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## **Raising Collective Self-esteem: Manifestations of internalized racism in the contemporary resistance language and discourse of Chinese Dutch citizens**

Linden, Anne van der

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## **Raising Collective Self-esteem**

Manifestations of internalized racism in the contemporary resistance language and discourse  
of Chinese Dutch citizens

Anne van der Linden (s2244039)  
MA Asian Studies: Politics, Society, and Economy  
Dr. Ethan Mark  
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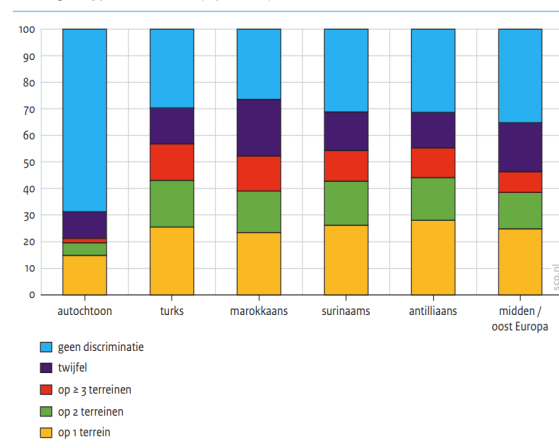
## Introduction

*I was ashamed of being Chinese. I didn't want to be Chinese anymore, I wanted to be white.*<sup>1</sup>

Asian antiracist movements are not a new phenomenon in the Netherlands.<sup>2</sup> However, the first time Asian-led antiracism received broad Dutch media attention was in November 2013. The popular singer Gordon made several discriminating remarks as a judge to a Chinese participant in an episode of *Holland's Got Talent*. This caused an outrage and sparked a wave of online activism. In more recent years at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in early February 2020, Lex Gaarhuis, a DJ for the commercial radio station *Radio 10*, produced and broadcast a carnivalesque song “Voorkomen is beter dan Chinezen” (Prevention is better than Chinese, a play on words in regard to a Dutch saying) and caused a similar pandemonium. Not too long after, an online petition was signed by 57 Chinese-Dutch organizations and trending under the #ikbengeenvirus (I am not a virus) hashtag, and sent to the House of Representatives in the Netherlands.<sup>3</sup>

Yet wider (academic) literature, especially in the European context, has predominantly remained silent on the topic of Asian racism and antiracist movements.<sup>4</sup> In the Dutch context, when talking about racism, it is often about the Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, or Antillean citizens. As can be seen in the graph, there is no information on people with Asian roots.<sup>5</sup> Even though, for example, the Chinese are one of the oldest non-Western ethnic minorities in the Netherlands,<sup>6</sup> in public and academic discourse they remain a

Mate waarin discriminatie (chronisch) wordt ervaren, zonder en met twijfel, naar etnische achtergrond, bevolking van 15 jaar en ouder, 2018 (in procenten)



Bron: scp/cbs (e0'18)

<sup>1</sup> Rui Jun Luong, “Ook Hier. Ervaringen van Racisme,” [Here as well. Experiences of racism], NPO, aired July, 2020, season 1, episode 5, 00:03:26-00:03:31, <https://npo.nl/start/serie/ook-hier-ervaringen-van-racisme>.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Hoogervorst and Melita Tarisa, “The Screaming Injustice of Colonial Relationships: Tracing Chinese Anti-racist Activism in the Netherlands,” *Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 177 (March 2021): 27-61.

<sup>3</sup> Hoogervorst and Tarisa, “The Screaming Injustice of Colonial Relationship,” p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Hoogervorst and Tarisa, “The Screaming Injustice of Colonial Relationship,” p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> Iris Andriessen et al., “Ervaren discriminatie in Nederland II,” [Experienced discrimination in the Netherlands II], Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, March, 2020, 141, <https://www.scp.nl/publicaties/publicaties/2020/04/02/ervaren-discriminatie-in-nederland-ii>.

<sup>6</sup> Frank Pieke and Gregor Benton, “The Chinese in the Netherlands,” In *The Chinese in Europe*, ed. Flemming Christiansen, (Palgrave Macmillan: London, 1998), 125-167.

blind spot.<sup>7</sup>

In the American context, much more research is available on Asian people and racism. However, the Dutch and American contexts are not 1:1 applicable. Both countries have vastly different histories when it comes to migration and racism. While the so-called racism “debate” in the United States has been a part of public discourse, in the Netherlands it has only been since the first massive Black Lives Matter protest on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 that there has been an increase in the number of prominent discussions about (structural) racism in the Dutch public space.<sup>8</sup> Before this, the white Dutch stance was that racism was not a part of Dutch culture.<sup>9</sup> However, Asian people are also oftentimes overlooked in these discussions.

Though there is definitely racism in the Netherlands, and as I will discuss in this thesis, Asian people also experience racism, the topic remains under-discussed. This research wishes to focus on the possible internalization of these systems. Growing up in a racist society can lead to the internalization of racist notions. How is this for Asian people who are oftentimes not taken into consideration when it comes to racism? Moreover, in the Dutch context, where racism is generally accompanied by denial? And how does this affect Asian antiracist movements? This research contributes to an ongoing dearth of academic research on Asian people in the Netherlands, Asian antiracist movements, and internalized racism.

To avoid Asianization, and due to limited available sources, this research in particular focuses on the Chinese-Dutch. Asianization is a process where people from geographical Asia are treated as a monolithic group,<sup>10</sup> not taking into consideration the vastly different cultures, for example, and what intersections come into play when discussing social issues such as racism. An important reason to specifically research the Chinese-Dutch is that it provides a chance to examine the prevailing biases and preconceptions about Chinese culture and language which could play an important role in the perceived acts of racism.

In summation, I present the following research question: “How has internalized racism manifested itself in the language and discourse of the Chinese-Dutch in contemporary Asian antiracist movements?”

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<sup>7</sup> R. A. Kartosen, “Young Asians constructing Asianess: Understanding the role of Asian popular culture,” PhD diss., (Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2016): p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Halleh Ghorashi, “Taking Racism Beyond Dutch Innocence,” *The European journal of women’s studies* 30, no. 1\_suppl (2023): 16–21S.

<sup>9</sup> Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Timon Van Merriënboer, “Racism and Sinophobia during the COVID-19 pandemic,” (MA diss., Radboud University, 2020), 38.

## **Researcher's positioning and methodology**

Before starting my research, I understood that my position as a white researcher might affect the research process. The cultural disparities between white and Chinese communities, coupled with the absence of personal impact from systemic manifestations of racism, represent a notable divergence in the lived experiences of the Chinese-Dutch discussed and myself. However, I hope that this navigational research inspires other researchers to have a basis to work with and further decrease the dearth in public and academic discourse on the Asian-Dutch.

Monica Trieu notes that “[f]uture research on internalized racism must engage both perspectives to hold accountable the connection between broader racialization processes and everyday interactions driven by internalized racism.”<sup>11</sup> As mentioned before, the American (historical & racial) context differs from the Dutch. Therefore, the first chapter will map out Dutch racism. Then, the theoretical framework is expanded with existing literature on internalized racism in Asian Americans. Because the American and Dutch contexts differ historically as well, the literature review will start with a chapter on the arrival and stay of Chinese migrants in the Netherlands to examine what similarities or differences there are and how this might affect the application of the theoretical framework of internalized racism. Afterwards, the literature review is expanded with research on Chinese and Asian-Dutch experiences with Dutch racism, also to compare and contrast the Dutch and American contexts. Finally, in the analytical chapter, I attempt to elucidate the ways in which internalized racism manifested itself in the language and discourse of anti-Asian racism movements. To achieve this, I will use the analytic lens of internalized racism on initiatives by the Chinese-Dutch to discuss Asian racism.

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<sup>11</sup> Trieu, “Understanding the use of “twinkie,” “banana,” and “FOB,”” p. 1.

## **To be Dutch or not to be Dutch, that is to be white: race and racism in the Netherlands**

In this chapter, available literature and theories on Dutch racism are discussed. As mentioned in the Introduction, racism can take on different forms depending on the context. To understand how racism affects Chinese Dutch citizens and the supposed internalization of it, the workings of Dutch racism must be clear first. Two authors are used for the theoretical framework. Both Wekker and Weiner discuss the presence of systemic racism in the Netherlands. Firstly, Wekker's prominent work on the self-image of the Dutch is discussed. Afterward, Weiner's synthesis of existing literature on racism in the Netherlands.

### **Racism? I don't know her: white innocence**

In *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (2016), Professor Emerita Gloria Wekker examines how Dutch society engages with issues of race and colonialism. Wekker is a prominent figure in the fields of gender studies, cultural anthropology, and post-colonial studies. In her work, and this book specifically, she critically examines historical narratives and contemporary social dynamics. Throughout the book, Wekker discusses several paradoxes present in the context of the Netherlands. These paradoxes highlight contradictions and tensions in the way Dutch society engages with issues of race and colonialism.

Firstly, even though one in six Dutch people have migrant ancestry, they do not want to be identified with migrants.<sup>1</sup> There is minimal interest in the elements that might mark one as foreign, or 'allochtoon'. Allochtoon is a word for immigrant that has since been racially marked and became derogatory.<sup>2</sup> To be Dutch you must assimilate and those who are not able to, are segregated.<sup>3</sup>

The second paradox is that of historical amnesia and selective memory. When it comes to confronting the Netherlands' colonial past, there is a tendency to focus on positive aspects of history. A slightly recent example is that the Netherlands perpetrated excessive violence against Indonesia during its war for independence (1945-1949). At roughly the same time the Netherlands had a strong self-image of innocent victim of German occupation during World War II.<sup>4</sup>

A third paradox continues this creation of the innocent victim self for the Dutch. The Netherlands had a strong imperial presence in the world since the sixteenth century. However,

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<sup>1</sup> Wekker, *White Innocence*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Wekker, *White Innocence*, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Wekker, *White Innocence*, p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Wekker, *White Innocence*, p. 12.

said colonial history is almost totally absent in the Dutch educational curriculum, in self-image and self-representations such as literature, monuments, and debates about Dutch identity.<sup>5</sup> Considering the colonial absence in the public consciousness, Wekker argues there was a deliberate avoidance of uncomfortable truths about colonialism, slavery, and the role of the Netherlands.

The first three paradoxes help shape the image of an innocent and fragile white Dutch self. This innocence creates a fourth paradox: the Dutch people do not shy away from uttering racist statements, but when they are confronted with it, they dismiss it either as a joke or simply state it was not meant as racist.<sup>6</sup> “I don’t see color”, is a response people of color in the Netherlands have often been confronted with when trying to discuss racism. Discussing racism had become a taboo since the German occupation during World War II and the circumstances of the Jewish Holocaust.<sup>7</sup> The Dutch see themselves as color-blind: racism is a feature found in the United States and South Africa, not here in the Netherlands.<sup>8</sup>

Interestingly enough, in recent years when white Dutch people are confronted with racism in their society, anger and resistance have grown to become the norm. Wekker uses the example of *Zwarte Piet* (*Black Pete*).<sup>9</sup> The call to abolish *Zwarte Piet* from the celebration of Sinterklaas (a Dutch annual feast that takes place on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December), has led to anti-*Zwarte Piet* protesters suffering violence and death threats from bystanders.<sup>10</sup> The frequent justification, “It’s not racist because it’s our culture and tradition”,<sup>11</sup> signifies the normalization and perpetuation of racialized discourse. Questioning a tradition of which white Dutch people tend to be very proud and with this, the self-image of a tolerant, ethically elevated and justified, color-blind, and antiracist people, is felt as a direct attack. Furthermore, the protestors are “putting themselves on the moral high ground”, countering another strand in the Dutch self-identity and representation of egalitarianism.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Wekker, *White Innocence*, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Wekker, *White Innocence*, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Shu-Yi Huang, “Dealing with everyday racism and discrimination: experiences of migrant Chinese mothers in the Netherlands,” *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Soziale Arbeit* 17, no. 15 (2015): 39-40.

<sup>8</sup> Wekker, *White Innocence*, p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> The controversial companion of Sinterklaas (*Saint Nicholas*). Often portrayed as a racial stereotype, usually with blackface.

<sup>10</sup> Bernadet Vroon, Anne Boer, and Paulien Plat, “Staphorst verhindert met geweld *Zwarte Piet*-protest, burgemeester: ‘Alles aan gedaan om dit te voorkomen’,” [Staphorst violently prevents *Black Pete* protest, mayor: ‘Everything done to prevent this’], *De Stentor*, November 19, 2022, [https://www.destentor.nl/staphorst/staphorst-verhindert-met-geweld-zwarte-piet-protest-burgemeester-alles-aan-gedaan-om-dit-te-voorkomen~ad90ec23/?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F&cb=c0a8485f628efa8627506143dd46d1e1&uth\\_rd=1](https://www.destentor.nl/staphorst/staphorst-verhindert-met-geweld-zwarte-piet-protest-burgemeester-alles-aan-gedaan-om-dit-te-voorkomen~ad90ec23/?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F&cb=c0a8485f628efa8627506143dd46d1e1&uth_rd=1).

<sup>11</sup> Wekker, *White Innocence*, p. 154.

<sup>12</sup> Wekker, *White Innocence*, p. 166-167.



These paradoxes collectively contribute to what Wekker terms “white innocence”: the Dutch self-image of being a tolerant, small, ethical nation, free of racism, presenting itself as a victim instead of the perpetrator of national violence.<sup>13</sup> The Netherlands’ “colonial cultural archive” shapes the persisting white innocence, and informs the images of Self and Other.<sup>14</sup>

As she summarizes (white) innocence herself:

*“[...] innocence speaks not only of soft, harmless, childlike qualities, although those are the characteristics that most Dutch people would wholeheartedly subscribe to; it is strongly connected to privilege, entitlement, and violence that are deeply disavowed. Loss of innocence, that is, knowing and acknowledging the work of race, does not automatically entail guilt, repentance, restitution, responsibility, and solidarity but can call up racist violence and often results in the continued cover-up of structural racism.”<sup>15</sup>*

The unwillingness to confront the complexities of colonial history and its ongoing impact on contemporary Dutch society has led to new terms being invented to avoid race sensitivities. Ethnicity, for example, is the term more often used instead of race.<sup>16</sup> This brings us to Weiner in the next subchapter, where she critically examines this use of ethnicity and other racialized discourse.

### **But where are you really from? Ethnicity and Phenotype**

In “The Ideologically Colonized Metropole: Dutch Racism and Racist Denial”, Professor of Sociology Melissa F. Weiner synthesizes existing literature to illuminate the Dutch form of racism. Weiner’s research centers itself in the fields of critical race theory and decolonial scholarship. She identifies and theorizes white supremacist mechanisms of racism and colonialism in the United States and internationally. Similar to Wekker, Weiner explores the historical origins of racism in the Netherlands and discusses how Dutch aphasia and racial Europeanization dismiss the connection between present and past oppression. Ultimately, she provides an explanation for this disconnection. Weiner argues that Dutch racism is rooted in racial neoliberalism, anti-racialism, racial Europeanization, and colonial exploitation, despite widespread denial of its existence.<sup>17</sup>

As in many other Western European countries, instead of racial categories such as

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<sup>13</sup> Myrthe De Ruiter, “Making Sense of Belonging: An Exploration of Everyday Racism in the Lives of Dutch Citizens with an Asian Background,” (MA diss., Utrecht University, 2021), 16.

<sup>14</sup> Ghorashi, “Taking Racism Beyond Dutch Innocence,” p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> Wekker, *White Innocence*, p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> Wekker, *White Innocence*, p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> Melissa F. Weiner, “The Ideologically Colonized Metropole: Dutch Racism and Racist Denial,” *Sociology Compass* 8, no. 6 (2014): 731. doi:10.1111/soc4.12163.

White or Black, the Netherlands utilizes ethnic categories.<sup>18</sup> While this evokes notions of culture, it overlooks the implications of hierarchical power and value that are fundamental to racial identities and the processes of racialization ingrained in Dutch society. In combination with the national denial of race and racism Wekker also discusses, Weiner notes that Dutch universities hindered critical scholarship addressing the subject of race and racism in the Netherlands due to the lack of independent granting agencies available which inhibited many scholars from obtaining funding for said topics until more recent years.<sup>19</sup> Weiner mentions the example of Philomena Essed's work on everyday racism to illuminate that racism is present in various social institutions in the Netherlands.<sup>20</sup> Essed faced significant criticism both inside and outside the academic world, leading to a widespread silencing of many in Dutch academia. This situation compelled many, including Essed, to pursue their work at universities abroad. The extreme difficulty of holding a university post while conducting critical research, coupled with the noticeable absence of faculty of color addressing these issues, only continues to reinforce the ongoing denial of racism and the ideological colonization of the Dutch metropole.<sup>21</sup>

While "ethnicity" is preferred over race, official government categories reveal racialized conceptions of the Dutch identity.<sup>22</sup> Weiner uses the distinction between "allochtoon" (immigrant) and "autochtoon" (native) to illuminate the associations white Dutch people have with those words. Most white Dutch attribute being Dutch, and thus citizenship and membership in the national community to white Europeans being born in the Netherlands.<sup>23</sup> This makes Dutch citizenship phenotypically based. Another effect of this focus on ethnicity is that it is harder for migrants to claim multiple identities because of the lack of terminology, such as Chinese-Dutch or Turkish-Dutch. As Wekker noted, to be Dutch is to fully assimilate and deny migrant ancestry or be segregated from the in-group:<sup>24</sup> you're either an autochtoon or an allochtoon. However, this is harder for people of color due to the phenotypical nature of the perceived Dutch identity.

Weiner argues that this racialized discourse is in turn maintained by media and textbooks that construct and reconstruct the stereotypical portrayal of "others" as being distant

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<sup>18</sup> Weiner, "The Ideologically Colonized Metropole," p. 733.

<sup>19</sup> Weiner, "The Ideologically Colonized Metropole," p. 731.

<sup>20</sup> Philomena Essed, Professor of Critical Race, Gender, and Leadership Studies, published her work *Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory* in 1990. It examines racism as a pervasive and normalized aspect of everyday life.

<sup>21</sup> Weiner, "The Ideologically Colonized Metropole," p. 738.

<sup>22</sup> Weiner, "The Ideologically Colonized Metropole," p. 733.

<sup>23</sup> Weiner, "The Ideologically Colonized Metropole," p. 733.

<sup>24</sup> Wekker, *White Innocence*, p. 23.

from the homogeneous Dutch “white” population.<sup>25</sup> Take for example the character Mr. Chung on the Dutch TV show “Ik hou van Holland” (*I love Holland*). The elderly Chinese man performs a Dutch song in “incomprehensible” Dutch and the contestants try to guess the song. This contributes to the imagination that Chinese immigrants lack Dutch language skills, thus maintaining the stereotyping. Therefore, these media discourses portray an imagination of racialized stereotypical “others”, in this case Chinese, as being distant to an imaged “white” Dutch population.<sup>26</sup>

According to Weiner, part of the reason that the Netherlands identifies as a tolerant nation is rooted in historical policies that offered Catholics and Jews a little more freedom in comparison to other countries where they faced death or persecution for practicing their religion. However, African and Asian people were legally excluded from citizenship.<sup>27</sup> Similar to what Wekker described as the paradox of historical amnesia and selective memory,<sup>28</sup> Weiner argues here that there is an institutionalized practice of “social forgetting”: using certain parts of history to polish the self-image of the tolerant Dutch. “We are tolerant, therefore we cannot be racist.”

The national identity, which is founded on the perception that the Dutch are tolerant and devoid of racism, despite being steeped in centuries of shared histories and interconnected relationships between White and non-White Dutch, leads to a kind of historical amnesia. This is an ability to reconcile and incorporate colonial exploitation, genocide, and oppression, or current shortcomings into the Dutch national history and ongoing path towards emancipation.<sup>29</sup> The accepted perception of Dutch society as non-racist hinders the scrutiny and questioning of the alleged supremacy of Dutch culture.<sup>30</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Both Wekker and Weiner contend that the nearly four centuries of Dutch colonization have left enduring imprints of racism in the culture, history, language, and institutional portrayals of self and others, which are still evident today. This clearly signifies the problems stemming from systemic racism in the Netherlands, where the connections between historical colonialism and racial inequality are often downplayed, overlooked, or outright rejected. This leads to the potential scenario where individuals, who don’t perceive themselves as racist,

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<sup>25</sup> Weiner, “The Ideologically Colonized Metropole,” p. 733.

<sup>26</sup> Weiner, “The Ideologically Colonized Metropole,” p. 733.

<sup>27</sup> Weiner, “The Ideologically Colonized Metropole,” p. 736.

<sup>28</sup> Wekker, *White Innocence*, p. 12.

<sup>29</sup> Weiner, “The Ideologically Colonized Metropole,” p. 737.

<sup>30</sup> Weiner, “The Ideologically Colonized Metropole,” p. 733 & 737.

might inadvertently reinforce racist power structures. Consequently, they may be impervious to criticism because, from their perspective, they haven't done anything out of the ordinary and hence, nothing incorrect. Therefore, it's vital to underscore that in a society where many deny the ongoing presence and effects of racism, it becomes significantly more challenging to identify or confront it.

## **The lens of the white ideology: Internalized racism**

Before we can analyze if and how internalized racist language has manifested itself, it must become clear what internalized racism entails, and how this expresses itself. Because the thesis' author could not interview people, it is extra important to find key points, terms, and phrases in the existing literature on internalized racism to be able to draw conclusions in the analysis later on. Internalized racism is both a prevalent aspect of racism and, at the same time, the least researched component of it.<sup>1</sup> This chapter discusses available literature on internalized racism in Asian American communities to further build the theoretical framework.

## **Overlooked and misinterpreted: Internalized racism in sociology**

Even though sociology has a deep-rooted interest in inequality, the topic has been largely overlooked. It might be said that the internalization of racial oppression by those who are racially subjugated, and its role in perpetuating racial disparity, are taboo. As a result, internalized racism continues to be one of the most overlooked and misinterpreted facets of racism.<sup>2</sup>

Pyke and Dang note a significant worry among sociologists. As internalized racism uncovers the mechanisms through which oppression is perpetuated, it could result in victim-blaming and divert focus from the racist institutions and practices that favor whites to the detriment of people of color.<sup>3</sup>

In another work by Pyke, she contends that we need to break this taboo. Through research on internalized racism sociology can reveal the covert damages caused by racism and the understated methods that uphold white privilege. She explains that:

*“Every instance of internalized racism among the racially subordinated contributes to the psychic, material, and cultural power and privilege of White folks. Thus, the study of internalized racial oppression is a study of the mechanisms by which all Whites are racially privileged, including those with anti-racist commitments. By investigating internalized racial oppression and focusing an analytic lens on how it supports White privilege, the blame will*

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity,” In *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, ed. Paul Gilroy and Ruth Wilson Gilmore (Durham: Duke University Press), 295–328. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>2</sup> Karen D. Pyke, “What Is Internalized Racial Oppression and Why Don't We Study It? Acknowledging Racism's Hidden Injuries,” *Sociological Perspectives* 53, no. 4 (2010): p. 551.

<sup>3</sup> Karen D. Pyke and Tran Dang, ““FOB” and “Whitewashed”: Identity and Internalized Racism Among Second Generation Asian Americans,” *Qualitative Sociology* 26, no. 2 (2003): p. 151.

*shift from the victims to the structure of racial inequality and those who are its beneficiaries. Doing so will make it harder for Whites to deny White privilege.”<sup>4</sup>*

Similar to all types of internalized domination, internalized racism does not stem from any cultural or biological trait of the subjugated. It is also not a result of any deficiency, ignorance, inferiority, psychological flaw, susceptibility, or other shortcomings of the oppressed. The internalization of oppression is a complex phenomenon that takes on various shapes and magnitudes across different situational contexts, including the intersections of multiple domination systems. It cannot be simplified to a single form or presumed to impact individuals or groups in exactly the same manner. It is an unavoidable aspect of all oppression structures.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Will of the Whites: Internalized racism**

It is not necessary to encounter distinct, recognizable instances of explicit discrimination to internalize racial oppression. Racism can subtly permeate the worldview of the racially oppressed without their conscious consent.<sup>6</sup> As Pyke and Dang explain:

*“Such direct encounters are not necessary as racial understandings are pervasive in the dominant society and part of “commonsense” thought. Just as whites do not need contact with racial subordinates to develop racist attitudes, racial subordinates do not need prior experiences with overt racism in the dominant society to internalize racial assumptions and codes.”<sup>7</sup>*

Pyke argues that internalized oppression starts at the moment that the oppressed accept the identities imposed on them by oppressors. The formation of a dominant, “superior” class relies on the presence of exploitable “others” who are characterized by their supposed inferiority.<sup>8</sup> With internalized racism, she specifically refers to white racism that is absorbed by the non-white group or individual and is directed inwardly towards oneself or the group.<sup>9</sup>

To elaborate, this is a process where oppressed racial groups start to accept, believe in, and internalize the negative perceptions and belittling or controlling images and behaviors

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<sup>4</sup> Pyke, “What Is Internalized Racial Oppression,” p. 566.

<sup>5</sup> Pyke, “What Is Internalized Racial Oppression,” p. 553.

<sup>6</sup> Pyke, “What Is Internalized Racial Oppression,” p. 556.

<sup>7</sup> Pyke and Dang, ““FOB” and “Whitewashed”,’ p. 153.

<sup>8</sup> Pyke, “What Is Internalized Racial Oppression,” p. 557.

<sup>9</sup> Pyke, “What Is Internalized Racial Oppression,” p. 551.

propagated by the dominant group.<sup>10</sup> As a result, those who are oppressed and repeatedly informed of their inferiority will ultimately perceive their own history, culture, and phenotype as worthless.<sup>11</sup> What arises from these oppressive relationships is the practice of “internalized racism,” which involves not only accepting, believing, and internalizing negative views, but also expressing the shame of oneself and one’s group through actions.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, Trieu defines “internalized racism” as the presence and continuation of the reflexive process of internalizing and replicating the “contempt and pity” of the oppressive white dominant group.

However, Seet argues that one’s racialization doesn’t have to be solely associated with negative feelings or experiences, nor does it have to have a personal negative impact for it to be recognized as a manifestation of internalized racism.<sup>13</sup> His analysis implies that internalized racism symbolizes the overall compliance or subjugation of the racialized individual, whether consciously or not, “to the Will of the dominant (White) group.”<sup>14</sup> With examples from his interviews with Asian people in Australia, he suggests that the way one identifies with their “Asian-ness”, whether positively or negatively, is less significant than how it marks general subordination to a white ideal and the white individual who often represents it.<sup>15</sup> Hwang adds that negative, as well as seemingly positive stereotypes, can have a damaging and lasting effect on individual and collective self-esteem.<sup>16</sup>

Overall, whether it is from a negative or positive standpoint, internalized racism leads to different dynamics between groups and individuals. It operates less obviously than overt racism and usually does so without conscious awareness through the internalization of stereotypes and othering.<sup>17</sup> Hwang explains in her meta-analysis that these dynamics are: interracial and intraracial hierarchies, intraethnic othering (defensive othering),<sup>18</sup> internalized conceptions of attractiveness bias (including Western standards of beauty), colorism, and

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<sup>10</sup> Monica Trieu, “Understanding the use of “twinkie,” “banana,” and “FOB”: Identifying the origin, role, and consequences of internalized racism within Asian America,” *Sociology Compass* 13, no. 5 (May 2019): 2. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12679>.

<sup>11</sup> Trieu, “Understanding the use of “twinkie,” “banana,” and “FOB””, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> There is a multitude of terms to describe a similar process, including but not limited to internalized oppression, appropriated racial oppression, colonized mentality, racial self-hatred, internalized Whiteness, and internalized White supremacy.

<sup>13</sup> Adam Z. Seet, “Serving the White Nation: Bringing Internalised Racism within a Sociological Understanding,” *Journal of Sociology* 57, no. 2 (2019): pp. 1-18.

<sup>14</sup> Seet, “Serving the White Nation,” p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> Seet, “Serving the White Nation,” p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> Wei-Chin Hwang, “Demystifying and Addressing Internalized Racism and Oppression Among Asian Americans,” *The American psychologist* 76, no. 4 (2021): 597.

<sup>17</sup> Hwang, “Demystifying and Addressing Internalized Racism,” p. 598.

<sup>18</sup> Pyke and Dang, ““FOB” and “Whitewashed”,’ p. 152.

gendered emasculation and hypersexualization.<sup>19</sup> In the next subchapter, examples of these dynamics are discussed.

### **Miserable Models: Internalized Racism in Asian Americans**

As discussed in the introduction, there is an ongoing dearth of academic research on Asian people in general in the Netherlands. Therefore, for our theoretical framework, we must rely on the sources that are available, even if they are not 1:1 applicable. There has been a growing amount of research on internalized racism within Asian American communities. The Asian American experiences can serve as a basis before we contextualize the Chinese-Dutch experience and migrant history in the next chapter after which we can examine in contrast.

Two of the oldest stereotypes are the “model minority” and the “perpetual foreigner.”<sup>20</sup> The model minority myth is based on an embellishment of their overall economic and educational success. The term surfaced during the 1960s in the United States and served as a way to further denigrate African Americans.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, it obscures the fact that Asian Americans are not “honorary whites” free from racial oppression.<sup>22</sup> In this context, “they [Asian Americans] are both praised and resented, complimented and derided.”<sup>23</sup> Pyke and Dang argue that Asian Americans have persistently inhabited a stratified space between black and white people.<sup>24</sup> This complicates the situation for Asian Americans when it comes to discussing racism. Oftentimes, because of this model minority myth, Asian people are looked upon as not experiencing racism, both by white and black people, making it harder to speak out.

The “perpetual foreigner” label traces back to the nineteenth century when a large number of Chinese laborers came to the United States. The racial ideology of the perpetual foreigner created several negative stereotypes including the alarming “yellow peril” that possessed “weird customs” and posed as economic threats.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the perpetual foreigner stereotype promotes rhetoric that Asian Americans are not “American”, creating the assumption that they are non-English speakers, even if English is the only language they

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<sup>19</sup> Hwang, “Demystifying and Addressing Internalized Racism,” p. 598.

<sup>20</sup> Hwang, “Demystifying and Addressing Internalized Racism,” p. 596-97. & Trieu, “Understanding the use of “twinkie,” “banana,” and “FOB””, p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> Pyke and Dang, ““FOB” and “Whitewashed””, p. 149-50. & Trieu, “Understanding the use of “twinkie,” “banana,” and “FOB””, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Pyke and Dang, ““FOB” and “Whitewashed””, p. 150.

<sup>23</sup> Pyke and Dang, ““FOB” and “Whitewashed””, p. 150.

<sup>24</sup> Pyke and Dang, ““FOB” and “Whitewashed””, p. 150.

<sup>25</sup> Trieu, “Understanding the use of “twinkie,” “banana,” and “FOB””, p. 5. & Hwang, “Demystifying and Addressing Internalized Racism,” p. 597.



know.<sup>26</sup> Internalizing this stereotype can lead to feelings of never being able to become a “real” American. Another way the internalization of this stereotype can express itself is by trying to appear less “threatening” by self-mockery upfront. A respondent in Trieu’s research explained how they asked for chopsticks in a pizza parlor to “get on the good side of their white peers.”<sup>27</sup> A more recent example of the consequences of the perpetual foreigner stereotype is the increase in violence against Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>28</sup>

Both these stereotypes are still very prominent currently.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, additional stereotypes where white or Eurocentric beauty standards are idealized, and Asian features inferiorized, became prominent.<sup>30</sup> This phenomenon, also known as the “phenotypicality bias”,<sup>31</sup> may increase internalized racism and pressure Asian Americans to blend in by looking more Western, whitening their skin, and surgically augmenting their eyelids for example, to avoid discrimination and increase social capital. The internalization of these beauty standards can create interracial hierarchies, as some fit more into the white ideal than others. It can cause the internalization of these conceptions of attractiveness and induce greater body dissatisfaction, especially because of gendered stereotypes such as the hypersexualized, objectified Asian woman or the emasculated Asian man, causing Asian American women and men to further distance themselves from each other.<sup>32</sup> It can also cause Asian Americans to try and fit into the dominant white group, intraethnic othering is occasionally applied to distance themselves from other racialized Asians in an attempt to resist a similar racially stigmatized status.

Another form it can take is a collective sense of distrust among those who strongly identify with their ethnicity towards their assimilated counterparts who are scorned for having “sold out” their roots to blend into the white majority. As Pyke and Dang explain: “Ethnic traditionalists resist the anti-ethnic othering of the more assimilated by engaging in another form of othering that ridicules those who are not ethnic.”<sup>33</sup> In turn, this reproduces racial stereotypes and a belief in essential ethnic and racial differences between whites and Asians.

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<sup>26</sup> Trieu, “Understanding the use of “twinkie,” “banana,” and “FOB””, p. 6. & Hwang, “Demystifying and Addressing Internalized Racism,” p. 600. & Pyke and Dang, ““FOB” and “Whitewashed”,’ p. 150.

<sup>27</sup> Trieu, “Understanding the use of “twinkie,” “banana,” and “FOB””, p. 6-7.

<sup>28</sup> Hwang, “Demystifying and Addressing Internalized Racism,” p. 600.

<sup>29</sup> Hwang, “Demystifying and Addressing Internalized Racism,” p. 596-97. & Trieu, “Understanding the use of “twinkie,” “banana,” and “FOB””, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> Hwang, “Demystifying and Addressing Internalized Racism,” p. 599.

<sup>31</sup> Hwang, “Demystifying and Addressing Internalized Racism,” p. 602.

<sup>32</sup> Hwang, “Demystifying and Addressing Internalized Racism,” p. 602.

<sup>33</sup> Pyke and Dang, ““FOB” and “Whitewashed”,’ p. 152.

Nonetheless, as Pyke and Dang have previously argued, this should not be understood as the oppressed having a hand in creating their own oppression.<sup>34</sup> Asian Americans live in a society that consistently racializes them as perpetual foreigners, lesser, model minorities, and occasionally, invisible or irrelevant. The narrative of racial inferiority is echoed repeatedly through societal structures like the media (bad or lack of representation), education (invisibility in history books),<sup>35</sup> and even beauty standards. These societal structures strengthen and sustain the internalized racial subjugation.<sup>36</sup>

Examples of language utilized by Asian Americans that indicate internalized racism are “fresh off the boat”, “whitewashed”, “twinkie”, and “banana” or codifying being a “real” American as being white.<sup>37</sup> These terms have been used by the Asian and Asian American communities to express assimilation and conformity to whiteness.<sup>38</sup> This intraethnic othering has served as an adaptive strategy but in turn, also reproduces racial stereotypes.<sup>39</sup> However, racial subordinates exist within the limitations of racial classifications, interpretations, and stereotypes, which essentially rob them of their power of self-identity. Whether they shape identities that internalize or resist the racial ideology of the broader society, they are compelled to define themselves with racial frameworks and connotations.<sup>40</sup>

## **Conclusion**

During this research, it is important to tread carefully to not victim-blame the subjects for their own oppression. The internalization of racism is another, less obvious, consequence of racism in society. Internalized racism can express itself through various forms that include interracial and intraracial hierarchies, intraethnic othering, internalized conceptions of attractiveness bias, colorism, and gendered emasculation and hypersexualization. It is often an unconscious process that internalizes not only negative but positive stereotypes. Prominent stereotypes are the perpetual foreigner, the model minority, and the idealization of Western/Eurocentric beauty standards. The lens of the white ideology is used to navigate relationships with others and the self, making it more difficult to resist these racist notions.

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<sup>34</sup> Pyke and Dang, ““FOB” and “Whitewashed”,’ p. 168.

<sup>35</sup> Trieu, ““Understanding the use of “twinkie,” “banana,” and “FOB””, p. 8.

<sup>36</sup> Trieu, ““Understanding the use of “twinkie,” “banana,” and “FOB””, p. 8.

<sup>37</sup> Trieu, ““Understanding the use of “twinkie,” “banana,” and “FOB””, p. 8. & Pyke and Dang, ““FOB” and “Whitewashed”,’ p. 168.

<sup>38</sup> Trieu, ““Understanding the use of “twinkie,” “banana,” and “FOB””, p. 2. & Pyke and Dang, ““FOB” and “Whitewashed”,’ p. 149.

<sup>39</sup> Trieu, ““Understanding the use of “twinkie,” “banana,” and “FOB””, p. 7. & Pyke and Dang, ““FOB” and “Whitewashed”,’ p. 149.

<sup>40</sup> Pyke and Dang, ““FOB” and “Whitewashed”,’ p. 151.

## The Arrival and Stay of Chinese Migrants in the Netherlands

Because there is little to no research about the Chinese-Dutch, let alone their experiences with (internalized) racism, the theoretical framework on internalized racism so far relies on sources that researched Asian Americans. In this chapter, the Chinese-Dutch migrant history and treatment are discussed. This is to compare the historical experiences and context between the two minorities. By bringing this together with the theoretical framework of internalized racism, the thesis aims to use the information for the analytical chapter.

### Starting from the bottom

The Chinese are one of the oldest ethnic minorities in the Netherlands.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to consider the Chinese-Dutch as one community as the composition is extremely varied in both linguistic terms and its history of immigration and socio-economic position.<sup>2</sup> As early as the late nineteenth century, a small number of peddlers from the Qingtian region in southern Zhejiang Province traveled all over Europe.<sup>3</sup> Most of them came through Siberia to Europe after the completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway in 1891.<sup>4</sup>

Other early Chinese migrants were sailors who arrived on ships that traversed between East Asia and Europe.<sup>5</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s, a small group of traders from Shandong in northern China found their way to the Netherlands. More significantly, after the First World War, the number of peddlers from Zhejiang in eastern China grew swiftly.<sup>6</sup> The Zhejiang Chinese comprised two different communities. One from villages around the port city of Wenzhou, the other from villages directed at the more inland town of Qingtian.<sup>7</sup>

After the First World War, many Chinese who were recruited to the Allied cause were expected to go back to China. However, many escaped and remained in Europe. Even though Qingtian and Wenzhou Chinese had already arrived in Europe before WWI, many of those

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Pieke and Gregor Benton, "The Chinese in the Netherlands," In *The Chinese in Europe*, ed. Flemming Christiansen (Palgrave Macmillan: London, 1998): p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> Pieke and Benton, "The Chinese in the Netherlands," p. 125. & Garrie van Pinxteren and Frank N. Pieke, "Chinezen in Nederland: wie, waar en wanneer?" [Chinese in the Netherlands: who, where and when?], In *Nederland door Chinese ogen van groepstoerist tot internetjournalist* [The Netherlands through Chinese eyes from group tourist to Internet journalist], (Amsterdam: Balans, 2017): p. 106-7. & Frank N. Pieke, "The Social Position of the Dutch Chinese: An Outline," *China Information* 3, no. 2 (1988): 12–23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X8800300202>.

<sup>3</sup> Van Pinxteren and Pieke, "Chinezen in Nederland" [Chinese in the Netherlands], p. 95.

<sup>4</sup> Van Pinxteren and Pieke, "Chinezen in Nederland" [Chinese in the Netherlands], p. 95.

<sup>5</sup> Hoogervorst and Tarisa, "The Screaming Injustice of Colonial Relationships," p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Pieke and Benton, "The Chinese in the Netherlands," p. 127.

<sup>7</sup> Van Pinxteren and Pieke, "Chinezen in Nederland" [Chinese in the Netherlands], p. 95. & Pieke, "The Social Position of the Dutch Chinese," p. 14.

now living in Europe have roots tracing back to these escaped contract laborers.<sup>8</sup> Not long after, these immigrants were followed by others who took the same route.

### **The Yellow Peril in Dutch shipping companies**

To break a seamen's strike in 1911, Dutch shipping companies brought over Guangdong seamen from Britain.<sup>9</sup> After the strike was resolved, some Chinese seamen remained on the Dutch ships to work, and increasingly replaced Dutch seamen as stokers and trimmers.<sup>10</sup> The Dutch saw the Chinese seamen as rivals and scabs because they worked for lower wages and were steadily increasing in numbers.<sup>11</sup> De Volharding, the Rotterdam seamen's union, even ran an inflammatory campaign against this "yellow peril." Until WWII, the shipping companies used this racist stereotype of the yellow peril as a trump card whenever they saw it fit to get rid of them.<sup>12</sup>

After the stock market crash and subsequent economic crisis of 1929, many Chinese seamen lost their jobs. Shipping practices evolved and changed which decreased their chances of working at sea. For example, as many Chinese were coal stokers, they became redundant after the switch to oil instead of coal. Moreover, Dutch unions worked together with ship owners to refuse the Chinese to work above the deck.<sup>13</sup> As the Chinese were forbidden to work ashore, a growing number of Chinese seamen were reduced to poverty, debt, and poor health.

The Chinese community decreased from several thousand to less than a thousand in the Netherlands at the end of the 1930s. This fall in numbers, however, was not only due to the economic crisis. The Dutch government frowned on the "economically useless" Chinese and their newfound peanut cake trade,<sup>14</sup> which caused many Chinese to be rounded up during the 1930s and 1940s and deported by the Dutch police during anti-Chinese actions.<sup>15</sup> After WWII, there were a couple of hundred Zhejiang traders and Guangdong seamen left in the Netherlands. However, they were the core around which the prosperous and large postwar

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<sup>8</sup> Pieke and Benton, "The Chinese in the Netherlands," p. 127.

<sup>9</sup> Van Pinxteren and Pieke, "Chinezen in Nederland" [Chinese in the Netherlands], p. 97.

<sup>10</sup> Pieke and Benton, "The Chinese in the Netherlands," p. 127. & Van Pinxteren and Pieke, "Chinezen in Nederland" [Chinese in the Netherlands], p. 97.

<sup>11</sup> Scab is a slang term for someone who crosses a picket line during a strike, choosing to work instead of joining coworkers in protesting low wages or harsh treatment by an employer.

<sup>12</sup> Yiu Fai Chow, "Moving, sensing intersectionality: A case study of Miss China Europe," *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 36, no. 2 (2011): 411-436, doi:10.1086/656023.

<sup>13</sup> Pieke and Benton, "The Chinese in the Netherlands," p. 128.

<sup>14</sup> Pieke and Benton, "The Chinese in the Netherlands," p. 129.

<sup>15</sup> Van Pinxteren and Pieke, "Chinezen in Nederland" [Chinese in the Netherlands], p. 98.

community of Chinese grew.<sup>16</sup> Due to the large-scale deportations, few of them have forgotten that Dutch tolerance is limited and can never be taken as a right.<sup>17</sup>

### **Cooking up a storm: the Chinese Indonesian Restaurant Boom**

Up until the mid-1960s, much like the prewar Chinese, new Chinese immigrants mostly originated from the same areas of Guangdong and Zhejiang. The new immigrants predominantly found their way through networks of acquaintances and relatives from the same parts of China. These core communities still economically and politically dominate the community of restaurant Chinese. The expansion of these core communities, as well as the overall postwar Chinese community, was made possible by the rise of Chinese-Indonesian restaurants.<sup>18</sup>

The immediate cause of the Chinese-Indonesian restaurant boom was the independence of Indonesia in 1949. A lot of members of the Dutch colonial elite and Creoles had lived a long time in the Dutch East Indies. Similar to the demobilized soldiers, they brought back a taste for Eastern cooking.<sup>19</sup> The number of Chinese restaurants that were mostly catered towards and frequented by the Chinese quickly grew to meet the new demand.<sup>20</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s, large numbers of Chinese immigrated to the Netherlands from the New Territories, the rural areas of Hong Kong, and smaller numbers from Malaysia and Singapore. These new immigrants were not a part of the core communities that already existed in the Netherlands, nor were they in any way related. However, the grand boom of Chinese Indonesian restaurants created a larger demand than the core communities could handle. Moreover, most of the core communities' networks came from the People's Republic of China, where emigration was very restrictive.<sup>21</sup> With the Cultural Revolution in 1966, it became nearly impossible to emigrate from the PRC. It was not until the mid-1970s that the so-called "overseas Chinese origin areas" were allowed to leave the country again. After reforms began in 1978, it soon became increasingly easy to leave China.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Pieke and Benton, "The Chinese in the Netherlands," p. 130. Pieke, "The Social Position of the Dutch Chinese," p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> Pieke and Benton "The Chinese in the Netherlands," p. 155.

<sup>18</sup> Pieke and Benton, "The Chinese in the Netherlands," p. 130.

<sup>19</sup> Charlotte Kleyn, "Voor en achter het doorgeefluik van Chin. Ind. Rest. Fook Sing: 'Mijn generatie is de laatste die echt hard kan werken'," [In front of and behind the conduit of Chin. Ind. Rest. Fook Sing: 'My generation is the last that can really work hard'], *Het Parool*, April 8, 2023, <https://parool.nl/cs-b1ffc684>. & Pieke, "The Social Position of the Dutch Chinese," p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> Pieke and Benton, "The Chinese in the Netherlands," p. 131.

<sup>21</sup> Pieke and Benton, "The Chinese in the Netherlands," p. 133.

<sup>22</sup> Van Pinxteren and Pieke, "Chinezen in Nederland" [Chinese in the Netherlands], p. 102.

The Hong Kong Chinese grasped this opportunity to meet the unmet demand. Fortunately for them, a rather sizeable community of Hong Kong Chinese already lived in the United Kingdom. This made it easier for them to build their personal core community and support their own immigration lines to the Netherlands, especially since Britain joined the European Union in 1973.<sup>23</sup> In the 1970s, the Hong Kong Chinese became the largest group of Chinese in the Netherlands. The pull of the Chinese-Indonesian restaurant industry was so strong that in those years, Chinese from Malaysia and Singapore also started to arrive.<sup>24</sup> Except for an aging and relatively ever-shrinking group of Zhejiang Chinese who continued to use their own dialects, Cantonese soon became the common language among all these groups. Hong Kong Chinese culture and media eventually dominated the entire community of restaurant Chinese.<sup>25</sup>

At its peak in the early 1980s, the Netherlands had about two thousand restaurants. Many restaurant workers managed to save enough to open their own restaurants after a few years. Subsequently, they invited family members and friends to migrate to the Netherlands and join the restaurant industry.<sup>26</sup> This soon overflowed the market and a crisis in the restaurant industry resulted.<sup>27</sup> Although the Hong Kong Chinese that already settled in the Netherlands generally just stayed here, new migrants were few and far between starting in the 1990s.<sup>28</sup>

Partly as a result of the model minority stereotype, it wasn't until 2004 that the Chinese community, estimated to be between seventy thousand and one hundred thousand individuals and ranking as the fifth largest immigrant group in the Dutch population of 17 million, was officially recognized as an ethnic minority.<sup>29</sup> Facing Dutch prejudice prior to the war and governmental minority policies in the 1980s, the Chinese community in the Netherlands has utilized and adjusted to Dutch narratives of cultural diversity and race. They've also incorporated traditional Chinese narratives of cultural dominance and racial classification.<sup>30</sup> In this context, the Chinese community became more aware of Dutch racism due to their own experiences with racism. However, the Chinese community's own racial

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<sup>23</sup> Pieke and Benton, "The Chinese in the Netherlands," p. 133. & Pieke, "The Social Position of the Dutch Chinese," p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> Pieke, "The Social Position of the Dutch Chinese," p. 14.

<sup>25</sup> Van Pinxteren and Pieke, "Chinezen in Nederland" [Chinese in the Netherlands], p. 102.

<sup>26</sup> Pieke, "The Social Position of the Dutch Chinese," p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> Van Pinxteren and Pieke, "Chinezen in Nederland" [Chinese in the Netherlands], p. 100.

<sup>28</sup> Van Pinxteren and Pieke, "Chinezen in Nederland" [Chinese in the Netherlands], p. 102-3.

<sup>29</sup> Chow, "Moving, sensing intersectionality," p. 415-16.

<sup>30</sup> Pieke and Benton, "The Chinese in the Netherlands," p. 160.

biases against non-white groups led them to distance themselves from these groups, rather than collaborating with them to confront racism directly.<sup>31</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The diverse community of Chinese has been in the Netherlands for over a hundred years. Not too long after their first arrival, were they confronted with Dutch racism. The perpetual foreigner stereotype became visible when the Chinese seamen were treated as a yellow peril. Moreover, as soon as they fell into economic disparity not only because of changes in the shipping business and the economic crisis but also because they weren't allowed to work ashore, being "economically useless" the Chinese were rounded up and deported. The Chinese that remained, adapted to the circumstances and created a booming business in Chinese Indonesian restaurants. The Chinese-Dutch relied on their own networks, knowing that Dutch tolerance was limited. However, this in combination with the model minority stereotype that informed the 1980s governmental minority policies, kept them in the stratified space between the white Dutch and other marginalized groups.

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<sup>31</sup> Pieke and Benton, "The Chinese in the Netherlands," p. 160-61.

## **Opinions about, and the treatment of the Chinese-Dutch**

Together with the historical chapter, this chapter aims to compare the American context to the Dutch one, before analyzing internalized racism in the Chinese-Dutch. We have learned so far that the perpetual foreigner and model minority stereotypes historically have influenced the Chinese community in the Netherlands. This chapter specifically discusses the lived experiences of Chinese-Dutch people documented so far.

### **Where do you *really* come from? Perpetual foreigners and Underrepresentation**

The Chinese-Dutch, while being one of the oldest ethnic minorities, are not incorporated in the Dutch history books. This is a form of exclusion that treats the Chinese as perpetual foreigners: they do not fit into the “Dutch image.”<sup>1</sup> To an extent, it imprints a narrative of a homogeneous white society into the minds of Dutch citizens. Lest we forget, as Wekker and Weiner concluded: to be Dutch is to be white.<sup>2</sup>

Another significant exclusion they suffer is in the media. Media creates an image of who gets included and excluded in day-to-day conversations. When it comes to Dutch media, all Asian racialized people are excluded from joining public, political, and academic debates and discourses on cultural diversity.<sup>3</sup> For example, in the Dutch talk show *Goed en Fout* (*Right and Wrong*) and “OP1”, discrimination was discussed without anyone present with an Asian background.<sup>4</sup>

When Asian people make an appearance on Dutch television, it is oftentimes in a stereotypical capacity.<sup>5</sup> The aforementioned example of Mr. Chung on the Dutch show *Ik hou van Holland* highlights how the Chinese are viewed and thus portrayed: distant to the imaged “white” Dutch population, and therefore “other”. This stereotypical media discourse constructs and reconstructs a collective and homogeneous (white) Dutch society.<sup>6</sup>

In regards to racist experiences of Chinese-Dutch people, these often allude to being a perpetual foreigner. As we have seen in the theoretical framework of Dutch racism, it is often phenotypically based and paired with denial on the white Dutch side. When it comes to

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<sup>1</sup> Myrthe De Ruiter, “Making Sense of Belonging: An Exploration of Everyday Racism in the Lives of Dutch Citizens with an Asian Background,” (MA diss., Utrecht University, 2021), 17.

<sup>2</sup> Wekker, *White Innocence*. & “The Ideologically Colonized Metropole.”

<sup>3</sup> Van Merriënboer, “Racism and Sinophobia,” p. 44. & Kartosen, “Young Asians constructing Asianess: Understanding the role of Asian popular culture,” p. 16. & Yiu Fai Chow, “Multicultural Schizophrenia: ‘You Are Different, You Are Chinese,’” *Amsterdam Social Science* 1, no. 4 (2009): 50. Chow, “Moving, sensing intersectionality,” p. 415.

<sup>4</sup> Kartosen, “Young Asians constructing Asianess,” p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Van Merriënboer, “Racism and Sinophobia,” p. 44. & Kartosen, “Young Asians constructing Asianess,” p. 108.

<sup>6</sup> Weiner, “The Ideologically Colonized Metropole,” p. 734. & Van Merriënboer, “Racism and Sinophobia,” p. 44.



racism directed towards Asian racialized people, oftentimes the verbal racist remarks are culture, food, and language-related.<sup>7</sup> For example, ordering “white lice [rice]” (referring to mixing up the R with an L sound).<sup>8</sup> Another example that comes from Dutch education is the song Hanky Panky Shanghai.<sup>9</sup> This song is often sung in elementary schools when it’s someone’s birthday whilst pulling at the eye corners to make slanted eyes. The words do not mean anything, in turn, this meaningless pronunciation ridicules and others the Asian-Dutch students.<sup>10</sup> When any comfortability is noted, the problem is often put with the one who raises the objection. These remarks are often paired with comments such as “What are you worried about?” or “It is a joke, do not take it so seriously.”<sup>11</sup> It is also the expectation, much like Pyke and Dang discussed, that based on their looks Chinese-Dutch do not speak Dutch.<sup>12</sup> When telling about their birthplace in the Netherlands, they often get hit with the all too familiar question: “No but where are you *really* [own emphasis] from?”, indicating they are perceived as foreign.<sup>13</sup>

Because there is hardly any representation of the Dutch Chinese in the media, it can create insecurities about the way they look.<sup>14</sup> Their appearance differs from the homogeneous white media narrative, which strengthens feelings of who belong and what they should look like.<sup>15</sup> The stereotypical portrayals in the media also affect feelings of insecurity about how the Chinese look – poking fun at having “monolids” or slanted eyes others them and tells them that they do not fit into the Western beauty standard.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, most of the racist verbal abuse that Chinese-Dutch experienced, was in line with Dutch racism overall: phenotypically based.<sup>17</sup> Reiterating that being Dutch is to be white.

It is suggested that the lack of representation in the media and Dutch discourse leads to a lack of identification, which plays an important role in feelings of belonging and inclusion.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, Asian-Dutch citizens have difficulties identifying as Dutch, oftentimes

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<sup>7</sup> Van Merriënboer, “Racism and Sinophobia,” p. 70. & Hoogervorst and Tarisa, “The Screaming Injustice of Colonial Relationship,” p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> De Ruiter, “Making Sense of Belonging,” p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> De Ruiter, “Making Sense of Belonging,” p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Huang, “Dealing with everyday racism and discrimination,” p. 44.

<sup>11</sup> De Ruiter, “Making Sense of Belonging,” p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> Pyke and Dang, “FOB” and “Whitewashed”,’ p. 150. & De Ruiter, “Making Sense of Belonging,” p. 22.

<sup>13</sup> Ien Ang, “To Be or Not to Be Chinese: Diaspora, Culture and Postmodern Ethnicity,” *Asian Journal of Social Science* 21, no. 1 (January 1993): 8.

<sup>14</sup> De Ruiter, “Making Sense of Belonging,” p. 22.

<sup>15</sup> De Ruiter, “Making Sense of Belonging,” p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> De Ruiter, “Making Sense of Belonging,” p. 46.

<sup>17</sup> Van Merriënboer, “Racism and Sinophobia,” p. 70.

<sup>18</sup> Van Merriënboer, “Racism and Sinophobia,” p. 45. & Kartosen, Young Asians constructing Asianess,” p. 9.

not seeing themselves as “real Dutch” but as “others.”<sup>19</sup> This is in line with the perpetual foreigner stereotype, which signifies the ongoing perception of Asian and thus Chinese people as foreigners. Similar to Asian Americans, the Chinese-Dutch are phenotypically perceived to be foreigners. No matter if they were raised in the Netherlands, due to their phenotype a full integration is not expected. As Ang concludes in his article: “[...] if I am inescapably Chinese by descent, I am only sometimes Chinese by consent. When and how is a matter of politics.”<sup>20</sup>

### **The Myth of the Model Minority**

As aforementioned, the Asian-Dutch are generally ignored in debates on discrimination. This is in part to them being perceived as “well-integrated”, “silent”, and “unproblematic”, the model minority stereotype.<sup>21</sup> On the front page of “De Telegraaf” (a leading Dutch newspaper), for example, the Chinese were once called “ideal immigrants”, “they don't complain”, and “they don't pull any crap and they work hard.”<sup>22</sup> They are, however, not excluded from the consequences of those debates, notably the demands of integration.<sup>23</sup> Like other ethnic minorities, the Chinese are confronted with social and symbolic exclusion and racism in the Netherlands: they are not perceived as “real Dutch” due to their “non-white Dutchness.”<sup>24</sup>

However, a story of successful integration helps to construct and reconstruct the narrative that the Dutch system is fair and open, it is not racist.<sup>25</sup> The Chinese have “made it”, therefore if another ethnic group can't, it must be their own fault or their culture, not the system.<sup>26</sup> After all, the Dutch aren't racist, the Netherlands has an egalitarian society.<sup>27</sup> Similar to Asian Americans, the model minority myth is mostly used to further denigrate other ethnic groups and does not necessarily mean that the Chinese-Dutch are perceived as Dutch or integrated.

This essentially results in the formation of a problematic social hierarchy where the white Dutch (“real Dutch”) are at the top, the unwanted “bad” ethnic groups are at the bottom,

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<sup>19</sup> Van Merriënboer, “Racism and Sinophobia,” p. 44.

<sup>20</sup> Ang, “To Be or Not to Be Chinese,” p. 14.

<sup>21</sup> Kartosen, “Young Asians constructing Asianess,” p. 16-17. & Hoogervorst and Tarisa, “The Screaming Injustice of Colonial Relationship,” p. 28. & Chow, “Moving, sensing intersectionality,” p. 416.

<sup>22</sup> Yiu Fai Chow, S. Zwiër, and L. Van Zoonen, “Bananen, modelminderheid en integratie: Mediagebruik en identificaties onder jonge Chinezen in Nederland,” [Bananas, model minority, and integration: Media consumption and identification under young Chinese in the Netherlands], *Migrantenstudies*, 24 no. 1 (2008): 72-73. & Chow, “Multicultural Schizophrenia,” p. 46. & Chow, “Moving, sensing intersectionality,” p. 415.

<sup>23</sup> Yiu Fai Chow, “Multicultural Schizophrenia: ‘You Are Different, You Are Chinese,’” *Amsterdam Social Science* 1 no. 4 (2009): 50. & Kartosen, “Young Asians constructing Asianess,” p. 53.

<sup>24</sup> Kartosen, “Young Asians constructing Asianess,” p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> Chow, “Multicultural Schizophrenia,” p. 46.

<sup>26</sup> Chow, “Multicultural Schizophrenia,” p. 46.

<sup>27</sup> Wekker, *White Innocence*.

and the preferred “good” ethnic groups occupy the middle position: the stratified place in between white and black people Pyke and Dang discussed.<sup>28</sup> For example, the statement, “Oh, but you are different, you are Chinese,” subtly communicates two significant aspects of the Chinese situation in Dutch society. Firstly, they are typically viewed and generalized as being distinct from other minority groups that are seen as problematic within Dutch society. Consequently, they are excluded from multicultural debates in the Netherlands that are framed by issues, which are economic, social, and progressively cultural.<sup>29</sup>

Younger Chinese in the Netherlands have reported feelings of frustration due to the everyday racism they encounter, and they express a sense of exclusion because of their racial appearance.<sup>30</sup> However, a more systematic form of subordination comes from the narrative of the model minority. While they take pride in being seen as law-abiding citizens, the Dutch Chinese are also conscious of being homogenized, stereotyped, and regulated by the limitations and anticipations associated with this view. They are aware that their experiences, challenges, and battles are often overlooked.<sup>31</sup>

While the concept of the Dutch Chinese as model minorities or “good” minorities is misconstrued and problematic, it does provide an opportunity to expose the contradictions and inconsistencies in the mainstream Dutch public and political discourse on migration, ethnic minorities, and sociocultural integration. The mainstream discourse highlights that ethnic minorities who have “integrated” are welcomed in the Netherlands. This emphasizes the conventional view of the Netherlands as an egalitarian and inclusive society that is open and tolerant towards cultures and people who are “non-Dutch.”<sup>32</sup> As Kartosen notes: “This observation in itself already suggests that the egalitarian promise of Dutch mainstream society, the promise that ethnic minorities are tolerated or even accepted if and when they are ‘integrated’, is false rhetoric.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Speaking out and denial**

As has been discussed in the historical chapter, the Chinese community learned early on that Dutch tolerance is limited. Therefore, they adapted their way of living in the Netherlands: remaining close to their community and trying not to upset the Dutch. This has resulted, in

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<sup>28</sup> Kartosen, “Young Asians constructing Asianess,” p. 16. & Pyke and Dang, ““FOB” and “Whitewashed”,’ p. 150.

<sup>29</sup> Chow, “Multicultural Schizophrenia,” p. 46.

<sup>30</sup> Chow, “Moving, sensing intersectionality,” p. 415.

<sup>31</sup> Chow, “Moving, sensing intersectionality,” p. 415.

<sup>32</sup> Kartosen, “Young Asians constructing Asianess,” p. 17.

<sup>33</sup> Kartosen, “Young Asians constructing Asianess,” p.18.

combination with the model minority discourse, that the Chinese are not known for speaking out. The older generations didn't want to cause any problems.<sup>34</sup>

However, younger generations have been speaking out about discrimination and racism.<sup>35</sup> One of the early examples where Asian racialized people spoke out, was the example discussed in the Introduction when Dutch celebrity Gordon made racist “jokes” directed at a Chinese contestant in the talent show “Holland’s Got Talent” on national television.<sup>36</sup> This caused an outrage and sparked a wave of online activism but Gordon did not see the need to apologize and said: “I'm glad I live in Holland, where you can just say these things. It was very innocent. A lot of Dutch people sometimes make a joke like ‘sambal bij.’”<sup>37</sup> It was only seven years later in 2020 in a discussion about Asian racism that Gordon reflected and apologized.

The media has diminished the value of Chinese-Dutch experiences with discrimination or racism.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, Dutch racism and its unique denial have confronted Asian-Dutch people that did speak out with stigmatizing and racist remarks such as “they did not understand Dutch jokes and culture”, reiterating that they were not integrated after all.<sup>39</sup> Stepping out of their model minority role they are, much like other ethnic groups that speak out, firstly met with denial: Dutch society is not racist, it was just a joke.<sup>40</sup>

## Conclusion

Similar to Asian Americans, Asian and Chinese-Dutch are constantly racialized as perpetual foreigners, model minorities, and occasionally, invisible or irrelevant. The narrative of racial inferiority is echoed repeatedly through societal structures like the media (bad or lack of representation), education (invisibility in history books or meaningless racist songs), and even beauty standards. When they do speak out, they are told that it's just a joke or receive even

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<sup>34</sup> Reza Kartosen-Wong, “Gastcolumn: Door zich kritisch te uiten over racisme geven jonge Aziatische Nederlanders actief invulling aan hun Nederlanderschap,” [Guest column: By speaking out critically about racism, young Asian Dutch are actively fleshing out their Dutchness], 2 December 2018, *De Volkskrant*, <https://www.volkskrant.nl/columns-opinie/gastcolumn-door-zich-kritisch-te-uiten-over-racisme-geven-jonge-aziatische-nederlanders-actief-invulling-aan-hun-nederlanderschap-b974722f/>.

<sup>35</sup> Pete Wu, *De Bananengeneratie: over het dubbelleven van Chinese Nederlanders van nu*, [The Banana Generation: on the double lives of Chinese Dutch today], (Das Mag Uitgeverij B.V.: Amsterdam, 2019). & Kartosen-Wong, “Gastcolumn” [Guest column].

<sup>36</sup> Kartosen, “Young Asians constructing Asianess,” p. 18.

<sup>37</sup> “Sambal bij” alludes to Chinese-Dutch who work in Chinese-Indonesian restaurants that take your order and do not master the Dutch language.

NU.nl, “Gordon biedt excuses aan voor racistische grap uit 2013” [Gordon apologizes for racist joke from 2013], *NU.nl* February 10, 2020, <https://www.nu.nl/achterklap/6029832/gordon-biedt-excuses-aan-voor-racistische-grap-uit-2013.html>.

<sup>38</sup> De Ruiter, “Making Sense of Belonging,” p. 20.

<sup>39</sup> Kartosen, “Young Asians constructing Asianess,” p. 18.

<sup>40</sup> Wekker, *White Innocence*, p. 17.

more stigmatizing and racist remarks. This process of othering constructs a boundary of white citizens being “real Dutch”, and others not. In this sense, the Chinese community is excluded from participating fully in Dutch society. These societal structures strengthen and sustain internalized racial oppression.

## **Aware of the internal struggle: analysis**

This chapter turns to the Chinese-Dutch considerations of race and identity discussed in anti-Asian racism movements. We have learned in the literature review that not only historically but contemporarily the Chinese-Dutch are excluded from fully participating in Dutch society. This is due to several societal structures racializing them as perpetual foreigners, model minorities, and sporadically insignificant or invisible. These structures, similar to the Asian American experience, have caused the internalization of racist notions. This chapter will focus on the internalization of Western beauty standards.

Using the lens of internalized racism that has been established as a guide to read and listen to the primary sources, firstly the chapter discusses examples of internalized racism in activist Chinese-Dutch. Secondly, the chapter reviews how internalized notions of racism are used by the activists in their movement.

## **Blond hair, blue eyes, and bananas**

Being insecure about their Chinese appearance was the most common theme discussed by the Chinese-Dutch in the different primary sources analyzed. As Dutch racism is phenotypically based, it should not come as a surprise that, even though the literature review only scratched the surface on this topic, the internalization of Western beauty standards was an issue for several Chinese-Dutch that are part of anti-Asian racist movements.

One way some Chinese-Dutch expressed this internalization was by discussing feeling insecure about looking Chinese. Instead, they wanted to have blonde hair and blue eyes, as some explain because of the lack of Chinese-Dutch representation in the media.<sup>1</sup> Blonde hair and blue eyes are considered what constitutes being a “real Dutch” person in the Netherlands. It reiterates the idea of the Netherlands having a homogeneous society. Some of the Chinese-Dutch from the primary sources tried fitting in with makeup for example or wearing different clothes. While there is a strong awareness of these internalized notions, it does not mean that the internal struggle has been solved yet. For example, Sioe Jeng Tsao an activist artist, author, and speaker explains in one of the episodes of “Pete en de bananen” (*Pete and the bananas*) that “I am less ashamed of my Asian appearance with age but I do have to say that for example my slanted eyes when I smile.. Ehm, yes, I do still try to create them bigger with makeup even though I know I should have passed that and embraced it actually.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Maud, “Portrait story: Maud,” Interview by Rui Jun Luong, *Guess Who: Asian Edition*, May 6, 2022, <https://guesswho.ruijunluong.nl/maud/>.

<sup>2</sup> Pete Wu, “Pete en de bananen,” [Pete and the bananas], VPRO, aired June, 2020, Season 1, episode 2, 00:14:40-00:14:59, <https://www.vpro.nl/dorst/producties/pete-en-de-bananen.html>.

Another way was by highlighting the so-called preferred Western beauty standards. Pete Wu, a journalist who published his book “De Bananengeneratie: over het dubbelleven van Chinese Nederlanders van nu” (*The Banana Generation: on the double lives of Chinese Dutch today*)<sup>3</sup> who interviewed 45 Chinese-Dutch people about generational gaps, dating, discrimination, and loneliness, explains in his TV series that when he makes a dating profile on an app, he specifically adds his height. According to Wu, he is quite tall for a Chinese-Dutch man, and he knowingly put this in his profile because it is the same as the average height of the white Dutchman.<sup>4</sup> While he discusses this in the context of analyzing love and dating as a Chinese-Dutch man and also shows a strong awareness, Wu too still struggles with internalized notions of Western beauty standards.

In the same TV series, Wu admits to finding white and “manly according to the Western [beauty] standards” men the most attractive, and how he thinks East-Asian men are not.<sup>5</sup> Besides the internalization of Western beauty standards, this alludes to the internalized gendered emasculation of East-Asian men: he specifically mentions the Western “manliness” he finds attractive. He elaborates that he thinks that it comes from internalizing a negative self-image and projecting this onto other Chinese Dutch. Another participant explained that she has never dated another Chinese girl, firstly because she does not find them attractive, and secondly, because ever since she could remember, she would consciously and unconsciously avoid contact with other Chinese people.<sup>6</sup>

Intraethnic othering was also part of QiQi Boheemen’s experience, an actor in the eponymous theater production *De Bananengeneratie* (*The Bananageneration*), inspired by Wu’s book. In the podcast where the whole cast was interviewed about their experiences and what moved them to audition for this theater production, Boheemen notes that because she wanted to be as Western and as white as possible, she always declined her mother’s offers of following Mandarin lessons.

The internalized Western beauty standards, however, were a source of inspiration for many of them to start their initiatives. Rui Jun Luong, before she started up Asian Raisins (a foundation that combats racism against East- and Southeast Asian people in the Netherlands since March 2020),<sup>7</sup> developed “Guess Who: Asian Edition.” This is a version of the

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<sup>3</sup> Pete Wu, *De Bananengeneratie: over het dubbelleven van Chinese Nederlanders van nu*, [The Banana Generation: on the double lives of Chinese Dutch today], (Das Mag Uitgeverij B.V.: Amsterdam, 2019) p. 81.

<sup>4</sup> Pete Wu, “Pete en de bananen,” [Pete and the bananas], VPRO, aired June, 2020, Season 1, episode 2, 00:01:18-00:01:46, <https://www.vpro.nl/dorst/producties/pete-en-de-bananen.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Wu, “Pete en de bananen” [Pete and the bananas], 00:01:30-00:01:57.

<sup>6</sup> Wu, “Pete en de bananen” [Pete and the bananas], 00:09:58-00:10:35.

<sup>7</sup> Asian Raisins, “Over ons” [About us], Accessed June 1, 2023, <https://asianraisins.nl/over-ons/>.

children's game Guess Who with only Asian people to show how diverse Asian people are. On her website are stories where she interviewed the participants about whether they (ever) felt ashamed of their Asian roots, their experience with the model minority myth, and stereotypes.

Luong mentioned that she was “[...] ashamed of being Chinese. I didn't want to be Chinese anymore, I wanted to be white.”<sup>8</sup> However, with these internal struggles, Luong started up the aforementioned initiatives. Moreover, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2020, Luong was invited to give a speech for the Day of Empathy. Here she used the fact that she had internalized Western beauty standards to illustrate how dire the situation is for some Chinese-Dutch when it comes to the consequences of racist experiences in the Netherlands.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, Hui-Hui Pan who started the Pan Asian Collective that tries to create more Asian representation in the Dutch media, discusses how much the internalized racism influenced her not wanting to be Chinese. In the speech that she gave at the yearly antiracism protest, she mentioned she did not want to be seen with other people who looked like her.<sup>10</sup> In the same podcast Boheemen participated in, Pan explained that she wanted to have blonde hair and blue eyes.<sup>11</sup>

Another commonality in the primary sources analyzed was the use of the word banana to identify oneself. As we have seen in Trieu's research, Asian Americans had called themselves bananas which alluded to internalized racism because they used the term to express assimilation and conformity to whiteness.<sup>12</sup> Wu's book and the eponymous theater production used it in their titles to describe a whole generation of Chinese(/Asian)-Dutch and their struggles with living with Dutch racism. Moreover, some of Luong's portrait story interviewees opted to call themselves bananas.<sup>13</sup>

Wu received the nickname banana affectionately from his mother.<sup>14</sup> It does, however, show the gap she and Wu himself perceive between being Chinese and being Dutch. A part of

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<sup>8</sup> Luong, “Ook Hier” [Here as well], 00:03:26-00:03:31.

<sup>9</sup> Rui Jun Luong (@ruijunluong), “3 May Day of Empathy,” *Instagram*, May 7, 2020, [https://www.instagram.com/p/B\\_4v9gnpewM/](https://www.instagram.com/p/B_4v9gnpewM/).

<sup>10</sup> Hui-Hui Pan (@huihui\_panonfire), “Ik ben niet je modelminderheid” [I am not your model minority], *Instagram*, December 11, 2023, [https://www.instagram.com/p/C0rTqNOoojC/?img\\_index=3](https://www.instagram.com/p/C0rTqNOoojC/?img_index=3).

<sup>11</sup> Vinny Tailor, and Hui-Hui Pan, “Nhung Dam,” *De Bananenpodcast* [The Banana Podcast] (podcast), October 9, 2022, Accessed June 1, 2023, <https://open.spotify.com/episode/2asrbQs0mZNv3migxtjsu6?si=7ed93577233549d4>.

<sup>12</sup> Trieu, “Understanding the use of “twinkie,” “banana,” and “FOB””, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Lani, “Portrait story: Lani,” Interview by Rui Jun Luong, *Guess Who: Asian Edition*, May 6, 2022, <https://guesswho.ruijunluong.nl/lani/>.

<sup>14</sup> Nils De Lange, “We spraken Pete Wu over het dubbelleven van Chinese Nederlanders,” [We spoke Pete Wu about the double life of the Chinese-Dutch], *Vice*, October 31, 2019, <https://www.vice.com/nl/article/wjwyb9/we-spraken-pete-wu-over-het-dubbelleven-van-chinese-nederlanders>.



him is “yellow” and a part of him is “white”. These two entities cannot coexist in the phenotypical racist Dutch society and therefore Wu is a banana.

### **Protesting phenotypical racism**

By openly discussing these insecurities about their appearance, their relation to other Chinese-Dutch, and their self-identification processes, it seems Chinese-Dutch in the anti-Asian racism movement use their experiences with internalized racism to highlight what other consequences exist due to racism. As Wu mentions in his TV series: “They [other Chinese-Dutch in the show] are comfortable with who they are. Should I also make myself less resistant to my own Asian looks? Perhaps. I actually think not only should my self-assurance rise but also the value of being Asian in the Western world.”<sup>15</sup>

It is with this quote that Wu points out what he and other Chinese-Dutch activists aim to resolve. These “bananas” struggle with identity and belonging, resulting in internalized notions of racism. Dutch racism is strongly based on phenotype which has resulted in internalized racism in the activist discourse of anti-Asian racism movements. However, it does not invalidate their intense dissatisfaction and condemnation of certain elements of Western/Dutch (popular) culture. Instead, they use the internal struggles to openly discuss what Dutch racism has had as consequences, going against the white innocence, the denial.

Seet argued in his analysis that internalizing a sense of pride about one’s particular racialization could be a manifestation of internalized racism. However, without interviewing and speaking personally to the Chinese-Dutch activists, there are no certain conclusions that one could or should make about the thought process behind wanting to represent other Chinese-Dutch and educate other white Dutch. It is unclear to what effect the Chinese-Dutch activists discussed still position white people as the arbiters of acceptance.

The sense of being different from their white Dutch counterparts and Western/Dutch culture remains a significant influence in shaping their cultural identities and their identification processes. However, the Chinese-Dutch activists discussed, try to forego the reiteration of racial stereotypes and a belief in essential ethnic and racial differences between whites and Chinese by actively and openly reviewing their internalized racism.

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<sup>15</sup> Wu, “Pete en de bananen” [Pete and the bananas], 00:15:54-00:16:17.

## **Conclusion and future recommendations**

Dutch colonization has left lasting traces of racism in Dutch culture, history, language, and institutional representations. These traces are still visible today and often lead to systemic racism, which is frequently minimized or denied. Dutch racism is phenotypically based, which causes non-white citizens to be excluded from fully participating in Dutch society. The Netherlands' white innocence creates and sustains racist power structures.

The Chinese community in the Netherlands, which has been present for over a century, has faced various forms of racism, including othering, exclusion, and deportation. Despite these challenges, the community adapted and thrived, particularly in the restaurant business. However, they are still often racialized as perpetual foreigners or model minorities. This causes the Chinese Dutch to live in a stratified place between the white Dutch and other present ethnic groups in the Netherlands. White Dutch use the Chinese as an example of successful integration. In turn, the Chinese Dutch are excluded from debating discrimination and racism in public discourse while they are not excluded from the consequences of Dutch racism due to their phenotype. This leads them to feel unseen and unrepresented in Dutch media and society.

The feeling of being different from their white Dutch counterparts continues to shape their cultural identities which became visible in the anti-Asian racist movements' discourse. Several activists discussed the internalization of Western beauty standards and consciously and unconsciously participating in intraethnic othering. However, the Chinese Dutch activists are actively examining and challenging their internalized racism, attempting to break away from racial stereotypes and inherent ethnic and racial differences.

### **Future recommendations**

This research was navigational and hopes to have decreased the dearth of academic and public discourse on Asian-Dutch, racism, and internalized racism a little. However, because of the great dearth of research, future recommendations are endless. Firstly, due to limitations on my side, interviews were not a possibility. By interviewing the researched individuals and analyzing broader systems at play, stronger conclusions can be made and more importantly, it could include more marginalized and silenced groups.

While there were definite similarities to the Asian American experience researched by previous scholars, creating analyses on internalized racism in a Dutch context is something I argue should be navigated. In the available literature on internalized racism, the internalization of Western beauty standards was hardly touched upon. While for the Chinese

Dutch activists analyzed, these beauty standards were the most common form of internalized racism. This might be due to the phenotypical nature of Dutch racism, but it is definitely something that needs further research.

Finally, existing literature on Dutch racism oftentimes focuses on Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, or Antillean citizens. To further understand Dutch racism, I think it could prove interesting to research the differences in racist experiences between (one of) these ethnic groups and, for example, the Chinese Dutch or another Asian racialized group. It could show how discriminated groups behave toward each other.

To borrow a quote from Hoogervorst and Tarisa: “In the repetitive structures of normalized bigotry, anti-racist mobilizations, social pressure, damage control, apologies (of a sort), dismissals, invalidation strategies, internal disagreements, and insistence to move on without wanting to commit to structural change, we find salutary lessons and ongoing relevance.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hoogervorst and Tarisa, “The Screaming Injustice of Colonial Relationship,” p. 57.

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