Negotiating intersectional identities: Navigating race, class, and gender in the emerging Indo-Dutch diaspora, ca. 1945-1975

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Indo-Dutch diaspora, ca. 1945-1975

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Preface

Growing up, I always knew my grandmother was born in colonial Indonesia. I was aware of the differences between the household I grew up in – quite Dutch by most standards – and my grandmother's, whose house smelled like *daoen salam* and *djeroek poeroet,* had a *botol cebok* in her bathroom, and where she often walked around in her *sarong* or other Indonesian clothes. Sometimes, she would tell me stories about her childhood in the Dutch East Indies and about the *bersiap* period, but never for too long and always with little detail – our family, too, was victim to the phenomenon known as *indisch zwijgen* or 'Indo-Dutch silence', caused by years of traumatic experiences in war-torn Indonesia.

As a teenager in high school, I also did not learn much about the Netherlands' colonial past in Indonesia, besides being told the Netherlands *had* a colonial past in Indonesia. My reasoning was simple: my grandmother was from Indonesia, so she was Indonesian. And that is what I told others. For years, no one corrected me. At most, some people would be surprised by the combination of my blue eyes, blond hair and Indonesian heritage. That is, until an Indo-Dutch acquaintance many years my senior corrected me. "Kimberley," he said sternly, "we are not Indonesian. We are *Indische Nederlanders.* That is very different. You should be proud of your heritage. Everyone forgets about us." It left me a little shaken and confused, but also with many questions. What did that mean, and why had no one told me about this?

Throughout the past few years, I have become increasingly interested in my own family history. This thesis, in a way, has been a personal journey as well – a culmination of many years research, and many conversations with my grandmother and others from her generation. One thing in particular has always struck me: the differences between distinct Indo spaces – loud, a lot of music, and even more *makan* – and how quietly *Indische Nederlanders* blended into the rest of Dutch society. My confusion as to how this was possible was the first seed that grew into what is now this master's thesis.

A few months ago, after I had bombarded my grandmother with yet more questions about all things Indo-Dutch and I was getting ready to leave her house, she suddenly looked at me and smiled. "I never could have imagined I would have a granddaughter who would be interested in our *Indische* heritage," she said. "And who would be proud of it."

Before diving into the thesis, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the interviewees. I cannot begin to imagine how hard it must have been to recall times that were often traumatic and left a lifelong mark. Thank you for your generosity and open-heartedness. Thank you also to my supervisor, Dr. Andrew Shield, for your endless patience, understanding, and trust.

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1. Introduction

On March 1st, 1970, *Tong Tong* – a biweekly magazine based in the Netherlands for readers who have roots in the former Dutch East Indies, subtitled "the only *Indische* magazine in the world" – published a short essay by a Mary Brückel-Beiten, an Indo-Dutch woman who, some 20 years ago, had repatriated from the former Dutch East Indies to the Netherlands. 'I often wonder,' she pondered, 'whether after more than 20 years I have become a different person. You would say that it must have had a pretty big impact. For example, I really tried my best to become a Dutch housewife. A sturdy and self-confident Dutchwoman like my neighbor or the greengrocer's wife.'[1] She seemed amazed by her own capacity to do chores around the house. 'To think that I am now my own *baboe, kokkie, djongos, kebon,* laundress and everything at the same time, I wonder how I was ever able to manage six servants.' She concluded, however, that though she had tried her best, she had never fully assimilated. 'My skin color never assimilated with me, and I still say *adoe* after 20 years.'[2] One can only imagine how surprised *Tong Tong*'s editors and Ms. Brückel-Beiten must have been when many angry letters were written in response, some of which were published a month later.

Someone named H. van den Brink, for example, said: '*Indisch*, that is who we are and that is who we will forever be, and no dear father or mother can change anything about that. And so there can *never* be a question of assimilation.'[3] Another man, signing his response with "an old *sinjo* from *Sawah Basaar*", aimed his anger directly at Ms. Brückel-Beiten. 'Speaking of scrubbing and cleaning,' he wrote,

> You as a lady and the other *Indische* ladies do not know that kind of job. You leave that job to others, who inherited it from their ancestors. That kind of job is not alien to those women. And me too. What I learned from my parents and the people of my country, I keep up here. … Me, I will continue to live in the same way I was used to in the Indies and also in New Guinea. In the East we would never look at someone sideways, however they want to live, that is their business. We also would have never tried to adapt someone's way of living to our own. Leave everyone to live their own lives. Ms. Mary Brückel-Beiten still says *adoe,* she wrote. But after 15 years of being here, I say *eh, loe djangan koerang adjar dong, nanti goea hadjar loe. Djangan maen topeng monjet, tengal! Asal Indo tetap Indo!* [Don't be rude, otherwise I'll punch you later. Don't act like a monkey, really! Because an Indo will always be an Indo!][4]

[1] Mary Brückel-Beiten, "Ben ik geassimileerd?" *Tong Tong*, March 1, 1970, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/TONG/1970-03-01/edition/0/page/5
[2] Brückel-Beiten, "Ben ik geassimileerd?"
[3] H. van den Brink, "Tien tegen de massa," *Tong Tong*, April 1, 1970, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/TONG/1970-04-01/edition/0/page/7
[4] Een oude sinjo van Sawah Basaar, "Tien tegen de massa," *Tong Tong*, April 1, 1970, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/TONG/1970-04-01/edition/0/page/7

From these short accounts, one thing should become clear: there was little agreement on what it meant to be *Indisch*[5] and how and *Indisch*woman should behave. Especially the topic of assimilation had for many years elicited much debate among the Indo-Dutch population. Fundamental to such debates were notions of gender, ethnicity and class, among other things. It is mainly the implications of these notions, then, that will be explored in this thesis.

Mary Brückel-Beiten, H. van den Brink and the anonymous *sinjo* were three of hundreds of thousands of mixed-race Indo-Dutch people who, after Indonesia gained its independence, left their country of birth and relocated elsewhere in the world. Though *Tong Tong's* readership was largely Dutch-based, it was also a way for Indos across the world to remain in contact with each other and share thoughts related to the diaspora. Through male ancestors they were in possession of Dutch citizenship, but most of them had never set foot in their unknown homeland. They had been offered the option to adopt Indonesian citizenship, but many Indo-Dutch people chose to hold onto their Dutch passports. As a result, they were forced to leave what was becoming Indonesia. Often, this meant relocating to the Netherlands, and to a lesser extent Australia, the United States, or another country.[6] This mass migration of Indo-Dutch people to the Netherlands is frequently called repatriation. Scholar Wim Willems has referred to the use of this word as "a gross historical distortion,"[7] because it implies that Indo-Dutch people were brought back to their homes. In the interviews conducted for this thesis, five people referred to themselves as refugees.[8] Whether the Dutch state views Indo-Dutch people as refugees or repatriates inevitably has had implications on policy and public discourse related to the Indo-Dutch population.

With this "repatriation", the social reality of the Indo-Dutch community changed. Formerly, Indo-Dutch people – descendants of European (mostly Dutch) colonizers and Indonesian women – 'had taken up an ambiguous, in-between position [in the Dutch East Indies], distinct from and above the 'natives', but also subordinated in dominant, white society.'[9] Their social reality was heavily influenced by longstanding colonial customs, traditions, and hierarchies – that is, made up of both Dutch and indigenous Indonesian cultures – affecting their lives and position in society in many different ways.

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[5] There are many disagreements with regards to terminology for ethnic groups originating in the Dutch East Indies. Indo-Dutch, *Indischen*, *Indische Nederlanders* and Indos are just some of the terms used to describe people of mixed European (mainly Dutch) and Indonesian heritage, and each person seems to use the terminology in different ways. In some cases, people of Dutch descent born in the Indies, also known as *totoks*, were included in the definition Indo-Dutch or *Indisch.* Throughout this thesis, I alternate between the four terms when speaking only of individuals of a mixed ethnic background. If ever I wish to include those of fully Dutch heritage, I will specifically add the word *totok.*

[6] Ulbe Bosma, Remco Raben, and Wim Willems, *De geschiedenis van Indische Nederlanders* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2006).

[7] Wim Willems, "Migranten op golven van de dekolonisatie," *Leidschrift: Migratie en acceptatie* 11 (December 1995): 49-66, 54.

[8] Fiep, interviewed by the author, March 10, 2022; Hendrik, interviewed by the author, March 11, 2022; Lien, interviewed by the author, December 20, 2021; Liesbeth, interviewed by the author, April 6, 2022; Edward, interviewed by the author, April 6, 2022.

[9] Pamela Pattynama, "Assimilation and Masquerade: Self-Constructions of Indo-Dutch Women," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 7, no. 3 (2000): 281, https://doi.org/10.1177/135050680000700304.

It is important to note that the Indo-Dutch community in the Dutch East Indies was not homogeneous. Despite having similar ethnic backgrounds, the respective positions in society that each family or individual had could differ to the point where some Dutch Indos had grand colonial homes and employed native servants, while others lived with little means.[10] Factors that determined these hierarchies were multifaceted – they were not, as modern readers might be led to assume, necessarily determined along (perceived) racial lines.[11]

In the Netherlands and other countries of settlement, however, society differed greatly from that in the former colony. It demanded flexibility and resilience from Indo-Dutch people; their 'imagined, somewhat idealized homeland, which they knew from stories and school textbooks,'[12] and which many of them had never actually visited before, was itself recovering from five years of German occupation. For Dutch people, the new arrivals in their already struggling country were often seen as a threat to their own welfare.[13] For the *Indischen*, their newfound home also came with new social norms, changed notions of race and identity, and other differences compared to the society they had known. In the words of Tajuddin and Stern, 'the intense interplays between race, class, culture, and citizenship under different political-economic environments have furnished the different contexts within which the Indo was identified; these, in turn, impacted the way the Indos saw themselves in relation to others in society.'[14] Indo-Dutch people thus had to navigate not only changing hierarchies within their ethnic group, but also in relation to their new postcolonial social reality.

1.1. Indo-Dutch people in the diaspora

In the seven or so decades since the sudden onset of the Indo-Dutch diaspora, several sociologists, migration scholars, and historians have written about the experiences and identities of *Indische* people. Often, this has been in the context of, for example, the relationship or dynamics between the Indo-Dutch

[10] Susan Legêne, "Bringing history home. Postcolonial immigrant and the Dutch cultural arena," *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* 126, no. 2 (2000): 56.
[11] Bart Luttikhuis, "Beyond Race: Constructions of Europeanness in Late-Colonial Legal Practice in the Dutch East Indies," *European Review of History* 20, no. 4 (2013): 541. https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2013.764845.
[12] Wim Willems, "No Sheltering Sky: Migrant Identities of Dutch Nationals from Indonesia," in *Europe's Invisible Migrants*, ed. Andrea L. Smith (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), 39.
[13] Willems, 'No Sheltering Sky,' 41.
[14] Azlan Tajuddin and Jamie Stern, "From Brown Dutchmen to Indo-Americans: Changing identity of the Dutch-Indonesian (Indo) Diaspora in America," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 28, no. 4 (2015): 351. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10767-015-9197-z

people and their societies of settlement[15], cultural memory and nostalgia for the Indies[16], questions of (im)mobility[17], or (intergenerational) identity development and racial consciousness.[18] Little, however, has been written about the dynamics within the Indo-Dutch diaspora, and how colonial hierarchies, masculinities, and femininities have continued to play a role or changed shape. Evidently, one cannot consider such dynamics in isolation from its context, nor is it possible to understand a postcolonial diaspora such as the Indo-Dutch community without understanding at least some of the dynamics that were at play in their colonial society of origin.

Although the two decades after 1945 were the first during which a large group of Indo-Dutch people set out to settle in countries other than the Indies permanently, the community had a long history of (circular) migration to, mainly, the Netherlands. In *Ik had een neef in Den Haag*, a book which wonderfully explores the different groups of migrants that settled in the city of The Hague during the twentieth century, Annemarie Cottaar explores how, during the first half of the century, many Indos and *totoks* spent some time in the Netherlands, for a leave of absence from their work in the Indies, or because they settled in the Netherlands after retirement. During this period, The Hague became an especially important city for people from the Indies to settle in; over time, they left an imprint on the city through food, a weekly magazine, and entire *Indische* neighborhoods. After the war and dispersion, The Hague continued to be a desirable destination for many people from the former Dutch East Indies. This earned The Hague the nickname 'the widow of the Indies'.[19]

Though some families had the possibility of going to the Netherlands for a brief visit prior to 1940, it should be noted that the vast majority of Indo-Dutch people that repatriated after the wars had never been there before. Some were able to find housing upon their arrival or had the opportunity to lodge with family or other contacts temporarily, but many had no other choice but to live in *contractpensions*: hotels that, through a contract with the Dutch state, offered rooms to Indo-Dutch people for long-term stay until they were assigned more permanent housing. For many families, this

[15] E.g.: Charlotte Laarman, *Oude Onbekenden: Het politieke en publieke debat over postkoloniale migranten, 1945-2005* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2013); Julia Doornbos, Bettina van Hoven, and Peter Groote, "Negotiating claims of 'whiteness': Indo-Dutch everyday experiences and 'mixed-race' identities in the Netherlands," *Social Identities* 23, no. 3 (2022): 383-399; Gert Oostindie, "Historische gebaren. Indische geschiedenis, postkoloniaal trauma en identiteitspolitiek," *Academische boekengids* 50, no. 2 (2005): 7-9; Joost Coté, "The Indisch Dutch in post-war Australia," *TSEG-The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 7, no. 2 (2010): 103-125.
[16] E.g.: Sarah de Mul, "Nostalgia for empire: 'Tempo doeloe' in contemporary Dutch literature," *Memory Studies* 3, no. 4 (2010): 413-428; Andrew Goss, "From *Tong-Tong* to Tempo Doeloe: Eurasian memory work and the bracketing of Dutch colonial history, 1957-1961," *Indonesia* 70 (October 2000): 9-36.
[17] Liesbeth Rosen Jacobson, '*The Eurasian Question': The colonial position and postcolonial options of colonial mixed-ancestry groups from British India, Dutch East Indies and French Indochina compared* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2018).
[18] E.g.: Rosalind Hewett, "Children of Decolonisation: Postcolonial Indo (Eurasian) communities in Indonesia and the Netherlands," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 24, no. 126 (2015): 191-206; Esther Captain, "Harmless Identities: Representations of Racial Consciousness among Three Generations Indo-Europeans," in *Dutch Racism*, ed. Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving (Leiden: Brill, 2014): 53-70.
[19] Annemarie Cottaar, *Ik had een neef in Den Haag* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 1998), 90.

meant adapting; in the Indies some had had big houses with servants, whereas in the Netherlands, they had to share a single room with the whole family.[20]

It seems these experiences – their life in the colony, the Second World War in the Indies, the Indonesian war of independence (also known as *bersiap* in Dutch colonial memory) and other common experiences related to their migration – became part of Indo-Dutch collective memory. According to Pamela Pattynama, these collective memories have contributed a great deal do Indo-Dutch identity formation, which was reshaped and renegotiated again through the process of migration. In the postcolonial Netherlands, 'Indo-Dutch identity is shaped and transformed in the context of Dutch multiculturalism'.[21] Rosalind Hewett states that this is often closely connected to a sense of *tempo doeloe* ("the good old days") towards the colonial Dutch East Indies, but also traumas related to the two wars and experiences of racism and exclusion during Japanese occupation, Indonesian independence, and in countries of settlement.[22]

In recent years, many scholars have explored different aspects of Indo identity formation. Frequently, this focuses of either transgenerational identities (within families or in a broader context), on the creation of a collective Indo identity, or both. Ana Dragojlovic, for example, explores how, due to a "lack of nation", *Indische* people define their peoplehood through a common sense of history and multiraciality, as well as through their identity of being marginalized in each of the societies they found themselves in. This shaped not only their transnational community, but also personal identities.[23]

At the same time, although Indo-Dutch people made many efforts to unify the transnational community, one should be careful not to generalize experiences or to homogenize the diaspora. Many factors contributed to differing experiences of individuals. Within the family unit, for example, women and men took on distinctly different roles. Doornbos and Dragojlovic state that parenting practices often had a gendered nature; the mother as the caretaker who passed down cultural foods and practices, and the father often emotionally unavailable and hardened by the traumatic experiences of the war.[24] According to Pamela Pattynama, women in particular also participated often in masquerading practices – outwardly adapting to binary notions of racial and cultural identities (one is either assimilated or not), but privately, Indo-Dutch women successfully negotiated different aspects and presentations of identities depending on the context, which 'illustrates that ethnic femininity is an imaginary identification that can be adopted, appropriated or discarded.'[25] It should be clear that gender differences greatly influenced the way in which one navigated their identity, as well as their daily experiences in general.

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[20] Cottaar, *Ik had een neef in Den Haag*, 96.
[21] Pattynama, "Assimilation and Masquerade," 291.
[22] Rosalind Hewett, "Children of Decolonisation,' 195.
[23] Ana Dragojlovic, "Haunted by 'Miscegenation': Gender, the White Australia Policy and the Construction of Indisch Family Narratives," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 36, no. 1 (2015): 66.
[24] Julia Doornbos and Ana Dragojlovic, "'The past should not affect the children': intergenerational hauntings in the homes of Indo-European families," *Gender, Place & Culture* (2021): 14.
[25] Pattynama, "Assimilation and Masquerade," 294.

In a recent paper by Julia Doornbos, Bettina van Hoven, and Peter Groote on identity formation of Indo-Dutch people in the Netherlands, emphasis is also put on the influence of the Dutch assimilation policies of the 1940s and 1950s, and how mixed-race identities are heavily shaped by experiences of racism. Through such traumatic experiences, they found, second and third generation Indo-Europeans often state that they "feel" Indo-European, but outwardly act more Dutch. They also found that a person's way of self-identifying does not always correlate with how others perceive them. For example, one Indo-Dutch woman shared that although she feels Indo-Dutch herself, other Indo-Dutch people and non-Indo others may invalidate her self-identification based on how they perceive her racial background.[26]

It seem that there are two aims in research on the Indo-Dutch population: on the one hand, those who reconstruct identities of individuals and their daily experiences, and on the other hand, those who aim to understand the makings of an "Indo-Dutch culture". It has become clear that individuals' experiences could differ greatly, dependent on their perceived race, class, or gender. How these individual experiences and the desire to create a collective identity challenged each other, however, has not been explored. Additionally, the dynamics of individual experiences seem to be understood mainly in terms of how they relate to the receiving societies, but not in how they influenced the dynamics *within* the Indo-Dutch diaspora. It is precisely this lacuna that I aim to fill.

1.2. An intersectional approach to social identity

Before commencing, it is imperative to define two concepts that will prove instrumental throughout this thesis. The first of these is the concept of social identity. The theory was first formulated by Henri Tajfel, and I will therefore choose to use his definition of the concept throughout this thesis: 'That part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership. Social categorization must therefore be considered as a system of orientation which creates and defines the individual's own place in society.'[27] It should be clear that social identity is not uniform to any set of members belonging to a specific group, but rather an individual's personal connection to the group or groups to which they belong. Significantly, one's own perception of social identity and the way in which they are categorized by others – both by those belonging to their perceived social group as well as those who don't – do not always correlate and 'are constantly framed, dependent on constructed boundaries of an in- and outgroup.'[28] This also means, for example, that someone might be perceived differently in different contexts by different people.

[26] Ibidem.
[27] Henri Tajfel, "Social identity and intergroup behavior," *Social science information* 13, no. 2 (1974): 69.
[28] Doornbos, Van Hoven, and Groote, "Negotiating claims of 'whiteness'", 9.

When speaking of social identities, there are often implied notions of power inequalities. Hurtato and Sinha, for example, state that 'social identities gain particular significance in relationship to "master statuses" and when they are stigmatized. Race, social class, gender, ethnicity, physical challenges, and sexuality are the social identities assigned master statuses, because individuals must psychologically negotiate their potentially stigmatizing effects—this is particularly the case when individuals do not belong to dominant groups in society.'[29] In the postcolonial diaspora, many Indo-Dutch people had to negotiate a number of such aspects of identity at the time.

The phenomenon of social identity especially complex when taking into account mixed-race individuals such as Indo-Dutch people. Sarah E. Gaither notes, nonetheless, that social identity research thus far has mainly focused on single-identity frameworks – that is, along binary constructs of identity and perceptions of in- and outgroups. She argues that such an approach is too limited, and that it is important to pay due attention to what she calls the *multiplicity of belonging* – in other words, to acknowledge that an individual may belong to many groups at once and have a multitude of social identities.[30] Specifically, Gaither states, 'identity research needs to start acknowledging populations who have two identities coexisting within the same social domain.'[31] One example of this is biracial or bicultural individuals – people who may feel a connection to both ethnic or racial aspects of their identity, while, at times, they may prove conflicting or complementary to each other.

One way of overcoming this binary way of thinking could be through the use of an intersectional approach with our research. Theretofore, intersectionality is the second concept that will prove relevant, and demands elaboration. The term was coined in 1989 by feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, who stated that there is a tendency to 'treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis' that is 'perpetuated by a single-axis framework that is dominant in antidiscrimination law and that is also reflected in feminist theory and antiracist politics.'[32] This is also true for scholars of Netherlands Indies and Dutch colonial history, who often make use of a similar single-axis framework. Susie Protschky notes that in the field of empirical and historiographical studies on the topic, scholars often assign 'predominance of one category over another – in particular, race versus class – in determining the character of social hierarchies in the Netherlands Indies.'[33] This way of reasoning, however, does not do justice to the complexities of the experiences and realities of Indo-Dutch people, both in the Dutch East Indies and beyond.

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[29] Aida Hurtado and Mrinal Sinha, "More Than Men: Latino Feminist Masculinities and Intersectionality," *Sex Roles* 59 (2008): 340.
[30] Sarah E. Gaither, "The multiplicity of belonging: Pushing identity research beyond binary thinking," *Self and Identity* 17, no. 4 (2018): 443.
[31] Gaither, "The multiplicity of belonging," 444.
[32] Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Anti- Discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989): 139.
[33] Susie Protschky, "Race, Class and Gender: Debates over the character of social hierarchies in the Netherlands Indies, circa 1600-1942," *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde* 167, no. 4 (2011): 544.

Amelina and Barglowski affirm that 'for a study of diasporas in general, and especially an analysis of identity formation, it is thus imperative not to privilege ethnicity and nation over other types of boundaries, such as gender, class and sexuality.'[34] Instead, it is important to take into consideration how such axes of difference interplay. As Crenshaw herself emphasizes, intersectional experiences can only be understood in terms of it being more than the sum of two categories, whether it be race/class, gender/sexuality, or any other single-axis framework.[35] Rather than asking which type of boundary had a greater effect on identity formation, then, I will aim to understand how various axes of difference contribute to the multilayered experiences of individuals.

Concretely, this means looking beyond the simple sum of characteristics that make up one's identity, and looking at how different aspects influence each other to shape one's social identity/ies. Hurtato and Sinha explain it as follows:

> By providing an analytical tool that explicates difference within the social group "man", intersectionality allows us to examine the ways that other disparaged social identities can influence experiences of gender in the USA. Exploring such variation in men's experiences contributes to more nuanced understandings of how different groups of men view and respond to hegemonic conceptions of masculinity at the same time that it provides insight as to how they resist such notions of gender. In other words, experiences of male privilege in conjunction with race-, class-, and in some cases, sexuality based disadvantage, can potentially influence the way that manhood is defined.[36]

The same is true, of course, for other social categories. It is in understanding these multiplicities that one can attempt to understand an individual's social position and identities in relation to the groups to which they belong.

In doing this, one should be careful not to analyze an overly large amount of social categories. Christensen and Jensen plead that researchers use *anchor points*, or a select number of categories that makes an analysis manageable.[37] I will focus, therefore, on three such anchor point that have proven to have a significant influence on the social identity of Indo-Dutch people: (perceived) race, class, and gender. Although it is impossible to study a diaspora in isolation from its context entirely, I will aim to explore how social identities of *Indischen* were contested and (re)shaped through notions of race, class, and gender *within* the diaspora in particular.

1.3. Research question and methodology

[34] Anna Amelina and Karolina Barglowski, "Key methodological tools for diaspora studies: Combining the transnational and intersectional approaches," in *Routledge handbook of diaspora studies,* ed. Robin Cohen and Carolin Fischer (London: Routledge, 2018), 32.
[35] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 140.
[36] Hurtado and Sinha, "More Than Men," 340-341.
[37] Ann-Dorte Christensen and Sune Qvotrup Jensen, "Doing intersectional analysis: Methodological implications for qualitative research," *NORA-Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 20, no. 2 (2012): 112.

For the sake of better understanding the history of the repatriation of Indo-Dutch people during the decolonization period, it is imperative to take into account different perspectives and to acknowledge the multiple complex, interconnected layers between actors and institutions involved. Wim Willems states that 'in every migration and settlement process it is necessary to distinguish three levels: the structure of the receiving society, including governmental responses, the institutional organization (top down as well as bottom up) regarding the reception of the migrants, and the personal experiences and perceptions of the newcomers.'[38] Anna Amelina and Karolina Barglowski, however, state that there is at least one additional perspective or level that should be specified and taken into account: the internal relations and power asymmetries within, in this case, the Indo-Dutch community. They describe its necessity as follows:

> By analyzing power asymmetries within diasporic communities, scholars can reconstruct dominant and marginalized masculinities and femininities within the diasporas they are studying, as well as their linkages to notions of ethnic/racial, class-specific, (im)mobility-related and other diasporic images and attributions. This enables researchers to reveal dominant and subordinated social positions within diasporic configurations and, thus, to describe diasporas as multifaceted and non-homogeneous.[39]

This is especially important because the heterogeneity of diasporas is often overlooked, both in policy making as well as in academic literature and public discourse. Such oversights have repercussions not only for the Indo-Dutch community, which remains large to this day, but also for more recent migrants and diasporas across the world.

The main question, then, is as follows: in which ways did the involuntary mass displacement of Indo-Dutch people affect internal dynamics and the formation of identities in the postcolonial Indo-Dutch diaspora, especially as it pertains to race, class, and gender, ca. 1945-1975? It is important to note here that the word "diaspora" has been deliberately chosen as a means of delineating the question geographically, in favor of, for example, focusing solely on Indo-Dutch people in the Netherlands. I have chosen to do so in order to appreciate the transnational character of the diaspora more appropriately, which, when confining the research to the context within the borders of a traditional nation-state, is lost. This prevents what Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller call methodological nationalism: 'the assumption that the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world.'[40] That is not to say that 'state policies [do not] contribute to and shape cross-border diasporic communities.'[41] However, since the interaction between the respective societies of the home country or the countries of settlement and the Indo-Dutch people is not the focus of this study, rather the internal

[38] Wim Willems, "No Sheltering Sky: Migrant Identities of Dutch Nationals from Indonesia," *Europe's Invisible Migrants* (2003): 35.
[39] Amelina and Barglowski, "Key Methodological Tools," 36.
[40] Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, "Methodological Nationalism and beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences," *Global Networks* 2, no. 4 (2002): 302.
[41] Amelina and Barglowski, "Key Methodological Tools," 33.

dynamics of the diaspora, the transnational nature of the diaspora seems more suitable as a framework – especially since, particularly in the time period under investigation, migration of Dutch Indos from the Netherlands to other countries and vice versa continued.

These intersectional identities are best explored through 'ethnographic methods, such as interviews and case studies, [because they] can illustrate the complexities of individual and collective identities and social dynamics.'[42] The way in which intersectionality is used in this thesis is as a framework or analytic lens, and it will shape the analysis of the interviews that have been conducted for the purpose of this thesis.

Since this question aims, above all, to reconstruct the individual experiences of Indo-Dutch people, in-depth interviews are well-suited for uncovering individual experiences and exploring complex and multi-layered issues. For this thesis, eleven interviews have been conducted with Indo-Dutch people who were born in the Dutch East Indies and, in the wake of Indonesian independence, relocated to, and grew up in, the Netherlands. There is one exception, in which the interviewee was born in the Netherlands shortly after his parents migrated. All interviews lasted between one hour and two and a half hours. These interviews reflect the experiences of individuals who, born in the Dutch East Indies, spent most of their childhood and/or teenage years in the Netherlands or other countries and were thus heavily shaped by postcolonial societies. The table below shows an overview of the people that were interviewed. Names used are pseudonyms.

Name	**Age**	**Sex**	**Repatriated in**	**Current place of residence**
Lien	88	Female	1948	Amersfoort (NL)
André	74	Male	1965	Leeuwarden (NL)
Maria	75	Female	1951	Curaçao
Jan	63	Male	1962	Den Bosch (NL)
Hendrik	74	Male	1950	Zeist (NL)
Frans	86	Male	1954	Den Haag (NL)
Fiep	83	Female	1952	Den Haag (NL)
Jeffrey	58	Male	-	Amsterdam (NL)
Edward	89	Male	1962	Hoevelaken (NL)
Liesbeth	80	Female	1962	Hoevelaken (NL)
Johanna	75	Female	1956	U.S.A.

In addition to the interviews conducted specifically for the purpose of this thesis, several other primary sources were drawn upon. Firstly, an extremely important source were the archives of the

[42] Gemma Hunting, *Intersectionality-informed qualitative research: a primer* (Vancouver: The Institute for Intersectionality Research & Policy, 2014), 1.

magazine that is nowadays called *Moesson*, formerly also known as *Onze Brug* and *Tong Tong*. Since 1956, the magazine, started and published by Tjalie Robinson, provided a space for *Indischen* across the globe to have their *piekerans* (thoughts or musings) published and engage in conversation with others in the diaspora. The articles, letters and *piekerans* that were published over the years proved to be an invaluable resource. The magazine was unique in that it started a movement that 'was both one of revival and a continuation of the Indo-Dutch emancipation movement that had constituted such a powerful force in colonial days. But in contrast to the colonial situation, it was not an emancipation that sought acceptance by colonial elites and that was heavily tilted towards metropolitan European cultural hegemony. The cultural agenda of Robinson was inspired partly by what he considered to be mestizo cultures in Mexico and Brazil.'[43] Secondly, a collection of interviews published in book form in 1993, commissioned by *Moesson*, titled *Ik wilde eigenijk niet gaan*, proved an insightful resource. Besides a brief historical context in the beginning of the book, it is simply a collection of quotations from interviews the authors conducted, without their own interpretations, and supplemented only by pictures and documents.[44] Finally, a number of additional sources have been consulted, including ego documents, additional newspaper articles, and leaflets that were periodically distributed to repatriates.

From the insights drawn from the primary source material, three main areas of interest were identified. In the remainder of this thesis, I will dedicate one chapter to each of these, before concluding. The second chapter will explore how individuals were forced to renegotiate their individual social identities as their social and geographical context changed. They were forced to rethink the meaning of Indo-Dutchness, both in relation to other Indo-Dutch people and in relation to their societies of settlement. Often, this was in part determined by notions of race and class. The politics of these negotiations and the social implications inevitably influenced the way Indo-Dutch people looked at each other, and the social identities they deemed desirable. The third chapter is concerned with tracing masculinities and femininities in the diaspora. Although the social identities of Indo-Dutch people were closely tied to race and class, additional aspects of one's identity has a great impact on one's position in the diaspora and wider society. Each of these axes of difference were intertwined and included many more aspects of identity, but I argue in this chapter that especially the dominant and marginalized masculinities and femininities should not be overlooked when trying to understand the internal dynamics of the Indo-Dutch community. It is in this chapter that such notions and their effects will be explored. The fourth chapter draws attention to the politics of trying to foster a collective Indo-Dutch identity. Through gatherings dedicated to food and music, intellectual discussions of what it meant to be Indo-Dutch, changing racial consciousness, magazines, remittances to Indos across the world, and other spaces dedicated to (re)defining Indo-Dutchness, many attempts were made to create a diasporic identity. However, this chapter also addresses how intersectional identities such as the ones that were

[43] Ulbe Bosma, "Why is there no post-colonial debate in the Netherlands?" in *Post-colonial immigrants and identity formations in the Netherlands*, ed. Ulbe Bosma (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 204.
[44] Siem Boon and Eva van Geleuken, ed., *Ik wilde eigenlijk niet gaan* (Den Haag: Stichting Tong Tong, 1993).

dissected in the second and third chapters challenge the idea of a single, collective identity. Lastly, the fifth and final chapter will discuss some of the main insights, explore the conclusions and limitations of this study, and provide suggestions for further research.

2. Negotiating social identities in a changing context

André was born in the Dutch East Indies in 1948. In many ways, his life reflects the experiences of children born just before the wars or in the wake of Indonesian independence. His parents, both of mixed Indonesian and Dutch heritage, were fond of Indonesia. It was, after all, their homeland. They were prouder still of their Dutch name and heritage, and, above all, loyal to the Dutch flag. During the Second World War, André's father was a soldier in the Dutch army, and during the *bersiap* period, too, he fought for the Netherlands. After Indonesian independence, however, André's father lost his job in the army, which meant that the family had no money to pay for the passage to the Netherlands. He was left with no other choice than to adopt Indonesian citizenship and join the Indonesian army, which he had fought against just a few months prior. André explained:

> He joined the Indonesian army. With the last name *Adriaans*. During that period, the Dutch people that opted for Indonesian citizenship were told to change their names. If you're Chinese, and your name is Kong, you would have to change it to Oman, for example. In any case, to something that would sound a little Indonesian. My dad refused. He thought further ahead. He thought, if I do this, I can never go [to the Netherlands]. He thought, this is my name, this is my identity, that was the way he thought. I want to keep this, I don't want to lose anything.[45]

Like many Indo-Dutch people, André's father felt immensely connected to his Dutch heritage. Out of pure financial necessity, he adopted Indonesian citizenship initially. While he saw more fortuitous friends and family members set sail for the Netherlands, he was forced to stay behind in Indonesia, where was confronted with discrimination for being too Dutch to the point where he lost his job some years later for continuing to refuse to change his name.[46]

More than fifteen years later, in 1965, the family was finally able to make the long-awaited journey to the Netherlands. They would be in for a rude awakening: here, too, they would face discrimination and racism, were put in *contractpensions* in dire circumstances, and had to pay no less than sixty percent of their salary to the Dutch state to pay off the costs of the government's aid.[47] For André's father, this did not alter his loyalty to the Dutch queen. André himself, who was born and raised in postcolonial, independent Indonesia, however, stated:

> My dad was always loyal to the Dutch flag. Red, white, blue. *Oranje boven*. Yes, that was sacred. Yes, looking at all those soldiers, the portraits of Juliana and Wilhelmina. Oh, that was the way it was at the time. Yes, I was indoctrinated myself at a certain point. […] We have so much respect for the royal family, really. You know, fighting the Indonesians, you took an oath to protect your country. But in hindsight, Indonesia never really belonged to the Netherlands. Right? Three and a half centuries under Dutch rule. And the Dutch considered Indonesia at the

[45] André, interviewed by the author, February 26, 2022.
[46] André, interview.
[47] André, interview.

> time as faraway Dutch land. My father, he was born there, in the Dutch East Indies. And therefore you have to fight the Indonesians. But you know, Indonesia is their country. Well, when you live there, you don't realize that.[48]

André seems to be considerably more critical of the Dutch than his father had been. He later explained that once he was in the Netherlands, he wanted to return to Indonesia as badly as his father had wanted to go to the Netherlands. This does not mean, however, that André felt Indonesian. 'In Indonesia I was *Indisch*. Not a Dutchman,' he stated. 'And then we moved to the Netherlands, and I was still *Indisch.* Not a Dutchman.'[49] In Indonesia, the family had been too Dutch; in the Netherlands, too Indonesian. In any case, André, like many other Indo-Dutch people, felt distinctly *Indisch.* André, his family, and others had been only some of the many people who were forced to reimagine and redefine their social identities as a result of the changing societal contexts they found themselves in.

André's story is emblematic for the experiences of many other individuals and families who decided – and had the possibility to – relocate to the Netherlands or other countries. It also illustrates some underlying factors that determined migration patterns and experiences of Indo-Dutch people. Firstly, it shows that individuals could have different notions of what it meant to be *Indisch*, and that there was no one, homogeneous sense of identity amongst them. Secondly, it exposes changing notions of race in both Indonesia and the country of settlement, and how those influenced the social identities of individuals in different ways. Thirdly, it shows that class and socioeconomic status could have a large impact on the possibilities and (im)mobility of people. In this chapter, these underlying notions will be explored consecutively, as well as how they relate to the current academic debate on social identity and postcolonialism.

2.1. Differing notions of Indo-Dutchness

After the Indonesian war of independence or *bersiap* period, hundreds of thousands of Indos were involuntarily displaced, similar to André's family. Many had already fled their homeland – to the Netherlands, Dutch New Guinea, Australia, or Singapore – but not all with the idea of never returning. After some years, however, the new Indonesian government forced them to make a decision as to where they would want to live. On paper, they were given a choice: hold onto Dutch citizenship or become a *warga negara*, an Indonesian citizen. Many felt a strong connection to their Dutch heritage, and so opted to move – others, however, decided to remain in Indonesia.

Though it seems like a mere choice, many factors contributed to whether or not one was able to relocate to the Netherlands. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide an in-depth account of the so-called repatriation and the debate it elicited in the Netherlands, but Charlotte Laarman's excellent

[48] André, interview.
[49] André, interview.

book *Oude Onbekenden* outlines some of the dynamics. According to Laarman, it became clear for Indos that they were not quite welcome in either country. In the Netherlands, the government tried to actively discourage Indos from coming to the Netherlands. It blamed it on the housing shortage in the Netherlands, and was dealing with the rebuilding of Dutch society after the Second World War. Instead, the Dutch government encouraged Indo-Dutch people to migrate to the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.[50]

The result of this, then, was that the identity of individuals suddenly became contested and had to be redefined. In *Ik wilde eigenlijk niet gaan,* one person recounts of their journey:

> Even though you fully realized that you are actually on an emigrant ship and that you are only now the Indo-par-excellence: in the middle of two homelands and with the vague realization that you are not welcome in either homeland, because you are, after all, a national alien to both. In Holland because you have too many strange habits and cannot immediately fit into the closing social system, in Indonesia because despite your hundreds, perhaps thousands, of personal friendships, you are officially undesirable. And perhaps in fact, because you have too few cultural values.[51]

Supposedly, the quintessential "Indo" did not, in fact, exist. Rather, the sudden mass migration prompted questions of identity, ethnicity, and belonging, fueled further by the way others perceived Indo-Dutch people's racial identity. Perhaps it was also this realization that lived in many an Indo's mind – this too, then, that prompted some individuals to launch a worldwide, diasporic effort to uphold the culture, define "The Indo", and create spaces to share in a common sense of "Indoness", something that will be further explored in chapter 4. In some way, however, every Indo was confronted with a displaced sense of identity, to which each of them reacted in a different way.

In the example of André's father, he seemed to feel most closely connected to his Dutch identity. Others, however, described a feeling quite opposite to his. Fiep, for example, stated that she felt more Indonesian than Dutch. She shared:

> Especially after the way the Dutch government received us here, it was not very good. They should know that. I will just say it, they profited off of us. I would even say I appreciate the Indonesian anthem more than the *Wilhelmus van Oranje.* Sorry, I do not know a king. I do know *Inonesia tanah airku.* Indonesia, my homeland. *Di sana aku berdiri*. That is where I rose. Where the blood of my mother once flowed. That means much more to me than the *Wilhelmus*. The content of that does nothing for me.[52]

It seems, therefore, that her self-proclaimed identity is more closely connected to being Indonesian than to being Dutch. Interestingly, not once during the interview does she mention that she is Indonesian as

[50] Laarman, *Oude onbekenden*, 56-57.
[51] Boon and Van Geleuken, *Ik wilde eigenlijk niet gaan,* 52.
[52] Fiep, interview.

such – only that she feels *more* Indonesian. Inherent to this statement, then, is still a sense of mixed identity.

If André's father, who felt extremely Dutch, and Fiep, who indicates feeling more Indonesian, are two extremes, perhaps "Indoness" can be defined on a spectrum. This is what Frans, too, explains. 'You have *Indische* people, of course, who lean a little bit more to the Indonesian side, and some who tend to feel a bit more Dutch. In my case,' Frans states, 'I think have both.'[53] He describes it as having cultural traits considered to be typically Indonesian, and others that are typically Dutch. He shares:

> Being Indo means a double culture existing within you. On the one hand, the humility of the Easterling, and on the other hand, I would almost say the directness of the Dutchman, but in a disguised form. Being *Indisch* means being complacent. Oh, nevermind, oh, the time will come. Being *Indisch* means liking good food. Hospitality. Gossip. Being superstitious. Yes, Indo people are superstitious.[54]

For him, then, the combination of these traits seems to create a culture that, to some extent, could be defined in terms of two cultures merging or coexisting within one person. This, however, did not always happen in a harmonious way. Jan, for example, shares that the coexistence of these two cultures within him, and the practical differences they caused in his upbringing at home or, for example, at the Dutch school he attended, were the cause of many internal conflicts.[55]

Depending on the country in which one settled, this search for, and uncertainty around, identity maybe have been an inner quest or one that was expected to be more explicitly defined. In the United States, for example, citizens are asked to state their ethnic background when filling out certain forms. This asks of individuals to define their identity in more absolute ways, but also highlights nothing of being 'othered'. Johanna, for example, who left Indonesia as a preteen, spent some years in the Netherlands, and eventually settled in the United States with her family when she was a teenager, indicated to feel strongly connected to her Eurasian identity as such, rather than identifying with a combination of Dutch or European, and Asian traits. When asked what it meant for her to be Indo, she recounted:

> What it means to be Indo. I don't like it, to tell you the truth. Because it's hard to be accepted. America has a lot of diverse people. But America still looks down to, well, I call myself Eurasian because I was born in Asia an my nationality is European. So every time they ask me on my documents what race I am, I just say Eurasian. And they ask me, why do you say Eurasian? Because I'm not Asian, I'm not white, and I'm not Mexican either. So that's why I put Eurasian. I have to explain why I checked off "other" and put Eurasian. Every ten years they have a head count for the population, so you have to fill in a form and you have to check off what your nationality is. So I always say Eurasian.[56]

[53] Frans, interviewed by the author, March 14, 2022.
[54] Frans, interview.
[55] Jan, interviewed by the author, March 1, 2022.
[56] Johanna, interviewed by the author, March 28, 2022.

In many ways, then, the questions around ethnic identification of Indo-Dutch people seems to be connected to the impossibility of fitting into binary categories of belonging. Pamela Pattynama, for example, analyzes this as such: 'Whereas mixed-race identity in the East Indies cut through all existing boundaries of "race" and gender and had a presence larger than life, in postcolonial, Europeanized Holland, Indo-Dutch intermingling that is neither white nor Indonesian seems to be unthinkable and is therefore relegated to an empty space – invisible.'[57] What is important to note is that such 'assimilation theories and popular representations of Indo-Dutch people reflect not so much Indo-Dutch identity as such but the binary terms in which Dutch national identity itself eclipsed.'[58] Indo-Dutch identity itself, then, was not binary but fluid and complex.

2.2. Perceived race and a sense of belonging

Even though it has become undoubtedly clear that Indo-Dutch identity was fluid and different for each individual, some of the abovementioned accounts also indicate that external factors influenced the way in which Indo people viewed and defined their identities. 'Colonialism is definitely over,' Tjalie Robinson wrote in the 15 March 1972 edition of *Tong Tong*, 'except for the mixed-blood!'[59] More than once, he was told something along the lines of 'Let us quickly erase that nasty halfness. To me, you are a Dutchman (c.q. Indonesian).'[60] He likened his experiences to other postcolonial, mixed-race individuals, who were never truly seen as indigenous to either one of their cultures. The confusion and questions this elicited, then, caused a wide range of identities to emerge.

From the abovementioned accounts, this diversity of identities becomes clear. They were conflicted or harmonized, more Dutch or more Indonesian, or a new, Eurasian identity was embodied. The last account, however, that of Johanna who mentioned to dislike being Indo-Dutch because of maltreatment of Americans, confirms that identity formation is never isolated from the context in which one finds themselves.

Although for Johanna, this discrimination and sense of non-belonging caused her to dislike her Eurasian heritage, for others, the othering had the opposite effect. Jan, for example, shared that his Indo-Dutch identity became stronger through discrimination. He explained that he was only confronted with the fact that he looked different from white Dutch people through having to face discrimination and racism. I was then that he started to explore his Indo-Dutch identity:

> I only became aware of my identity later on, when I was faced with discrimination. […] At some point, you become more aware of your identity. And then at some point you start paying more

[57] Pattynama, "Assimilation and masquerade," 292.
[58] Idem, 293.
[59] Tjalie Robinson, "Moeder Abels," *Tong Tong*, March 15, 1972, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/TONG/1972-03-15/edition/0/page/8
[60] Robinson, "Moeder Abels."

> attention to it, and it's true, when I was in my teenage years, around that time I had a tendency to hang out with Indische people more often. Just to find your identity a little, you know. You feel different, even though you didn't feel like that before. But at some point you just can't escape it any longer.[61]

Through these experiences of being othered, but also through notions of belonging, he drew closer to the group in which he recognized a sense of identity that he could not find elsewhere.

For dominant societies, judgments with regards to belonging seemed to have frequently been made based on physical appearances. This did not always correlate with the way in which Indo-Dutch people viewed themselves. Fiep, who, as mentioned earlier, may have felt more Indonesian herself, was often mistaken for being Dutch by Dutch people and other *Indische* people alike. 'I actually didn't look very Indo. I had light eyes, and I was white, you couldn't really tell I was Indo just from looking at me. But as soon as I opened my mouth and started speaking, you could tell, *djedar djedoer*. The accent. I still have it.'[62] This is similar to the findings of Doornbos, Van Hoven, and Groote, who encountered people who identified as distinctly Indo-Dutch, but were often perceived as Dutch by others.[63] This shows again that one's own perception of their social identity and the way in which they are perceived and framed by others do not always correlate.

In general, language proficiency helped a great deal with integrating into society. Although most Indo-Dutch people spoke with an *Indies* accent, they seemed to have been accepted more easily into Dutch society than those who did not speak Dutch. For example, both Liesbeth and Edward indicated that they had been asked where they had learned Dutch. 'They would ask us: did you learn Dutch on board [of the ship]? Yeah, right. Our name is Jansen, we are Dutch.'[64] Although they were racially profiled by white Dutch people, their language proficiency bridged the initial gap between the Indo-Dutch newcomers and the Dutch population. At the same time, the opposite was also true. Not everyone who came to the Netherlands spoke Dutch, and those who settled in a country where a language was spoken other than Dutch or Indonesian also did not have the advantage of knowing the language. Johanna, for example who settled in the United States, shares that having to learn a new language made her experience challenging.[65]

It also would be incorrect to assume that every Indo-Dutch person spoke Dutch. Though the majority had learned Dutch at some point or had attended a Dutch school in the Indies, some of the lower class individuals or those who had spent a considerable time in postcolonial Indonesia, where speaking Dutch was prohibited, did not have the same language proficiency. Fiep, for example, whose mother was of a lower class and had not had the opportunity to go to a Dutch school in the Indies, states:

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[61] Jan, interview.
[62] Fiep, interview.
[63] Doornbos, Van Hoven, and Groote, "Negotiating claims of 'whiteness,'" 9.
[64] Edward, interview.
[65] Johanna, interview.

> My mother and I spoke Indonesian every day, she did not speak a word of Dutch. We are foreigners, really. That's how you could call us. We were the first foreigners that came here. Yes, I was born in another country, so I am a foreigner. Well, I'm not ashamed of it, that's it. I am proud of it.[66]

In this sense, language proficiency contributed a great deal to one's social identity, but also to the way others perceived them or how they perceived their own place in society. André shared that language was a great barrier for him and prevented him from getting accepted into Dutch society immediately, as well as feeling less connected to Dutch society.[67]

There is one group of Indo-Dutch migrants in particular that seems to have elicited yet another redefinition of Indo-Dutchness, especially as it pertains to class distinctions. After a number of years, in the 1950s, many *warga negaras* with Dutch heritage, as well as those who had Dutch heritage but were never in possession of a Dutch passport, pleaded that they were being treated in a discriminatory way in Indonesia and that they would like to obtain Dutch citizenship – so-called *spijtoptanten*. The Dutch government decided to categorize the Indo-Dutch people into two categories: "Eastern" and "Western" Dutch people, which had the purpose of determining the assimilability of the individual. On this topic, Laarman states:

> The 'assimilability' in Dutch society was an important, but flexible criterium. Most Indo-Dutch people who, after the war, came to the Netherlands, did have the Dutch nationality but that did not mean their admission was undisputed or that their membership of the Dutch nation was obvious. This was true particularly for those Indo-Dutch people who were deemed unable to assimilate in the Netherlands or who, it was feared, would be a burden (economic or social) to Dutch society because of their low level of education and low class. … The exclusion of Indo-Dutch people was based on color and class. The best solution, it was thought, was to provide financial support to the hard-to-assimilate in Indonesia, rather than giving them an advance to pay for their journey in the Netherlands. The thought behind this was that once the situation in Indonesia had improved, they would no longer want to come to the Netherlands.[68]

It seems that notions of what it meant to "belong" as an Indo-Dutch person were redefined yet again by the Dutch government and Dutch society.

What these findings show, then, are that the way in which others perceived their racial heritage could affect Indo-Dutch people in a number of ways. On the one hand, being constantly confronted with the ways in which they were different from the white Dutch population – through language or skin color, for example – forced many people to define their identity in racial terms in some way. For some, this resulted in a more close relationship with their Indo heritage, whereas others disliked that part of themselves. However, one's own perception of identity and the way someone perceived them, such as in the example of Fiep, who others perceived as white but felt very Indo herself, did not always correlate.

[66] Fiep, interview.
[67] André, interview.
[68] Laarman, *Oude onbekenden*, 60.

2.3. The remnants of colonial class distinctions in the diaspora

Often, the move away from the Indies also had direct and obvious implications for Indo-Dutch people on a socioeconomic level. One man, as quoted in *Ik wilde eigenlijk niet gaan*, a collection of excerpts from interviews with repatriates and other (primary) sources, shared: "Almost everyone tumbled down the social ladder [in the Netherlands]. … I was walking through the city, I saw a man behind a hand cart, carrying bales of flour. I thought: he looks like my father. It *was* him. The former police inspector from the Indies."[69] The layers, complexities, and social rules of the Indo-Dutch community that were so important in Indies society became obsolete in the diaspora and the societies in which *Indischen* found themselves. Take, for example, this self-proclaimed housewife, who shared her *piekerans* in *Tong-Tong* in 1974: "What about our identity problems? Maybe you were a real dignified *Nyonya Besar* with many social obligations, or one of the many *Nyonyas Muda* with yet also her own specific place in our society at the time. Here, you suddenly became one out of the 'great multitude'."[70] In any case, the status of Indo-Dutch people in the diaspora seems to have frequently been different than in the Dutch East Indies – certain class distinctions that were important in colonial society took on very different shapes within the community, and mattered even less to their societies of settlement.

Many of the interviewees shared how, despite having been quite rich in the Dutch East Indies, they had to leave everything behind and became dependent on government aid in the Netherlands or elsewhere. Jan, for example, shared:

> My mom had just become a widow, and she left for the Netherlands with five children. But we were pretty rich, because my dad had a good job at a sugar plantation. So he had a good salary, a big house, and every time my dad got a promotion, we could move again to a bigger house. Each of us had their own *baboe*. […] We had a really good life, actually. But then when we went to the Netherlands we were not allowed to take anything. Everything was nationalized by Soekarno, and my mother came [to the Netherlands] with two suitcases. With some clothes. We had a lot of money there, so we were able to come by plane. […] And it was a very harsh winter, it was really cold. We had to buy everything new, and the government gave us money, but we had to pay everything back. I found receipts later, of the money my mom received every month, and we had to pay it back later in monthly installments. My mother had to work a lot during the evenings. And my oldest two sisters, I think the oldest was eleven or twelve, and the one below her, neither of them went back to school. They had to find jobs right away.[71]

[69] Boon and Van Geleuken, *Ik wilde eigenlijk niet gaan*, 99.
[70] Emy H.-Simon, "Piekerans van een Indische huisvrouw in Holland," *Tong Tong*, February 28, 1974, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/TONG/1974-06-15/edition/0/page/14
[71] Jan, interview.

Jan's experience mirrors that of many others at least to some extent. In a sense, then, most Indo-Dutch migrants were made to become equals economically – at least in a financial sense, class distinctions largely disappeared.

In the Indies, however, class distinctions were not only based on economic grounds, but also based on socio-relational ones. Tjalie Robinson recounts how, in the Indies, there was such a thing as *grote boeng* ("big man") and *kleine boeng* ("little man"), indicating higher and lower levels of society, respectively, that had implications both economically and socially. True to other aspects of Indo-European society, it seems that these terms, too, were hard to define. In a *Tong Tong* article from 30 August 1958, common misconceptions about *kleine boengs* are addressed: "contrary to widespread thought, *kleine boengs* actually speak Dutch well, are not 'paupers', and are not all *nozems* [aggressive and problematic]. The only common denominator seems to be that, though often hard-working, many *kleine boengs* have low-paying (but admirable) jobs, which means they are financially less well-off.[72] Interestingly, it seems that there was quite some level of social mobility: "Second mistake: not every *kleine boeng* in Kemajoran, forced by a starvation wage to live low, remained little. A significant number of *kleine boengs* reached top positions after European studies."[73] Although one could infer from these reflections that there was no sense of strict caste-system within the Indo-Dutch population – in fact, there seems to have been a fairly high level, or at least possibility, of social mobility –it is evident that among the Indo-Dutch population there was a sense of hierarchy.

This distinction, at least in the minds of Indo-Dutch people, did not disappear with the launch of the involuntary diaspora. For example, in *Ik wilde eigenlijk niet gaan*, one person shares:

> My husband took care of the children a little bit, he shared thoughts with other people from the hotel. But you can imagine how many annoyances and stuff that causes, right. Of course you've noticed by now how many gradations there are in the *Indische* community, that there are many people who can not properly express themselves. And then it's like: 'Mister Groenhart, could you suggest this to our contact person?' 'Well, I'd be happy to do that, as long as you will join yourself. What's on your mind? I don't mind joining, but try saying it yourself, and if you get stuck, then…' Those kinds of this, so he was acting as some kind of social worker.[74]

This also indicates how intertwined all of the distinguishing factors explored in this chapter are; language proficiency, level of (Dutch) education, and class were undeniably linked extremely closely.

On the other hand, while the higher class had prejudices about the lower class, the same was true the other way around. Lien, for example, mentioned the word *blaga* a few times, explaining that it means as much as "arrogant". When referring to people who acted *blaga*, she often characterized them as not wanting to have much to do their Indonesian side of their heritage, not wanting to associate as

[72] Tjalie Robinson, "Kleine en grote boengs," *Tong Tong,* August 30, 1958, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/TONG/1958-08-30/edition/0/page/1
[73] Robinson, "Kleine en grote boengs."
[74] Boon and Van Geleuken, *Ik wilde eigenlijk niet gaan,* 82.

much with other Indos, and trying to be as Dutch as possible.[75] Fiep, too, explained: 'There was a lot of solidarity in the Indo community. But for some people, they were very *blaga*, you know. They didn't want to speak Indonesian, for example. But not everyone was like that.'[76] In any case, it seemed different classes looked at each other differently, and it also shaped the daily experiences one had in the diaspora and the spaces one would attend.

2.4. Conclusion

In concluding this chapter, it should be clear that, on the one hand, Indo identity was not uniform and instead unique to each individual's experiences. At the same time, it was not static, nor disconnected from perceptions of others. Some felt secure in their Indo-Dutchness, others were influenced, in fact, by the binary way of thinking of their societies of settlement and the discrimination they faced to some extent, by trying to become "more Dutch" or "more American". Each of them, however, identified in some way, whether positive or negative, with their Indo-Dutchness. In line with the findings of Doornbos, Van Hoven, and Groote[77], the way in which Indo-Dutch people negotiated their identities were often influenced by racialized violence and perceptions of others.

It also seems that while for non-Indo-Dutch people, their social identities were defined and analyzed mostly in terms of physical features, for Indo-Dutch people themselves, the Indo-Dutch identity transcended race and was more concerned with the cultural values or historical experiences they embodied. These, in turn, could be vastly different for each individual, depending on their class, (perceived) race and, as will be expanded upon further in the next chapter, gender.

Furthermore, though some describe their identity in terms of feeling "more Indonesian" or "more Dutch", none described feeling fully Indonesian or Dutch, and most said they felt "Indo-Dutch" as a new constructed identity that challenges notions of racial binaries. In line with Sarah E. Gaither, this shows the complexity of identity and the limitedness of thinking in terms of either/or binary constructs of identity,[78] something that European society with its clear notions of "insiders" and "outsiders" has a tendency of doing.[79]

Finally, many hierarchies and relationships among the Indo-Dutch populations shifted, as well as their personal daily experiences. The high social status some families enjoyed in the Indies meant little in the context of post-war societies. This will be explored further in the next chapters.

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[75] Lien, interview.
[76] Fiep, interview.
[77] Julia Doornbos, Van Hoven, and Grootte, "Negotiating claims of 'whiteness'" 9.
[78] Gaither, "The multiplicity of belonging," 450.
[79] Philomena Essed, "Gender, Migration and Cross-Ethnic Coalition Building," in *Cross-fires: Nationalism, Racism and Gender in Europe,* ed. Helma Lutz, Ann Phoenix, and Nira Yuval-Davis (London and East Haven: Pluto Press, 1995), 137.

3. Tracing masculinities and femininities in the diaspora

On the 16th of May in 1960, an opinion piece in *Tong Tong* reflected on societal standards for Indo-Dutch people in the Netherlands compared to how they were in the Dutch East Indies. In the Indies, the European hegemony that prevailed in the region determined much of what was considered to be desirable behavior. For people in the Indies, this meant trying to adhere as closely as possible to such standards, or as the author of the article describes:

> "That is not how Europeans behave" was the *leitmotiv* for European behavior amongst Asians in the former Dutch East Indies, resulting in a remarkably strong sense of social decency and the pushing down of crime rates. To such a large extent even, that even now, in the Netherlands, the people from the Indies stand out because of their "inner civilization."[80]

The author goes on to reflect on living as an ethnic minority in both societies, how societal standards are often determined by the majority population and how they, as Indo-Dutch people, were seen by the majority. Whereas in the Indies, as stated above, this meant behaving according to their European status and reflecting "European qualities", in the Netherlands this meant being a good example of "Indo-Dutch behavior". What this meant, however, took on a new form:

> In general in *Indische* circles, a new *leitmotiv* is heard: "That is not how an *Indische* boy (or *Indisch* girl) should behave!" *Indische* hotheads are taught here to control their will to fight; *Indische* girls are less light-hearted and free. Adults keep from angry discussions in public. Slowly but surely, a new position on decency is emerging.[81]

Although these reflections refer to changing notions of decency for all Indo-Dutch people in general, it also hints at the idea that the implications were different for boys and girls. In Dutch society, apparently, Indos were told to be more sober and calm than had been socially acceptable in the Indies, and it seems that features and characteristics that were considered to be distinctly feminine or masculine were (re)regulated in different ways as the community and individuals were adapting to new social and geographical contexts.

In addition to these changing outward contexts, the inner dynamics of many Indo-Dutch families also changed as a result of the wars they had gone through during the years prior to their emigration from the former Indies. Of the eleven people interviewed for the purpose of this thesis, for example, two had come to the Netherlands as minors without their parents, and three had come with their mother but without their father, because they had perished during the wars.[82] During the war, many women were left to take care of their families in the midst of danger and confusion, and suddenly they had to fulfill

[80] Tjalie Robinson, "Dat doe je niet als Europeaan, dat doe je niet als Indische jongen," *Tong Tong*, May 16, 1960, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/TONG/1960-05-16/edition/0/page/1
[81] Robinson, "Dat doe je niet."
[82] Lien, interview; Jan, interview; Frans, interview; Fiep, interview; Edward, interview.

the role of both parental figures in the home at once. Even when the men returned home after fighting in, or having been taken prisoner during, the war, women's roles in the home had changed drastically.[83]

Additionally, for those Indo-Dutch families who had enjoyed a wealthy lifestyle in the former colony, this also meant that, for the first time, they did not have any servants in the home that would take care of daily work around the house. 'My mother cried like a baby when we went from Indonesia to Holland,' Johanna explained, 'because there were no *baboes*. We had a *baboe* for the garden and a *baboe* for cooking, a *baboe* for everything. So my mom always worked [in the Indies], I've never seen my mom not work. She did embroidery twenty four hours a day.'[84] The realization, then, that she now had to take on the role of what could be considered the more traditional European housewife was something she seemed to have had a hard time accepting.

What should become clear, then, from these accounts and those discussed in the previous chapters, is that the role of a woman or man in the home was often determined in connection to their class or status. However, it is worthwhile to explore in more depth the dominant and marginalized masculinities and femininities, because it highlights further particularities and factors that determined one's position in the diaspora. Interestingly, the way in which masculinities and femininities in the diaspora were (re)defined seems to have happened in one of two ways: in the public sphere, most notably the workforce, and the way in which Indo-Dutch men and women presented themselves outwardly, on the one hand, and in the private sphere and dynamics within the family, on the other. It is in these two contexts, then, that gender roles will be explored in this chapter.

3.1. Maneuvering gender roles in the public sphere

Although most of the people interviewed for the purpose of this thesis were young when they left the former Netherlands Indies and were not of an age to work themselves, they observed the way in which the roles of their parents in the household changed. Jan's father was one of the many men who passed away before the family had the chance to emigrate from the former Dutch East Indies. The story of his family, in many ways, resembles that of other Indo-Dutch families in the diaspora. The role of Jan's mother, and thus prevailing gender norms, changed multiple times in only a few decades. Before she got married, Jan explained,

> She worked briefly as an administrative assistant for some company, until she got married. That's just the way it was in those days, you know. As soon as you got married, the woman should stay home and take care of the children. Well, she didn't really have to take care of the

[83] Theo Kappers, "Point of no return," *Tong Tong*, August 15, 1985, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/MOESSON/1985-08-15/edition/0/page/20
[84] Selia, interview.

> children either, because each of us had their own *baboe*. […] That's just the way it was at the time.[85]

This implies that women's roles in the house were quite complex – though both the abovementioned account and the scope of this thesis are too limited to go into colonial gender roles in depth, one can infer that the role of a housewife was not, as modern readers might be led to assume, to tend to the household. Women seemed to have had an in-between position; on the one hand, they were expected to cease working outside of the context of the home, but on the other hand, once having obtained a certain level of wealth or status, they were also expected to employ *baboes*.

Upon relocating to a postcolonial society, the relationship between Indo-Dutch women and the workforce often changed once again. In Jan's family, which consisted of five children and his mother upon arrival in the Netherlands, his mother became the main breadwinner of the family. His two oldest sisters – the oldest was twelve at the time – also had to find a day job immediately. They were never able to return to school. Jan stated:

> My mom often had to work until deep in the night, because during the day she would have to take care of the children at home. And then in the evening, when my older sisters would be home, she would go to work. At the chicken butchery or a catering company, you know, just to get some extra money.[86]

In Jan's case, his mother would not only challenge prevailing gender roles by adopting aspects of duties that were traditionally reserved for men, but also continue to fulfill the duties traditionally assigned to women.

Even in families where both the mother and father were present, however, gender norms were challenged. Whereas in the Indies the man of the household often worked and, depending on the level of wealth of the family, the woman tended to the household, the servants, or other leisurely activities, in the Netherlands most families were catapulted into debt due to the government policies of having to pay back 60% of the family's income to the government each month. Both André and Hendrik describe how both of their parents had to work in order to be able to make ends meet.[87] Hendrik, for example, shared: 'In the beginning it wasn't all that great, in the fifties. A small upstairs apartment, and my mother had to sow and knit clothes all day, you name it. There was no money otherwise, you know.'[88] The work of his mother in the home, therefore, was both a source of income and a means to obtain clothing.

Though for women changing gender roles in the workforce and public sphere were defined mostly in terms of practical changes in their daily lives, in the case of men they were often explored in terms of characteristics and qualities that were specific to Indo-Dutch men. In an article of *Moesson* –

[85] Jan, interview.
[86] Jan, interview.
[87] André, interview; Hendrik, interview
[88] Hendrik, interview

the successor of *Tong Tong* – on 15 June 1985, an Indo-Dutch coronel in the Dutch army, Ruud Broekholt, argued that *Indische* men were particularly suited to work in the army:

> In the army I saw that many *Indische* guys reached the top, because they have the right qualities: *pedis* [spicy] but not aggressive and knowledge of the field. In civilian life, *Indische* interests were suppressed often and we let ourselves be suppressed, and to be honest: we took a step back ourselves too quickly.[89]

Interestingly, then, in addition to the qualities that made *Indische* men suitable for such a profession, Broekholt also describes a phenomenon similar to the masquerading described by Pamela Pattynama. According to her, being forced into binary notions of belonging (as opposed to the Indies, where mixed-race identities had a place in society), pushed individuals into a masquerade of being "almost white" and therefore the "model minority."[90]

Hendrik, too, observed such masquerading in his father. The difference could be observed most prominently in how his father behaved at work in comparison to how he behaved in his private life. At work, Hendrik describes his father as being "adapted". At home, however, he acted like a "real *Indisch* person". He did not want to display wealth by buying a large house, although at some point he was able to secure a well-paying job, and he did not like the arrogance he found to be typical for Dutch men. Compared to how his dad acted at work or in contact with more formal relations, Hendrik contends, he became his true self when he was in his home or with other Indos:

> Normally and at work, my dad was a very neat gentleman. Very serious. […] But at home, and especially when other *Indische* people came over, he changed. His accent would come out, speak some Malay. He would squat down and tell *Indische* folktales, like *tante Lien*. I think my father could do it even better than her. He had an entire repertoire. Then he would tell the story of Snow White, but with an *Indische* twist. Who ate my *tempeh*? But then when he would leave the home, it would disappear immediately. That was very strange, and he never addressed it.[91]

This shows that though outwardly, Indo-Dutch people (and especially men) seemed to fit into the Dutch workforce seamlessly by displaying the desired characteristics and qualities, it was merely a form of masquerading qualities they felt more comfortable with.

In concluding the abovementioned accounts, it becomes clear that the gender roles that Indo-Dutch people adopted upon relocating to postcolonial societies were fluid and did not necessarily conform absolutely to prevailing gender norms of their receiving societies. For women, it often had practical implications and manifested in expectations of how they contributed to their family on a daily basis; for men, it seems that the changes were most obviously detectable in the qualities and

[89] Ruud Boekholt, "Pedis maar niet agressief," *Moesson*, June 15, 1985, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/MOESSON/1985-06-15/edition/0/page/29
[90] Pattynama, "Assimilation and Masquerade," 292.
[91] Hendrik, interview.

characteristics they displayed outwardly. Especially in the case of the latter, men learned to masquerade and present themselves to others in a way that was considered desirable by their societies of settlement.

3.2. Masculinities and femininities in the home

In the private sphere, too, gender roles underwent a drastic change. Jan's mother, for example, was confronted with her new role as a housewife gradually as she observed other (Dutch) women and their roles in the home. 'One day,' Jan explained, 'she saw the neighbor from across the street sweeping the sidewalk. And she thought, oh dear, I have to do that myself now, you know. Yes, she had to get used to that. In Indonesia others did all of that for her.'[92] On the one hand, this changing role had clear notions of class differences. At the same time, it also begins to indicate how the role of a housewife was being redefined by, in the case of Jan's mother, Dutch society, similar to Ms. Mary Brückel-Beiten, who aimed to become like a 'sturdy and self-confident Dutchwoman'[93], as mentioned in the introduction.

One of the ways in which the changing position and role of *Indische* housewives was being redefined was through the skill of cooking. The many references to *baboes, kokkies,* and other servants in *Indische* households in the Indies – at least for wealthy families - that have been mentioned so far, indicate that the skill of cooking was not one that was always necessary to have as an Indo-Dutch parent prior to emigration from the former Indies. Jan explicitly stated that his mother learned to cook only upon settling in the Netherlands, because in the Indies their servants would do this for the family.[94]

It would be incorrect to assume that in those families who did have to provide their own meals, the cooking was reserved only for women. In an article in the 15 February 1984 edition of *Moesson*, a woman named Hilda reflects on her parents' roles in the house when they lived in the Indies. Her mother had never learned how to cook, so she would continue to make the same few dishes for her husband over and over again. After gaining wealth, they were able to afford to hire a *kokkie*, who taught her mother to make a few more dishes. 'She was enjoying herself, but the joy quickly subsided once mom and dad moved to Java and grandma and grandpa and dad's step brother moved in, because the step brother could cook excellent food and although mom had a *kokkie*, grandpa was the master chef.'[95] It seems, therefore, that in the Indies, cooking was not as strictly tied to gender roles as it seems to have been in European societies.

In the postcolonial societies of settlement, however, where the role of the woman, and specifically the housewife, was defined in different terms, cooking became an important aspect of women's lives. Interestingly, although the act of cooking and the desire to be a good housewife may

[92] Jan, interview.
[93] Brückel-Beiten, "Ben ik geassimileerd?"
[94] Jan, interview.
[95] Hilda, "Crisisjaren," *Moesson,* February 15, 1984, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/MOESSON/1984-04-01/edition/0/page/19

have been strengthened by European gender roles, the way in which these were defined were still quite unique to Indo-Dutch women. An article and advertisement for an electric rice cooker – one that would return in many subsequent editions of *Tong Tong*, such as the one pictured below – in the 30 November 1966 edition of *Tong Tong* explores some of unique characteristics of *Indische* housewives:

> The rice cooker is DOING WELL, just like we expected. Even in these expensive times many housewives (and considerate spouses) have been able to find the money to pay in cash for one of the rice cookers or provide the money for the first installment. This should clearly falsify that "the Indo-Dutch housewife" is conservative and fearful of new things. In our twelve years of contact with *Indische* housewives we have learned that with regards to *good moral values* she is indeed conservative (bravo!), but above all that she is *practical*. The modern living rooms and kitchens even in simple households, the many modern time-saving appliances, and the enormous ease with which all this is handled are testimony to this.[96]

This paragraph shows that, among other things, she had to adhere to high and conservative moral values, and was also responsible for managing the entire household. Although, at first sight, this might be representative of the prevalent European values at the time, upon closer examination it seems that the paragraph is meant to, in fact, highlight the uniqueness of Indo-Dutch women. The juxtaposition of conservative and modern values in this article seems to be aimed at setting apart Indo-Dutch housewives from other housewives – that is, the housewives native to the societies in which they settled. Additionally, in the same way that the *Indische* man was often distinguished by his qualities in the public sphere, the *Indische* woman stood out against her Dutch counterpart by qualities reflected in the private sphere.

Figure 1: An advertisement from the 29 April 1967 edition of Tong Tong for an electric rice cooker aimed specifically at Tong Tong-reading Indo-Dutch housewives. The heading reads: 'How far are you lagging behind other readers, dear housewife?'

Upon reading these accounts, one might be led to assume that main role of the Indo-Dutch woman in the diaspora was to be a housewife and, out of mere financial necessity, work to support the family. Tjalie Robinson, however, reflected on the true value of the Indo-Dutch woman in particular in the 1 September 1957 edition of *Onze Brug*, the predecessor of *Tong Tong*. He stated:

> Now, in Holland, the *Indische* woman trudges through all the markets through rain, snow and hail, and sees it as an opportunity to create her own dish out of strange and new resources. Even

[96] Anonymous, "De electrische rijstkokers," *Tong Tong*, November 30, 1966, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/TONG/1966-11-30/edition/0/page/12

> now, she creates a cozy home for her family in a concrete barrack. But also in different cultural spheres, the *Indische* girl has always distinguished herself honorably. There have been musicians, singers, and dancers with a remarkable reputation. To this day, there are more women than men amongst Indo-Dutch writers. […] In the old Indies, many IEV-men[97] were accompanied by an energetic woman. […] When 99 out of 100 Indos were only thinking about safe governmental jobs, many women maintained themselves as entrepreneurs in society: as florist, caterer, or stylist. It is true, the Indo-Dutch woman has twice, thrice as much sense of independence and individuality as the Indo-Dutch man. And how is she often seen in public opinion? A cute thing, so-and-so's wife, a nice girl, and nothing else.[98]

Although Robinson does not contest the image that the Indo-Dutch housewife in the diaspora is responsible for the home as well as for cooking, his reflections on additional roles of Indo-Dutch woman show that their position in the home did not exclude them from participating fully in the public sphere and make meaningful cultural and intellectual contributions to both Indo-Dutch and wider society. It is important to emphasize, however, that the perception of women still seems to have been that they assumed a position in society that was secondary to men, particularly their husbands.

A final notable observation is that although cooking does not seem to have been exclusively reserved for women, there may be indications that upon relocating to another society, more traditional European gender roles with regards to women and cooking were introduced at least to some extent in parenting as well. Fiep, for example, stated:

> My mother was at home a lot, and other people would come and play cards at our house. My mom would cook a lot, and eat. And I was always there, really, or I would serve them. Us girls, we always had to help our parents in the kitchen, so that why most *Indischen* can cook well, because we learned from our parents. My mother got a job at the *pasar malam* later, that is an *Indische* market, and she would cook and I would help.[99]

Interestingly, she states that she had to help her parents in the kitchen, which suggests that both her mother and her father cooked. Perhaps, this implies that dominant femininities and gender roles were changing as a result of settlement in different societies.

In any case, the lack of reflections of the role of the man in the private sphere also supports the suggestion that while complex, it seems that the most important role in the diasporic private sphere was reserved for the Indo-Dutch woman, particularly the housewife, although she may have been able to participate freely in other aspects of society – and be admired for it. The fact that in the colonial Dutch East Indies many women were relieved of such duties once her family had acquired a certain amount of

[97] The IEV or *Indo-Europeesch Verbond* (Indo-European Alliance) was an interest group in the Dutch East Indies that aimed to unite Indo-Dutch people across the Indies and advocated for representation of Indo-Dutch people in colonial affairs. It was active in the first half of the twentieth century.
[98] Tjalie Robinson, "De Indische huisvrouw," *Onze Brug*, September 1, 1957, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/BRUG/1957-09-01/edition/0/page/3
[99] Fiep, interview.

wealth shows that such gender roles were not inherent to all Indo-Dutch families, and they likely adopted them upon relocation to their respective postcolonial societies.

3.3. Conclusion

In its most banal form, this chapter showed that masculinities and femininities in the diaspora, especially in these first few decades of the emergence of the diaspora, went through a myriad of transformations as social, financial, and geographical circumstances of Indo-Dutch people changed. It revealed, furthermore, that gender roles and class were closely tied together. In the diaspora, where wealth was lost and most families were struggling financially, most women were forced to find employment. Furthermore, traditional notions of what it meant to be a good European housewife shaped the way in which Indo-Dutch housewives desired to become. It was in this context, then, that masculinities and femininities in both the public and private spheres were most heavily affected.

For men, it seems that most detectable changes in gender roles happened in the context of the way in which they presented themselves outwardly. Reflections were often presented in the context of employment and the distinctive qualities of Indo-Dutch men in the workforce. The desirable qualities for women, however, were often explored in the context of the home and what it meant to be a good *Indisch* housewife, often in comparison to housewives native to their country of settlement. In the public sphere, most reflections on dominant femininities referred to their practical contribution to the workforce. Both men and women succeeded in embodying the fluidity of such expectation and negotiated their identity based on the context they were in. Pattynama calls this "masquerading," in which individuals are 'ethnic agents rather than victims of history.'[100]

Finally, it is imperative not to emphasize this "Europeanization" of masculinities and femininities in the diaspora too heavily. Although it is true that the binary nature of their postcolonial societies of settlement left little room for the hybrid identities of Indo-Dutch people in the Indies, it would also be incorrect to state that such "European" gender roles found no expression in their colonial society. What I have tried to argue in this chapter, however, is that class distinctions were annihilated and European notions of gender, both in the public and private spheres, were further defined and narrowed. I also tried to argue that through the process of masquerading and intergenerational developments, the process of navigating gender roles was multidimensional and complex. In any case, it should be evident that one's sex had an immense impact on one's experiences as an Indo-Dutch person in the diaspora.

[100] Pattynama, "Assimilation and Masquerade," 295.

4. The politics and challenges of a collective identity

Many scholars agree that in the Indies, there was no true sense of an Indo-Dutch community. Perhaps this stems from the fact that Indos could be found in many layers of colonial society. Indos themselves even had terms to identify at least two different 'types' of Indo-Europeanness in Indies society, as mentioned before: *kleine boeng* and *grote boeng*. It seems, therefore, that there was no true sense of Indo-European solidarity that would make such differences obsolete.

This is not to say that the Indo-Dutch community was entirely disunited. Some attempts of the unification of the community across all layers of society were made in the first half of the twentieth century by visionary Indos who founded interest groups that advocated for Indo-Dutch representation in colonial affairs. The most famous – and successful – of these was arguably the *Indo-Europeesch Verbond* (Indo-European Alliance or IEV). The first difficulty regarding membership arose when trying to define "Indo-European". A newspaper article from 1 July 1919, reflecting on the IEV's first meeting, recounts that "a correct definition of the word 'Indo' could not be given, nor did the expression '*hiergeborene*' suffice, for there were Indos that were not born in this country, and, for example, Ambonese people are also *hiergeborenen*."[101] The final first statue included all mixed-race Indo-Europeans, as well as those of European descent as long as the latter was born in the Indies and even then Europeans could only be financial donors instead of full members.[102]

At its height, however, the number of members was only 15,000. An opinion piece in *Tong Tong* suggests that in later decades many Indos applauded the work of the IEV, which fought for the interests of the Indo ethnic minority in the Indies and its legal and social status. At the time, it seems that few Indos joined the Alliance, and even made fun of De Hoog, the chairman of the organization, for his vision.[103] The IEV was not the only one, however, that tried to unify Indos: many self-published magazines were published already before the IEV first came together. None of them seems to have been able to gather a large following, and many were met with indignation by the community.[104] It seems, therefore, that in the Indies, though many people shared a common multiraciality, there was little unity among them, or even a shared sense of identity.

The seeming non-existence of a collective Indo-Dutch identity (or the lack of desire for such a thing) changed after the involuntary launch of the Indo-Dutch diaspora after the Second World war. Especially magazines such as *Tong Tong*, which was specifically aimed at preserving Indo-Dutch culture, contributed to the conversation around such a phenomenon. The aim, however, of Indo-Dutch

[101] Het Indo-Europeesch Verbond. "Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië". *Batavia*, July 1, 1919, https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010179925:mpeg21:p001
[102] Het Indo-Europeesch Verbond. "Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië". *Batavia*, July 12, 1919, https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010179935:mpeg21:p001
[103] Anonymous, "Indo's in Amerika en 'Hall of Fame'", *Tong Tong*, January 30, 1966, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/TONG/1966-01-30/edition/0/page/7
[104] Anonymous, "Goentoer Bergerak," *Tong Tong*, May 1, 1973, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/TONG/1973-05-01/edition/0/page/5

unification efforts in the diaspora differed from those in the colony. As mentioned in the introduction, Ulbe Bosma sees Tjalie Robinson's *Tong Tong* movement as a revival and continuation of the IEV-movement of the early twentieth century; however, rather than longing for acceptance by colonial elites, 'the cultural agenda of Robinson was inspired partly by what he considered to be mestizo cultures in Mexico and Brazil.'[105] The aim of Robinson, therefore, was to unite Indo-Europeans globally and cultivate a collective Indo-Dutch identity through the medium he called *Tong Tong* – not in order to find representation in postcolonial affairs, such as De Hoog and his IEV had attempted decades earlier, but for the sake of cultivating, and preserving, an Indo-Dutch culture. In addition to this mediated attempt at identity formation, many local spaces were organized that allowed for the community to gather, such as *pasar malam*s (night markets), *koempoelan*s (gatherings), or *tokos* or *waroeng keililing,* stores of sorts where one could buy supplies from Indonesia that were not available at regular supermarkets.

After having explored the complexities and layers of the multitude of Indo-Dutch identities, and, in a way, the inability to formulate a single way in which Indo-Dutchness could be defined, this chapter will explore some of the spaces and movements that attempted to do exactly that. I will also explore how this identity, then, was challenged by this multitude of identities explored in this thesis.

4.1. Tempo doeloe and the creation of Indo-Dutch spaces

When referring to the Dutch East Indies, many of the interviewees spoke with a sense of nostalgia. *Tempo doeloe*, some called it – the good old days.[106] All of them stated to regularly attend spaces where, together with other Indo-Dutch people, they reminisce about their life in the Indies. Sometimes, these are informal spaces. Fiep, for example, shared:

> My *Indische* friends and I come together often. My accent comes out when that happens. We'll talk to each other, like, weren't we the first refugees? *Adoe*, yes, you're right. And funny enough, when we get together we always talk about those days. If we're not talking about food, we're talking about the things we went through. How, how? We're never dramatic or anything, but still. For most people [the trauma] keeps coming back, you know.[107]

Although Fiep, as indicated in a previous chapter, struggled to find her identity, she is able to connect with others through shared experiences and memories.

In Fiep's case, the spaces in which she finds a satisfaction for her nostalgia in informal spaces with close friends, but in other cases, this sense of nostalgia is elicited in larger and more organized contexts as well. One example of such a space is the *pasar malam* in the Netherlands, literally night market, that was first organized by and for Indo-Dutch people in 1959, in collaboration with *Tong Tong* magazine. The main initiator, Ms. Mary Brückel-Beiten, put an advertisement in the 15 June 1959

[105] Bosma, "Why is there no postcolonial debate in the Netherlands?", 22.
[106] E.g.: Jeffrey, interviewed by the author, March 6, 2022.; Lien, interview.
[107] Fiep, interview.

edition of *Tong Tong*, requesting readers to send her ideas and suggestions for the event. About two weeks later, in the next edition of the magazine, the advertisement pictured below was published. 'All kinds of tasty snacks,' it reads, 'useful things for the housewife, many old acquaintances and *banjak* (many) fun attractions for young and old, among other things an *Indisch* novelty: the slingshot shooting gallery! A party of surprises!'[108] The proceeds, it states, would be donated to the *Indische* art collective *Tong Tong*, in order to buy music instruments and art supplies for current and future *Indische* artists. This short announcement gives an important insight into what many of the interviewees indicated to be important aspects of the Indo-Dutch community: food, music, performances, and togetherness.

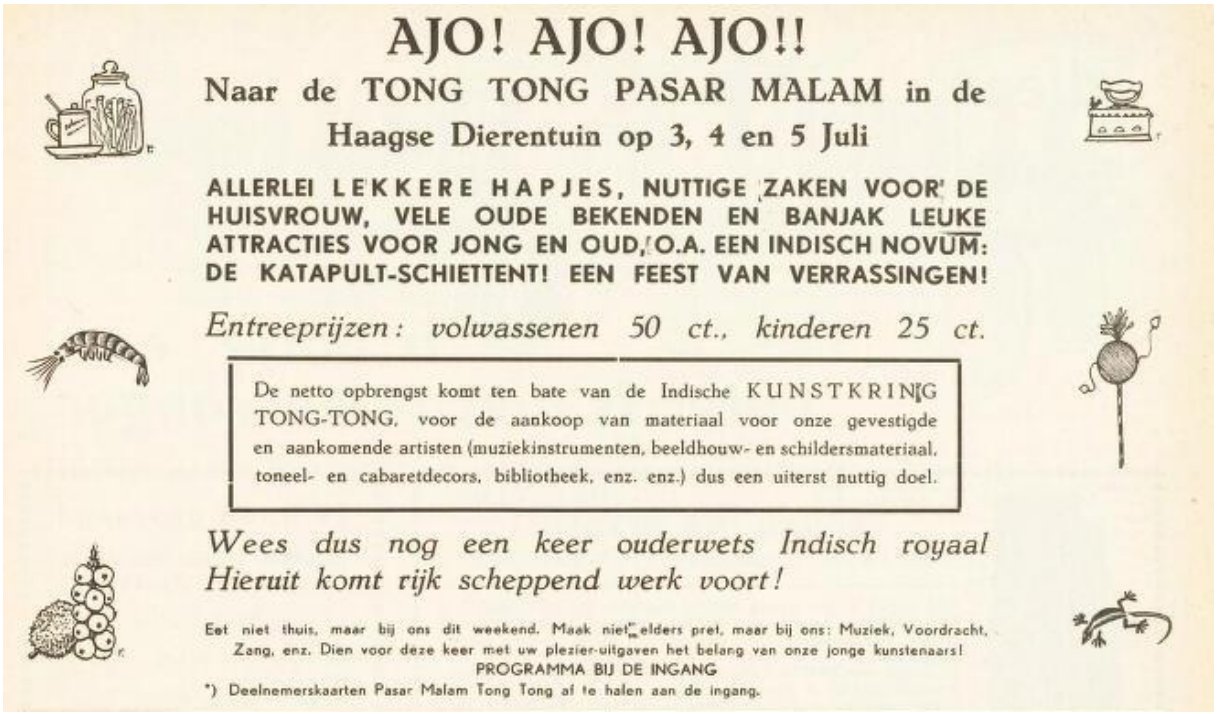

Figure 2: An announcement for the first edition of the Tong Tong Pasar Malam *in 1959, published in the 30 June 1959 edition of* Tong Tong.

Before exploring the reflections of the interviewees with regards to the abovementioned aspects, it is important to note how, even in an advertisement on such a collective space, notions of gender are reinforced through catering specifically and deliberately to the Indo-Dutch housewife. In this case, notions of race/ethnicity and gender are not sustained and created within the context of the private sphere or in correspondence with societies of settlement, but are further perpetuated within the context of larger Indo-Dutch (diasporic) community life. It emphasizes again the multiplicity and complexity of the identities of Indo-Dutch people and the contexts in which they are (re)shaped.

With regards to the event itself, which has happened on a yearly basis since its establishment, each person that was interviewed for the purpose of this thesis indicated to have attended at least once,

[108] Advertisement, *Tong Tong*, June 30, 1959, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/TONG/1959-06-30/edition/0/page/11

in addition to similar spaces that aim to gather Indo-Dutch people in a celebration of their culture. For some, such as Edward, it was the only occasion during which he would mingle with other Indos; other than attending the *pasar malams*, he was not actively in touch with others in the community.[109] This was similar to Liesbeth's situation, who stated that she often went for the atmosphere and not because she hoped to run into acquaintances. 'It was fun, of course, because there is so much to see. And sometimes you would run into acquaintances there, people you'd know, but you know, [the Indies are] so big, so it would be a huge coincidence if you'd run into someone you'd know.'[110] Somehow it was the cultural aspects or other recognizable factors that would prompt them to visit the event, rather than mingling with Indo-Dutch people.

What exactly this cultural aspect meant seems hard to define. Hendrik, who organizes at least one additional space dedicated to Indo-Dutch culture each year, described it as follows:

> In the evening, everyone will put on some piece of Indonesian clothing, a *batik* shirt or something. And then there is an *Indisch* band that comes, *Indische* rock. Some people can describe it in such a precise way. One woman, she came for the first time, and she introduced herself. And she said, I feel at home here, because now I can finally cut people off again when they speak. With Dutch people you could never do that, you know. […] But with *Indische* people, if you put twenty Indo people in a room, it's one big cacophony. Not one conversation will be finished. […] But Dutch people find that indecent. And food, you know. The food culture, eating a lot of food, and speaking about food. That's very *Indisch*.[111]

Though some specific aspects of Indo-Dutch culture are mentioned – specific foods, food practices, and musical traditions such as *Indorock*, what perhaps stands out most from this account is, again, the sense of nostalgia, but also recognition in common experiences of masquerading.

Although these examples were from the Netherlands, it should be emphasized that such gatherings were also organized by Indo-Dutch communities in other countries. Johanna, for example, stated that Indo-Dutch people in the United States regularly organized such gatherings. In addition, events that happened within a certain country would draw people from all over the world. Frans, for example, shared:

> I had a friend, he used to organize reunions, since the fifties. The *Indische* community in Soerabaja, especially the schools, they would hang out with each other. […] Some twelve, thirteen hundred people would attend. They would truly save up money to come. They would come from America, from Germany. We'd attend the Pasar Malam first, and then go to the reunion. That was so much fun. And we've kept in touch all this time, from all over the world.[112]

This example shows that there was come level of transnational mobility and community. In this sense, attending similar events together, maintaining contact, and through memory politics, there may have

[109] Edward, interview.
[110] Liesbeth, interview.
[111] Hendrik, interview.
[112] Frans, interview.

been a cultivation of a diasporic Indo-Dutch identity to some extent. At this stage, however, it seems to have mostly been what Pattynama refers to as an Indo-Dutch "memory community."[113]

Finally, it is important to note that being in close geographical proximity to each other seems to have contributed to the creation of smaller, more close-knit Indo-Dutch communities that would cultivate community life beyond organized physical spaces. Jeffrey, for example, emphasized how Indo-Dutch people often help each other whenever they are in need. He shared:

> There are quite some Indo people, and they visited each other often. The Hague has a core group like then, and in the east of the [Netherlands], Apeldoorn, that way. Amsterdam, of course. It makes sense, you find each other, you know where your aunts and cousins ended up so you'd sooner visit them than connect with Dutch people, you know.[114]

The ease with which Indo-Dutch people connected with each other – through shared experiences, collective memories, and at least some shared cultural practices, it seems – was further enhanced by living close to each other. The prime example of this is The Hague, "the widow of the Indies", as mentioned in the introduction, where due to the many *Indischen* living close to each other, spaces were created to, for example, share in cultural food practices. This, in combination with the *Indische* neighborhoods that emerged and a local newspaper, helped *Indischen* to continue participating in the culture they had been part of in the Indies.[115]

4.2. The politics of a collective identity

Although geographical proximity and physical spaces in which culture could be shared surely contributed a sense of Indo-Dutch culture, it was not a prerequisite to being connected to each other. This was in large part due to the efforts of Tjalie Robinson, who created what Ulbe Bosma called the *Tong Tong* movement.[116] In 1958, Robinson wrote, with regards to the purpose of *Tong Tong*:

> This magazine, *Tong Tong*, the only true *Indische* magazine in the Netherlands, tries to encourage the storytellers from the far (and past) Netherlands to speak up. It might be going very slowly, but it's going. And if we can only get one-thousandth part of all those brown and tanned Dutch people to record their memories in *Tong Tong*, we would have the most beautiful storybook that the Netherlands will have ever known.[117]

[113] Pamela Pattynama, "Cultural memory and Indo-Dutch identity formations," in *Post-colonial immigrants and identity formations in the Netherlands,* ed. Ulbe Bosma (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 176.
[114] Jeffrey, interview.
[115] Cottaar, *Ik had een neef in Den Haag*, 92.
[116] Bosma, "Why is there no postcolonial debate in the Netherlands?", 22.
[117] Tjalie Robinson, "Zwijgende Rijsteters," *Tong Tong*, February 28, 1958, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/TONG/1958-02-28/edition/0/page/1

At this stage, his plea seems to connect seamlessly to the purpose of the *pasar malam* and other Indo spaces that were created mainly as a means commemorate together, to share practices that reminded them of home, and to allow feelings of nostalgia. *Tong Tong*, too, seems to have mainly been a means to foster collective memory at this stage.

According to some of the people interviewed for the purpose of this thesis, however, this was no simple task. When Indonesia gained independence, Indo-Dutch people lost their homeland. This meant that, wherever they went, they would be seen as immigrants and were expected to assimilate. Jan, for example, stated: 'I know that *Indische* people adapt very quickly to a new environment, and because of that, sometimes we lost our own identity a little bit. On the one hand, that's a shame, but you know, it's almost the only way in which you can make sure that you will be accepted into society.'[118] Jan, among others, expressed a fear that Indo-Dutchness, including the community's collective memory, would be *weggeassimileerd* ("assimilated away") one day.

It seems Robinson was aware of his concern – as an indirect response to many similar fears, he proclaimed on 30 July 1962 that he viewed 'the Indo-Dutch community in the Netherlands as the heart of a star with points towards all countries of the world.'[119] Perhaps, in a sense, he hoped the Netherlands – which was home to most of the Indo-Dutch people in the diaspora – could function as an alternative homeland for *Indischen* across the world.

It still begged the question, however, what Indo-Dutch identity was, exactly. On 31 December 1963, one Indo-Dutch person in the United States wrote in *American Tong Tong*, the American branch of *Tong Tong* that was published from 1962 to 1965, that:

> It is time for the Indo to more seriously consider their identity and the identity of increasing numbers of mixed-race people across the world. […] As a conscious link between two races and two cultures, we can reconcile the best of two heritages to form a new source of useful friendship. Without superiority or inferiority complexes: we can win the esteem and friendship of two peoples.[120]

This call to defining and reconsidering Indo-Dutch identity marks a shift that seems to have taken place around 1963, at least amongst *Tong Tong* readers – that is, many articles were written attempting to answer this exact question. Rather than being content with cultivating a memory community, the purpose of exploring and understanding Indo-Dutch identity became more "active". That is to say, *Indischen* seem to have started questioning what the active role and contribution of an Indo-Dutch person in their societies of settlement could be.

One month prior to the abovementioned article, on 15 November 1963, a panel took place in Los Angeles on Indo-Dutch migration history that elicited yet another question related to the

[118] Jan, interview.
[119] Tjalie Robinson, "Waarom dit allemaal?", *Tong Tong*, July 30, 1962, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/TONG/1962-07-30/edition/0/page/2
[120] "Menghuwelijken, *American Tong Tong*, December 31, 1963, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/ATT/1963-12-31/edition/0/page/2

community's diasporic identity: 'Do we present ourselves to the American as Dutch, Dutch-Indonesian, or Indo?'[121] It seems the remainder of the evening was spent attempting to answer this question. The author of the article was left with the following conclusion: "It turned out that the problem is really only contention among the *Indische* group *sadja* [as such], because the American really doesn't care what we want to call ourselves, as long as our identity is clear to him. And we do wonder how many more years will pass before the Indo understands that!'[122] It shows, again, that it was in fact the Indo-Dutch community itself that was unable to achieve unity of vision on how they should self-define, and not only the way in which their societies of settlement perceived them.

Robinson also received a lot of criticism for his quest to define Indo culture and identity. On 30 January 1966, one person wrote to *Tong Tong* defending him:

> It is Tjalie's earnest endeavor to shape the cultural status of the Indo. Again and again he has pointed out that the Indo possesses a definitive culture, that the Indo possesses a tradition, that it takes study to reconstruct it, and that it is worth preserving these things. In the same way that Dick de Hoog was fighting for the social recognition of the Indo, Tjalie is fighting for the cultural recognition now that social recognition is no longer an issue.[123]

The author, interestingly, draws further parallels between Robinson's movement and that of De Hoog in the Indies in the first half of the century, emphasizing that De Hoog, too, is now regarded as a hero while, at the time, he was ridiculed for his vision. In any case, one thing should become particularly clear: despite many efforts to unify the community and cultivate a common, diasporic culture, the variety of Indo-Dutch identities that existed across the world seems to have prevented Robinson's vision to fully take shape. Although, to some extent, there are some efforts, such as the now yearly *pasar malam* and *Tong Tong* (now *Moesson*) itself, that continue to be successful, there was no consensus on what it meant to be Indo-Dutch, or whether it was even desirable to define such an identity – at least during the first three decades of Indo-Dutch dispersion.

4.3. Challenges and the diversity of the community

Despite all efforts to unify the community's interests, there continued to be people who could not agree on the way in which Indo-Dutchness was being defined, or even whether it should be defined. For some, it seems, their Indo-Dutch heritage was a cause of shame, and the name "Indo" one that they considered to be derogatory. Defining it, then, was not something they aspired to do, whereas others advocated for

[121] Anonymous, "The Triangular Route," *American Tong Tong*, November 15, 1963, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/ATT/1963-11-15/edition/0/page/5
[122] Anonymous, "The Triangular Route."
[123] Anonymous, "Indo's in Amerika en 'Hall of Fame,'.

pride of their heritage.[124] Cultivating and advocating for Indo-Dutch culture and identity, then, was not something all Indos considered desirable.

Even among those who did agree that efforts should be made to advocate for Indo-Dutch emancipation and cultural preservation, there was no general consensus as to how it should be done, what should be the outcome, and even who should be included. For example, after a discussion between many readers on the relationship between the *Indischman* and the Netherlands, whose letters and responses were published in a number of editions of *Tong Tong*, one reader wrote on 1 November 1975:

> The opportunity to find a starting point on which the Indische community agrees apparently does not exist. This is not surprising when one considers the elements of which it is composed: from the *kleine boeng* down to the real *totok* who spent part of his life in the tropics. What unites them is the love for the Indies, the certainty of a great experience (at least, if they have actually lived there, not just stayed for a while) and an inability to feel completely at home in the cozy, rigid, and sometimes rather narrow-minded country of milk and fog... and of excellent social services. Materially the Netherlands has taken good care of us - we have to accept that it was beyond its capabilities to do so spiritually.[125]

Interestingly, this excerpt from this reader's contribution highlights two ways in which Indo-Dutch identity was hard to define. Firstly, as mentioned in a previous chapter, the Indo-Dutch community had many layers and gradations. Class differences in the Indies caused Indo-Dutch people to have vastly different daily experiences, and although such differences were, at least in an economic sense, largely annihilated upon emigration from the former Indies, one can imagine that the memories different people had of the Indies could differ as well. Secondly, the way in which this reader defines "Indo-Dutchness" is much broader than, for example, the people who were interviewed for the purpose of this thesis, who all defined their identity in terms of being mixed-race. Similar to De Hoog, who attempted to unify the community through the IEV in the early twentieth century, the first problems arose as soon as one tried to answer a most fundamental question: who really *is* an Indo? This seems hard to define.

In conclusion, then, it seems that a true, quintessential, collective *Indisch* identity did not exist. Despite many attempts and efforts to define "the Indo", a definition that satisfied all was never found. One thing in particular, however, connected many the Indo-Dutch community: the magazine *Tong Tong* and the efforts of Tjalie Robinson. Although he may not have been able to fulfill his quest fully, his contributions to Indo-Dutch community life and diasporic traditions are immeasurable. Theo Kappers wrote on 15 August 1985 in *Moesson*:

> 'We, the first generation, tried hard to introduce our youth [to the Netherlands]. The youth is on their way, we laid the foundation for those in America and Holland and smaller groups elsewhere in the world. After 40 years I tell my contemporaries "Well done" and if I am ever to

[124] Redactie, "De Tweede Jaargang," American Tong Tong, September 15, 1963, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/ATT/1963-08-15/edition/0/page/1
[125] JHR, "De Indische Nederlander in Nederland (slot)," *Tong Tong*, November 1, 1975, https://moesson.pictura-dp.nl/issue/TONG/1975-11-01/edition/0/page/6

> return to this earth, I hope to meet a world without races and borders, because I am fed up with all this labelling. […] The only thing left to do is to remember Tjalie Robinson, who started *Tong Tong* over 30 years ago, now continuing as *Moesson*. He wanted to keep an *Indisch* space in our European world, where Indo-Dutch people could find each other. Cherish *Moesson* in your reading folder, because once we lose this magazine, then our last connection with "the good old Indies" will be lost.'[126]

Tong Tong, now *Moesson*, seems to have played an immensely important role in connecting the community to their origins, as well as helping Indo-Dutch people across the world cultivate a sense of collective memory and a physical and mediated space to find each other, even across borders. Their homeland, after all, had been lost, and the only way in which the Indo-Dutch community was able to ensure the survival of an Indo-Dutch culture – however one might define that – was through transgenerational transmission of Indo-Dutch culture. Whether Robinson and his contemporaries succeeded or not, this thesis cannot answer, but it seems that whatever the outcome, his efforts were appreciated by many *Indischen*.

4.4. Conclusion

In the decades after mass dispersion of Indo-Dutch people, many efforts were made to unify the community across the world. Through spaces such as the *pasar malam* where Indo-Dutch cultural and collective memory was being reproduced and reinforced, in some aspects, it succeeded. When the focus shifted from a memory community to creating a unique, mixed-race identity, however, problems arose; as the first chapter of this thesis suggested, the great variety of identities of Indo-Dutch people did not seem to allow for a unified definition of what it meant to be Indo-Dutch, or even *who* was Indo-Dutch.

In some ways, it also reinforced notions of gender and class in the diaspora. As discussed, Indo-Dutch people of different classes could have vastly different experiences, both in the Indies and beyond. This, then, raises the question of whether one could even speak of collective memory that included *all* Indo-Dutch people, and whether such a thing is possible. Similarly, at least in the first few decades, special spaces at the *pasar malam* were dedicated to women. Notion of class and gender, then, are not only enforced in the context of the private sphere or in contact with the majority culture, but further enhanced and perpetuated within the context of Indo-Dutch community life. It also hints at how, in some ways, more dominant voices may have shaped such spaces, and marginalized voices were further silenced or framed by the dominant voices.

[126] Kappers, "Point of no return."

5. Conclusion and limitations

5.1. Conclusion

To reiterate, in this thesis I aimed to answer the following question: in which ways did the involuntary mass displacement of Indo-Dutch people affect internal dynamics and the formation of identities in the postcolonial Indo-Dutch diaspora, especially as it pertains to race, class, and gender, ca. 1945-1975? This was done by looking at three aspects of Indo-Dutch identity (formation) in particular: first, the self-constructions and self-definitions of Indo-Dutch individuals; second, through tracing dominant and marginalized masculinities and femininities across the diaspora; and third, by trying to understand the politics and challenges of Indo-Dutch collective culture.

Firstly, it was found that Indo-Dutch identities were shaped not only by themselves but also in the context of the societies in which they settled, and that they were constantly negotiated and renegotiated as contexts changed. The social hierarchies so prevalent in the Indies meant little in post-war Dutch or other societies, and many families and individuals had to navigate their new reality in accordance. Interestingly, regardless (or because of) the many social identities Indo-Dutch individuals could have, they challenged binary notions of ethnicity and belonging and could navigate multiple identities depending on contexts.

Secondly, it was found that both men and women participated in masquerading practices. Although their existence challenged binary notions of ethnicity, their receiving society did not adapt to such notions and therefore Indo-Dutch individuals had to "mask" their differences to fit into daily life in their receiving societies. Notions of class and gender were closely related – as families plummeted in class status, women were forced to enter into the work force, whereas for men, they had to take on a job that indicated a change in class. Both men and women succeeded in embodying the fluidity of such expectations and negotiated their identity based on the context they were in.

While a movement was underway to cultivate an Indo-Dutch identity, this seems to have been impossible – the diversity of identities did not allow for a such an aim. To some extent, however, a type of "memory community" was made, that created spaces and media to share memories and cultural practices. Interestingly, gender and class distinctions seem to have been further marginalized in the context of Indo-Dutch community life and, in particular, in the efforts of unifying the Indo-Dutch community, where class and gender-related identities were shaped and defined in the context of the Indo-Dutch culture. Lower-class individuals, for example, seem to have had less access to shaping the community, and women also had spaces created for them that further marginalized their gender roles.

5.2. Limitations and suggestions

In presenting the results, some limitations of this thesis should be mentioned. The interviews conducted for the purpose of this thesis consisted mostly of people residing in the Netherlands, and therefore there was an underrepresentation of other voices across the diaspora. Furthermore, I made no clear requirements with regards to class distinctions amongst participants, which may have affected the results of the study. Thirdly, I did not take into account the geographic location of the experiences of individuals, which means that the effects of different receiving societies on identity formation, for example, have been overlooked. Finally, it should be noted that each of the participants identified as Indo-Dutch. As shown in chapter 4, not all people who are considered Indo-Dutch by the Indo-Dutch community self-identify as such. This group of people, then, was not represented in this thesis.

I would suggest that for future research, more attention is given to the masquerading practices of men in particular. Recent research has focused on Indo-Dutch women and masquerading, but this thesis has shown that men, too, participated in such fluidities of identity. Additionally, more axes of differences should be taken into account in future research, such as religion, sexuality, or (dis)abilities. I would suggest that additional attention is given, too, to how dominant voices in the Indo-Dutch diaspora shape the memory community, and how marginalized voices are further marginalized in such contexts. Finally, this thesis also has implications for policy makers, as it highlights again the importance of being sensitive to intersectionality of experiences of individuals within not only the Indo-Dutch community, but all diasporas.

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