

# BSA Decolonising Families and Relationships Event

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## **'Mixing' and racialization: the production of knowledge on mixed marriages and relationships in the Netherlands**

### **Abstract**

Scholars working on Gender and Sexuality Studies have shown how in many contemporary societies, marriage and family formation are matters of political concern and social scientific inquiry. As Foucault has taught us, marriage and family formation are central to the biopolitical questions of population. By questioning marriage and family formation patterns, scholars enact the population and enable the circulation of social imaginations of what the population looks like, and how 'it' behaves and develops. This knowledge often does not remain in academic circles, but also circulates among policy makers and government officials. In the Netherlands, focusing on marriage and family formation contributes crucially to the production of 'migrant populations' as a political problem. This happens in particular through raising concerns about multiculturalism and integration based on statistical knowledge about mixed marriages and relationships. In short, 'mixing' is nowadays often used as a marker and indicator of the level of integration of migrant populations. In this paper, I analyse how knowledge on mixed marriage and relationships is produced and how this constructs racialized notions of what 'mixing' is, what kind of marriages and relationships are considered (un)desirable, and which are made invisible. I do so by looking at important contemporary studies and reports on mixed marriages and relationships. This includes papers in scientific journals, but also policy-oriented reports by Dutch demographic institutions. In my analysis, I attend specifically to the datasets that are used in these studies, such as data from the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study and Dutch municipality registers.

### **Bio**

Sherilyn Deen finished her Research Master Social Sciences (Cum Laude) at the University of Amsterdam in 2018. She is currently a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Amsterdam. Her PhD project is part of the NWO-VICI project 'EnGendering Europe's Muslim Question'. In her project she focuses on scientific knowledge production on mixed marriage and relationships (*gemengde huwelijken en relaties*) in the Netherlands, and how this relates to the problematisation of Muslims in public debates. For her project, she combines insights from Science and Technology Studies with Critical Race Studies, Postcolonial Studies and Gender and Sexuality studies.