Serious Games of Sexual Relation

Attitudes and Conceptions
of Young Cape Verdean Men

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The Cape Verdean Community of Rotterdam
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Summary

Sexual relation is relation involving sexual intimacy. Intimacy can be subject to touching, kissing, conversation, fore play, and sexual intercourse. Sexual relation is a common issue in every community. In my research I posed questions of the occurrence of sexual relation that happens between Cape Verdean men and women. The research was all conducted in the Cape Verdean community located in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. This exploratory study was achieved to bring light to the sexual relation of young Cape Verdean men in their twenties. Twelve Cape Verdean men from the age range of twenty to twenty-nine gave their perspectives for data collection. All were living in Rotterdam during the time of the interviews. Access to the participants was started by some key informants and by using snowball sampling. The data was collected through in-depth interviews and participant observation.

Sexual relation between men and women has recently been put into the spotlight. The media, mainly the news, have reported on incidents of sexual relation that have lead to sexual abuse and sexual violence in the Cape Verdean community. Sexual relation is currently very important because of this. Acts of sexual abuse and sexual violence occur through sexual relation. Sexual abuse and sexual violence have been a common issue in the Cape Verde Islands where many of the Cape Verdean descendants from all over the world are from. In Cape Verde, domestic violence against women, including wife beating, remains common. Child abuse and mistreatment, sexual violence against children, and juvenile prostitution are problems. (AFROL News 2007) Since sexual abuse and sexual violence still occur even after migration to the Netherlands, migration may also play a pivotal role in Cape Verdeans actions.

There have been no studies dealing with sexual relations in Rotterdam’s Cape Verdean community written from the male perspective. Through studying the sexual relations between men and women, I was able to begin to reveal when sexual relation turns into sexual abuse and sexual violence.
My research exposes some factors that contribute to sexual relation to understand how, and what motivates it to happen. Masculinity, gender roles, sexuality, and courtship are contributing factors to sexual relations. “Men need to dominate and exercise power in sexual activity and this is the basic common denominator of male sexuality.” (Coveney 1984:14) Not all men use dominance and power to fuel their sexuality. Many reports, however, suggest that power and dominance play a significant role in sexual relation. According to my informants, parental role in the family shapes how men engage in sexual relation. In addition, my key informant expressed that drugs, most commonly alcohol, play a role in the activity of sexual relation. This is all disclosed in the data analysis. Dutch influence, integration into Dutch culture, African influence, and migration add to the explanation of sexual relation for my participants.

This research was done to understand sexual relation between Cape Verdean men and women. Understanding how the relation works may yet provide insight into the activity and how it can go too far and lead to sexual abuse and sexual violence. The research will help explain what factors play a role in sexual relation.

Hopefully I have supplied an understanding of sexual relation within the Cape Verdean community in Rotterdam. I want to uncover what is really happening in the situations when the media, although bringing the issue into the spotlight, do not unearth all aspects of the issue. I hope that this research will open the eyes of the Cape Verdeans and bring more concern to the activities in the community.

I also intend my research to reach the Cape Verdean community in Rotterdam. I would like the Rotterdam city counsel and the mayor to be aware of my research. I think that if the authorities are aware of my research, aid and funding could be contributed to more research to possibly prevent and intervene in causes that lead to sexual abuse and sexual violence and also better understand the culture of Cape Verdeans in Rotterdam. I would like the Dutch government to have access to my research and I would also like other ethnic communities to understand my research for reflection into their own community.
Chapter One

Introduction of Research

In this study I have made an attempt to gather and discuss conceptions, attitudes and perceptions of heterosexual relation of Cape Verdean men in their twenties. The introduction will first discuss myself and my affiliation to the research. Secondly it will provide a brief history of the Cape Verde islands. Thirdly, it will provide background and statistical information on Cape Verdeans in Rotterdam. Fourthly, it will talk generally about sexuality, masculinity, gender roles and courtship from the male perspective. Lastly, the objective of the study and the main research questions will be stated.

1.1 The Researcher

I am an American Cape Verdean in my twenties. I am second generation in the United States. My father was the first born in the United States after my grandparents migrated to the United States following other family members. My immediate and extended family embraces our Cape Verdean heritage along with being American. My heritage is one of the main reasons why I chose to study Cape Verdean men. I chose the age group to be around my own so that I can better relate to my participants. I feel that my background and life experience is complimentary to the research.

1.2 Cape Verde

The Republic of Cape Verde is a set of ten main islands in the North Atlantic Ocean off the west coast of Africa across from Senegal. The islands that were once uninhabited became discovered and colonized by the Portuguese in the fifth century. After the Portuguese colonized Cape Verde it became a watering station, then a sugar plantation
site, later providing a major port for the slave trade. Lead by the African party for the Independence of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC), Cape Verde received independence from Portugal in 1975. One of the most prominent political activists for independence at the time was Amilcar Cabral.

Cape Verde is located in the subtropical zone just about five hundred kilometers off the African mainland. It lacks natural and agricultural resources due to the climate. The islands have experienced numerous serious droughts which is why only four of the islands are agriculturally prominent.

A large majority of the people who live on the islands are descendants of African and Portuguese settlers. An overwhelming percentage of the population is Christian of Roman Catholic denomination with a smaller group of Protestants. The official language is Portuguese. The unofficial language is Portuguese-based creole, the dialect of which remains different from island to island.

By the early 1800’s many Cape Verdeans became whalers on foreign ships. Cape Verdean sought these jobs to earn a better living than what Cape Verde offered. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century the poorer classes of Cape Verdeans migrated to
the United States, mainly in New England as whalers and cranberry pickers. (Almeida 1995) In the 1920’s the United States government restricted Cape Verdean immigration by reducing the entry of people of color. When the American doors closed many Cape Verdeans began to migrate to Europe, South America and West Africa. In the 1960’s the United States government relaxed its immigration policies and Cape Verdeans began to move in again.

Gender roles are well defined in Cape Verde. Women take care of all domestic responsibilities including cooking, cleaning, and child rearing. By the same token women make large contribution to other sectors of work such as farming, construction and commerce. Women are many times seen as the sole economic supporter of the family. Women are also substantially under-represented in white collar professions and the government. Women in Cape Verde are respected for the workload they carry and can be very independent of men. (Culture of Cape Verde)

1.3 Cape Verdeans in the Netherlands

Since the 1950’s Cape Verdeans have been migrating to the Netherlands. Many of them found their way to the Netherlands by way of Portugal. Many Cape Verdeans have used unskilled labor positions to aid them in their migration. As of 2007, there are an estimated 37,500 Cape Verdeans living in the Netherlands. (De Queiroz 2007) The largest concentration of Cape Verdeans lives in Rotterdam. Most of the migrants in the Netherlands originate from the two neighboring islands Sao Vicente and Santo Antao in Cape Verde.

1.4 Sexuality, Gender Roles, Masculinity and Courtship Interrelated

Sexuality, gender roles, masculinity and courtship are all social constructs, meaning that they are socially rather than biologically derived. Masculinity and gender roles can be products of sexuality. Courtship and the way it occurs is a product of sexuality, gender roles and masculinity. Although these factors are interrelated they are influenced by themes such as family, peers, mass media, education and religion. Sexual relation, sexual
abuse and sexual violence are directly related to but not only by sexuality, masculinity, gender roles and courtship.

1.5 Sexuality

The sexuality of men incorporates aggression, power, dominance sex, sexual intercourse, and control. These themes are not subject to all men but many men exercise an assortment of them. Male sexuality is not just a construct to show power over women but it is also a construct to exert control of women. Through emotional, physical and sexual indications of sexual abuse and sexual violence, men establish control. “The need to dominate and exercise power in sexual activity is the basic common denominator of all those aspects of male sexuality described here.” (Coveney 1984:14) It is common to hear men refer to controlling their woman or women. “Somewhere between normal and extreme, power manifests itself in many forms of harassment of women, such as sexual gestures, innuendoes, jokes and remarks.” (Coveney 1984:14) Power does not just manifest itself through these forms but also in the social construct of relationships. Men also show power by establishing themselves as the breadwinner in a relationship or by the initiated experiences in the relationship. Men perform sexual abuse and violence through these acts of dominance.

Although men express their sexuality through acts of dominance and control, many of these acts may not endorse the kind of power over women men intend. Context is very important in this case. Men feel at ease with their sexuality in certain settings when power is very important but in other settings, this perceived dominance is less of a factor. For instance in taking care of the family, especially when children are involved, men do not need that control over the family. Many times the woman’s influence is dominant and her womanly traits are necessary as men take a back seat in the performance of power. When we take a look at men conquering women, sex is a strong concept where men seem to need to wield power and show dominance in the context of this relationship of sexual occurrence. Sexuality also plays out a double standard. A man from a study remarks, “If I have sex with ten women I am a superman, a macho man; people praise me. If a woman does the same thing, she’s considered a whore.” (Perez-
Jimenez 2007:366) Men are to be conquistadors while women cannot engage in the same behavior.

Male sexuality uses sex as a key component to their identity. As seen earlier, experiences that are not sexual retain different power relations by men. “For these students sexuality is a natural human expression and it is directly related to sexual relations, specifically sexual intercourse.” (Perez-Jimenez 2007:365) Perez-Jimenez found that the sexuality of these men directly dealt with sex. “Men feel driven to ‘act out sexually’ because that is how they assure themselves of their identity as men.” (Coveney 1984:17) Coveney feels that men use their sexuality in a sexual way to be men.

The sexual harassment of emotional, physical and sexual dominant behavior in some cases is to remind women that men are powerful. Sometimes the intention of men may not be to express that they are more powerful than women are but to remind them that they are powerful. These notions of dominance are symbolic for the identity of males. “Emphasizing men’s sexual oppression of women does not mean that economic or patriarchal power-related analyses are irrelevant, or vice versa. Instead, these factors are related, but often in contradictory ways. What appears powerful at the macro level is surprisingly frequently found to be connected to powerlessness in local circumstances. The interplay of power and counter-power (‘influence’ in some formulations) in modern male-female relationships is complex and we should be especially careful not to jump from macro-level considerations (‘men have power’) to local conclusions.” (Breines 2000) Rape in marriage for instance, is an example where men are trying to keep a hold on the notion that they have power in a relationship, especially when the men feel inadequate or insecure. These feelings of insecurity or inadequacy are sometimes not even a result of the relationship with the woman but are caused by other factors and are still acted out upon on the women.

Men’s sexuality is actually a social construct. This opinion is arguable, though, due to research done on homosexuality perpetuating that men’s sexuality is biological and may even be hereditable. Popular research still suggests sexuality as a social construct stemming from outside influences of the self. These influences are subject to the family, peers, mass media, education and religion. Family and the media are the most common influences, which many males are influenced by at the beginning of their
development. “Something we have been careful to stress throughout is our belief that male sexuality is socially constructed, not biologically determined.” (Coveney 1984:19)

Some sociologists would agree that sexuality is a social script by the way it is experienced and acted out. “The way little boys learn to act towards women and girls is partly the result of social influences such as education, the media, parental expectation and peer group pressure, but also partly the result of realizing, consciously or unconsciously, how their best interests are served.” (Coveney 1984:20)

Coveney’s statement that men serve their best interests when displaying their sexuality, clarifies that men use agency. Male sexuality is demonstrated through options and the goal is to choose the best option. Men have many choices to choose from in the creation of the sexuality when dealing with the family and the media. They can choose to adhere to common suggestions of what their sexuality should entail or they can deviate from this. It is very hard to deviate because the images of male sexuality are suggested so heavily through these outlets, which makes it difficult in some cases to break from the norm.

1.6 Gender

Another important aspect of sexual abuse and sexual violence that men act out on is gender, specifically gender roles. Who a man should be and how a man should act when dealing with women is a tricky concept. “Gender involves power structures and economic relationships.” (Breines 2000)

Gender and gender relations involve also race and class. Gender role relationships are based on these structures. When dealing with sexual abuse and sexual violence “research suggests that violence against women is related to unequal gender relations maintained by social and socioeconomic inequities.” (Asencio 1999:108)

Inequality is a significant concept in gender relations. The example of males posing as the breadwinner shows the class difference between the relationship of women and men. Women are subordinate in financial matters and thus playing an unequal gender role.

Gender role is a social construct. Gender and gender roles are the basis for how women and men should act. “The social construction of gender implies a process by which an individual perceives and interprets gender characteristics, behaviors, and
expectations, as well as attributes and parameters that determine gender and its relations to people’s anatomy.” (Perez-Jimenez 2007:360) These social constructions of gender and characteristics come from many means. “Participants agreed that gender roles are imposed by society through a series of institutions and in particular contexts. Institutions most mentioned were mass media, family, peers and religion.” (Perez-Jimenez 2007:368) The inequality of power was most dominant with Perez-Jimenez’s study participants. Women in most cases were submissive in their gender role where men dominated these women. In this same study, most men “attacked the media, particularly television, for exploiting women’s bodies as sexual objects, as well as marketing campaigns that use women’s bodies to sell products.” (Perez-Jimenez 2007:368) The marketing tools that the mass media uses perpetuate sexual abuse and sexual violence placing women as objects. The way men see women as objects affects how they treat women, which often leaves little room for respect. Men in turn want to be the hero; they want to be wanted by women and many women. When this does not happen and men feel that they do not attract enough or the kind of women they like, they resort to other measures to ensure these relationships from women. Some of their tactics involve sexual abuse and sexual violence.

The media not only portray women but give accurate accounts of what a man should look and act like. Many feel that the media promote an image of men as sexual and strong. One male comments on television ads saying, “For those ads with those chicks, “brother” they have to assume that men are strong, that he has a woman, that he’s going to get her […] he likes women, he likes sex, and he has to assume that attitude to make those ads, because if they didn’t think men were that way, those ads would not exist today.” (Perez-Jimenez 2007:371) The media can be seen to almost set men up for situations they are not prepared for. When the media places standards of male sexuality and gender role men can have a hard time playing out these standards.

In many studies of gender, the family is a vital teacher of gender roles. Family was seen as one of the primary influences of gender roles for males. One study participant states, “Parents start telling you early on not to touch yourself there. They start nagging about that.” (Perez-Jimenez 2007:369) Families also instill heavy burdens on their male children. Fathers often encourage their boys to have many girlfriends
showing praise if the women are sexually and physically attractive. Mothers encourage their boys to be secure in a relationship with marriage in the process. Men can be discouraged from female interaction when they do not meet their parents’ expectations for their gender role in relations with women.

There are misconceptions about gender concepts and gender roles. Some men express the belief that gender role differences were biologically based. “Males were seen as biologically unable to control their passions (including sexual desire, anger, and jealousy), self-centered, led by their sexual desires, and attraction to violence.” (Asencio 1999:112) When biological explanations are used, they do justify sexual abuse and sexual violence but they also remove social responsibility for violent behavior. Not all acts of violence are solely the individuals fault. Past experience stems many acts of violence. “Researchers have also suggested that experiencing and/or witnessing abuse in childhood is associated with involvement in abuse during adolescents and adulthood.” (Beyers 2000:453) The misconception of gender roles does not hold true with all individuals. Perez-Jimenez clearly states his view by saying, “Regarding gender roles, these men are strongly aware of differences that should exist between men and women. They clearly identify that men are suppose to be in control (dominant, aggressive), that they should not be sentimental, that they carry the burden of economic providers, that they should have many sexual partners, and that they dress and communicate differently. However, the view that these differences are natural or biologically based is absent from their discourse. They strongly believe that these are socially constructed behaviors imposed by different institutions.” (Perez-Jimenez 2007:373) To sum it up neatly, “Gender is thus a process of becoming rather than a state of being.” (Harvey 1994:8)

1.7 Masculinity

When we speak of masculinity, we seem to be directly concerned with men, their sexuality, and how their sexuality is played out. Many researchers have revealed that masculinity deals with men but is also closely connected with women. “It has been shown that definitions of masculinity, which incorporates concepts such as dominance, toughness, or male honor, are highly correlated with violence against women.” (Asencio
Strength and power directed to women and acted out upon women reflect masculinity, which in some cases is violent. The strong connection between men and women is signified in various ways. Sexual intercourse is one bond that men and women have. “Sexual intercourse is inherently violent, involving penetration and the transgression of bodily boundaries.” (Harvey 1994:13) Coveney agrees by stating “Pain, then, is not only a ‘normal’ constituent of sexual intercourse, but essential to sexual pleasure. In men, it is a normal manifestation of power…” (Coveney 1984:59) Women also accept and in some cases enjoy these acts of violent masculinity men direct towards them. Coveney also notes, “How women enjoy being beaten, raped and sexually brutalized, and have no respect for weak men; thousands of women, it appears, write love letters, including proposals of marriage, to convicted rapists and sadistic murderers.…” (Coveney 1984:58)

Aggression is one of the main ingredients for masculinity, and it is acted out in many instances. Sports are one example where the best players in some cases are the most aggressive. Sometimes savagery is praised and considered masculine. “Physical and verbal aggression is seen as a legitimate expression of manliness.” (Asencio 1999:109) One wonders why –when power, violence and aggression symbolize manliness– are some men punished when they play out their masculinity.

Men’s conception of masculine men justifies their actions. Many men, though they may not play out masculinity, still praise and connect with masculine behavior. Asencio shows what some men believe about masculinity. These men claim, “According to young people studied, violence was prevalent and justifiable. Most of them nonchalantly commented on violence. They said violence not only was part of human nature, but it had a strong biological connection with masculinity. Many of them felt that the violence they encountered was to be expected. They interpreted stress as aggravating the reality and inevitability of violence.” (Asencio 1999:112) Many men use biology as a factor because masculinity seems so inherent to what a man should be. Violence, aggression, and acts of dominant power are seen in so many outlets expressing male virtue. Men do understand that there are boundaries to masculinity but the misuse or absence of their masculinity does have consequences. “Although physical and sexual aggression was seen as an expression of manliness, males were not expected to constantly
seek fights to prove their manhood. Males, however, were seen as weak if they fled a fight.” (Asencio 1999:121) Men face dilemmas when dealing with their masculinity and what constitutes a man. The threshold for aggression and becoming too violent, research says, is difficult for the acting individual to measure. When it comes to women who are the butt of aggression and violence from men, one can see where problems may occur.

Looking at masculinity and conceptualizing it leads to the outlets that perpetuate what masculinity is to men. However, because masculinity and the notion of it are so prevalent in society on different levels it is not biologically based. “Given this rethinking of gender, we must always see masculinity as located in a structure of gender relations.” (Breines 2000) Would masculinity still be such a factor to maleness if gender relations were different? Gender relations are natural to the expression of masculinity and how it is reflected. “Masculinities do not exist prior to social interaction, but come into existence as people act. Masculinities are actively produced, using the resources available in a given situation.” (Breines 2000) Breines touches a key concept of social interaction that causes masculinity to be reflexive. You must see masculinity through social experiences to have a grasp on what it means and how to act it out. The agency in social interaction provides an environment where masculine-behavior can act out. “Some violent patterns of masculinity develop in response to violence: they do not simply cause it.” (Breines 2000)

Male children learn masculinity from the beginning of their development, and it is reinforced throughout the lifetime. The family and the mass media are tools for men to incorporate concepts of masculinity into their lives. Life experience also plays a valuable role in explaining masculinity to males. Many families express to their boys at a young age that males do not cry and boys do not wear pink. Even though pink is trendy now for men, families still discourage historically feminine colors and ways of acting. Fathers have encouraged and praised their sons to be strong and exert the power of dominance. Families are the first professors of the concept of masculinity to males.

The mass media is yet another teacher of masculinity to males and they become aware of the media’s interpretation of it at an early age. “One is the intensified promotion of exemplary masculinities in commercial mass media: in televised sports, Hollywood ‘action’ movies, violent video games, and the like. The messages in these
media relentlessly insist on the bodily superiority of men and their mastery of technology and violence.” (Breines 2000) Many of the media’s portrayals of masculinity are out of reach of even the most masculine of men. Masculinity in the media is sometimes fantasized and does not perpetuate reality. The construction of masculinity in the media raises expectations of rewards for masculine behavior. The heroes in movies are the ones who are the most dominate, receive the attractive women or happen to be the most secure financially. Movies also touch upon ethics and morals of dealing with masculinity. The media provokes the prevailing thought of masculine tendencies by any means necessary. Males should not question the morality of their masculinity but they should in turn act and be a man, express manliness. “The social constructionist approach views masculinity not as a dimension of personality, but as an ideology, a set of beliefs, and expectations about how men should think and behave.” (Seen in Perez-Jimenez 2007:359)

Life experiences can trigger acts of violence against women. I have already talked about findings that show how violence stimulates violence. “It was not men’s background relations to women, nor their type of masculine identity, but instead their experienced bullying in childhood or youth (i.e. victimization mainly from other boys or men), and having experienced violence in the family or origin (mainly from their fathers).” (Breines 2000) Men do not innately seek to victimize women but learn to do it, whether through the media, family or peers.

1.8 Courtship

Courtship is the engagement of one person seeking the affections of another for some gain, whether it is company, sex or marriage. Many acts of sexual abuse and sexual violence occur during courtship between men and women. The male sexuality, gender roles, and masculinity are played out in the courting of women. Men describe courtship in many ways and some explain it as, “a fishing expedition whereby a man randomly approaches women in hopes that one would respond.” (Seal 2003:302) Courtship is almost a sexual conquest of men that initiates power when a man receives the company of a woman. Sometimes courtship is even seen as a game or sport and the prize is the woman. “In the courtship game, women were characterized as adversaries to be battled
or conquered.” (Seal 2003:302) Little regard is given to women themselves when men begin courtship. “Within casual, ongoing relationships, sex was more likely to be motivated by sexual variety (‘Maybe some guys could just have one sexual partner, but there’s temptation out there… As nature calls the man who is grazing, he is expected to have different experiences’ or sexual conquest…’)” (Seal 2003:302) Masculinity plays an important role in courtship. Men are supposed to win the hearts of women by showing their power and dominance to other men and women.

The interaction between men and women varies culturally but the goals intended by men can be perceived similar cross culturally. “Strategies men commonly used to initiate with women in the courtship game, included small talk (‘Most of the talk is just about daily events’); compliments, sweet talk, and direct come-ons (‘I go over to her and tell her you’re beautiful. Can I have your phone number?’); and non-verbal cues such as eye contact, smiles, or physical touch.” (Seal 2003:302) There is a thin line between courtship, sexual abuse and sexual violence. Many times courtship only becomes sexual abuse and violence when it is perceived that way by the women. One man explains, “Dating is all about sexual harassment-sort of pushing the limits to see how far the other person is willing to let you go. Society believes that it is the man’s role to test the waters. It is certainly expected by women.” (Seal 2003:302) In this case, the man is the initiator and the woman is the boundary setter stating what is ideal for her and what is crossing the line. Women taking this passive role can sometimes be troublesome for them because the man is pushing the limit and can certainly get out of control. When this happens, the man could perceive the woman as wanting it or his unwanted action as what she deserves. Coveney also explains human courtship in the terms of animals. “Women compare to a bitch: when in heat she throws modesty to the winds, but when not she refuses the dog’s attentions and squats firmly on the floor, concealing her sexual parts. At the same time, however, this is also an invitation to the dog, and in the human male, mixed up with his ideas of what is sexually desirable in the female. Even in heat the bitch, having first chased the dog, may turn to flee, thus appearing to refuse him and perhaps submitting to his embrace only after much persuasion. This obviously implies that sometimes women give the impression that they are not interested in sex even though they really are; and since in women there can be no absolute certainty – we don’t come on heat – there can be
no way of being sure whether we want sex or not. This begins to bear an uncanny resemblance to the familiar masculine justification of rape.” (Coveney 1984:54) This raw interpretation of courtship is relative to what happens with men and women. It does occur that men do not read the signs of a woman properly. Some men are so wrapped up in the action to court them that they go too far and commit acts of sexual abuse and violence. Rape does occur in these situations and men again justify their actions by saying that the woman deserved it for leading them on. In many societies there is a phrase “women say ‘no’ when they really mean ‘yes’”. Men can break the threshold in these situations by no longer allowing women to be the boundary setters. Through agency, men act upon their impulse for the common goal of sexual dominance, mainly sexual intercourse. When men are in the act of courtship and women say no, men in some cases build resentment for the women because they are not wanted at the time and this can also lead to sexual abuse and sexual violence.

In many courtship situations, men are in a constant state of trying to prove something, whether it is to themselves, to other men or to women. “Often men viewed their sexual conquests as proof of their own superiority over other non-conquering males.” (Seal 2003:303) As for women Seal explains, “Some men reported feeling pressured to live up to the male norm of ‘men are always ready, able, and willing to have sex’; sex being defined as penetrative vaginal intercourse. A fear of impotency and an inability to sexually perform on demand were major concerns. Men further expressed concern about the adequacy of their sexual functioning and their ability to sexually satisfy their partner. A common belief was that dissatisfied female sexual partners would seek other men.” (Seal 2003:313) There is much at stake for men when they are courting women and this is one of the reasons why sexual abuse and sexual violence occur.
1.9 Research Objective

To explore perspectives that contribute to young Cape Verdean men’s sexual relation with women.

1.10 Main Research Questions

The main research questions are:

- What attitudes, conceptions and perspectives do Cape Verdean men in their twenties have on sexual relation with women?
- What practices do Cape Verdean men have on sexual relation?
- How do they look at their ideas and motivations of their sexual relation with women?
- How do they explain their sexual relations?
Chapter Two

Methodology

2.1 Study Type

I did exploratory research and fieldwork. I had a six-week fieldwork duration, which is relatively a short time. Little is known about my topic. There has been research on some of the themes that support my topic. I was not able to locate or view this research. I worked within the limitations of available information.

2.2 Sample

My sample of study is Cape Verdean men in their twenties. At the time of research all the men resided in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. There were no specific attributes to the choosing of these men. The only criterion was that they are Cape Verdean, living in Rotterdam and in their twenties. I contacted my first informants through my key informants. Men I obtained in my study were collected from a snowball effect from friends and family members. The sample size was twelve interviewees. I had a ceiling of fifteen but due to time constraints I ended interviews at twelve.

2.3 Data Collection Tools

Interviews:

I performed semi-structured in-depth interviews on all my informants. I also conducted informal interviews with the key informants and interpreters. Two interviews took place in private, the rest took place in a semi-private location. All interviews took place in the public library in Rotterdam, or the informants’ homes. One of my aims was to keep the interviews semi-private to private but if the interviewee suggested a location, I would oblige to keep the interviewee comfortable. I suggested in each interview that it was to
last for an hour to two hours in duration. Interviews did not last longer than two hours and some were shorter than one hour, which was based on the cooperation of the interviewee and subject matter. All interviews encountered perspectives, attitudes, and conceptions of sexual relation between men and women. I made use of an interpreter for the young men who did not speak English.

*Observation:*
Participant observation was held as much as possible with Cape Verdean men. I spent time with them in nightclubs, bars, ‘*local hang outs*’ and when they were with women. I did not use any research tools during my participant observation. I wanted the young men to feel as comfortable as possible with their surroundings and me. I stored all data using memory skills and formally made record of the data later.

*Validity and Reliability:*
My study did not represent all Cape Verdean men in Rotterdam, nor did it represent all Cape Verdean men in their twenties. My aim was to give an account of the perspectives of Cape Verdean men in their twenties in the Rotterdam area.

I compared and contrasted individual interviews with participant observation. I tried to compliment as many interviews with participant observations as possible. I did not succeed in this.

Being American Cape Verdean, and my informants being Dutch Cape Verdean I was hoping that our similarity in ethnic background would aid my data collection. I feel that it did. I was aware that I am not Dutch Cape Verdean which at first, I thought, posed a challenge in my fieldwork. Due to subject matter, the fact that I was a male in the same age bracket as the informants made it helpful in the interaction and participant observation. Language barriers were also relevant for my collection of study data. It is possible that the use of an interpreter generated a loss of authentic data from the informants.
Analysis of Qualitative Data:

I used coding for my qualitative data analysis. I coded all themes and topics by hand. All interviews were also transcribed by hand.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

My topic of study was at times sensitive and private in certain contexts. The atmosphere of the study hopefully enabled these topics to generate security for my informants. The informants may have had conflicting interests while participating in the study. I foresaw that many of the young men wanted to have experiences with women and discuss them for the topic, although they were looking for a special woman in their lives at the same time.

The study was a learning experience because little research had been done on the topic in the past. Informed consent is important when dealing with sensitive issues such as these. I told all my participants verbally that I am a researcher. Prior to the interviews, I told the participants what the study was about and that I was going to record each interview.

I was aware that unforeseen issues may arise during the research. Some of the young men I studied could have mentioned situations of sexual abuse or sexual violence. I would have had to appropriately deal with these instances if they happened. I did have access to various resources that aided me in dealings with abuse or violent stories. During participant observation I did not find myself confronted with touchy situations that questioned my morals as a researcher or as a person. I distinguished between researcher and informant, and still maintained a sense of being part of the group that I was studying.

All the men were represented anonymously in my research. Anonymity is very important because I asked questions about these young men’s experiences with women, some of whom may be in the community they live in. The data from these young men will be beneficial for the community at large, allowing members to have insight on sexual relation of Cape Verdean men in regards to women.
Chapter Three

When There Is a Relationship and When There Is Just Sex

Most of the participants from my study agree that relation with women is not all about sex. Only one of them stated that relation with women is all about sex. The men clearly defined when there could be a relationship with a woman. One participant stated, “For me, if the girl has brains then it’s not all about sex.” Many of these men need for the woman they are dealing with to possess qualities that make them more appealing than the average women in order to consider having a relationship with them. Some participants feel that if they can think about commitment with a woman, it warrants the possibility for a relationship. The future is most important. Alvin said, “I think when you start a relationship you need to think about commitment with a woman and not just about sex because you don’t know the future; what’s going to happen two or three years from now. You might be thinking that one day from now you might have an accident and be
paralyzed so you can’t even have sex anymore. That’s why I think you can’t just think about sex. You have to think about a commitment with your girl or wife.” Emotions play an important role in telling whether the relationship will amount to more than sex. Nick said, “Yes, especially when a relationship is past being emotional. When you really want something from each other it’s past sex.” One participant believes that conversation determines if a relationship will form or if it is just sex and sometimes it is a combination of sex and relationship that makes the bond serious. “No. It’s about conversation, trust and sex also. It depends on how the relation with the woman is. If you have good conversation with the woman it’s different than if you’re only going to have a one night stand with a woman when it’s only going to be sex,” Bob defined. There are times when relations with women do not amount to a relationship. According to Scott, “It depends on the kind of relationship. If you have a serious relationship it’s about love. It’s just about sex when it’s a fling.” Many of the informants clearly define a difference between when the relation is sex and when there can be a relationship. Nick, however, thinks that you can build on your relation with a woman through the means of sex. “It depends because when you have a sexual relationship it can be more because you can build on the family, have children and build a home. In Cape Verde it’s different than in Europe and the United States. It’s not about a career but when you have a girl you build on a family.” One informant feels that through talking about sexual issues he can tell immediately if his relation with a woman will amount to sex or not. He said, “You talk and you play with each other. Sometimes talk naughty stuff, these types of things. You turn each other on. It’s not like you meet somebody and just want to have sex. You see her and you say ‘wow’. She has to be attracted to me. But sometimes I think she must be a freak. You try to know her in her sexual areas.”

My informants have differences in what they think marked if the relation was to be sexual or should form into a relationship. I was surprised how many of them think that relation with women is and could be more than sex. For example, Nick’s depiction of Cape Verde shows that the possibility of a family is very important in considering if a woman should be taken seriously or not. These men all have certain standards which they follow to define their relation with women.
Chapter Four

Initiate Contact with Women

Initiating contact with women can be a very difficult choice to make. When a man first meets a woman it can be hard to know what to say and do. The participants from my study gave their experiences and interpretations of initiating contact with women. Many of the informants begin contact with women through eye contact. They either look first at the woman they are interested in or they find that the woman is looking at them. Most of them stated that eye contact is the most important determinate of whether or not the woman is interested. Carlton said, “I start off with eye contact. If I have eye contact I will make the first move. ‘How are you doing?’ ‘What’s your name?’ If I’m at a party maybe I’ll buy her a drink.” For some of the participants if there is no eye contact they will not go any further in their pursuit of the woman. For some eye contact is not enough to judge if the woman is interested or not. Others feel conversation is the key to concluding if they should engage the woman of interest. Depending on the level of interest the men will persist in conversation with the woman giving the woman opportunity to, as one participant put it, “open up to you.” ‘Opening up,’ meant that the woman would show interest. Nick describes this persistence to me in our interview. He said, “I talk to them and make them feel comfortable. There are other women that don’t open up that quickly if you talk to them so it depends on the girl.” I responded by asking him if he will keep pursuing a woman that does not ‘open up’ right away? “If you like the girl and you already initiated talks with her you should continue.” I followed with asking him what it means when a girl opens up or doesn’t open up. He responded, “It’s very important because it shows if the girl likes you right away. If she opens up to you it means she is interested or she sees something in you, that she can at least have a good conversation with me. But if she doesn’t it means she is not interested or I’m doing something wrong.”
One of the men I interviewed said that conversation is important but what is even more significant was what he said to the woman to gain her interest. For him flattery and finding out what she liked is the best way to ensure a woman’s interest. He said, “I’m a spontaneous person and I do like women. I will start talking with someone, a woman. In the conversation I will hear if I like the woman or if I don’t like her...I say nice things to her. If she likes to dance, I’ll go to the disco. If she likes to read I will go to a library with her. I will search in a conversation what she likes and go to that place and the chances she will like it will be big.” Most of the participants feel initiating contact with women seemed something that men had to do. However a small number of the men think it is not their job to initiate contact with the woman. Instead they are accustomed to
women breaking the ice with them. Colin said, “Most of the time girls start conversations with me. I’m a shy guy. Sometimes I may be with a friend or a cousin and they’re like I know a girl I want you to meet. But I’m not the guy to go out and say, ‘Let me talk to that girl.’ I never did that.” I asked what would happen if he really had strong interest in a woman? Would he then initiate contact with her? He responded, “No. It’s just the way I am. I’m not going to go up to a girl and start a conversation. ‘Hey what’s your name?’ I don’t have that in me and I’m not like that. I don’t know how to do it.”

One man uses a strategy similar to Colin but for a very different reason. This man’s religion is a large influence on how he will contact women he is interested in. He said “Because of my religion I would do it differently. I would contact a relative of the girl before I would talk directly to her. I would use a mutual source so the woman would know I was interested in her.” The informant’s religion is Islam.

According to my own experiences and observations from society, largely friends, education and the media most of the participants met the standard, which was that men initiate contact with their women of interest. Participants who found it necessary to start the contact with women seemed to me the most stereotypically Cape Verdean. Other informants who were not interviewed for this study believe that Cape Verdean men are initiators in contacting women and are very persistent in finding out whether a woman reciprocated interest in them. Most of the informants from the study believe that women are supposed to be passive in the introduction of contact.

Chapter Five

Approaching Women Alone or in Groups

I asked the men if they preferred approaching women for the first time alone or in groups. The answers varied and it was difficult in many cases for these men to figure out what is the best way to approach women. The group was not conclusive. Different men had different ideas about how to approach women. Mike thought it is better to approach women alone because of what he thought the response will be from the women. To him
it is very important how the woman will react to him if he approaches her with his friends or if she is with her friends. He said, “I prefer to approach women alone because when you approach women in groups they think you’re trying to be the cool guy in front of your friends. I think it’s better when they’re alone too because women can act different when they’re with their friends.” To him women also act differently when they are with their friends. He thought he has less of an opportunity to succeed in gaining the woman’s interest when groups are involved. Mike is not the only one that thought women act differently when they are in groups. Many of the men think women have an attitude when they are with their friends.

One participant said that approaching women with a group of his guy friends will intimidate the women. He insinuated that she will be afraid of what the intention of the group is. I thought to myself that the woman may in fact be intimidated by the group of men but if my participant talked to her she would then know why she was being approached. He is convinced from his experiences that women are slightly frightened by groups of men. The woman having confidence when he approached is important for her to be comfortable with his contact with her. He also said that approaching women alone feels better. When he is with his friends, his friends take away from his approach because they ask the girl all types of questions. His friends change the atmosphere of conversation he will have with the woman.

In some situations the men think that approaching a woman in a group would have an adverse effect. Carlton said that even if he is with a group of his guy friends he will leave the group behind and initiate contact with the women alone. He said, “If I’m with a group I go alone. I don’t go with the group and introduce the group. With the group maybe it would have a negative reaction. The girl would say to me, ‘Why do you come with your whole group if you’re the only one interested?’” It is interesting how Carlton described what he would do and what may happen. When he approaches the woman alone he has power as the initiator and has confidence in himself. As we spoke more about approaching women, he explained that he feels that he looses power at the point of contact when he approaches the woman with a group of his friends. At that point it may be possible that he looses the opportunity to control the atmosphere that surrounds
him and the woman as he feels she will question his intentions because he has not approached her alone.

The group can be an overwhelming entity when a relationship is being formed between a man and a woman when they first meet. One of the participants told me that he was engulfed with implications about the woman he was interested in from the group he was with. The group made the challenge of meeting the woman even more difficult for him. He explains, “It happened one day I was with a group of friends and I met a girl. They were all saying, ‘Alvin you’re never going to get her. She’s too pretty for you. You should be quiet.’ I didn’t want to come to her because I was shy. I was too afraid of embarrassment. I’m a shy guy, really, I’m a shy guy. I didn’t want to approach her and get closer to her because she knew about my friends that they wanted to hit on her and get a chance with her. Maybe she would think I would try too. That’s when I started to think that I would never get a chance with her.” To make a long story short, in the end Alvin did get his chance with that woman alone and she became his girlfriend. Alvin will now always approach a woman alone because he feels that he has more confidence alone, along with a better opportunity to reach his goals with her.

All my participants did not agree that talking to a woman alone is the best course of action for getting to know the woman. One participant said bluntly, “It’s just a way of socializing [group contact]. It’s better to talk in groups because you can talk about a lot of subjects.” He sees that in groups everyone can talk and there are no awkward silences that happen when a man is alone with a woman. He was totally comfortable with a group of his friends or with the girl’s group of friends. Another participant said, “Trying to approach women alone I find it more difficult to communicate with her. When you’re alone she may get in defensive mode. But if you’re with a friend of hers you can use the friend to get to know her better. Or you can subtly let someone in the group know that you’re interested in that girl to help you get to know her better. So when you eventually talk to her alone she would know why you’re talking to her. I would never approach a woman alone if she didn’t know me at all.” These two men were on the other side of the coin when it came to approaching women. Approaching women in groups can be an advantage.
Amazingly, none of the participants mentioned anything about a woman being flattered by a group of guys giving her or her friends attention. It’s been my experience that women can get more excited about the communication with men when there are more than one. This could increase the woman’s interest in getting to know all or one of the men communicating with her. No one mentioned this reaction from women. I thought none of the participants spoke of this because they are primarily thinking about their own goals in mind. From the participants perspective they are the ones who are interested in the woman and should have the greatest opportunity to reach their goal with the woman. If the woman was flattered by a group it would take away from their motives depending on the situation.

Power and control is a vital issue concerning approaching women in groups or alone. From the participants perspective women have more power in groups and can dictate how the communication will go and if they are inviting to the men or not. Men who approach women in groups have the power of being the aggressor but they also loose power because there can be mixed signals sent to the women about their intentions. Many participants believe they are empowered and that they have the most control when they are one-on-one with the woman of concentration. These perspectives are contingent on the intentions of both the women and men involved because two of the men said group contact is a helpful occurrence and not a hindrance. They considered that they have more power in a group because the group can support their attention for a woman. Group contact will also create better conversation and open up opportunities for the woman to get to know them and vice versa.

Some of the participants argue that the influence of ‘group mentality’ can be too great. The possibility of embarrassment from the group can destroy an attempt to make communication. Also when the woman is with in company of her friends the man may wonder what influence the friends have on the woman. The friends of the woman may influence and can demolish the man’s chances of success with her.
Chapter Six

Showing Off in Front of Women

The art of ‘showing off’ can be explained as adding a little something to your personality to accentuate it. Showing off to women incorporates what women seem to like in men and gives the men an edge. Many men who show off do this to women by trying to distinguish themselves from the average man.

I always saw and learned that Cape Verdean men are known for showing off, especially to women. Informants from Rotterdam outside of the study Cape Verdeans and non-Cape Verdeans alike suggested some reasons for why a large percentage of Cape Verdean men show off. There are many explanations, ranging from ‘it’s in their blood’ to ‘it may be embedded in Cape Verdean culture.’

I posed a question to the participants asking them if they showed off to women. Many were completely against showing off. Based on the accounts by the informants showing off to women has a negative connotation. Many of the men were astounded that
I would even ask if they showed off or not. The responses of some of these men are shocking.

Carlton explained, “No, I don’t like to show off. I don’t like to show off because if the girl eventually likes you then she won’t like you for who you are. People that show off most of the time don’t show their true self. I think the people that show off lie about what they’re talking about.” He added that when a girl sees a guy showing off it can be a turn off for her. I was not sure why Carlton felt that showing off would turn a girl off from contact with him. He kept saying that he did not show off and that was the bottom line. I had a strong feeling that Carlton did not learn showing off is flawed from his own experiences. Maybe he heard someone else’s perspective of their experience. He just did not convince me that that was how he truly feels about the matter.

Jorge supported what Carlton said but he gave his own personal experience on the issue. He said, “I found out that showing off from experience doesn’t work. You need to be able to talk to her and get closer to her. You can’t do that by showing off. It also depends on her and what she wants from you. It’s all about the situation. If you notice she only wants to have sex then you’ll talk to her in that way. So maybe showing off will help your goal if you also have the same intention to have sex with her.” He later said that you can get closer to a girl probably in a sexual way if you show off to her. This supports that success will depend on the woman’s intentions as well. One participant thought that showing off makes him weaker to a certain extent. He argued that if you show off once then you have to continue doing it. Once you stop showing off and show your true nature, the woman will notice that you are not acting the same and will ask what is wrong with you. He maintained that she will stop talking to you after a while. Other men explained similar situations but contradicted themselves and the situation. For instance, Colin said that he did not show off. He described his personality, “I’m a shy guy. I have to be very comfortable. When I’m the new guy in the group I’m not going to talk. If you want to get to know me it has to be me and you. Then you know it’s only the two of us and we get to talk and it takes a while to feel comfortable. Then I’m at home and I feel like saying funny jokes and then I make some show off jokes.” I quickly asserted to Colin that he was actually showing off. He surprised me by responding, “You have boys that like to impress girls but to me it’s in the joke. It’s more just a joke to make
them laugh than to impress somebody. If I’m impressing a girl it’s not because I’m showing off, it’s because I’m making her laugh. I don’t call it showing off and I don’t like when people show off.” I wanted to get down to the bottom of why he explained it this way. Not only did Colin say he did not like showing off but he explains to me how he shows off. To him showing off is something bad although he does it himself but he did not want to call it that. He tells women jokes and makes them laugh which could be seen as impressing the women with his sense of humor. Then he told me that he did not joke with women all the time but only when he was trying to attract them and let them know how funny he was. Why was Colin so strongly against the term ‘showing off’? From my own experience showing off is not something negative. At times there can be negative consequences from doing it but the action itself is not destructive or wrong.

Some of the men in the study claimed adamantly that they do not show off and they supported my first impression that many Cape Verdean men do in fact show off. Ken asserted, “I don’t show off. I’m not the type of guy to do that. But a lot of guys like to show how big they are. Guys that show they’re a player. I try to speak my own voice and not show off. I don’t want her to think I’m a player.” Ken made it known from the beginning that he does not show off but that many Cape Verdean guys do. That puzzled me a great deal. I wanted to know why many Cape Verdean men show off to women but the informants feel so strongly against it. When Ken said he did not want women to think he was a player, I realized that being a player has some adverse stereotype about it that connects with Cape Verdean men. Ken is only trying to disassociate himself from that stereotype. The term player is discussed in Chapter 19.

Darrel talked about related information but was much more open about the subject. He said, “I don’t show off but I think every man has that in him.” I told him that I heard Cape Verdean men show off a lot. He agreed with me, adding that he thinks it comes from their character. He continued, “If you’re Cape Verdean, then like 75-80 percent of the guys have to show off. I don’t know what it is. It’s difficult because when a person says it about someone else [that they show off] it’s less difficult to say it. I think generally Cape Verdean guys show off. I think it’s in their blood.” Darrel referred to showing off twice as something that comes natural to Cape Verdean men. He also said
that every man has the ‘showing off’ feature in them. He later included that part of being a Cape Verdean man is about showing off and looking good.

Only two of the informants said they show off in front of women. What makes this interesting is that Cape Verdeans and non-Cape Verdeans attach that a large majority of Cape Verdean men show off but only two of the informants openly admit to it. One commonly hears that there is always a basis of truth in stereotypes. Alvin admits to showing off claiming, “Sometimes I do show off. I show off with music, working out [staying in shape], dancing in clubs and singing. Often I read my lyrics to women. I show off in those ways.” I had to ask him what he had to gain by showing off. I thought this was an important question because so many of the men I interviewed were intensely against it. He claims when he sings to a woman he can see they get teary-eyed and sentimental. That, he explained, helps him make a connection with the woman and helps him get to know her better.

I began to conclude that because these men think showing off was bad, they said that they do not do it. I personally thought that many of the guys that said they do not show off actually do show off but cannot admit it for some reason. I contemplated that these participants are aware of stereotypes about Cape Verdean men. That awareness of the stereotype and the alertness that it was not always positive may have played a role in the fact that they claimed that they do not show off. I was also conscious why many of these men could have heard or experienced from women or through others that showing off is negative. I also found out from the interviews that showing off is related to being macho. Many Cape Verdeans and non-Cape Verdeans claim that Cape Verdeans are macho, especially the men. Many of my participants also saw being macho as something negative. The concept of macho will be discussed in chapter 14.
Chapter Seven

What Motivates Sexual Relation?

What motivates sexual relation for men is an interesting concept. Many men have different characteristics of a woman that turn them on. The intention of the man and how he feels about each particular woman does suggest what motivates him to want to have relations of the sexual kind with her. The informants were very excited to tell me what motivates them toward wanting or having sexual relations with women.

Many of the participants informed me that the way women looked inspires them to want to have sex with them. Scott said that the way women look does it for him. He mainly thinks that lust is the most important factor for him in determining whether he will be interested in having sex with a woman. He said, “I’m not doing it for sport or anything. It’s mostly lust but love, too, sometimes.” To him he thinks having a fine girl by his side is the crucial motivator for him to want to have sexual relation. Sex is an important factor especially in the beginning of a relationship but as time passes having a fine girl can motivate him to have sexual relation and the sex becomes not as important. To Scott the actual act of sex with an individual woman can be replaced by having a fine girl. His reasoning for this was that any time he wants to have sex it would be with a fine girl so after a while the sex would became less of an importance.

As the feeling toward a woman changes so does what motivates the man. At the beginning it seems that the participants are mostly affected by the woman’s looks. But as the relationship develops other traits play an even more precious role in motivating sexual relation. Darrel initially explained that the body of a woman first does it for him. Then he said the sexuality of the woman turns him on. Finally he said, “If she has a pretty face and if she is intelligent I want to do something with her. You have like I said with and without love. Without love they have to have a nice body. With love, those are the girls I look at their character.” Darrel shows that without love, what can be called superficial characteristics prevail in his mind as necessary. With love he mentions character. He explains that when he looks at a woman’s character he has to know much
more about the woman and it takes research. Without love he does not have to know much about her.

Sometimes men get turned on by the woman’s activeness and sometimes by the woman’s outer appearance. In the first case a man is passive being turned on by a woman’s active behavior. In other situations a man is active being turned on by a woman’s passive role. Alvin states, “What motivates me is when the women are dressed all sexy. But what really motivates me is when she does stuff to me. When she asks you questions like, ‘What do you do when you’re alone?’ ‘What are your hobbies?’ ‘What kind of music do you like to listen to?’ ‘Do you like my dress?’” Alvin is turned on by the woman showing an interest in him and what she thinks about his life and other matters. When women ask him questions it shows him they are really interested which is an influencing factor that motivates him to want to have sex with a woman.

Two of the participants mentioned that the adventure and the unknown contribute to their motivations of sexual relation with women. The fantasy of a woman and what that particular man could do to that woman can occasionally be tremendous. Bob claims that the possibility of an adventure with a woman always does it for him. “You don’t know how it’s going to be like. You just imagine.” Bob was excited telling just how and what he imagined about women. Though the fantasy of a woman can be pretty spectacular, when imagination runs wild the man could be setting himself up for a big let down. James believes similar to Bob but he added more interpretation with it. He said, “If I see a chick I’ll imagine her legs and I’ll imagine me touching those legs. Or kissing those hips or kissing that face. It depends on the girl; if it’s my type then it’s my type. Long hair, dark, not so tall, nice hips.” James was very convincing when he described his fantasy with a woman. However, he returned back to reality when he said that his whole world can crash down if he actually kisses those lips and touches those legs and it doesn’t feel the way he thought it would. He said it is a big let down and afterwards he wishes his mind would not have ran away with him.

Several of the participants were motivated by the women but there was one who was motivated by a totally different measure. Jorge claims that having a family is what motivates him to have to have sexual relation with a woman. He asserts that the motivation for sex is in a man’s genetics. Still, he argues that the libido for sexual
relation is a controlled thing. He made clear that most men have the drive in them to have some sort of sexual relation with women. Jorge also tells me that it has to do with his religion which made family such a strong motivator for sexual relation and not just the woman’s body or looks. His religion taught him that it is good to have sex with your ‘wife’ and it is good to have a partner in life.

Chapter Eight

What Is Sexual Relation Related to?

I asked the men what comes to their minds when I mention sexual relation with women. This question was planned to shed light to how they perceived sexual relation. I also wanted to know if they understood what I was referring to during the interview when I used the term. The responses were almost all unanimous. Most of the men thought immediately of sexual intercourse. Good sex was commonly mentioned with sex referring to the best possible outcome of sexual relation. Many also mentioned that there are two kinds of sex or sexual relation. One based on sex and the other based on love. Plain sex is associated to any girl but love sex, which was renamed to making love, is associated with a girlfriend or wife.

Three out of the twelve responded with sex related topics. Two of the three did not mention sexual intercourse at all when asked the question but thought topics that could lead to sex. Fred mentioned kissing and touching. Soon after he said that what he really meant to say is sex because that is the first thing that came to his mind. Darrel brought romance into the idea of sexual relation. He mentioned love, passion, sensuality, and desire. He also said that sexual relation has to be a part of his life. Ken used a more graphic interpretation of what sexual relation meant to him. “Touching, kissing, touching the right spot. I like finding what a woman likes. Pleasure! I like my pleasure too. Everything that will please the women I do it for them. Most guys do it also. Not to every girl but the special ones.”

Most of the informants thought that sex equaling sexual relation is a common interpretation for all men. Subjects related to sexual intercourse are an after thought.
One participant mentioned after he said sex that he first thought of a beautiful woman. He immediately assured that he only thought of the beautiful woman because he only wants to have sex with beautiful women. In the end he followed the majority response also.

Chapter Nine

Ideas of Courtship

Courtship can be a beautiful engagement in the way it can be interesting and tiring at the same moment. Courtship was explained to the participants as all the sequences that occur between a man and a woman to when their intended goal is reached. The participants of the interviews were very relaxed and excited when discussing courtship and their ideas of it. None of the respondents were negative about courtship; instead all were optimistic and looked forward to courting with women. Communication and dating seemed to be an intricate part of how the men court women. Only one participant told me that thinking about his ideas of courtship is difficult. He responded this way because to his recollection no one ever asked him about courtship and he had not thought of the topic before.

Alvin related courtship to the back and fourth communication between himself and a woman. He recounts, “Sometimes you get her number and you never hear from her again. That happens. Then you may see her again and she’s with someone else to your dismay. But you talk to her anyway and end up getting her email. Then you talk to her again.” Alvin's impression is that with some women reaching his goal, if it is sex, can be easy. For other women it can be a very difficult process. Some women he will call once and get them into bed. Others he has to call numerous times to even get a date. After the fourth date he gets the woman into bed. Alvin said he never knows with women what is going to happen or if anything at all will happen.

Scott gives a full account of the process. He states, “You meet the person, you exchange numbers, you meet for the first time. You exchange interests and get basic information. Then the second time you hang out maybe start kissing. It’s difficult to say.
“It usually happens when you date a couple of times and then you see somebody and present her as your girlfriend.” As for Scott, he had the whole process mapped out. He was not alone in recalling that it takes some time, even a few dates to feel satisfied and successful with the cause. He agreed with Alvin that courtship is unpredictable and that is what makes it so exciting.

Most of the men saw eye to eye that the process of courting the woman is enjoyable but once it is over and the man achieved his goal or is unsuccessful all the thrill is gone. Some of the men who now had girlfriends said that they missed the excitement of courtship and longed for it again. Mike recapped, “I think courtship is an exciting period. I assume that you’re in love with the girl or you really like her. It’s exciting to try to make the girl like you. But when you have the girl and you know she likes you back it’s not really exciting anymore because you know she likes you. When you’re courting her you try to make her like you and when she likes you, you feel like you’ve won. You feel like you’ve conquered.” Since Mike mentioned that he probably really likes the woman or he is in love with her that he would feel a sense of satisfaction because he won her. He, however, later told that he does feel satisfied. It is only when he wants to just have sex with a girl that there is no feeling of gratification. After he has reached his goal he is done with the girl. There is no reason to continue the relationship.

Nick gave a similar yet different interpretation of his idea of courtship. Nick conveyed, “It’s beautiful to get closer to a woman. I prefer to be with a girl and let my feelings show maybe writing her a letter or giving her chocolates. If you’re going to court then you know you have to do whatever it takes to get closer to her. It has a serious side and there’s a reason for it. I won’t court a girl and then not see her the next week... Courting is a sense of youth that goes with it because if you don’t want to court someone you don’t have to. So you have fun also by the feeling you’re doing it right and doing what you intended to do.” Quite interestingly Nick connects courtship to youth. He said later that courting reminds him of his youth because when he was younger he courted much more then at his age now. He explained that when he became older courting became intricate because now he thinks about marriage and raising a family. As a result of his motives changing he does not court as often.
Scott explained the cultural differences for him as a Dutch Cape Verdean compared to the Americans in the United States. He feels that in the United States people go on dates to see if they are going to have sexual relations with each other. In the Netherlands he starts out with a platonic relationship and first gets to know the woman that he is dealing with. He personally senses that courtship is not as easy for him as it is for many Americans. For Scott the reason for dating is not to have sex; it is more than getting laid. Dating was about getting to know the person and forming a lasting relationship. I told Scott that not all Americans use dating for sex and he informed me that in the Netherlands many Cape Verdeans are friends before they begin dating for sex. I wanted to find out if this was true. None of the other participants relayed the same beliefs that Scott had. Some said that relationships can form that way but they do not think that that is the way Cape Verdeans handle relationships. I was left with concluding that Cape Verdeans may start off with platonic relationships but a relative number may use this method as do other ethnic groups.

One participant during realized the interview that courtship is all about the future with a woman. He believes that courtship is the most interesting part to having a relationship with a woman. He compared it to a game stating, “It’s basically a game. I wonder how she’s playing and she wonders how I’m playing. I feel like courtship is one of the best moments in a relationship sometimes. When you’re courting your heart beats non-stop and you can’t wait until you’re together again. And during courtship you’re trying to get satisfaction. You’re fighting for it. And the end result you feel good because you achieved your goal. You’re in love with her. At that moment you’re trying to get the girl you’re in love with to be in love with you. It’s like a dream. You go to bed thinking about her. You think about her and how it would be going out with her to a cinema, to dinner, for a walk. It’s the most exciting part because you think ’What is going to come from this?’”

One of the key ingredients to courtship is if the man is in love with the woman or not. Most of the men agreed that courtship is electrifying if you are or are not or in love. What is fascinating is how they treat the women during and after courtship based on if they are in love or not. There are also differences if the men strongly like or just wanted to have sex with the woman. Some men would persist for long periods of time in
courtship not knowing the outcome if they strongly like or are in love with the woman. If they just want sex many men pursue for shorter periods of time even if it looks like they will reach their goal of sex. How they feel will determine to what extent they are willing to be successful. Not to mention that a few men may even lose love for a woman if she takes too long to have sex with him. I concluded that in those circumstances even the feelings a man has for a woman may not equate to his actions shown. Personally I can relate to the fascination of courtship that these men described.

9.1 The Game

A good number of the informants compared courtship to a game. One informant did not like referring to courtship as a game and said it should be taken more seriously. The majority told curiously about close aspects of courtship that have similarities to a game. To them, the game made courtship fun and terrible at the same time. It is not just courtship that is a game but relations with women on a whole. Winning and not winning is crucial to playing the game of courtship. Winning and not winning can make a man and break a man. The game is psychologically devesting but it can also make the person’s ego soar. Darrel began to explain the game by saying, “It’s like playing a game. You have to go to the next level. There’s always a goal in mind. That’s the reason you’re playing. I have to think positive. I have to go there to get the woman, if it’s a kiss, a date, whatever the aim. There are also girls that play hard to get. That’s why it’s a game. She wants to go there and you want to go there. The goal is meeting together. But it’s a very hard game sometimes. Sometimes if I really want a woman I have to do my best to get her.” Darrel suggests that the game is reciprocal and two have to play.

There are ups and downs in the game of courtship. Sometimes you can’t predict if you’re going to score or not, one just plays and hopes for the best. Alvin shows this by making clear, “If she gives you the chance, the game is on. When you get her to say things to you like, ‘I miss you’ and you’re just friends, that’s when you get excited. See, the exciting part is when you see results. You see that things are happening. It’s not exciting when she sees me just as a friend and can’t possibly think anything more of me. Or when she speaks of other guys and says she has a crush on this guy. That’s when you
feel you’re just a friend and nothing more. And that is not a good part of the game.” As for Alvin courtship is exhilarating when he is winning the game but when he is not he feels miserable. He even said that sometimes when he is loosing he wishes he had never played. He said that the grief only lasts for a short time because soon enough he is right back at playing with another woman and the previous woman does not bother him anymore.

Chapter Ten

Where Does Courtship Happen?

For these men courtship happens in various places. The place sets the mood for courting the woman. A lot of the men were very particular on where they go with women when they are getting to know them. Some mentioned romantic places, others just want a quiet place where they and the woman can talk and exchange ideas. Ken said, “I like meeting in a bar or a restaurant. I like always to take a girl to different places. I like to take the girl to different romantic places. Usually if I meet a girl at a club I take the girl to the beach where we can walk and talk so we are together alone, so we can bond.” Most of the men agreed with Ken. The beach is an unanimous location where these men prefer courting after they have gone on a few dates with a woman. Colin has a similar idea of a place that is quiet. He said, “You have to go to a place where you can talk. My favorite place is, like, walking through the park. Go to a zoo, get something to drink. Be somewhere where you can talk. The more you talk the more you know each other. After a while when you know each other good, she can come to my place get something to eat or watch a movie.”

Fred felt that where he courts a woman is important. The place lets him know some general information about the woman and if a serious relationship is possible. “The best place to court a woman is school because you see her everyday. I get to know her and her friends. I also know that she is doing something positive with her life. A smart girl is good and she will have a good income. If we marry then we both will have good incomes. This is very good for the kids. If you meet a girl you want to spend the rest of
Fred said that he thinks about his future with the woman when he is getting to know her. How she acts in different settings is critical to knowing where the relationship will go. To my surprise he is the only informant thinking in this direction. For many of the participants the future is not important right away. Only after they have the chance to really get to know the woman does the future play a significant role.

10.1 Parties and Alcohol

The bulk of the informants said that parties are a place where courtship mostly occurs for them. At parties there is a certain mood. One of the participants said that people come to relax at parties and meet people. What is essential is that large percentages of the people at parties are single and want to enjoy themselves.

What makes parties so central to the men is the music and the alcohol. Music set a mood where men could dance and show off as well as get intimate with a woman of interest. Alcohol plays a much larger role in courting women. Scott explained, “At parties you’re drinking beer, feeling a little bit free and you start talking to the girl. It seems like when I’m drunk I lose all feelings of shame. I would normally think one hundred times before I do something but with alcohol I’ll do it faster. And talking to her depends on if she already likes me. Then when I’m drunk it won’t matter.” Scott told me that he would say anything to the girl and he could get away with it because he was drunk. Carlton said that usually when he is not drunk at a party he can pass on a woman who is interested in him and have a good time with his friends. When he is drunk or under the influence it is a different story. He feels that there is no resisting a fine woman when she is all over him. He can not let her pass by. Alvin claims that parties and discos are the best places to get girls. He said, “When you go to these places you’re in the mood. Many of the people are more vulnerable when they drink. I think that is the best place to get a girl because it’s easier. It’s dark, there’s music and you get all excited when there is good music. All that together in a place you can make-out with a girl and
that happens a lot.” When Alvin goes to parties he has expectations of what the party will be like. He knows there will be music, drinking and women. He also knows that there is a great possibility that the women will be easier to talk to and persuade at the party. According to Alvin, the party sets the mood for sexual relations to occur; if not there then after the party.

Many of the participants relayed to me that Cape Verdeans like to party often. People from tropical islands are laid back and know how to enjoy themselves. A few of the participants said that alcohol is a big part of the Cape Verdean culture. One participant made a comment, “Cape Verdeans like to drink and mingle with each other. We are an affectionate group of warm people.” To him alcohol and parties go hand and hand. Another participant said that a great deal of babies are made because of alcohol and music at parties.

I thought about these comments long and hard. I deduced that many cultures have those same characteristics about them. Many ethnic groups from warm islands are talked about the same way that people are laid back and like to party and drink. I have seen plenty of movies about vacation islands where there are bars on the beach and music is playing where people are dancing and drinking. Many of the men thought that at Cape Verdean parties the music and alcohol are essential. From observation of Cape Verdean parties I just did not notice anything abnormal about the way people were consuming alcohol and behaving. Men and women were drinking, dancing and having conversations. I took into consideration that I could not observe everything or everyone but the people at these parties seemed similar to most cultures I have experienced. What happened after the parties I could not account for which could have been very important to the research. The Cape Verdeans actually seemed conservative on the alcohol intake. I presumed that maybe the alcohol was expensive at these particular parties and the people could not afford to drink as much as they wanted. I also supposed that possibly I was not attending the right parties. I found that I could not support any claim that the Cape Verdean alcohol consumption was any different than any other culture or even other island ethnic groups.
Chapter Eleven

What Stimulates Courtship?

Various occurrences, activities and moments can stimulate courtship to happen for men. The participants explained what caused them to court women. Many of them told different things that gave them the inkling to pursue a woman. Scott responded that when a woman is happy to see him and he feels the same way about her it makes him want to go after that woman more. Alvin claimed that when the woman gives him a chance to get closer to her he aims for her. Carlton enjoys the whole game stating that he likes when the woman plays games. For him when the woman plays hard to get, it attracts him. When the woman is acting mysterious it is even more of a turn on. Colin gave a more in depth explanation by saying, “Just the opportunity to be with somebody, feeling that love, feeling the best experience there is. There are good experiences but she gives you the
He also told me that he has to find a soul mate. A man needs to be with someone who makes him complete.

Most of the informants said that what a woman did to them triggered them to want to court. Two men explained other reasons that influence them to court a woman. James said, “The little things can stimulate it. Sometimes a song I like can stimulate it and I start dancing with the girl. At first it doesn’t have to do with the girl. The song will make me see her and want her.” Jorge on the other hand has a more naturalistic reason for courting a woman. He said that it is the nature of men to court women. A man should be successful in life and success is having a girlfriend or a wife.

There are also other factors that influence these men to court a woman. Those are categorized into family, peers and societal influence. Some of the men were open to sharing how outside factors influence them; others claimed that there is no influence from family, peers, or society. They said that they themselves are the only influence in their lives. I found this hard to believe. Many of the men that said they are not influenced by outside factors contradicted themselves in other parts of the interview.

### 11.1 Family Influence

The men who are stimulated by their family are mainly influenced by their mothers. Darrel's mother always told him to have respect for women. He said that the way his mother raised him affects how he always treats women. One participant said that he knows that his mother wants to see him with a woman. So, whenever he finds a special woman he brings her home to his mom so she can approve. For some of these men when the mother approves of the woman they are with it solves for them if their woman is the right one. Many said that they do not have a close relationship with their father to talk about women with him. This is shocking because I would think that the father would want their son to be with a woman just as much as the mother. The men who responded this way were raised with their mother and father together. One informant did, however, report that his influences on courtship come from his father. He said that how he treats women comes from previous generations in the family. He believes his grandfather
taught his father and his father taught him. Personally I have strong influences from my family. My mother has been one of the most influential people in my life and in the lives of many of my Cape Verdean friends. She provided us with advice about women and relationships.

11.2 Peer Influence

Many of the informants found it usual that their friends or peers influence their courtship. They claim that their friends influence them in two ways. The first is when their peers have girlfriends or are in serious relationships, they think that a serious relationship would also be nice for them, especially when their friends’ relationships are going well. The second is when the men are with their friend’s at parties or spending a night on the town. A friend suggests that they should talk to a woman, maybe because she looked their way and this influenced them in talking to her. Mike said, “When my friends talk about their girls I want to have girls too. When my friends want me to talk to girls sometimes I do and when I want them to talk to girls they do.” Jorge told a similar situation stating, “It could be by talking or by competition. For example, if all my friends are working or have a wife and I’m not in a relationship or not married it would stimulate me to get married. I would want to be on that level. It’s a drive you get from your friends.”

11.3 Societal Influence

Society has great influences on some of the interviewed men. Society includes the media, education, and communities that the men live in. Colin responded that watching a movie or reading a book about a love story makes him think about his life and his relationship with his woman if he has one at the time. Fred explained that sometimes when a Cape Verdean man is serious with a Moroccan woman, her family dislikes him because he is not Moroccan. That has influenced him not to have relationships with Moroccan women and if he does he will no longer have a public relationship with her. Jorge made an interesting observation touching on family values that shape whether
societal influences are positive or negative. He said that television and elementary school
definitely have stimulated his courtship. How these outlets stimulate him depends on his
values which he learned from his family growing up from birth. I would agree with Jorge
that the family and society partially influence courtship. Things learned from both can
persuade either positive or negative.

Alvin touches on the sex shown on television and the dating programs that are
regularly shown. He said, “You see on television that there are a lot of dating programs
on TV and on the net. Right now it’s all about sex and all that. The date process. Now
it’s much easier to get a girlfriend than before. Let’s say ten years back that kind of
thing was taboo, finding a girlfriend on TV. It wasn’t as easy as now. Now you can find
sex on TV.” Later Alvin scrutinized the deterioration of society starting with our values.
He said the families are loosing their values because of what family members are taught
by the media.

Chapter Twelve

Perceptions of Women

To men, the perception of women is sometimes a delicate subject. A man’s perception of
women can be based on personal experiences, family experience or from education that
they have received on the issue. The participants in this study gave their perceptions of
women and the responses were scattered. Many think that women are vital to world.
One participant stated that without women the world would not be as it is and would not
run as smoothly. To some of these men women are not only help but also support for all
their accomplishments. They connect women to their mothers, sisters and friends.
Colin responded, “Women are just another human being. They’re like men but they’re women. Attractive. They’re just humans like men but they’re softer than men. Guys are much easier than women about life, about everything.....A woman gives you something you don’t have, that love. You can live without that love but if you have that you live better, you feel better, you’re complete.” Colin said that he has this knowledge of women from personal experience. He always feels great when he is with a woman whom he is serious about.

Alvin also agrees with Colin but Alvin provides that women give a sense of support for him. He feels that his future is never certain but with a woman by his side he usually has a better direction for his life. He said, “Women are complicated. Now I know that it feels so good when your single, living at home with your parents. Women are not just complicated, they compliment men. If you don’t have a girlfriend, well, you have plenty of time to get a girlfriend... She helps you with a lot of things. Thinking about the future and which school. For me women are very special in the world. If there are men then there has to be women too. They help you with your life. The help think about things you want to be in the future. You have to help them out too of course but their just like that.” Alvin wanted me to recognize that most Cape Verdean men would agree that women are essential to the man. They provide that extra that a man needs to be successful and survive in the world.
A large percentage of the men have positive perceptions of women but only if the woman meets certain standards that society and the men place on her. When the woman meets that standard she is regarded as a good woman. If not, some of the men would not even refer to that woman as a woman. Carlton explained this when he said, "A woman represents a queen. My women represent my mother. A woman keeps a family united and she has to be clean... A woman gets treated the way she behaves. If a woman acts like a slut then she’ll be treated like a slut and if a woman acts like a woman, she’ll be treated like a woman. You have the good ones and the bad ones and the sluts... I look at the cloths and if she’s dressed nice. If she’s wearing a short skirt and oto much make-up, I would say she’s a slut not a woman." To Carlton women are recipients of their own actions. When a woman acts a certain way she warrants a certain response from men. He also noted that a woman’s actions are based on her appearance even if that woman does not reflect her true actions by her appearance.

One of the participants would always like to see women as an equal to men. He vowed to also treat the women he was with as equals. He feels all men should treat women equally to other men. Ken stated, "I don’t look at women differently. She has the same rights as us guys. I respect everyone. I give her the same respect as a friend. I don’t want to hurt her. I don’t want to give the idea that I’m aggressive. So I treat her like a good friend of mine. If I’m going out with my friends, I like to take her out also. The rights that I have she has to have too. I never like to say with a girl you can’t do this because I want her to have all the rights I have."

Another participant finds that women are difficult for him. In his past experiences he could not exactly figure out why women are the way they are. His friends also influence his perception of women greatly. He said, "No all girls but most of them are far too emotional. I’ve been in this long relationship and she always wanted to be with me and was always complaining about things. I have a lot of friends and their girls are like that too. So it’s difficult to find a girl that is not that way. I think in a relationship everybody needs space. All women are different in their way." Though many of the men connected that women are essential some agree also that women place importance on things different than men. Even with the differences between men and women described
they still thought they were necessary in men and women getting along and working together.

James gave his perception of women and gave his interpretation on a woman’s senses and what women value as important. He described, “Some women like to have fun and some women are really shy. And the thing is they may be shy in front of you but they’re not shy. Women are really smart and out going and evil. They are not dumb at all. And if you mess with them most of them nowadays will pay you back. But women are very naïve. And when they fall in love they become very dumb. Girls love you for a reason. A lot of times it’s the way you have sex with a girl. If you have good sex with a girl then she’ll say ‘love you this’ and ‘love you that’. If you do that and have sex with them as much as they like then you’re the man. Well you have to treat them nice and support them but you won’t get any problems from them.” James explained that a woman knows what she wants and when the sex is good she can be manipulated. I think James came to this conclusion from possibly personal experience but also from his friends and the society.

The environment very much influences the perception these men have on women. I believe that in different settings some of these men’s perceptions will totally change. The perception of a woman was contingent on the setting and how the man feels at the time. I also recognized that a man’s perception is very important to how he will treat the woman he is dealing with. His perception will affect the short term and long term communication with the woman. Women are treated as objects and sometimes sexually abused based on the perceptions that men have for women. This will be discussed in section 12.1.

12.1 Objects

Based on the perception that men have of women, women can be seen as and referred to as objects. Objects in this case are something that can be handled, managed, manipulated, taken advantage of, respected and disrespected. Men conceptualize the way a woman acts or how they perceive a woman to act which warrants a positive or a negative response from the men. About a half of the men whom I interviewed gave their
account of women as objects and why they feel women are objects. A few men thought women should not be seen as objects and should be shown more respect. Carlton said, “Most of the time I’m drunk I consider women as objects. Maybe when I wake up the next morning and I’m sober and she’s next to me it’s different. But when I’m drunk I will see her as an object.” A few of the men claim alcohol affects their perceptions of women and changed how they would normally treat them. It makes no difference to the men if the woman represents a quality woman or if she is acting like a hoe. The men that said they will treat her as an object regardless. Another informant remarks that he has to have a conscience when he treats women as sex objects. At first he stated that he sees women as his sister and learned that they are not objects. Women become objects to him when only sex is involved. When only sex is involved his perceptions change slightly. He said, “If you’re only going to have sex with her you still keep in contact with her. You’re not going to stop talking to her. You may not walk with her on the street but you won’t just stop talking to her.” This informant does not have a problem having sex with a woman but if the sexual aspect is the basis of the relationship then that woman does not grant the same respect as a girlfriend or friend.

Not all the participants feel that they see women as objects. One participant states that women deserve to be treated normally and respected. He claims to never see women as objects even when he thinks the women are disrespecting themselves by having sex with many men or dressing in a slutty manner. Most participants agreed that women should be treated with respect but many said if the women do not treat themselves with respect it is difficult for them to treat the women with respect and not see them as objects.

12.2 When Women Are Hoes

The definition of a ‘hoe’ is a woman who has sex with many men. Many of the men in this study feel very strongly against women who act as a hoe. There were many different responses to women that where hoes. Scott said, “A hoe could never be my girlfriend. I have a certain perception of the type of girl I want. I don’t want a virgin but I don’t want a girl who has had sex with a lot of guys...I don’t know. You could be walking down the street and you’re thinking maybe he had sex with him too. You need to protect yourself
because you think to yourself why you are so special if she had sex with a lot of guys.”

Scott explained later that he looses respect for women who are hoes. He feels he would not have the same sense of security with a hoe. To him a hoe is a threat to his respect in the community. In addition he would never be able to figure out why a hoe wants to be with him or have something serious. If a hoe wanted a serious relationship he will be really suspicious of her intentions.

All the men who talked about women as hoes see these women as sex objects. One informant made distinctions between certain types of women who are hoes. He said that there are ‘nice hoes’ and hoes who act tough. Women who are nice hoes will receive more respect than the women who are ‘tough hoes’. The difference is that nice hoes do not act like they run the show with men they deal with. Nice hoes according to Fred do not act like “they are all that. Tough hoes act like they can do everything with you.” He was referring to being seen in public with a hoe that is trying to represent a woman who is not a hoe. Women who are hoes are not allowed to been seen in public with the man or men she is having sex with. Fred has a remedy for dealing with women who are ‘tough hoes’. He said, “Girls that act like that you have to put them in their place and tell them to shut up.” Fred believes it is necessary to resort to violence for hoes if they do not act like ‘nice hoes’ or play a certain role. What makes it so interesting is that being seen with a hoe reflects his integrity. Fred said that he could be seen as less of a man if he was walking around with a hoe. Eventually his family will find out he was with a hoe through community gossip and they would scold him for being so irresponsible. In this sense the way Fred explained ‘tough hoes’, these women get very little respect and much disregard. If Fred was to have feelings for a woman that people consider a hoe, whether she was one or not, it would affect his reputation and his feelings for the woman. He thinks if he knew the woman was not a hoe, he would have to convince his family and friends that she is not a hoe before he could be seen with her. In this case for Fred no regard is given to the woman and how she interprets the treatment she receives from him and others.

It is fascinating that out of all the men who spoke of women who are considered hoes, few recognize that the women who are seen as hoes may not be. I was told that in the Cape Verde community in Rotterdam hoes are shamed and men disrespect them...
often. What is so curious about this is that in a community where hoes are shamed why did most of the men say they would still have sex with a hoe, especially if they were horny? I concluded that the community’s perception of women were just as important as the man’s own perception. The men would spend time with the women who are considered hoes in private but public companionship is forbidden. It does not matter if the woman is a hoe or not. What matters is the group perception of that woman that the men adhered to.
Chapter Thirteen

Womanhood

When I asked the men what they thought it is to be a woman many referred to their mothers and what their mothers did in their family lives. Womanhood is recognized as the most influential part of a child’s life. Older women deserve automatic respect, because for many of the informants older women remind them of their mothers. Women who are their age are seen as colleagues so they are not given as much respect as older women. For one participant women are supposed to be reserved. They are supposed to have respect for themselves and should respect their male partner. Some men said that women should support their man. Not all the men agreed on the role of a woman in the society and in the family. Some men made distinct remarks about the positives and negatives of womanhood in the Cape Verdean community in Rotterdam. These remarks opened my eyes to the role of a woman in Cape Verdean culture.

Carlton said, “You want a woman to do everything and a man to do nothing. A mother who likes to care. My mother works. She comes home and she cooks, she cleans, she takes care. It’s not because she has to do it, it’s because she loves to do it. She loves to do the dishes, she loves to take cared of the kids. That’s the kind of girl I would like, one that loves to do those things.” Carlton that said his mother is a typical Cape Verdean mother who takes care of the family.

Bob learned his perspective of a woman from Cape Verdean culture mainly from his family and friends families. Bob said that women are strong and independent. Pursuing their dreams and helping the man pursue his dreams is what womanhood is about. “It’s hard to be a woman. You’re expected to have children, take care of your husband. Women are to raise kids, cook the meals, and take care of the man when he comes home. That is the way of the culture and it’s still being used by a lot of the cultures.” Bob's response is a usual response to define womanhood based on the majority of responses by the group. Most of the men said the same thing. Bob though, also gave the demographics of Rotterdam according to the family make up of Cape
Verdeans. He said that Cape Verdeans who live in the west of Rotterdam are different than Cape Verdeans in the north and south. “Cape Verdeans in the west are usually young parents and there are a lot of broken homes. There’s only one parent: the mother. There are different brothers and sisters from different fathers. The mother works more than one job and is rarely home for the kids. Cape Verdeans in the north are sophisticated. They usually have two parents and they both work. They are on a higher level. The south has different Cape Verdeans too. They are more like the Dutch.” Many of the informants confirmed that these were the demographics of Cape Verdeans in Rotterdam. I observed some of what Bob said to be true. I had the chance to experience the west for a few brief periods. There were younger parents, many just the mother with more than one child. The informants did not provide an answer for the west having so many broken families where the fathers were non-existent.

Fred said, “It’s tough to be a woman. Women can give birth. The main thing is they can have children. Women have it equal with men in the rest of society but only in western society. Women have it good in Cape Verde also. Cape Verde is like western society. It’s not like mainland Africa. The mayor of San Vincent is a female. There you can see that women have equal rights.”

Colin spoke of the negative aspects of womanhood. He said that women have to be tougher than men. “They have to take more crap then men take. Men make women miserable. Most of the men don’t treat their women well. I see a lot of couples and the men don’t show the women any love. The man doesn’t show he married to the woman. The women stick to the men even though the men don’t show love because the women don’t want to be without nothing. The women settle because at that time they couldn’t find anyone better. In my opinion the woman does more than the guy.” I asked Colin who the interpretation represented. He said it represented Cape Verdean culture. With a few informants I discussed how many of the Cape Verdean men leave Cape Verde to work here in the Netherlands and go back to Cape Verde to look for a wife. They told me that many Cape Verdean men want a wife to start a family with and take care of the home so they marry a Cape Verdean woman from Cape Verde. Many times they do not marry the woman out of love but out of necessity. The women marry these men because they want to leave Cape Verde for possibilities of a better life in Europe. In some cases the
women and men grow to love each other over times; in other relationships it seems to be an agreement. The wife takes care of the house and the children, and provides company for the man. In return the man provides a life for the woman in the Netherlands.

Colin also gave his observation of the average Cape Verdean family of a husband, a wife and a child in Rotterdam. He said, “The wife takes care of the husband, kid and herself. That’s how I see it. And often the guy does things he shouldn’t do or doesn’t do things he should do. You see more women making their man feel good then the man making the woman feel good. Women care more than men. A man is like an easy thing. A lot of men come home and sit on their ass and watch TV and pay bills. The wife looks after the kids, cooks dinner, cleans the house, and that’s most of the women. I’m not saying all of them but most of them. Yeah, women have a tougher life than men.” One could say that Colin may be exaggerating the life of a woman a bit but many of the informants stated similar scenarios of the Cape Verdean woman’s live in a Rotterdam family.

Most of the participants stated that women have to be strong. They said Cape Verdean women are especially strong. One participant said that when things happen to the children in the family the mother suffers the most. He said that the women feel things more. The father feels these situations also but he feels them in a different way. Many of the participants would agree that women play the most influential role in the family setting and are very supportive of their male partners.

**Chapter Fourteen**

**Perception of Men and Cape Verdean Men**

I asked the participants questions about their perception of Cape Verdean men and men in general. All participants responded with their perceptions. We touched on subjects such as being macho, players, and homosexuality.
14.1 Macho

Before my research began I had heard that Cape Verdean men are macho. I heard this from my family and from other resources. This topic came up in the interviews various times. More than half of the men see that Cape Verdean men are macho or show some form of it in their past experiences. Four claimed that they are not macho but their friends are. Macho seemed to have a negative connotation. Many of these men did not want to be macho or referred to as macho. I wanted to find out if it was true what people say about Cape Verdean men and that they are macho. I realized that I could not make generalizations that Cape Verdean men are macho but I wanted to find out if it was present in the culture and what was macho about for Cape Verdeans.

Bob said it depends on what island the family is from. He felt that macho definitely exists in the Cape Verdean culture. He said that people from San Vincent are very macho and they like to show off. He relayed that the other islands have specific characteristics to them also but nothing really dealing with macho. To Bob macho is showing off. If the man is macho he will show off with everything: money, women, and also social status. Macho is a sense that the man is the best of all men. Macho is the confidence a man can have that distinguishes himself from everyone else, mainly other men.

Colin claimed that he is not macho. In our interview I saw remnants of macho from stories he told me. Colin said that it does not matter what he wears or does when he meets women, they end up liking him. He also said that he does not have to initiate contact with women like most men do. He has never had to do that. He said that women flock to him and make it easy for him and he usually is successful with the women that approach him. Colin defined what it is to be macho whereas the other informants did not. I was not sure if he told me he is not macho because he did not want to show off to me for the sake of the interview. Colin was very confident and could possibly be seen as overly confident, one of the signs of macho. I wonder what it is about macho that certain men do not want to be identified with it. Colin was not the only one to say that he is not
macho. Some of the other informants’ responded that they were not macho but their actions come close to what the definition of macho is.

Carlton described scenarios similar to Colin but he admitted that he is macho. He said that macho was part of being Cape Verdean and most men that say they are not macho are lying. He loves being macho and is not ashamed of it. He said that he could get most girls he wanted. He does not have to wear the best clothes or say the nicest things to women. He can get the women regardless because of who he is and that is enough. Carlton was very confident in his experiences.

Nick did not find that most Cape Verdean men are macho. He thinks that over all Cape Verdean men are not macho. He said that you can get a sense of macho in the Cape Verde culture but it is only a minority of Cape Verdean men that act macho. He also felt that though Cape Verdean men may act macho they are really not. To him being macho is a front, a façade. When Cape Verde men are acting honest and their real selves they are not macho at all. Nick said that all macho is, is a hype that you are better than what you really are. People that constantly act macho are living a lie but some people believe it. When people believe that someone is macho they keep doing it because they found out from society that acting like that brings some success.

I found that being macho and acting macho may be so normal in Cape Verdean culture that people do not see it. Macho has been imbedded in the culture. It could be that only when people stop and really think about it do they notice that men are actually acting macho. That even they themselves act macho from time to time. Other ethnic groups have been known to have this sense of macho in their culture. What was very interesting was that a few participants said that some Cape Verdean women could be considered macho. The boundaries around the term macho were broken. Women also act overly confident and show off by how many kids they are able to have and how wealthy their family is. I could not prove this from the female perspective because the aim of study was from the male perspective but some men said that this is true of Cape Verdean women.
14.2 Players

A player is a term used to describe a man who has many women. Having many women is not the only quality. A player is smooth. A player knows how to treat women, and is able to manipulate women, and knows how to have good sexual relations with women. Players are also known to dress well and have attractive things. In many cultures players are seen as something positive and many men want to be a player. Women seem to be attracted to players and for various reasons. Women want a man that is wanted or they want a pleasant sexual experience. For whatever the reason players are often given a lot of respect.

On the other hand not all men aspire to be players. Many men do not like players or men that try to be that way. They may feel women should be treated with more respect. There are women who feel the same way. There are women who want a serious relationship with a man and players cannot give them that serious relationship because they have other women they are involved with.

The informants explained that Cape Verdean men in Rotterdam have the stereotype of being players. Almost every last one of my informants stated their concern and dismay for this stereotype. Having the stereotype of a player has positive and negative implications. Bob said, “Cape Verdean men have the reputation of being players. But I think it’s not just Cape Verdean men but it’s black men in general. I think all men are players in general because of our animal instinct. In nature animals are also players. We are animals. But Cape Verdean men do have a bad reputation with women in Holland and in Rotterdam. Most girls talk bad about Cape Verdean guys.” Another informant said, “Good girls like bad boys. Normally the pretty boys are the players. The pretty boys give a bad name for the rest of us because now most women think Cape Verdean men are players.” He also said that players can be a hype. He told me that not all men who act like a player are really players. Many of them do not have a lot of money or women.
14.3 Homosexuality

Homosexuality is a taboo among Cape Verdeans in Cape Verlean culture. Many of the participants seemed to be uncomfortable talking about homosexuality or topics that had to do with homosexuality. One participant said that homosexuality is something you do not talk about with friends or your family. If someone is gay in the family they are not talked about. He said that one may see someone who is gay and make a derogatory remark about them but other wise the subject is not discussed. I noticed that homosexuality is shameful in the Cape Verlean community. People do sometimes talk about homosexuality but mainly through gossip. Very few of my informants actually went into any detail about homosexuality.

Bob did remark on one of my questions. He said, “If I don’t bring girls around, my family will start to ask questions like, ‘Is he gay?’ They stimulate you to find a woman. I think it’s for the name of the family. I think that’s very important in Cape Verlean society. I think most things are based on how other people think about us. If your son is gay how is the rest of the community going to think about that. You raised your son wrong and look what he became. He became gay. What people think about the family is important.”

Chapter Fifteen

Manhood

All the participants were very proud to be men. What they think a man is supposed to be and do was similar. Some men talked about what men should do and other discussed what they do and how they act in society. Alvin said, “Men are strong. But men are less sentimental. Men are not as kind as women. Men don’t care a lot about things women care about. For example my father, when I get home and put my shoes over there and go
into my room and play my computer games my mom would say have you eaten yet. Put your shoes over there. Take a shower before you go to bed. My father wouldn’t say anything like that or maybe he would but that’s like one in one hundred men.” Alvin thought that there is nothing wrong with his father not saying what his mother would say. He thinks his father should play a different role and that is disciplining the children. To him if the children act up then the father as a strong person needs to talk to the children and correct the household.

Fred had ideas about what men should do. He said, “Men can be tough but not the same as females. Females have to raise children. Sometimes they have to raise children and go to work. Women have to support themselves and the child because the man left them. Manhood is not that tough. Because men have some things easier then females, like certain jobs. Some jobs won’t take females. A man is suppose to work, go to school, and take care of the family. Don’t ditch them. If your girlfriend gets pregnant and you don’t want to live with her you should support the child. Pay her money every month. I think what a man is suppose to do is support the family.” I heard from many of the informants that there are a large percentage of Cape Verdean men in Rotterdam who do not take care of their children. They have babies with women and leave them and move to the next woman or move out of Rotterdam.

One participant tells me how it is tougher being a man than a woman in the Netherlands. To him Cape Verde is such a different place for the rights of men and women. “In Holland women have much more power than men. If a woman and a man who are together get into a fight the man will most likely get charged for a violation and will be arrested. But in Cape Verde you don’t have these things. The man wouldn’t be arrested and he wouldn’t have to leave the house.”

Gender relations seem to be very important for these men when discussing their manhood. Knowing what to do when dealing with a woman is a must in order to maintain a relationship with them. James said, “The man has to be a leader. Especially in these times because women like to take the lead. But women like to be lead the same way. Ninety percent of the time women don’t like for you to ask them questions like where should we go out to eat. They want you to tell them where to go out to eat. But
they must have a say. If they don’t they’ll feel like your just ordering them. So it’s
delicate.”

One participant believes that working and taking care of the kids are not enough. A real man should do more than that. He gave his account of what a man should do, and what he would do. Colin said, “A man is supposed to protect their family from everything. He should make sure everything goes right and nothing goes wrong. Men that do this have the best relationships with their women. But what I see is most men are easy. They don’t show anything. They just work come home pay the rent and eat whatever their wife has cooked. They’re not showing any interest.” Colin later added that men do not provide enough love for their wives and their family. The love is lacking and that lack affects the family in negative ways.

Other informants thought that getting the woman a man intends on is being a man. One informant said that men should resolve problems as soon as they start, whether it happens in the family or within their relationship with a woman. Women usually keep their problems in and eventually let them out. A man should always talk about problems when they start. He also said that a real man will not let anyone make him loose focus of his goals. A man should not let anyone make him do wrong when he knows what is right. These were some of the qualities a man should have.

15.1 Competition over Women

For some of the participants part of being a man is to be competitive over women. Whether the competition is with men from the other side of the town or with a friend, competition over women is healthy and in some cases exciting and fun. The participants gave their accounts of their competitiveness over women. Not all the participant said they are competitive over women. Some felt that a woman gets a certain level of power when men fight over her. They said that a woman should not possess that power and
instead should make a choice of who she wants to have a relationship with without the competitiveness of the men.

The men who are competitive seem to be competitive in three forms. One form is wanting to be in a relationship with an attractive woman. If men are in a relationship with an attractive woman when they go out public and are seen by people the men will feel confident about their taste in women. Two participants said that they want an attractive woman so that people will compliment them and they will know that other men find their woman attractive. It is very important that the women the men are with are attractive and even more imperative if they like the women. Men want their women to look as good as or better than other men’s women. This could be interpreted as a form of macho by these men. The two participants who feel this way want to show their women off to the community. The women give them a confidence that they are successful in their relationship because of the women’s attractiveness.

The second form is competition over women with unknown men. Many of the informants said that if they had feelings for a woman and their friend or cousin had feelings for her also, they would work out who will pursue the woman and will not be competitive. The informants claimed loyalty to their family and friends stating that women do not come between family and friends. The situation will change if a man that they do not know is courting the same woman as them. If they do not know the man they will do what they need to do to take the woman away from that man and claim her for themselves. Fred said, “It depends on if I’m competitive over women. It depends on the other guy in the picture. If it’s your cousin and you’re not totally into her then he can have her. If it’s a friend I would talk to my friend. If it’s some guy on the other side of Rotterdam I would take her from him. I would do everything I could to get the girl.”

James said something similar claiming, “I want the girl to like me. She either wants me or wants the other guy. If she says ‘yes’ to me she might still do it [have sex or intimacy] to him. But I prefer that she says ‘yes’ to him and I try to get her from him.”

The third form of competitiveness was between friends. Friends make courting women a competition and bet who will be able to get a particular woman. Actually getting the woman could mean obtaining her number, acquiring a kiss, or having sex with the woman. Jorge believed that competition between him and his friends depended on
the aim. “If we’re doing it to have fun or get laid it makes it more exciting to have a competition. But it doesn’t depend only on that girl. But who gets the most girls on that occasion. It depends on the goal. I have to admit that most of the time the aim is all about sex especially when I’m with my friends. What I win is enjoying myself. The excitement is what I’m winning. And losing makes it more fun also. Because if I would win all the time it wouldn’t be fun anymore. But something I would loose is the chance to approach that girl again. My question is, is that a loss when you have a particular aim in mind for the game. I think not because I’m loyal to my friends. And in that particular situation she wouldn’t be more than just a sex object.” Other informants explained comparable scenarios about competitiveness with friends but they usually take place at parties and alcohol is involved.

Chapter Sixteen

Double Standard

Men and women have standards that families and society set for them to follow. Gender roles are important to fit in and be accepted. Women and men who do not follow the gender roles will become deviants and may increase their problems in that particular society. Three of the participants gave their version of the double standard that is placed on women and men in the Cape Verdean community.

Both women and men are sexual and have sex. The double standard is that although men and women both are sexual beings, if a man has sex with a large number of women he is seen as a player or ‘the man’. If a woman has sex with numerous men she is seen as a hoe or a slut. A player is regarded in the Cape Verdean community and in some cases can be a positive thing. A slut or a hoe is always seen as negative and is sometimes compared to a prostitute. Families, to a certain extent, can be proud of their son who has many women. A family that has a daughter that has sex with many men is shameful. Bob said, “No one respects a woman who is a slut. A man can be a slut too and there really is no difference in action between a man and a woman who has sex with a lot of different people. It’s basically the same thing but if a man is a hoe, he’s called a
player. If a girl is a hoe, she’s a hoe. Most people see a player as something good but really a hoe is a hoe. I think for most men if a man has sex with a lot of women he’s seen as ‘the man.’ But if a girl has a lot of sex with men then she’s a bitch, she’s a hoe, and she’s everything. I think it’s all based on how society accepts it. It’s based on the perceptions of society.” Mike provides a similar illumination but adds solutions to the double standard that society has placed on men and women. “I know that men have a sex drive but so do women. They have a sex drive too. But when a woman has a lot of sex she’s a slut. I think it’s hard for women. I don’t call a girl a slut when she has sex with different boys. I don’t think women should call their friends sluts. It starts with that. Just as men are trying to find women to have a serious relationship with and possibly marry, so are women and sex is involved when your searching for ‘Mr. Right’ or ‘Mrs. Right.’”

Chapter Seventeen

Cape Verdean Men vs. Dutch Men

When faced with the question if there is a difference between having a Cape Verdean background and talking to women than a Dutch (white) background and talking to women, substantial issues arose. The participants have varying opinions about what the differences are and why there is a difference. About a half agreed on a difference and concluded that women seem to have a problem with the historical actions of the Cape Verdean man. Darrel argued that the positive quality for Cape Verdean men, as he put it, that their “blood is hot,” which means they want to get the women they set out for. Dutch men are more relaxed about pursuing women. He said that Cape Verdean men are more confident and out going then the average Dutch man. The setbacks from being a Cape Verdean male are the historical actions that are prevalent in the cities and communities where Cape Verdeans live. Darrel said, “It’s like a movie because you hear stories about Cape Verdean guys having four kids by three different women. Then people think all Cape Verdean men are like that and you see it in the community. I have that stereotype and Dutch guys don’t have that. That difference is on me. It’s a Cape
Verdean thing.” He feels like he cannot do anything about it because people gossip about Cape Verdean men but the stories are made true in the Cape Verdean communities.

Bob seemed to think that the differences had to do with the appearance of promiscuity of men that are seen in private and in public. “The black man or the Cape Verdean man is more of a player than the average white man. It comes from history. Most African countries, southern countries have more women than man. If you go up north it is not that normal that men have more women in public. Here in the north it is in secret. Everyone knows but it’s in secret.” I have also read and seen that in some African countries men have more than one wife and promiscuity is more openly excepted, probably more than in European countries.

Scott had a fascinating first hand experience with a woman insinuating the stereotype that Cape Verdean men are players. He recounted, “I was talking to this Dutch girl and she started asking me questions. ‘Do you have a kid?’ I was like ‘No’. ‘Do you have a proper education?’ I was like ‘Yes’. Then she asked me, ‘How many girls do you have?’ It’s just a stereotype that Cape Verdean guys have many girls. They have a lot of kids and they don’t have educations. So I asked her what is good about Cape Verdean guys. She said ‘the sex is good.’ A lot of girls say they don’t want to marry a Cape Verdean guy because they are good to have sex with but not good to marry. It’s not a good stereotype. There are a lot of situations where the Cape Verdean guys are players and cheat on their girls.” Scott is displeased with the stereotype that Cape Verdean men have but just as Darrel stated the Cape Verdean men support these stereotypes. Of course not all the Cape Verdean men have many women. The participants mentioned positive stories about Cape Verdean men having all their children by one woman and marrying that same woman. It may to have something to do with the culture of Cape Verdean men. All the informants talked about the stereotype that Cape Verdean men have. Many of them see themselves as confident and able to obtain most women they have there hearts set on. What makes it even more interesting is that one could consider migration of Cape Verdeans to the Netherlands as a factor to why the family and values have diminished. I started to consider that the problem may fall in integration into the Dutch culture. I consider integration because many of my informants said that from the stories of their parents and grandparents they understand that Cape
Verdean men who migrated here from Cape Verde, Portugal and other places did not act like the current generation. They had families and raised their children properly. Based on these accounts is it integration? Are the values breaking down in the Dutch culture that is affecting Cape Verdeans? This is an issue. What makes it even more attention-grabbing is that Cape Verdeans are settling with the actions of the Cape Verdean men in the community even though they are displeased with it. Some of the informants said that “it’s a Cape Verde thing” or “its part of being Cape Verdean.” Many people could argue that this issue is not just Cape Verdean but faces other ethnic populations also. There is a problem and I fear things may get worse if these issues are not addressed and people just go along with it.

Chapter Eighteen

When and Where Desire for Woman Started

Most of my informants began their desire for women at age twelve or thirteen. They state that they were in middle bare school. At that time they were placed in an environment where women are developing. Hormones are changing and curiosity heightened. Colin plainly put it, “It was the time when I moved to junior high and you started to see girls with boobs and asses. It was like they threw you in the middle of all those breasts and your body is changing and you think ‘I’m liking it’. It’s not because of the way they are, their personalities; it’s because of the way they look.” One informant called middle bare school superficial because at that time MTV was very influential in his life and taught him various things about women, and how to dress and act.

When these men had their first desire for women it was important. This was the beginning of their sexual relation with women, the age and environment in which these men were partly shaped the way they treat women today.
Chapter Nineteen

Can a Girl Say ‘No’ but Mean ‘Yes’

When asked what they will do when a woman says ‘no’ to them regarding having sexual relations, about half of the men said they would stop their pursuit. They did not want a problem occurring where the women could say they tried to harass them or rape them. One participant said that from his environment it was shameful for a woman to dismiss him when he was trying to have sexual relation with her. As a result he would smoothly persist and try to change her mind. Fred said, “It depends on her body language. If the girl is saying ‘no’ and is creating more distance between me and her then it probably means ‘no’ but if she says ‘no’ and she’s giggling then she probably means ‘yes’. Sometimes the girls say it themselves if you don’t get the hint.” About half of the participants said that they would keep persisting if the woman said ‘no’ depending on how much they wanted to have sexual relations with her. They all said that if she insisted with ‘no’ then they would stop immediately.

I was not able to touch upon this but I would have liked to ask these men about what happens when they are drunk with women alone and in the mood of having sexual relation. I thought alcohol may be crucial to their tactics when dealing with women who tell them ‘no’ to their objectives. I know that many men’s character can change under the influence of alcohol. Many of the informants explained that in parties when they are inebriated they have less shame and act upon impulse when dealing with women. I wondered if alcohol affected them differently when they were alone with women.

Chapter Twenty

Sexual Violence and Sexual Abuse

Sexual violence and abuse can occur in various situations. Most of my informants did not mention anything directly linking to sexual violence or abuse. Ken, however, said,
“I’ve heard of some Cape Verdean guys hitting their woman. Woman can be fragile; she’s not as strong as a guy so you can hurt a girl in so many ways. That’s a thing that I would never do. I’ve had Cape Verdean friends that have done that. I heard from many Cape Verdean girls that have boyfriends who did that to them. I would give advice to those girls. I met a few guys that hit their girls and I don’t talk to them anymore. I find that to be so low.”

I expected more of the informants to bring up sexual violence and abuse because I’ve heard and read that violence toward women happens in the Cape Verdean community. Out of all the participants only one brought up the issue. Many women that I spoke to knew of other women that were sexual assaulted and verbally battered in a sexual manner. I asked myself why only one participant touched on the issue. I’m not implying that any of the participants were violent or abusive toward women but only that they might have heard of situations where men were. During all interviews I never asked questions about sexual violence or abuse unless the interviewee brought up the topic.

There is only one other aspect to the conducted interviews that linked to sexual abuse. I considered when the men who responded to viewing and treating women as sexual objects as sexual abuse. The conduct of this treatment toward the women could be viewed in this way. In this case women are not regarded as normal women but women that can be degraded, mistreated, and verbally abused.

**Chapter Twenty-One**

**Education**

I spoke to informants outside of the interviews about the education of Cape Verdean men in Rotterdam. Those informants said that a large percentage of Cape Verdean men have lower educations than their Dutch counterparts. Most of the participants have some level of higher education. A few were attending school at the university level. The education of the men largely influenced their perceptions and attitudes toward women. Many explained that Cape Verdean men look for several women to have sexual relationships
with but because they are in school they claim they did not have the time to pursue women as did Cape Verdean men with less their education. They also stated that they have priorities and having a good occupation with a house and a car enables them to have a proper relationship with a woman. Carlton said, “I don’t have time to only focus on girls. I go to school and do other things. Maybe when I have my job, my car, my house I can worry about that but not yet.” Other informants felt that school and their family taught them responsibility. They see that men have to be responsible for their actions, especially when they bring a child into this world. Bob said, “Having a baby is similar to buying a new BMW. You can get it but without money and education you can’t afford it. You see a lot of guys have kids but can’t take care of them. A lot of kids live with their mothers. You see guys that buy BMW’s but can’t even afford to put gas in it. They fill it up half way. It takes a real man to afford a kid and to buy a BMW or any other expensive car.” Bob said to that it is important to have an education. An education will help him into an occupation that will enable him to support a family when he decides to have one. Some informants outside of the study told me that many Cape Verdean men that they know with higher educations have been successful and are supporting their children and lifestyles.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Religion

Very few of the participants claimed to have a religion of any kind. I thought it was necessary to ask them if they were religious or had a religious background. All had been introduced to religion at some point in their lives. It could be possible that their religion or lack of religion could play a role in their sexual relations with women. Religion in several cases can add to a person’s values in life based on the principles of that religion. I was surprised that so many of them had no religion because historically Cape Verdeans were either Catholic or Protestant. One of my participants who is a Roman Catholic remarked that because of his religion he will have to get married to the woman that gives birth to his child. Another participant who is Muslim said that his whole outlook on sex
has changed since he became Muslim. He no longer has sex with women for fun or because he is horny. It has been difficult for him but he will only have sex with his wife, the woman who will mother his children. For the men who had religion in their lives religion was pivotal in their sexual behaviors and activities.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Sex Complications

A crucial part of sexual relations with women is sex complications. Sex complications are wanted and unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, regrets and humiliations. I wanted to talk about these four issues more in the interviews but they surfaced very few times. Wanted and unwanted pregnancy was not talked about at all by any of the participants. They only mentioned it when referring to other Cape Verdan men who had children or children by different women. I mentioned pregnancy and sexual transmitted infections with one informant who many times revealed that he used a condom and therefore is safe from STI’s and pregnancy.

Colin mentioned during a discussion about when a woman says ‘no’ but means ‘yes’ that he would not want a woman regretting any sexual experience with him. He said, “I don’t go into it trying to change their minds. ‘No’ means ‘no’. I want it that we both want to do it [have sexual relation]. I don’t want to change her mind. You don’t want to get her to say ‘yes’ because after she may regret it.”

Carlton referred to humiliation but from the stand point of himself. We discussed sexual relation and that for him is fun and makes him feel like a man. He said that when he has sex with a woman and he does his job right [sexing the woman], he feels like a real man. I asked Carlton what happens when he does not do his job right. He said, “Well, then the next time you have to give two hundred percent. If you don’t get the chance to put in two hundred percent you feel messed up. You get the feeling like you didn’t do what you were supposed to do. The best words that describe it is, disappointed with yourself. You feel embarrassed.”
Chapter Twenty-Four

Limitations of the Study

There are a number of limitations to this study. All I suspect have implications on the outcome of the data. The limitations were language, time constraints, honesty and truthfulness, research tools, transportation, interpreter, and interview questions. I will discuss all limitations in order as listed above.

24.1 Language

All my participants spoke Creole. Some of the participants spoke Dutch or English. There were many times when it was difficult to communicate to the interviewees. Mixed communications happened often and conflicted with recording data. I gave the chance for all participants to comment on the interview after it was over. Many responded that English was not their native tongue and it was challenging to explain themselves properly. It was also difficult for me to record the data from the interviews because of the broken and sometimes unrecognizable English. During interviews the interviewee and I spent critical minutes explaining ourselves and what we were trying to say. This did not occur for all the participants.

24.2 Time Constraints

A. Planning was utterly vital for observation and interviews. I was located in Amsterdam, Netherlands and all the observation and interviews were held in Rotterdam. There were situations where the train was running late and the interviewee only had a certain amount of time to talk with me. Some meetings and interviews had to be rescheduled. Timing cost me a few interviews because we could not reschedule and participants were leaving to go to Cape Verde on holiday.
The amount of times I had to interview the participants was a problem. I was only able to interview each participant once for about an hour to two hours. I thought that my research would have been more complete if I could interview the participants two or three times to cross reference what they told me. Collecting entire perceptions, attitudes, and conceptions takes longer periods of time though; collecting absolute viewpoints is almost possible. Answers to interview questions were contingent on that particular response. At times I felt that what the participants told me one day could be subject to change the next day, the next week or the next month.

24.3 Honesty and Truthfulness

I questioned the honesty and truthfulness of my participants. I sensed that some of the participants were hiding their true feelings and answers to the questions I posed. Several informants asked what I would use the interviews for. I told them what I planned to use the interviews for but some seemed skeptical. During questions certain participants were evasive and tip toed around the question. Others just did not seem honest because their response was out of context or character of someone their age. In these cases the answers to the questions appeared staged or learned from someone else. I wanted them to tell me what they truly thought, although I took into consideration that they would have outside influences in answering certain questions.

24.4 Research Tools

The research tools I choose for interviews were sometimes not efficient enough for data collecting and transcribing. I used a voice recorder, a pen, a notepad, and manual transcribing. After the interviews I checked the recorder to see if the voices of myself and the interviewee were clear. I only checked the very beginning of the interview. After coming home I listened to some of the interviews and it was difficult to hear or understand the interviewee’s comments. At that point I was devastated because I could not schedule another interview with that particular person. Possibly a more expensive
recorder would have helped the data collection. Sometimes indescribable English affected transcription but very few interviews were disturbed.

24.5 Interpreter

I used an interpreter for the participants who did not speak English. My interpreter was Cape Verdean. I ran into problems with my interpreter because he often added his own opinion and remarks to responses given by the participant. A few times I had to ask the interpreter to give the answer of the participant and not add his own. I noticed that some opinions and viewpoints were lost in translation or were exaggerated out of context.

24.6 Interview Questions

The interview questions I chose to ask the participants during the interview could have been better. They could have been better contextually with better language. I felt that the questions were ample enough for the study but not to the degree I wanted. The questions were grammatically correct but some where demanding for the participants to fully grasp because English is not their native language. The interview questions definitely affected the data collected.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Conclusion

This study was intended to uncover sexual relation and how it can turn into sexual violence and abuse from the male perspective. I did not really find sexual violence or sexual abuse. Instead I found some other issues that are extremely important to the Cape Verdean community in Rotterdam. Gender roles of Cape Verde are still inherent in the community even after migration. Cape Verdean women have more rights and opportunity for economic growth in the Netherlands but they are still found managing the household and family. Not all forms of integration are occurring after migration because in the Dutch society women play a larger role in the economic growth of the country. Some of the participants supported the idea that Cape Verdean women’s role is in the
household but others saw a need for change. A large percentage of the participants saw that men should be the bread winner in the family but also stated that many Cape Verdean men do not handle the responsibility of having a family. Hence it is normal to find Cape Verdean single mothers and fathers with children by different women.

All conceptions, attitudes and perceptions of sexual relation with women varied in all the participants who I interviewed and observed. The participants’ practice of sexual relation coincided with descriptions in the introduction and literature. These Cape Verdean men have practices that can be called Cape Verdean but many of the practices are also similar to other communities. The men looked at their ideas and motivations of sexual relation as something natural but directly influenced by their personal experiences, as well as outside factors such as the family, media, education and religion. The men also explained their sexual relations through the experiences and ideas of others and from their own experience.

One positive aspect was that the participants who were selected for interviews went through no formal selection process. Many of them were in school or attended some level of higher education. Education seemed to be a large influence on these men giving them insight to handle their responsibilities and provide for their families when they have one.

I did not find many issues that were inherently Cape Verdean. Many ideas could be linked to other migrants who are represented in Rotterdam. The difference between Cape Verdean men and Dutch men courting women was huge. It was inherent that Cape Verdean men are better at courting women and are known for it. There were major incentives for women learning that the men courting them were Cape Verdean but in a wider context the negative were far greater. The participants told me of the stereotypes that Cape Verdean men are unfit for marriage due to lack of education, promiscuity and not taking on responsibility of family leadership. Many of the participants felt that they are trapped in the stereotypes and experience the negative aspects regularly. Many women I spoke to support these stereotypes by claiming that they probably would not marry a Cape Verdean man because their track records are not positive. I mentioned earlier that the participants were chosen with no formal process. I did not plan who I
would interview. From the educational perspective the informants did not fit the stereotypes. They all had some degree of higher education.

Aggression, power, dominance, sexual intercourse, and control are major themes in male sexuality. Many of these themes are social constructs. The family and mass media deliver to men what component of male sexuality is important to men. Men seem to have to live up to notions of male sexuality. The family, peers and mass media set the stage for this. Though about half of the participants claimed that their family, friends and the media have no influence, what is portrayed in their lifestyles differed. Family, peers and the media were great influences in setting the standard for perceptions of men and manhood.

Gender roles are also a social construct. The role of power and dominance in heterosexual relationships seem to be inherent of men. The male is supposed to be the breadwinner in a relationship. The male is supposed to initiate the engagement of a woman. Women also have defined roles. The woman is supposed to be submissive and passive but never promiscuous. Society endorses these concepts of gender role. The family, mass media, peers, religion, and educational institutions support traditional gender roles. Men and women are supposed to follow gender roles and are looked at as deviant if they do not follow them. The men in the study construct their ideas of gender roles mainly from their families and other families in the Cape Verdean community. The role of the mother and father contribute largely to how they see themselves when they begin their own family. These findings support that gender role is a social construct in the lives of men.

Cape Verdean culture maintains masculinity for Cape Verdean men. The men are surrounded by Dutch culture but stay strong to their Cape Verdean culture and their perceptions of it. Notions of power, toughness, dominance and honor explain masculinity and what it is to be a man. Masculinity, though, is very troublesome for many men just as the role of being macho. The conception of macho is embedded and so strong cross-culturally, that men are expected to act a certain way. These expectations can and may initiate violent behavior, which is sometimes expressed to women through acts of sexual abuse and sexual violence. I did not find great evidence of this from the research. Masculinity and 'what it is to be a man' is a social construct. Caught in the
‘hype’ of trying to be the masculine man, some Cape Verde men cross lines of ethical and moral behaviors of acting when dealing with women. Treating and referring to women as objects is highly unethical and is portrayed in abusive manners. Masculinity is validated by Cape Verdean culture as manly without proper explanation to why masculinity can be abusive and violent. Masculinity is positive in some regards but can be very troublesome when various outlets set standards and expectations.

Courtship is the stage where men and women engage each other. It is yet another complex construct. Rules of engagement vary depending on the context of the situation. In most cases, the men feel most comfortable as the initiators and the women are to have a passive submissive nature. These laws of courtship do not always occur but they are traditional in many societies, including Cape Verdean culture. The problem occurs when men overt to more savage acts of courtship and do not allow traditional rules of engagement to occur. When this happens, women are stripped of their right to set the boundaries for men to invade their space and relation. Women do, however, in some cases send mixed messages to men and men cross these boundaries that women have set. My research revealed no evidence of this. The men at most were more persistent in courtship situations when under the influence of alcohol but did not respond resorting to violence and aggression.

In conclusion, this study is an introduction from a male perspective on sexual relation, the occurrence of it and how it may or may not lead to sexual violence and sexual abuse. Hopefully this study will create more debate on the issue and stem further research on the matter.

1 Fling: A relationship that is not meant to last very long; short-term relationship usually involving sexual relation.
2 Freak: A person with an obsession with sex and sexual behavior.
3 Player: A man who has many women at one time.
4 Laid: A term used for having sex.
5 Make-out: A term used for fore play.
6 ‘The man’: A man that is looked up to, regarded and distinguished.
7 Middelbare school: The Dutch translation of middle school in English.
8 STI: Sexual Transmitted Infections
Annex

Annex (1) Further Research Suggestions

I have a few suggestions for the next step in research on the perspectives of Cape Verdean men relating to sexual relation. The first suggestion is to research a larger sample of Cape Verdean men in their twenties. The sample should be large enough for statistical rating of all data collected. A sample size of a hundred or more would work well. The second suggestion is to research either teenagers or men outside of the twenties sample range. The difference in age range may supply more holistic data with the research previously collected from the twenty sample range. The last suggestion is to thoroughly analyze the interview questions and answers from the interviews to ask even deeper questions into why these men act the way they act and think what they think.

Annex (2) Interview Questions

- Is relation with women all about sex or sexual intercourse? Why?
- How do you initiate contact with women?
- What type of things do you say to women to meet them?
- Do you approach women alone or in groups?
- Do you ‘show off’ in front of women?
- What motivates sexual relation with women?
- What are some of the first ideas that come to your mind about sexual relation between men and women?
- What are your ideas of courtship?
- Where does courtship happen for you?
- What is your perception of women?
- What are you ideas of womanhood?
- What are you ideas of manhood?
● What stimulates courtship? Is it family, peers, or society?
● Is there a difference in being Cape Verdean and talking to women and being Dutch and talking to women?
● What age did you have the desire for women in a sexual way?
● What was the environment like when the desire started?
● Can you be friends with a woman?
● How do you take ‘no’ for an answer from women?
● What happens when a woman says ‘no’ but she means ‘yes’?
● Are you competitive with other men over women?
● Do you feel the need to have more than one woman?

Annex (3) More Insight Into the Research

3.1 Contradictions

The Cape Verdean men from the study have contradictions to their conceptions, attitudes, and perceptions. Migration and integration play a great role in the conceptions, attitudes and perceptions of the men. Gender roles are largely affected. The men want women, especially Cape Verdean women, to play a greater role in the family. They want women to be able to work if they want to. Men should help in the household and take more responsibility with their children, especially in situations of discipline. Despite the reaction for changes to occur in the Cape Verdean family the men still thought that the role of the woman is to take care of the household including the children. This is a major contradiction. Gender roles in Cape Verde are similar to the descriptions these men have of the Cape Verdean family in Rotterdam. It seems that in practice family gender roles of these men are quite different from what the participants perceive as a positive modification of the family for future generations. Some of the men’s conception of the woman’s role in the family is completely on a need basis. The women play a functional role in the family for the well-being of the men. This possibility was supported in the interviews when one of the participants described why Cape Verdean men from Cape
Verde obtain a wife after migration to the Netherlands. Integration into Dutch society has not completely occurred in the Cape Verdean community. Dutch society reflects a more empowered woman compared to the conceptions of women in Cape Verde and in the Cape Verdean community in Rotterdam.

3.2 More on Participant Observation

It was not until close to the end of the fieldwork that I was able to participant observe in detail. Many of the men I interviewed were busy traveling on holiday or finishing exams and working so we were not able to schedule participant observing times.

The men, however, did invite me to some parties. These parties were at clubs in Rotterdam. The parties were held on 'Cabo night' which was a night designated for Cape Verdeans. I was told that the majority of people who attend these particular parties are Cape Verdean though some Dutch, Moroccan, Surinamese and Turkish people attend the parties also. The doormen said that most of the people there were Cape Verdean. How the doormen knew this I do not know. Cape Verdeans come in all shapes, sizes and colors so it was tough for me in most cases to distinguish who was Cape Verdean. The men and women I went to the party with were Cape Verdean and they seemed to be able to point out Cape Verdeans with know trouble.

The men associate with and have relationships with all types of women. One participant described his experiences with a Moroccan woman. Another participant was currently in a serious relationship with a Turkish woman. The men made no distinction between women other than if they liked them or not. Some of the men, however, did state that it would reflect on them and their families if they were to have a Cape Verdean girlfriend or wife. This is due to cultural similarities and language barriers of Cape Verdeans compared to other ethnic groups.
Annex (3) References

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