certain clothes. But the police which criminalised them, full-sway ignorance on what was then completely white-based youth work, the feeling among Surinamese youth that the attitude of fairly tough confrontation of the youth gang had only brought about nasty experiences, and interaction with white deviant youth instead of an improved status in the eyes of more varied layers of white youth, contributed to the progressive disappearance of the phenomenon.

In the years 1981-4 the emergence of new youth styles underlines the beginning of a new period. In these years, while most Creole males in the age-range 20—30 still practiced with a variety of music and rituals which were typical of that age-group in Surinam before the mass emigration of 1971-5, the majority of Creole under-20's were confronted or participated in two new youth styles: Rastafarianism and disco-freak's style. It is worth looking in some depth at their »creation«. Mediated through the lyrics of reggae music, the first borrowed from the Rastafari religion a lot of its symbolic universe. After a while booklets printed in England with the main rasta tenets were also available in two reggae record shops which were the main meeting places, together with one ethnic-based community centre and one or two youth clubs, where occasionally the Amsterdam rastas got together for reading and commenting the Old Testament. The disco-freaks (that is what they call themselves) drew upon the symbols of the disco scene, which were seen as not discriminating on the basis of class and race as much as through fashion, and as stimulating a modern, fast (or »space«) way of life.

Creation of homology and dissonance with the parent culture and the mainstream culture in the Surinamese and Creole community is the thread we can follow throughout the development of rastafarianism among young Surinamese in Amsterdam. If the rastas rediscover certain aspects of their background — the »roots« — they reject other parts which they label as forms of »mental slavery«. By subverting a traditional Surinamese discriminatory pattern towards the Indians and the »bush«, they praise the Amerindian origin of some Surinamese and the bushnegroes who are seen as genuine roots people. The rastas know very well that in the main their parents grew up closer to nature and the roots (they use the word »deep«) which they consider something to evaluate positively, rather than hide from as they assume their parents had been doing. While rejecting some of the most commercial and »enslaving« aspects of *winti* (a whole of rituals and practices specific to Surinam which shows some resemblance with other Caribbean cults like *condoble*

and voodoo), the rastas have revised other of its aspects and the religiosity of their parents. They have turned these aspects into something exotic and »heat-hen« by associating them to their rasta symbols and tenets: food and menstruation taboos are perhaps the most striking elements in their syncretism. In addition, through their feeling of moral restraint and sexual decency, rastas often hold the same principles of their parents as to the education of children and the role of women.

Rastas are not simply alienated from their parent culture, as often suggested; they combine and adjust some of its values and norms to their Dutch-Surinamese background in creating their specific rasta *Weltanschauung*, which is rooted in the past whilst at the same time it does not impinge that much on the present. In order to do this, rastas borrow from the past:

»In a way we are old fashioned as we want to go back to how it was«,

and from contemporary ecologist themes:

»Babylon is Europe and what is artificial. Better be dull but live in the nature than be witty and in Hell, In the western world they have wit but they have polluted the lot. We (black people, LS) have other endowments«.

In many cases the Amsterdam version of Rastafarianism looks like a bricolage. There are many elements which constitute this special blend of Rastafarianism: the truths and premonitions elicited from the Bible, the religious education enjoyed at the parental home and the religious background of the different sections of the Surinamese community, the interest in Oriental religion of a part of the Amsterdam youth in the past, hippy and other counter-cultures (which in a city like Amsterdam have a special bearing also on the cultural orientation of the white working class youth and on young ethnics), black nationalism (though to a lesser extent than in Britain)<sup>3</sup>, the »deviant« lifestyle of a minority of Creole youth, the interaction with white youth at school and during leisure time and of course the shared experience of disadvantage, discrimination and often long-term unemployment already at a young age.

In spite of what might look like a predisposition to adapt to the Dutch, the disco-freaks think of themselves as pure Surinamese and whenever possible label the rastas as sham-Surinamese. The disco-freaks trace their aggressive consumerism back to the life orientation of the parent culture and to the expectation for a more affluent life as the main reason of emigration. They see the rastas rejection of consumerism and the most westernized forms of black fashion as a refusal of traditional fashion and beauty. They believe moreover that a certain flamboyance through which the black man has come to be seen by white society is in effect a part of Surinamese Creole culture. The disco-freak sees in his disco style a positive appreciation of blackness, even though such appreciation stresses different aspects than those stressed by the rastas. The main difference is that the former use their blackness to support their interaction with interesting sections of white youth, whereas the latter seek for appreciation of one's blackness eminently among Surinamese

<sup>3</sup> »Style« refers here to some of the most visible aspects of the exertion of ethnic and/or youth identity. It can consist of cultural objects, clothes, language, music and other elements which, handled according to the internal conventions and logic of the style, have a special meaning for the individual who identifies with the style (cfr. 7).

contemporaries and only indirectly among white youth (in which case they relate to the counterculture, like hippies and what in Holland are usually called the »alternatives«). If rastas and disco-freaks represent two different ways of approaching the majority society, all in all the members of these two youth styles often share the same symbolic universe and get on with each other better than they get on with the more Surinam-oriented older youth in the age-range 20—30. After all they have created two styles which are parts of the same youth subculture, the first one of the »second generation« Creole youth in Holland.

But, in the long run, youth styles lose their glamour if they do not keep developing — in a way their hegemony on youth is as hard to maintain as that of a certain mode on fashion. The younger group experiments more with clothes and fashion and sometimes combines Surinamese articles with cultural objects which are highly evaluated by many white young people. The phenomena of electric boogie and break dance which on sunny days, starting from the spring of 1983, has animated the shopping areas in the centre of the main Dutch cities has to be seen as the most recent improvisation on the theme of youth styles by Surinamese youth (and, to a lesser extent, for the first time Moroccan youth). There is a trend from more cohesive social forms, very much oriented towards Surinam and the subculture of the urban lower class males in its capital Paramaribo, to expressions which are consistent with the need to interact — or in case fight — from a stronger position with sections of white youth. Through the three stages sketched above one does not notice a simple decrease in the relevance of ethnic identity but a new emphasis from introvert to extrovert forms of ethnicity. That is to say, in the corner shop subculture the »action« was meant to boost one's status within the Surinamese community and only secondarily in Dutch society at large, whereas for the youth gangs and the more recent youth styles the »action« was, and still is, largely meant to impress outsiders and in particular the trendsetting groups in (white dominated) youth culture.

Variety and change among Creole youth are even clearer if one looks at age difference. Where there were for the greater part young men in the age-range 20—30 who determined the first stage, in the groups animating the last two stages one sees more and more younger people. In 1984 it was not difficult to see kids of 12 year old dominating the electric boogie competitions which were held in the major Amsterdam discotheques. In the meantime, the more these subcultures develop into more relaxed and less gang-wise expressions, the more popular, less exclusive and less sophisticated in their rituals they become: in the peer groups which form them, one sees an increasing number of girls, Hindustani, Dutch and other, non-Surinamese, immigrant boys.

## Two age-groups

The very similar class origin of most informants and the fact that almost all of them arrived in Holland in the same period (1971-5) have been partially blurred by the different socialization and schooling, which has taken place mostly in the Netherlands for the younger group, and for the older group, up to adolescence, mostly in Surinam.

The thesis is that new youth subcultures with specific styles have been created only among the young age-group (13); there were other subcultures of Surinamese youth which although they were not created in Holland might have further developed here: a distinct Creole and Hindustani (youth) subculture: in modern Surinam, girls and boys, particularly though not exclusi-

vely among the Creoles, have in a sense each created a youth subculture of their own which has a bearing on the Surinamese youth culture in Holland (11).

During leisure time, the members of the young age-group visit, usually quite often, many sorts of meeting places: youth work facilities (youth culture centres and to a lesser extent teenage clubs, youth clubs and community centres): Surinamese community centres, Surinamese parties and concerts: and, more than anything else, commercial leisure facilities such as discotheques, slot machines and video games halls and more and more coffee shops<sup>4</sup>; sport is played informally among Surinamese, but many also play in white teams or clubs. Generally speaking, the influence of youth workers on Creole youth, which was quite strong up to a few years ago, is decreasing — its place being taken by commercial facilities.

There is much less variety in the leisure time of the members of the older group. Most of the places they visit bring them in contact with Surinamese who are similar to them. These places are usually a more limited number of coffee shops and public bars, Surinamese community centres and self-help organizations, Creole parties and concerts. Apart from a very small subgroup which is part of the jazz or salsa music scene, they do not visit places which white youth also frequent.

Listening to music is an important element in the social organization of Surinamese youth. At their parties there are some differences as to music taste. The over-20's tend to prefer *bigi poku* (the modern Surinamese dance music which shows similarities with *merenque*) and American soul, also the under-20's dance to this music when it is played at family parties, but have a liking for reggae, disco and scratch (the music of electric boogie). The last three sorts of music attract a considerable white youth audience as well.

In »managing« ethnicity the two age-groups use different strategies. Each informant considers Surinamese welfare organizations as being useful in the first period of settlement in a new country, during which one is necessarily dependent on those who have better contacts. This dependency should be as short as possible, argue these informants — all of whom in 1982 had lived in Holland for at least 7—8 years.

Listening to Surinamese radio programmes and reading Surinamese newspapers is good, as a sign of allegiance to the community, but if it happens too often it would mean that one still feels insecure and is not yet »in control of the situation«. Besides, many believe that the message of these media is of little relevance to the youth — it is too »old-fashioned«. In 1982—3 for many under-20's, and a minority in the older age-group, listening to reggae music had taken that function in ethnic allegiance.

In the older age-group »talking my own language« (Sranan Tongo, the Creole Surinamese language) is one of the main reasons for getting together among Surinamese people — in fact most of them meet mostly with contemporaries. A young person who speaks Sranan Tongo is usually accepted as »Surinamese« by all the peer groups and age-groups of the research. He who does not speak it, regardless of his dark colours is likely to be regarded by most informants as Dutch-Surinamese, which is understood by everybody as being almost an insult, as opposed to the positive connotation of the term Black British in Britain.

<sup>4</sup> The coffee shop is a phenomenon of the last 3—4 years which in Holland is almost exclusive of Amsterdam where they are ca. 200. The coffee shop is an unlicensed, though tolerated, cafeteria which is usually run by a group of young people. The owner tends to be the group itself or an entrepreneur on behalf of whom they run it. Coffee shops revolve around the sale and the use of soft drugs (which in this city are tolerated) and in a sense function like self-help small-scale youth clubs.



Being born in Holland, which was not the case of any informant, is usually given as the very characteristic of utmost integration in Dutch society. The disco-freaks reply to the accusation of some older informants, »you are too dutchified«, by arguing that they cannot be integrated Dutch Surinamese because they were not born in Holland.

It is striking that for a large number of the informants »being Surinamese« takes a collective meaning but has to remain loose, without too binding a connotation that could impinge on their lifestyle which, for the over-20's, is based on precarious statuses, fluidity, irregular cash flows and individual solutions. Being a rasta, which includes being a Surinamese, entails instead an improvement of one's life not through individual competition but through a collective — albeit magic — solution. None the less, the emphasis on individual solutions is also growing in the younger age-group. But it develops within the importance that »individuality« is taking in their life, very much as an effect of Dutch education and interaction with white peers.

### **White vs black and Surinamese vs. Dutch**

Belonging to the ethnic group is also defined through a series of oppositions with other social groups: Dutch = thinking of useful things all the time versus Creole = masters in the art of leisure: Hindustani = thrifty versus Creole = enjoying life. The attitude towards spending and lending money, for example, is a test for allowing young Hindustanis into a peer group of Creoles. Very often the sense of belonging has been reformulated during the collective experience of leisure time.

The style and ethnicity of the average Surinamese youth takes form, and makes sense to these young people themselves, very much in relation to the other groups of the population with whom they interact and sometimes compete. For this reason the young adult men see themselves as the opposite of the teenagers, who in turn see themselves as the opposite of their white contemporaries. This means, of course, that the social and cultural borders between the two age-groups in Creole youth and between the Creole under-20's and their working-class white contemporaries are not given but need to be reconfirmed time after time. On the same line a very important part of the ethnic identity of Creole under-20's is drawn from their comparison with Surinamese Hindustanis, and also Moroccans, contemporaries in the context of Amsterdam.

Moreover, the members of this age-group draw on the expectations and styles of the mainstream (white) youth culture and on their more specific knowledge of certain aspects of Dutch society (e.g. the system of education, access to the labour market, career advisory services, youth work, multiracial leisure activities). In this respect one sees more ethnic and social groups informing the ethnic identity of the under-20's: the older age-group tends to be »inspired« by other sections of the Surinamese community and by some very general, and often somewhat vague, ideas of the majority white society. These are some of the general lines along which ethnic identity develops, of course, each ethnic group — sometimes as a community — develops some mainstream ideas on how to adjust to Dutch society with which most members tend to identify. That is also why, in spite of the lower degree of formal ethnic cohesion, the under-20's feel very strongly that they are part of the Surinamese community.

In the following we can only touch upon some aspects of ethnic identity which shed light onto its situational and fluid character.

Those informants who spent a considerable part of their life in Surinam tend to have a general picture of the characteristics of life in Holland as op-

posed to life in Surinam. They turn it into a coherent vision of the black world as something different from the white world.

»In Surinam it is a matter of survival, here the whole thing is getting (commodities). Actually I find that surviving is the essential thing in life. A typical distinction between whites and blacks is that the first aim at creating and at making more, whereas blacks are more into making use of existing things... In a sense this explains why blacks like golden objects. I mean it does not have to be gold, the important is that it has permanent value« (a 22-year old male informant).

But on the whole the older age-group has a fairly ambivalent view of the relationship with the Dutch. They are good to learn things from but they would not teach you all they know.

For this age-group the Creoles think of today and cannot cope with the Dutch work ethos (»work, save money and make plans all the time«), and for this reason they are »actually« different from the Dutch. For them Holland is a country which is atomised, where all forms of family-based support have collapsed, it is nevertheless a country which »cares for people«. Welfare provisions are highly praised but are said to estrange people from their own community and, eventually, from Surinam. Dutch society, they argue, stimulates broad-mindedness (*ruim denken*), which is good, but also individualisation which tends to be judged negatively.

Many of the over-20's envisage Holland as the country for action and development. Because of its different tradition the Surinamese community needs instead to develop at a slower pace and with a timing of its own. A minority of them — comprising the most deprived — even argues that the Surinamese (but they usually refer to the Creoles) who try to be »too active« are bound to fail since this country makes you sick and neurotic. An example which they frequently adduce in this sense is the relatively high number of heroin addicts among the Creole over-20's, who are said to have become so because of a previous intellectual strain (e.g. students who had enrolled for too difficult studies and people who had worked too hard).

The young age-group is more prepared to see nuances and a range of types among Dutch people. This age-group, however, includes most of the rastas who, although accepting the existence of variety among the Dutch, have clearer ideas about the need to preserve some sort of exclusive black places and about black pride. Also the rastas criticise what they see as »too fast Dutch society« where action is coupled with the aggro of consumerism and alienation. Their opposition, though, comes from within: it is expressed in words which, besides the millenarian overtones, conjure up the hippy and ecologist traditions. For the disco-freaks the word action takes on a different, positive connotation.

Remigration and integration are hot issues for the Surinamese community the analysis of which shows some degree of change in how one sees the future. During the first years of research remigration was central for allegiance to the Surinamese community. All the informants used to talk about it and most stated they wanted to go back to Surinam. But there were many ways of accomplishing it. For the most in the older age-group it was a matter of hitting the jackpot and flying back rather than careful planning — the condition was anyway individual success. The younger informants wanted to go back, too, to what they felt was still their mother country: most of them, however, stressed that one needs technical qualifications, which are to be achieved in Holland. For the rastas, repatriation was seen as a collective destiny to be accomplished somewhere down the line in their struggle for recovering from »mental slavery«.

The political instability of Surinam and the developments in that country over the last three or four years have discouraged many people from remigrating and have had a devastating impact on the cultural orientation towards Surinam and the practical links with it. In the meantime the question of whether and how to integrate in Dutch society has become more crucial than it already was, while the awareness of racial discrimination has grown in both age-groups — most strikingly among the young. Everything shows that racial discrimination is older as a phenomenon than the strong awareness of it among Surinamese youth. This means that this awareness has increased together with a more explicit orientation towards Dutch society and is not linked with a high degree of formal participation in the organizations of the Surinamese community.

With reference to integration, in the older age-group there are many who hold that on a public level and as to technical innovations some sort of adjustment of Dutch society and mores has to happen. In the more domestic social life, however, one can stick to tradition: »at home you can do whatever you want«. For the younger informants such division into public and domestic forms of adjustment is less outspoken. For them interaction with Dutch society and Dutch contemporaries is an all-embracing phenomenon.

### Conclusion

»Symbolic relations are not disguised metaphors for class relations: but nor are they merely signifying« (5).

There is no space to deal in depth with the causal relationship of ethnic identity and ideology on ethnic cohesion and of superstructure on infrastructure but I must touch on a few themes. There has always been some social and cultural variety among Surinamese youth. Some trends, however, are specific to the Surinamese youth in Holland. Changes in social organization and ethnic cohesion are reflected in ethnic identity. On the other hand, developments in the ideological aspects of this identity, like the magical solutions yielded by the use of spectacular youth styles have their bearing on ethnic cohesion.

I suggest that class, age, gender, parent culture and ethnicity determine the life of the informants, although some assertive aspects of ethnic identity may recall associations with only ethnic origins and the dynamics of youth style with only the generation gap or with age difference among the 13—20 and the 20—30 age-group. The longer the informants have lived and studied in Holland the more will class, then age and thirdly ethnic origin and parent culture bear upon their choices and career. The reverse is also true, for the older age-group it is first ethnic origin then class and thirdly age that weighs.

A big gap between expectations and actual opportunities has been part and parcel of the experience of the Creoles as colonial immigrants in Holland. For the under-20's, however, this gap has a fairly different connotation. The experience of »second generation« Surinamese youth shows that there is no direct link between Dutch education, good knowledge of Dutch language and way of life and a better social position — as argued by too many Dutch policy makers. Many of these young people feel that what they have »handed in« in terms of cultural specificity has not yet been »paid back« with a better social status. As a result of their socialization in Holland their job expectations have changed and have started to get closer to those of their white peers. None the less, in spite of the similarities with their white lower-class urban contemporaries (the comparison with white contemporaries is part of my research,

although it has not been included in this paper), the Creole under-20's are not simply a coloured version of the white working-class youth. The expectations relative to emigration, the experience of racial discrimination and a number of key cultural traits make them a special kind of young people. Although the economic position of the Surinamese in Holland, and particularly of Creole youth, has somehow remained the same over the last 7—8 years, in the age-group 13—20 one starts to see that, within the limits of their lower class origin and generally lower standard of education those who have been fully schooled in Holland have a certain variety of opportunities on the labour market. A majority of the rest of the informants can be accounted instead to the growing category of the young long-term unemployed. They have become »one of the main problems« of labour agencies which often consider them »chronic unemployed«. Both age-groups often fill this gap between expectations and job opportunities with imaginary solutions which aim at tackling anonymity, cultural uniformity and social marginality.

But of course the socio-economic difference between the two groups bears all the way on the development of a »twilight ethnicity« (a term used with reference to the third generation Italian-Americans, 15:12) for the young group, and of a somewhat reactive ethnicity for the older age-group.

After all, at the subjective level, the under-20's have more choices: they are in the position to choose between Surinamese-based and straight Dutch leisure facilities, they can play with languages (Dutch and Sranan Tongo) and in some respects with two cultures; they can »choose« to stay on at school or drop out of it and, on the leisure time arena, they can choose between several possible magic solutions. They can decide whether or not and on what occasion they want to be or feel Surinam-oriented, or simply Dutch. Occasionally they can have more than a single identity at one and the same time. Their life orientation depends very much on the management of ethnic identity. They have created a subculture which can be spectacular in many ways: disco-freaks, rastas, electric boogie dancers, squares, etc. For the over-20's less opportunities and choices in Dutch society have resulted in fewer spectacular styles and imaginary solutions. They cannot choose to »become« Creole — they can hardly ever attempt to be anything else. For the time being one can speak of a split in the Surinamese youth — with of course a lot of new arrivals into the group of the young long-term unemployed. Much depends on the social position of Creole youth and on their job opportunities. One thing is certain, for most of them »coming of age« (becoming over-20) and leaving school is paired with a decrease of concern for and interaction with the white-dominated youth culture. The cultural skills they have acquired during the style interplay with youth culture and the use of ethnicity they have experienced, however, are bound to bear on their future life orientation. For them ethnic identity is not given, it also has to be taken and shaped. The familiarity with Dutch ways, resulting perhaps more in disenchantment than in any real advantage, will leave its marks. Even if at an older age they might experience an ethnic »backlash«, due for example to rampant racial discrimination, their reactive ethnicity will be different from that which is nowadays experienced by the over-20's.

The relevance of the new forms of ethnic identity of the younger age-group cannot be grasped if the sole yardstick one uses is the cultural heritage of their parent culture (19). These forms only make sense in the Dutch context and are coupled with a peculiar relationship with their own ethnic community. This group can display a strong ethnicity in spite of little formal ethnic cohesion and participation in the organizations of the Surinamese community. The ethnicity of the older age-group is a matter of ethnic allegiance and preserva-

ion of emotional bonds with social networks already existing in Surinam (the district, the Paramaribo neighbourhood, the street corner mates, the hustle, etc.). For the younger age-group ethnicity is instead a matter of creation and exploration, and it has less »provincial« overtones. Blackness is more relevant than Surinamness. Occasionally »being an immigrant« or »being a young person« can be relevant too. Their ethnicity implies a great deal of self-reliance and in a sense a degree of integration in Dutch society. A certain detachment from the parent culture, hence from traditional ethnic allegiance, for them is as important as a degree of preservation — even re-evaluation — of certain traditional cultural habits or cultural objects and familiarity with some sections of the white majority society. The more generations pass, the harder it is to keep alive forms of ethnicity based chiefly on traditional ethnic cohesion or religious culture.<sup>5</sup> For these young people ethnicity is thus not only a reactive phenomenon, but also an affirmative instrument for improving and renegotiating one's position in the Amsterdam cultural and social setting. Ethnicity is not a one-way all subjective phenomenon either. Besides the socio-economic context, the image the majority society has of Surinamese youth and the way this society acts towards them are very important. For the ethnicity of Creole youth, and nowadays more in general, of second generation ethnics, the reinterpretation of the parent culture is not only relevant. Also a constant relation to and even comparison with the youth styles and lifestyles of sections of the white contemporaries plays a key role. Hence one needs to relate their cultural and social expressions also to the social dynamics of urban youth more in general and to the symbolic universe of that part of popular culture which is the youth culture.

A renegotiation of the disadvantage of one's own social position by means of youth styles or, for very few people, an individual »work career« through some areas of leisure like sport and the show and music business are, of course, a magic solution. The question why these young people put so much energy into leisure time should be answered by looking first of all into the way the education system and the labour agencies they have to deal with function.

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#### ETNIČNOST I SLOBODNO VRIJEME SURINAMSKIH ADOLESCENATA I MLADIĆA U AMSTERDAMU

##### SAŽETAK

Ovaj članak prati promjenu obrazaca etničkog identiteta i slobodnog vremena kod mladića i adolescenata, migranata kreolsko-surinamskog podrijetla niže klase, u Amsterdamu u zadnjih petnaest godina.

Etnički identitet mladih »etnika« stvara se ne samo u odnosu prema roditeljskoj kulturi već i prema omladinskoj kulturi, odnosno ustaljenoj, popularnoj kulturi i vidljivim mladenačkim supkulturama bijele omladine.

»Magična« kod mladih Kreolaca druge generacije jest njihova sposobnost stvaranja oblika etničnosti koji se može povezati s njihovom slabom participacijom u tradicionalnim organizacijama surinamske zajednice.