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***Special issue*
Netherlandic migrations: Identities
Guest editor: Hendrika Beaulieu**

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CANADIAN JOURNAL OF NETHERLANDIC STUDIES
REVUE CANADIENNE D'ÉTUDES NÉERLANDAISES

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From the editor

Inge Genee

You find in front of you the second of two special issues on the topic of migration, guest edited by Hendrika Beaulieu of the University of Lethbridge. As with the first issue, this one also contains a combination of scholarly articles combined with non-fiction pieces, all shedding their own kind of light on different aspects of the migration experience; in this issue the emphasis is on identity. We hope you enjoy reading these contributions as much as we enjoyed working with the authors.

All contributions in this issue, with the exception of the non-fiction/memoir vignettes by Jenny Radsma and Grace Hols, were assessed first by the guest editor Hendrika Beaulieu and myself, before being sent out for external peer review. We are very grateful to all anonymous reviewers for providing such insightful comments and suggestions. We would like to thank our contributors for working hard at sometimes multiple rounds of quite significant revisions, which in some cases involved rethinking some of the initial work. All the contributions in this issue are stronger for the serious rewriting efforts that went into them, and the results clearly demonstrate the benefits of a good peer review process.

I would like to thank Hendrika for her intensive work with the authors in helping shape their writing. Without her guidance and inspiration this issue would not have been possible. I would also like to thank our new managing editor Steven Gillis for all French translations in this issue, in addition to invaluable assistance in the copy-edit and proofing stages. This issue was produced with in-kind support from the [University of Lethbridge Journal Incubator](#) in the Lethbridge Centre for the Study of Scholarly Communications (CSSC). The issue was begun with assistance from managing editor Carey Viejou, and was finished by our new managing editor Steven Gillis.

Lethbridge, May 2018

De la rédaction

Inge Genee

Vous avez entre vos mains le deuxième des deux numéros spéciaux sur la migration, dont la rédactrice invitée est Hendrika Beaulieu de l'Université de Lethbridge. Comme le premier numéro, ce deuxième contient un mélange d'articles savants et d'articles généraux. Chacun fait la lumière sur des aspects différents concernant l'expérience de la migration. Ce numéro se concentre sur l'identité. Nous espérons que vous prendrez autant de plaisir à le lire que nous en avons pris à collaborer avec ses auteurs.

Tous ces articles, à l'exception des vignettes écrites par Jenny Radsma et par Grace Hols, ont été évalués d'abord par notre rédactrice invitée Hendrika Beaulieu et moi-même avant d'être envoyés à un comité de lecture. Nous sommes très reconnaissantes envers ces évaluateurs anonymes d'avoir offert des suggestions et commentaires. Nous tenons aussi à remercier les auteurs de tout leur travail de révision, parfois considérable, et d'avoir réagi avec tant de patience à plusieurs séries d'épreuves. Nous croyons que chacun des articles de ce numéro est plus solide grâce aux efforts significatifs de réécriture et que les résultats font preuve des avantages d'un bon processus de critique des pairs.

J'aimerais remercier Hendrika de son travail intensif avec les auteurs pour donner forme à leurs articles ; sans ses conseils et son inspiration, ce numéro n'aurait pas vu le jour. Je remercie aussi notre nouveau directeur de la rédaction Steven Gillis de ses traductions vers le français dans ce numéro et, en outre, de son assistance indispensable pendant les étapes de la révision et de la mise en page. Ce numéro a été produit avec le soutien technique de l'[University of Lethbridge Journal Incubator](#) dans le Lethbridge Centre for the Study of Scholarly Communications (CSSC). La directrice de la rédaction au début a été Carey Viejou, et la tâche a été complétée par notre nouveau directeur de la rédaction Steven Gillis.

Lethbridge, mai 2018

Van de redactie

Inge Genee

Voor u ligt het tweede deel van een dubbelnummer over migratie onder gastredactie van Hendrika Beaulieu van de University of Lethbridge. Net als het eerste nummer bevat ook dit een combinatie van wetenschappelijke artikelen met non-fictie stukken, die allemaal op hun eigen manier een licht werpen op de ervaringen van migranten; in dit nummer ligt de nadruk op identiteit. We hopen dat u net zoveel plezier beleeft aan het lezen van deze stukken als wij hadden aan het voorbereiden ervan.

Met uitzondering van de non-fictie/memoire-schetsen van Jenny Radsma en Garce Hols, zijn alle bijdragen in dit nummer eerst beoordeeld door onze gastredacteur Hendrika Beaulieu en mijzelf, en daarna uitgestuurd voor externe review. Wij bedanken de anonieme reviewers hartelijk voor hun nuttige commentaar en suggesties. En we bedanken de auteurs voor hun bereidheid om hun bijdragen soms meer dan eens tamelijk drastisch te herschrijven, wat in een paar gevallen zelf leidde tot een herziening van de oorspronkelijke opzet van het stuk. Wij zijn ervan overtuigd dat alle stukken sterker zijn geworden als gevolg van het intense herschrijfproces dat ermee gemoeid ging, en dat de resultaten laten zien wat er uit een sterk peer-reviewproces kan voortkomen.

Ik bedank Jet voor haar intensieve werk met de auteurs. Zonder haar inspiratie en volharding zou dit themanummer er nooit gekomen zijn. Mede namens haar bedank ik ook onze redactie-assistent Steven Gillis voor alle Franse vertalingen in dit nummer, en voor zijn zeer gewaardeerde hulp bij het copy-editen en opmaken van dit nummer. Dit nummer is tot stand gekomen dankzij een bijdrage van de [University of Lethbridge Journal Incubator](#) in de Lethbridge Centre for the Study of Scholarly Communications (CSSC). Twee redactie-assistenten hebben geholpen met de productie: Carey Viejou overzag de eerste fase, en haar werk werd afgemaakt door onze nieuwe redactie-assistant Steven Gillis.

Lethbridge, mei 2018

From the guest editor

Hendrika Beaulieu

This second special issue on Netherlandic migrations complements the first issue's focus on memory and remembering (see <https://caans-acaen.ca/volume-37-issue-1-2016/>) through its emphasis on identities and identity making. As I pointed out in my introduction to the first issue, *Of memory and remembering*, "narrative knowledge conveyance remains problematic across many disciplines in the Academy, particularly because the various forms require careful, alternative analytic methods and are still viewed through the objective/subjective binary." The articles and vignettes in this second edition enrich my assertion that oral histories/life stories offer rich data assemblages that directly address, in a remarkably timely way given the dispersal of peoples around the globe, questions related to immigration, memory and identity and the transactional, negotiated nature of "ethnic" selves within mainstream cultures.

I would like to thank the scholars who contributed to this collection and to express my gratitude for an amazing journey. I have made new friends and discovered scholars and writers immersed in many of the research areas that hold my attention, and who have contributed to my vastly enriched understanding. While it has been a long journey, it has been eminently rewarding. In honouring their impact on this undertaking, I acknowledge the names of the contributors to both issues of the special edition (in alphabetical order): Helene Demers, Grace Hols, Jasmin Keijzer, Jenny Radsma, Lisa Schalk, Greg Sennema, Jason N. Vasserman and Christa van Daele. In addition, I want to thank Christa van Daele, Helene Demers and Grace Hols for their insights on our panel at the CAANS conference in 2017, and to acknowledge that we could easily have spoken on our research for another two hours. Thank you for your insights and your gracious contributions.

My deep appreciation goes to Christa van Daele for bringing the unique artwork of Julian van Mossel-Forrester to the attention of the editors. His work highlights Christa's article, *An educator's return to Belgium*, in the first issue and graces its cover.

The support I was given by managing editors Carey Viejou and Steven Gillis was unparalleled and the detailed input proffered by internal and external reviewers, invaluable. To the CJNS/RCEN editorial board, I again convey my appre-

ciation for the opportunity to showcase the quality and importance of oral histories and life stories around the immigration experience.

I am virtually at a loss to properly thank Inge Genee for her unfailing and generous guidance, mentorship, advice, and sheer hard work throughout the production of both issues. Her generosity of spirit and her unflagging support underpin these issues; they would simply not have been possible without her.

If these collections prompt scholars to expand their methodological range through life story/oral history data gathering and analysis, I am content.

Enjoy!

Lethbridge, May 2018

Introduction to special issue 37.2

Netherlandic migrations: Identities

Hendrika Beaulieu

This second special issue on Netherlandic migrations focuses both obliquely and specifically on identity making in conversation with social constructs and the etic imposition of, as well as external acceptance of or resistance to, those identities. The issue has been organized to specifically reflect these tensions; the academic articles that converge on features of identity making are interspersed with memory vignettes that invite the reader to reflect on the processes taking place: analyses of what we choose to remember, how memories inform and complicate the “I”, are compounded in Jenny Radsmá’s final vignette, *What do we gain when we lose control*, a poignant consideration of the personal histories that form us and their unspoken impact on our actions as conscious memory slips away.

In keeping with the life story/oral history methodology underpinning both issues, the articles written by vasser-elong, Sennema, Keijzer and Beaulieu all rely on personal life stories, oral history data collection, or both, that are analyzed in terms of identities. vasser-elong, for example, describes the journey provoked by a Dutch last name, his subsequent search through DNA analysis for his ancestry, his research into the Vasser name that provoked an awareness of his extended and shared Dutch-African-American ancestry, and his choice to honour the maternal “roots” written on his body. Sennema discusses his late awareness of the Dutch identity that framed him as the son of immigrants, how that identity was preserved, enhanced and often, unassimilated to mainstream Canadian society, and the diary that led him to examine his identity more closely. Both are focussed on “roots”, albeit in significantly different ways, and the impact of their ethnicity across time and space on the ways in which they negotiate the Self.

Keijzer and Beaulieu are both concerned with conflicted identities, as well as identities externally imposed and internally accepted or resisted. Keijzer’s analysis of emerging adult narratives who feel “very very Dutch around anything that is slightly Dutch but for the rest of the time [...] mostly Canadian” is rooted in data that highlights the tension between enculturation into Canadian society and

upbringings that preserved the traditions of the “old country”. Those young adults, born in Canada, are prescribed Canadians, but they are an uneasy “fit” within the greater Canadian society, self-negotiating their identities through multiple narrative strategies that facilitate self-explorations of their multi-faceted identities and questions of belonging. Beaulieu’s article, on the other hand, analyzes several common narrative themes that characterized the life stories told by *Indische* people to Netherlanders to explain who the *Indische* were and what they had experienced. These narratives resist the ways in which they were externally perceived and written; the narrators found themselves in the Netherlands, where their self-perceived identities were clearly at odds with societal understanding. Their story is ultimately one of emic rejection of an etic identity and choice; the decision to immigrate to countries in which their ethnic designation had no relevance. Not coincidentally, that ethnic label is disappearing altogether in Canada and the U.S.A. and has become a theme in immigrant histories/journeys; who our ancestors were and where they came from, clearly interlocking with aspects of the articles by Vasserman, Sennema and Keijzer.

The vignettes by Hols and Radisma invite us to ponder how identities of immigrant children were formed and re-shaped through their parents’ immigrant experiences. Hols’ memories of the unique characteristics of her landscape and personal circumstances that typify her immigrant family vividly bring to life the memories that shaped her and structure her being-in-the-world. Embedded in her stories, moreover, are unique data assemblages regarding the decisions and experiences of immigrants that can be mined for further analysis. Radisma reminds us, in *The Underdiver*, of the critical importance of historical understanding. Living in Canada, a country that did not experience Nazi occupation, the immigrant descendants of those who did live under German occupation had little-to-no comprehension of the narratives that informed the daily awareness of the Dutch regarding their WWII experiences and the impact it had on the psyche and health of survivors and the country after the war. What remains “unspoken” informs misapprehension, and Radisma’s father, like the male survivors of WWII in Indonesia noted in Beaulieu’s article, did not speak of his experiences, thereby staving off the recognition of the suffering and fear that formed his identity, and silencing, like so many men of his generation, histories that must be recalled so that we “never forget” the shared trauma of multiple historical events.

The articles and vignettes in this edition highlight, once again, the power of life stories and oral histories as the source of historical and social data. The editors express the hope that they will provoke further research and analysis into all facets of the human experience narrated by those who lived and experienced them.

Some of the words: Swimming pool

Grace Hols

Remember the saying “A picture is worth a thousand words”? Well, I have a lot of pictures: black and white, some already fading. So I am trying to write the words, or at least a few of them. This process involves an intimate study of a photo, to the point where I take a magnifying glass to zoom in and capture details otherwise overlooked. The result of all this is a growing collection of vignettes that I am calling “Some of the words.”

Swimming pool

It’s a blistering day in August 1952. The oat crop is thick and tall and ready to ripen, and the daisies are in full bloom amongst the wild grasses that make up most of the yard.

I am surprised to see the daisies. Mom made it a mission to get rid of them as much as she could, spraying them with who knows what and pulling them out roots and all if she had the strength. Dad had taken classes in agriculture before he came to Canada, and one thing we heard repeatedly was that daisies were a sign of bad soil and a poorly managed farm. In those early years, though, with a house full of young children and a farm to build up, pulling daisies out of the side yard was probably not a priority.

A clothesline has been strung between two poles, and a third pole with a nail on the end holds it up, although this day there are no clothes drying, and the clothespins hang idle and unevenly spread along the metal line.

The mower Dad uses to cut the hay has been parked for the time being, since the hay is already cut and packed into the barn loft, and it is too early to start cutting the oats.

In the background, already twisted from sitting on its side, is the large wooden crate Dad made in Holland before he and Mom emigrated. It was into this

crate, or *kist*, that they packed the oak table and chairs, the two *rookstoelen* ('smoking chairs'), the pots and pans, the less fragile wedding gifts, books, clothes, and whatever else would fit. It even held a large engine, awkward and heavy, because Dad knew they were heading into the northern Canadian wilderness and he thought he might need it as a generator or something. There wasn't a lot of room. I know Dad reluctantly sold his piano and Mom sold the bedroom suite she had saved so hard for. They needed that money to pay for the passage to Canada. I wonder how they moved that large crate around? Did they have loaders or cranes to transport it from the house to the ship when they were ready to leave on the Volendam? The crate later became a storage shed, but what I remember is that we used it as a playhouse, parked on its side.

In the centre of the photo is a large galvanized metal tub with two handles. I think my sister has it, or whatever is left of it, today. She's the sentimental one in the family, although she says it's because she loves the "shabby chic" look. Her house is full of old things, or things made to look old.



In our "swimming pool", 1952. From the author's personal collection.

But in 1952, inside that tub, which really wasn't even big enough for an adult to bathe in, are three children. They are not having a bath, because you can see bathing suit straps, and the girls have big white ribbons in their hair. No, this was an early day version of a swimming pool. This was a big deal. There was no running

water, so early in the day Mom must have used the kitchen hand pump to fill pails of water and carry them out to the tub in the yard. The water would have been ice cold, coming from the well hand-dug by my dad and his brothers when we first moved out to the farm. So the tub had to sit in the sun for a few hours to warm up, and I can imagine we would have run out often to check if it was ready. The way to check was to stick our hands in, and to look for the small bubbles that would collect under the water along the inside of the tub. Probably the tub of water would have been incentive for us to get our chores done, for we all had chores, even the little ones. Feeding the chickens, collecting the eggs, sweeping the porch, or folding towels would have happened quickly that day.

But there we are, chores done, the water warmish, three of us crowded together in the tub, hair ribbons askew and big grins on our faces, squinting into the sun for a photograph. A large cloth of some kind lies next to the tub, ready to receive us when we have had enough of the water. Lying on a blanket in a wet bathing suit with the sun to warm and dry me was an absolute treat in those days.

Treading the Atlantic

jason n. vasser-elong

Treading the Atlantic is an essay that details how the legacy of colonialism affects one's sense of self in the social context in which one lives. This account will enable the reader to see society through the lens of someone "Treading the Atlantic" as lived in real-world experiences of struggle, self-efficacy and spirituality. This merging of art and science aims to highlight the cognitive dissonance of those personally and historically affected by colonialism. The speaker in the essay is not interested in placing blame on any one person or people, but will inform the reader of day-to-day ponderings of those affected by colonialism.

Key terms: Colonialism; Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade; Afro-Dutch identity; African-American identities; DNA.

I am and have been called many things in my life but for the sake of conversation, I have been a poet ever since my sixth grade English teacher, Mrs. Davis, introduced me to Paul Laurence Dunbar and his poem *A Negro Love Song*. I have used, and continue to use, poetry to interpret the world I live in as an African-American male, who was brought up in a nation of immigrants; poetry has been the meter by which I sought a sense of self. Having been born and raised in the Midwest of the United States, particularly St. Louis, Missouri, had its own set of regional challenges; implicit and explicit racism, prejudice and the colloquial "Where did you go to high school?" which allowed total strangers to pass judgment on your educational background and other socio-economic factors. I questioned everything as a child, and my ancestry was one of those elements about my life that I could not ignore; it consumed me because the society in which I lived reminded me every day that I was not only different, but that there was something wrong with my black skin, full lips and kinky hair. As African-Americans we are taught and reminded of our ancestral lineage to Africa and more specifically to slavery. For example, the textbooks I read in my formative years often mentioned that *slaves* were taken from Africa, when in fact they were *Africans*; they were not slaves in their own countries but forced to become so after their capture as free people. Despite the externally imposed label "African", many

of those people didn't know that "African" was who they were; instead many identified more with their tribal or ethnic affiliations such as the Ibo in Nigeria or the Twa in Ghana. Where, I wondered, do I fit? What is my tribal affiliation? I decided to research further to discover where in Africa my ancestors came from, and because this wasn't common knowledge in my family, I set out to learn about that important missing part of our past.

My decision was furthered by my studies in anthropology in college. During my second year of school I purchased the PatriClan DNA test from *African Ancestry*, which traces the Y chromosomes and yields results that offer DNA matches for people living in modern day countries of the world. This purchase did in fact impact my learning, because I was able to use what I learned inside the classroom and apply that knowledge to my life. It was unsettling to find that paternally I shared ancestry with people living in modern day Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, and Great Britain, especially considering that the Portuguese initiated the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, before Spain followed suit. I felt that I was a spade in a game most valued for helping the conquerors win the wealth and influence that has saturated the world and manipulated the books we read. I had learned that that legacy lived on in my own body, and that sickened me, yet I continued to do research on my ancestral background.



Figure 1. Nicholls Island from the coast, situated 300 meters off the coast of Cameroon, where the depth of water allowed the boats to dock. Photo courtesy Nicka Smith, 2010.

Upon reflection, the notion of self has been integral to me, in part because though I knew that I had to have African ancestry, being African-American, my surname was Dutch and didn't reflect how I saw myself nor how others saw me. There is complexity in identity. Aside from being black in America, I was also shorter than average, which lends itself to its own brand of criticism from people both inside and outside of my ethnic group. In short, I needed a reason to know if there was something wrong with me for feeling African, even though my feet had never touched African soil, nor did I possess a name that would ethnically mirror how I felt inside.

The Dutch are among the tallest people in the world and I stood tall as a pygmy in a forest of questions. Looking in the mirror at an African face with a European surname confused me, but as I learned more about my ancestry, the more I came to understand the prominence that the name Vasser held in the Netherlands and hence the impact it would have on my life. It's the name I inherited from my father through the patriline, while the name itself originated in Holland. It is thought to be of noble stock; even now people comment on how dignified it sounds on my tongue. There are more variations in the spelling of the Vasser name than I care to mention here, but I have learned that Vasser descendants had hence moved to France, changing the *er* to an *ar*, in an effort to reinvent themselves in a foreign land. After learning that they came to America to reinvent themselves, I felt that it was only fitting to reinvent myself as well, and that someday I would, but on my own terms.

I carried the name of my father, but as I got older I felt the legacy of colonialism, because even that name was not his, yet our surname manifested itself into my identity. My mother's surname mirrored a similar fate. A Scott, she and her ancestral lineage also faced one of the legacies of colonialism, the taking away of one's own name and the imposition of another. As an African-American, I rebelled against that legacy whenever I could. I was in middle school when I read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* as told by Malcolm X and Alex Haley, and vowed to one day change my name to something of my own choosing. I was disgusted with the notion of colonialism and needed some way of avenging my African relatives whose names have been lost in the waves of the Atlantic, so that I may indirectly embark upon the journey of self-discovery, much like the Vassers that left Holland for France or elsewhere in the world. Interestingly enough however, I realized that if I replaced the name, I would have then erased another part of the history of my family in some way. Who would be accountable for our arrival to the shores of America if I changed it? At least with the name intact, there is a direct line of where to seek for answers.

I wanted to have a conversation with other members of the African Diaspora on the subject of identity in the post-colonial context. The interview that

follows is one of those conversations. Among the questions in my questionnaire I included: "If you could describe who you are in **one word**, what would it be and why?" So, in the spirit of the post-colonial narrative of so many throughout the world, let's meet *Resourceful*, who identifies as black and grew up in a loving family. Her mother is black and her father is of mixed race. Growing up on the east coast of the United States, she always identified as black because both of her parents were also, though she found out more about her paternal racial makeup three to four years ago. Her father, who identifies as *American*, used the same company, *African Ancestry*, as I did to trace his paternal ancestry; and interestingly enough, his paternal DNA and mine were very similar, with the Netherlands being one of the places in the world where he shares paternal ancestry with others.

To many within the African-American community, the notion of identity is of great importance. With respect to remembering where our ancestors came from, there are many African institutions and traditions within our culture. From the African Methodist Episcopalian Church to social clubs, organizations and others with African names, meanings and symbols, our community has tried tirelessly to preserve our heritages, but what of the belief systems, villages, and people from whence we came? Is it enough to be human or is there a broader need for membership and belonging that is missing in the lives of those directly and indirectly affected by the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and colonization?

In time I came to learn about communities in the Caribbean, Suriname, and Holland and in other places in the world that identified as Afro-Dutch, much how we identify as Afro-American in the United States, and I began to question if there were similarities in how we lived and if they too yearned for *home*. Due to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, it would have been very likely that my family would have ended up in any of these places in the world. I believe that within the Afro-Dutch community we share continuity in our African ancestry, even if it seems that we are all living separate identities. Treading the Atlantic for me is living in the middle because it is in the middle that I live day to day. Maneuvering from the blackness of family life to the whiteness of societal norms in America leaves me in an uncomfortable state of liminality. It's a language. Mason Bassett, a fictional character that I have created through my poetry, walks the middle; he walks the line of living in two worlds for most of his life. It's easier for me to create scenarios for Mason because my lived experiences are at times too much to bear, and the world seems to not even hear my screams for help. Mason makes it easier to articulate the difficulty of not truly living on either side of Africa or America but rather treading the Atlantic in a state of balance.

Introducing Mason Bassett

So he grabbed the face towel to remove the black
until the skin peeled pink across the surface.
Instances became rooms without doors
windows or light. For him, daylight
was a lamp and night was the sun.
Remnants of his past stained the white
and never left the fiber – destined
like the exodus that led to questioning
the currency of one's weight in cowries
iron bars or rum.
Now, the sugar no longer sweetens
and drinking history becomes a ritual
needed in the waking hours
when the Windsor meets the center
and oxfords carry his stride.

I can never walk the streets of the American South and truly participate in its culture, because I know that there are places there where I would be uncomfortable. Or when visiting the East Coast, in say New York (once New Amsterdam), I am constantly reminded of this nation's history as I overlook the colonial architecture in the restaurants and homes. Out West it's the staring and the looking directly away. I was born in the Midwest, in one of the few blue cities in a red state, meaning that outside of St. Louis and Kansas City, the rest of Missouri sided with the South during the Civil War of 1861-1865, where many Africans were enslaved, living in the middle, oppressed, and made constantly aware of their difference.

In *Introducing Mason Bassett* I recall a moment in my life when I was so exasperated that I literally tried to remove the black from my face because it seemed that regardless of how pleasant I was or intelligent, to many I was nothing more than a nigger, and in feeling depressed with powerlessness I took that anger out on myself. In western society, there is this need to assimilate into the culture so much that one would alter their appearance by straightening their hair, bleaching their skin, or even getting plastic surgery to look more European to fit in, because their Africanness or "otherness" is cause for public debate. This poem also references some of the lasting legacies of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade with its mention of sugar, coffee, and clothing made of cotton that have become so ingrained in our lives that their origins are often never given a second thought.

Along my quest for understanding, I looked into the experiences of others within the African Diaspora. I asked pointed questions about their family histories, where they lived, how they self-identified regarding their ancestry, the advan-

tages or disadvantages their identity provided, the importance of the past, and asked where home was to them. Lastly, I asked my participants to reflect on the hardest aspect of who they are. The results were varied, as their answers reflected possible opinions that members of the African Diaspora have regarding their experiences in a post-colonial society. My interest was in those who shared the surname Vasser with me, even though we have only met through LinkedIn, an online community, and to the best of our knowledge aren't family. What we all have in common is our understanding of our African ancestry in the presence of a shared European surname, but then again, isn't that part of the legacy of colonialism? So many people were displaced into different parts of the world and were given the names of those that either enslaved them or participated in the manifest destiny of their lands.



Figure 2. Bimbia ruins, the historic slave trade market situated at the East Coast of Limbe subdivision, South-West region of Cameroon. Photo courtesy Nicka Smith, 2010.

For the sake of argument, I have always found a connection and self-identified as *African*. Before discovering that my maternal ancestry traced to the Bamileke in Cameroon, I knew there was more behind my identity than being black in America. But I also understood that people identified differently for their own reasons, so in these two interviews, we have a conversation with three Vassers who I have labelled, the *African* (myself), *Resourceful*, and the *American*, each one identifying

differently for various reasons, exploring their stories in a dialog. Let's take a look at the interview I had with *Resourceful*. As we will see in the interview with the *American* later, these responses reflect how their experiences shape their lives.

jason/African: What advantages does your identity provide for you?

Resourceful: I have been very fortunate and blessed to have an incredible family who loves me and raised me from a child to an adult. They helped with college, etc. However, I cannot think of anyone else from another race who has ever said, "Oh, she's Black, let's help her". So, I don't see an "advantage" per se. What I know is – I am a Black Woman, so if someone is looking to "check two boxes" (Black and Woman) for any reason, then I would be considered. I believe I should be considered on qualifications and merit, not on my race/ethnicity.

jason/African: What disadvantages does your identity provide for you?

Resourceful: Black women are not always portrayed well in mainstream society (television shows), and I believe individuals in small town America as well as other countries believe that "we" are all the same. If your only exposure to Black people is what you see on TV you are in trouble. However, I find that there are many places where people don't know anyone of colour, do not regularly/daily see people of colour, or even if they know people of colour, they don't have any minority friends. How could they possibly learn from others or understand anything beyond what they see or hear when they do not interact with people of other races in their daily lives? Allow me to share a story: I visited Japan three times. When my husband and I would go places, I noticed that many Japanese women (especially) stared at me. I asked my husband why, and he said: "Because they aren't used to seeing Black people in all hues." Interesting. I also noticed that the only "Black shows" on television in Japan at that time were shows that portrayed and cast Blacks in a limited way.

jason/African: Were your ancestors brought to America enslaved?

Resourceful: On my mother's side, yes, probably. My father's mother is $\frac{3}{4}$ Cherokee (her mother was full-Cherokee; her father was $\frac{1}{2}$ Cherokee and $\frac{1}{2}$ Black as far as we know). So, she was an American Indian and Black ... so if her Father was $\frac{1}{2}$ Black – then, yes, he may have been enslaved and brought to America from Africa. My paternal grandfather (Vasser) and his entire side were very fair-skinned, often mistaken – but they never tried to pass for white as I understand it. My paternal grandparents are American Indian, Black and mixed race (apparently, Dutch, possibly from England and Spain) ... Why? My Father also had his DNA tested 3-4 years ago to determine ethnicity on the male side of the Vasser family. The report showed 20+ DNA sequences and none of the sequences showed a link to any countries in Africa on the Vasser side of our family.

jason/African: What have you learned about your surname and the people that passed that name down to you?

Resourceful: The Vassers were landowners and business owners. They owned land in Virginia and New Jersey. My second cousin (who would have been in his late 90's if he was still alive) was the Mayor of West Cape May, New Jersey for 29 years. My Grandfather worked for a funeral home in Philadelphia, PA and managed a farm in Cape May.

jason/African: How important is it to remember the past?

Resourceful: It is imperative that we not only know our history, but also remember it and pass it on. And in what context should readers of history remember it? Answer: As people, we are a beautiful and unique combination of our ancestors. No one is just from one place or solely one ethnicity. A person may be Dutch because both parents claim they are Dutch, but their grandparents, great-grandparents, great-great-grandparents or others in their family may not be Dutch.

jason/African: If you could describe who you are in one word, what would it be and why?

Resourceful: *Resourceful* – Whenever someone asks me to assist them or provide advice, I take that very seriously. I don't dismiss it, because I believe the person asked because they believe I can help in some way. It's important to me. So, I will work until I find a solution, give sound advice, or find a person who can help them.

jason/African: Given that your surname is Dutch, do you consider the Netherlands home or is home someplace else?

Resourceful: It is exciting to know that my surname is Dutch; however, I consider Alexandria, VA and Southern New Jersey home. (Explanation: Alexandria, VA because I've lived here for 21 years, and Southern NJ because I was born there, spent several summers there, and my parents, grandmother, aunts, uncles, and cousins still live in NJ). However, I would like to visit the Netherlands now that I know that my surname is Dutch.

jason/African: What has been the hardest aspect of being who you are?

Resourceful: I like who I am. I wish I knew more about my ancestors. Unfortunately, the previous generation of Vassers did not communicate much. They held things in. At least my father was able to get a lot of info through his research and conversations over the last four decades. He has lots of family photos, books with birth and death announcements, and other information.

After a follow-up phone conversation with *Resourceful*, I learned a bit more about the complexities of ethnicity, especially when it came to skin colour. One part of the black experience is that there is no hiding or blending in. When a person of colour enters a room, or takes a photo with those of different ethnicities, they are immediately noticed. With respect to the point made that many television shows, and other modes of media display negative portrayals of people of colour, the notion of not blending in becomes a stark reality.

Skin colour brings about a host of societal challenges, particularly in the post-colonial context. It's this notion that dark is wrong and that white is right as in the motifs of the villain and hero, devil's food cake – angel food cake and others. The danger is over time, with forced acculturation into western society, many of those dark-skinned people are discriminated against and then values are placed in their *blackness* or *whiteness*, both inside and outside of their perceived cultural backgrounds. So, the past is important to *Resourceful* as it is also to millions of other members of the African Diaspora that wish to learn more about their African selves.



Figure 3. Nicholls Island off the coast of Cameroon leading to Bimbia, a slave trading post used during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Photo courtesy Nicka Smith, 2010.

Treading the Atlantic will look different depending on who you ask, but I hypothesize that questions about Africa have always been present, in the far reaches of the mind and heart of many members of the African Diaspora. It's interesting how pets, particularly dogs, are admired, especially pure-bred ones, and if one is lost, in need, or in danger, there are many outlets to get that animal the help it needs. On the other hand, those Africans lost to the waves of the Atlantic and their displaced families from plantations are limited in how they are allowed to identify themselves; and as time passes, the descendants of those Africans are made to believe that they are not African at all, but something else.

Dog abroad

A Labrador retriever
 taken with family
 away to say, America
 is still a Labrador retriever
 years after generations
 have ran and fetched.

In this poem we find that dogs get to keep their pedigree, while so many members of the African Diaspora have to live in the ambiguity of where they find themselves.

In casual conversations I've had with people from varied walks of life, I find it interesting that, generally, people are in different places when it comes to their ancestry. Some, like me, think about it constantly while others do not. Given that The United States of America is a nation of immigrants, it's an interesting conversation to have. But what does it mean to be an American? In my interview with the *American*, I got a glimpse of what *can be* achieved in a post-colonial society.

jason/African: Do you reside in North America?

American: Yes

jason/African: How do you self-identify, i.e. Black, African American, Afro-Dutch, other?

American: American

jason/African: What advantages does that identity provide for you?

American: Being in more of the majority of people.

jason/African: What disadvantages does that identity provide for you?

American: None

jason/African: Were your ancestors brought to America enslaved?

American: Don't know, but I think my Forefathers were "free" land owning people in Virginia.

jason/African: What have you learned about your surname and the people that passed that name down to you?

American: They were German, Jewish, etc.

jason/African: How important is it to remember the past?

American: It is important, but because I belong to an old family, which most have passed on, it is hard to get new information. There are so many mixed races involved.

jason/African: If you could describe who you are in one word, what would it be and why?

American: *American*, I was born here and that is all I know.

jason/African: Given that your surname is Dutch, do you consider the Netherlands home or is home someplace else?

American: No and home is America (USA).

jason/African: What has been the hardest aspect of being who you are?

American: With so many ethnic groups involved, I really don't know who I am except being American. My father's people originated from Europe. My mother's people are Native American, with my mother's father being half Black and half Native American. So, what am I? Still cannot answer after all these years.

Sadly, the *American*'s father passed away when he was thirty-seven years old, the same age as I was when I wrote this essay. Having had this conversation with him about life is very significant for me and I thank him for sharing his experiences. The most important lesson that I learned from my conversations with the *American* was the possibility of what can be accomplished. The *American* grew up in a diverse neighbourhood where everybody knew one another and developed meaningful relationships. Until this day, his closest friends are members of the diverse environment in which he grew up. During one of those conversations, I asked him what being American meant to him and his response was that he was hard working. The *American* believed that people were innately good and that their worth was measured in their work ethic.

The reality for the *American* growing up in Virginia was that though he knew little about his cultural origin, he understood the importance of questioning it. The beauty in his experience is that his "Blackness" was never a factor in his childhood. For many of the African Diaspora in general, their Blackness is always a factor, but wouldn't it be something if it wasn't. That is the America I thought I lived in growing up in St. Louis, but sadly it isn't.

I was so excited about the life the *American* lived, that I wondered if it was possible to achieve that level of freedom to just be. To just be a person. To just be someone who works hard and plays harder. I longed for my (perceived) racial background to not be a reason for discrimination or humiliation, or retaliation for just being who I am and wanting to express myself as those around me do so freely. I too wanted to say with confidence to those who say "Well on my mother's side I'm Irish and on my father's side we are Scottish", I just wanted to add to the conversation. The *American* inspired me to write another poem, *acculturation*, about my father, who embodies a similar freedom.

acculturation

he was pops back then,
who played loud white people's music, as I called it.
i was confused by him whistling and shuffling cards
to the beat of what I've never listened to
long enough to relate to;
but he was himself,
something I then had yet to find...
in my dreadlocks that stretched to my behind
and a chip on my shoulder / dat weighed heavy on my mind
there was freedom in his ridiculous
something authentic
like old shoes repaired
then worn again.

My father was Steely Dan and Stevie Wonder, a chameleon of a person who worked in corporate America, only to feed his true love for magic. There was never a time that he wasn't performing magic; whether he was working with a deck of cards or metal coins, he was working the feather of ease in the most difficult of illusions. He would say "Be yourself" when we parted ways or finished having an intellectual conversation. I was his Buffalo Soldier who grew to love and know him as someone who never met a stranger and I'd like to think that trait lives on within me. God rest his soul, Dad passed away shortly before this was published, and, like the *American*, he didn't consider himself to be African either, but rather indulged in the culinary arts of different cultures, often speaking the languages of those he interacted with. I would like to dedicate this narrative to him; traversing unfamiliar waters, always smiling, always learning.

Is it not ideal to be who you are, regardless of what that means? I think I learned from my father, from the *American* and from *Resourceful* that it is indeed possible to be yourself. Through the miracle of DNA tracing I have learned that I received my African ancestry from my mother, who inherited it from her mother and so on. All those years ago, during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, a Cameroonian woman survived and passed her genes down to me. My maternal relative, Mary Jones, was born in 1810 in North Carolina into slavery. She was Bamileke and so am I; and perhaps she is why I decided to embark on this subject to begin with, to return and pick it up, as they say in Ghana. I have reinvented myself, much like the Vassers of Holland that moved to France, that changed the *er* to an *ar*, and among other things, I have embraced my Cameroonian and Netherlandic ancestries. Reclaiming and then merging parts of my identity that were taken from me makes me proud to be who I am in all of my complexity.

And so, I walk the line in old shoes leading to my Atlantic that is a rainforest in colours vast, a great ocean, a garden of creation that becomes even more alive at night, under a full moon. Each generation building off of the next, sea fans and sponges kept in balance by parrotfish as Spanish dancers sway to the current in their red mantels and trumpetfish use their muse and become what they lay against. Where there are decorator crabs that in their thrift carry life, as do orange fish grooming themselves against the backs of sharks.

In my ancestral home, “The People Down There” as they are called, communicate in French and English though few speak Ghomala, one of the many indigenous languages spoken in the region. But *ah’ tchieh choueh pah* ‘let’s enjoy our meal or drink’ in celebration for those that do. I have come to learn that the Bamileke people are comprised of eight different kingdoms, each with their own identifying characteristics, Baka Pygmy being one of them, who are the original ones who helped carry on their traditional ways. The Baka are short in stature and stocky. They are known as the keepers of the culture and when I see myself in a mirror, I envision a past that isn’t really the past at all.

About the author

jason n. vasser-elong is a poet and essayist who was born and raised in Saint Louis, Missouri, but has maternal ancestral roots in Cameroon, Central Africa. In 2014 the Cameroon Royal Council gave the name Elong (Eh-long) to him, and after embracing it, he added that name to reflect his family’s legacy.

jason earned a master of fine arts degree in creative writing from the University of Missouri – St. Louis after studying cultural anthropology and presenting his ethnographic research *Rhyme and reason: Poetics as societal dialogue*. His most recent poetry appears in *Black lives have always mattered* (2 Leaf Press, 2017), edited by Abiodun Oyewole, *Crossing the divide: From the poets of Saint Louis* (Vagabond, 2016), and *Unveiling visions: The alchemy of the Black imagination* (New York Public Library exhibition, 2015-2016).

His forthcoming debut collection of poetry *shrimp* (2 Leaf Press, 2018) examines identity and culture for someone of the African diaspora living in the post-colonial context.

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Faire du surplace dans l’Atlantique

Dans la composition, *Faire du surplace dans l’Atlantique*, il s’agit de la façon dont l’héritage du colonialisme touche la conscience de soi dans le contexte social dans lequel on vit. Ce récit permettra au lecteur de regarder la société dans la perspective de quelqu’un qui « fait du surplace dans l’Atlantique »

par des expériences sur la lutte, sur l'auto-efficacité et sur la spiritualité. Cette fusion de l'art et de la science vise à souligner la dissonance cognitive de ceux que le colonialisme affecte historiquement et personnellement. L'auteur du récit ne cherche pas à rendre quelqu'un responsable, mais plutôt à informer le lecteur des réflexions journalières des gens touchés par le colonialisme.

Watertrappelen in de Atlantische Oceaan

In *Watertrappelen in de Atlantische Oceaan* beschrijf ik hoe de erfenis van het kolonialisme het zelfbeeld beïnvloedt in de sociale context waarin men leeft. Deze beschrijving stelt de lezer in staat om naar de samenleving te kijken door de bril van iemand die voortdurend bezig is te "watertrappelen in de Atlantische Oceaan", in een leven getekend door strijd, zelfbeschouwing en spiritualiteit. Deze combinatie van kunst en wetenschap wil de aandacht vestigen op de cognitieve dissonantie die plaatsvindt in diegenen die persoonlijk en historisch zijn getekend door het kolonialisme. De schrijver van dit essay heeft niet de bedoeling schuld toe te wijzen aan specifieke personen, maar om de lezer te inzicht te bieden in de dagelijkse gedachtenkronkels van mensen wier levens door het kolonialisme zijn geraakt.

The underdiver

Jenny Radsma

Veel te weten is veel te begrijpen.
‘To know much is to understand much.’



In a black-and-white photo, my father leans forward from the kitchen chair on which he sits. Beside him, my sister's future father-in-law, a quiet, reserved man, watches from "Dad's chair" as we called it, bemused at the antics of my boisterous

father who, laughing, stretches his arm towards the camera, a glass of wine held aloft in his hand. On the border of the photo is the date, August 1969, and the occasion is my older sister's engagement party. By then, proud citizens of their new homeland, my parents have lived in Canada for 16 years. The following year, in May 1970, the world would commemorate the 25th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, and people like my parents would celebrate the never-to-be-forgotten sweet taste of liberation.

The war underscored so much of my sisters' and my upbringing, a continual presence overshadowing every conversation we had, every meal we ate, every decision our family made, every dime my parents spent, every prayer my father uttered at the conclusion of our mealtimes. My mother reminded her children regularly of our blessings, that as children we would never know hunger as she and my father had, what with our well-stocked pantry and the daily delivery of fresh milk; we always wore clean, well-mended clothes even if purchased at a second-hand store; we washed ourselves every morning with fresh-smelling soap and warm water running from the tap; we never had occasion to sleep on flea-infested mattresses, nor did we ever have to apply kerosene oil to quell the lice crawling on our scalps as happened more than once to my parents during the war.

For me as a child, the country from where my parents emigrated, Holland, remained a distant, far-away place from which stories abounded about relatives whom I had never met, how times had changed since my father's and mother's childhood, about family who still lived in the fatherland, as well as social, religious, and political changes that had occurred since my parents' departure. Sandwiched in between these stories for both my parents and their Dutch friends came recollections of the *oorlog*, the war, something I understood as a terrible time for the Dutch at the hands of the Nazis. But as a child I failed to appreciate the significance of the physical and emotional hardships endured by my parents and their friends during those dreadful years. In my ritual childhood prayers I expressed gratitude for my daily safe-keeping and the plentitude of food on the table, but not until well into my adult years did I begin to fathom how the deprivations, fears, and losses, repeated over and over across the five-year duration of the war, affected my parents and their countrymen for the remainder of their lives. Overhearing such accounts in a language I didn't fully comprehend, I had little awareness of how war altered my parents as young people or what they could hope for and dream about. Nor did I realize at the time that the stories I heard so frequently from my parents and their friends would come to an end, that my parents and other post-war Dutch immigrants would age and die, that the descriptions of their travails – and toughness – during and after the *oorlog* would be lost if their offspring failed to tell successive generations of the determination, fortitude, and courage of their forebears.

I recognized, however, that despite the weekly reminders issued from the Sunday pulpit to forgive one another, my parents could never allow themselves to befriend anyone with a German background. My sisters and I learned to carefully couch any mention of someone with a German name or accent whom we met or worked alongside. I sighed more than once when Mom repeated her vehement stance, “You can never trust a German, never!” followed by my father’s murmured agreement, “Ja, that is true.”

My mother spoke to her children about her experiences during the war, the horrors as well as humorous anecdotes, about biking along unlit backroads after curfew to evade patrolling soldiers; riding bicycles with wheels wound with rags after the Germans made buying rubber tubes and tires an impossibility; of the copper lid she brought with her to Canada, a leftover memento of the kettle the Germans took after barging into her and her mother’s apartment; of the quarantine sign left on the front door well after my grandmother’s recovery from diphtheria, a way to forestall the Germans from entering their home. My father, on the other hand, otherwise so ebullient and talkative, said little about what he endured those awful years. That was the past, he’d say, reminding us always of the importance to look ahead to the future.

Some 25 years after his death, I described to a friend how during the war my father went into hiding, part of the Dutch resistance, wherein numerous Dutch men and women engaged in clandestine and underground activities, anything to thwart the Germans who began their occupation of The Netherlands in May of 1940. Referred to as *onderduikers*, literally ‘underdivers’, an estimated 330,000 men, women, and children sought safe refuge, among whom Anne Frank’s family in Amsterdam became the most famous. My father and his brother, after receiving their conscription to report for duty at a steel factory in Dresden, Germany, also became fugitives from the Nazis. As loyal Dutchmen, their notice to serve in Hitler’s war precipitated their “diving under,” to leave their home in Haarlem and locate themselves elsewhere with an assumed identity. My father, 20 years old when drafted in 1941, left his childhood home with forged papers identifying him as Tjeerd VanderMeer, his new surname reflecting his maternal grandmother’s maiden name. He hid with a farm family, the de Vrieses, who lived in northern Holland, in the province of Fryslân, a rural area from where his grandparents years before had migrated to the city in hopes of improving their economic situation. In returning to his ancestral home, my father strove to save his life.

“How traumatizing for him,” my friend said as I offered her these details. A chill crossed over me when she made her comment while at the same time something clicked. This comment captured so much of what I had never before put together as the full picture of my father’s peculiarities: his staunch religious zeal; his over-the-top anxiety in the face of unfamiliar circumstances; his un-

yielding conservative worldview; his nervous agitation, which on Sunday mornings had him run to the bathroom several times before leaving the house to attend the weekly worship service. Upon arrival at the church, he visited the men's room once more before seating himself in the family pew. Based on memories shared by my aunts about their oldest brother, the war almost certainly aggravated my father's pre-war idiosyncrasies. Until talking to my friend, aside from appreciating the difficulties of war with its unending shortages and the fear engendered by armed German soldiers milling about on cobblestoned town squares, I'm embarrassed to say how little thought I had given to my father's plight as an *onderduiker*. From my mother, I learned how my father slept in a small back room rigged with a rudimentary contraption involving a string, something the de Vries family pulled to alert him in his room should Nazi soldiers unexpectedly enter the house. Hoping to catch unawares any *onderduikers* and their hosts, the German militants could shoot everyone on sight, adults and children alike, a penalty paid by many in the resistance movement. More than once, my mother told me, my father escaped through the barn and leaped across the muck of farm fields to avoid the soldiers who stormed the house whenever they chose.

For unexplained reasons, perhaps to prevent undue notice with extra pants and shirts hanging on the clothes line, Mrs. de Vries chose not to launder my father's clothing. Instead, he periodically packed his soiled clothing into a suitcase and sent it home for his mother to wash. To do so, he sent word to his family letting them know when to meet the boat on which his luggage travelled. On one occasion, my father's sister arrived by train to retrieve her brother's case of laundry. En route, Dutch personnel in the employ of the Nazis stopped her.

"Papers, please." Assured my aunt carried legitimate identification, one of them, pointing to the baggage she carried, asked: "What have you here?"

"Only some clothes," my aunt replied, trying to sound nonchalant, praying they would not open the suitcase. But they did, and the stench of fermenting manure on my father's trousers had everyone backing up for fresh air. The uniformed Dutch men gave each other a meaningful look. The dirty clothing, a dead give-away of someone in hiding, could have ended my aunt's day in a very bad way. But the men, in their own act of resistance to sabotage their German oppressors, said nothing as they closed the valise, motioning her brusquely away while turning toward their next task. Shaken, my aunt breathed a huge sigh of relief as she boarded the train bound for the relative safety of home. My father's family would later learn how, in escaping a *razzia*, a German raid, their son and brother had run "like a jack rabbit" through cow and pig shit in the barnyard, across the back field to where he hid in the shrubs and tall grasses alongside a muddy canal.

An underdiver for so much of the war, how did my father endure and hold himself together for so long? With electricity that flickered and remained off more often than not, particularly in the last year of the war, and because of the evening blackout policy of the *Reich*, he could only read by daylight whatever books or newspapers were available to him. Not many people possessed a radio with which to listen to news or entertainment, for the Germans had confiscated such electronics at the onset of their occupation. Those who tuned in to the BBC via unsurrendered equipment did so as an act of defiance, albeit a risky one. Should the Nazis make a sudden visit with the intent of catching anyone with prohibited belongings, for example, family and friends gathered round a banned radio set, the consequences could be extreme. Reading the newspapers, some of them contraband and published by the resistance movement, and whiling away evenings with his host family and any trusted neighbors who dropped by to call, would doubtless have helped my father ease his situation. In this way he learned about advances and losses by enemy and allied forces as well as how others across the country fared. I can still hear the rowdy laughter of my father and his Dutch friends as they recalled covert adventures and close calls in which they had outsmarted the *Moffen*, a Dutch pejorative for the Germans. One man, with glee in his voice at the retelling, described how under the cover of darkness, he poured sugar into the gas tank of a parked *Third Reich* vehicle, then cycled like the wind, as far away as possible from the crime. Someone else intercepted and dumped batches of Nazi propaganda into a canal while another person distributed *verboten* newspapers published by the underground resistance movement. Forbidden as the Dutch were of any expression of patriotism, humming or singing their national anthem, *Het Wilhelmus*, (which, translated, includes the line, “Loyal to the fatherland I will remain until I die...”), became another act of rebellion. Recalling their escapades while gathered in our living room over cups of coffee, my father and his friends spoke only about the excitement of their capers, never their fears.

In addition to the shelter Dutch families provided their *onderduikers*, my father, like all his counterparts, depended upon other activists for his safety, including the counterfeit ration cards needed for his hosts to obtain the food necessary to feed an additional person. Although my father worked in the fields by day, moving about openly in his off time was out of the question; thus, as a devout Christian, he dared not attend church for the duration of the war. A carpenter by trade, he found he liked farm work. Growing things and tending animals suited him, and being outdoors helped him to release any cooped-up feelings stemming from long evenings indoors and monotonous Sundays, a day of rest. Unable to move about as young people ordinarily do, he must have had periods of sheer boredom, alone in his cramped room with little to do, the strain broken by the occasional comfort of a cigarette should he have some tobacco to roll. The year-

round physicality of farm life, what with feeding and milking cows, haying, plowing, seeding, and harvesting, it all must have left him blessedly tired at the end of each workday. Bored though he might periodically be, he could ill afford to become complacent; a chance encounter with an unknown sympathizer could cost him his life if reported to the German authorities. He must have wearied at times from inertia, only to go through the sudden adrenaline rush of a German *razzia*, always wondering when or if a raid might happen, running for his life at the least suggestion of danger, ever mindful of the overhead roar of aircraft, listening for air raid sirens, attuned to the descending whine of nearby and distant bombs then absorbing their booming vibrations, all of which must have left him habitually rattled.

Fathers are typically concerned for the wellbeing of their maturing daughters. But my father's repeated admonishments to my sisters and me to "Be careful! We live in a wicked city," struck us as extreme. Those forceful warnings may well have originated from his chronic fear and uncertainty during those years and from his knowledge of what happened to teen-aged girls at the hands of enemy soldiers, men who had lost their moral center.

My nephew, my father's only grandson, recalled an incident that cast further insight into the probable lasting imprint of the war on my father. As children, my nephew and his sister, staying for a sleepover with their grandparents, thought to play a trick on my father. Engrossed as he was in reading the newspaper while sitting in his easy chair, my nephew and niece sprang out from behind the furniture and whacked the newspaper in his hands, catching my father completely off guard. The trick backfired; instead of the good-natured laughter they had expected from their Opa who usually indulged their innocent mischief, he shot them a startled look, became uncharacteristically stern, and sent them directly to bed. Who knows what long-hidden feelings his grandchildren's prank unnerved? A concrete thinker not given to introspection, my father's long-suppressed fears may well have surfaced unexpectedly along with the forgotten vigilance that had been his daily companion for so many years.

Food and fuel supplies became progressively scarce as the war continued; by the last winter of the war, the lack of provisions dominated daily life and resulted in thousands of Dutch civilians perishing from starvation and cold. Intent on limiting their military losses in that lowland country, the Germans flooded crucial agricultural areas with sea water, which decreased the planting of crops and availability of food during 1944. The situation worsened when next the Germans halted the transportation of dwindling food supplies by boat. As a result, people in urban areas found their daily caloric intake reduced even more. The next Nazi edict prohibited the purchase of food from outlying farms and city dwellers found themselves in dire straits, scavenging for what little food they could during

that long cold *hongerwinter*. My father's family in Haarlem, like many of their fellow citizens, staved off hunger pangs by trying to make tulip bulbs palatable, something my father's sister remembered as "indescribably bitter." Those who lived in the countryside, like my mother, benefited from the storage of late fall garden vegetables such as potatoes, onions, and carrots – providing, of course, their German occupiers had not stolen such foodstuff. As their provisions diminished, however, country folk often found themselves eating the same thing day in, day out. Years later, my father, who reprimanded his children when they turned their nose up at "perfectly good food," told me in no uncertain terms to never again serve beets for Sunday dinner. I loved that colorful root vegetable, cooked, grated, served hot with sautéed onions, some butter stirred through, and sprinkled with salt and pepper to season. My father himself planted a row of beets every summer, so I could not understand why he reacted with such sharpness. That day he disclosed how he had eaten red beets almost every day of that hunger winter. Grateful at the time to go to bed with something in his belly, he could, after the war, content himself with beets as a midweek meal but not on Sunday, a sacred day he wanted left untainted by the taste of that dark time.

In November 2015, Stuart McLean of CBC's *Vinyl Cafe* read an essay submitted to the program in honour of Canada's Remembrance Day (Veterans Day in the U.S.). I listened as he read the words of a Jewish woman who as a child lived several years during the war with a Protestant family in The Netherlands. She commented how, by taking her in, a risky endeavor, the members of this family overcame their fear to stand up and resist evil, how they found the courage to act on their ideals. I couldn't help but think how my father, young as he was when the war began, held to his convictions to resist evil and overcome it with good, a Bible verse he quoted frequently when I grew up.

Because he said so very little about it, I can only guess with what terrors my father lived during and after the war. Born in Canada ten years after the war ended, I knew my father to be quirky by nature, rigid in his beliefs, frustrating in his patriarchal ways, and socially clumsy. But no mistake: he loved his wife and children, and, when they arrived, his grandchildren, too. In fact, he loved life, milking as much enjoyment as he could from every waking moment. So that photo, in which my father raises his glass with such exuberance to share with friends and family in the happiness of his daughter and her fiancé signifies to me that although evil as perpetrated by war exists, it cannot endure, that in the words of Proverbs, weeping may last for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. And that is how my father greeted each day and lived his life, with immense joy, his antidote to what he referred to as "the wicked ways of the world." My hope is that, like my father, his grandchildren and great grandchildren will brace themselves with the fortitude and joy needed to reflect what is worthy and good.

About the author

Twenty years ago, Jenny Radsma moved south from northwestern Alberta to live in northern Maine where meeting people with a Dutch accent is a rarity. The daughter of immigrant parents (her father from Haarlem, her mother from Lemmer), who by needs ended their formal education midway through the eighth grade, Jenny made her parents proud by becoming “Dr.” Radsma. A professor of nursing by day, she writes when she can, mostly on weekends. She continues to take writing workshops and her work, primarily about the Dutch immigrant experience within her own family, has been published in *Goose River Anthology*, *Echoes*, and *The Sun*. Her essay “What’s in a cup of coffee?” was published in *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies / Revue canadienne d’études néerlandaises* 37.1. When Jenny is not teaching, reading, or writing, she bikes, hikes, cross country skies, or snowshoes, depending on the weather. She still has hopes of learning to speak fluent Dutch and Frisian.

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Under the floorboards

Greg Sennema

My grandfather Theo Polman (1904-1965) maintained a daily diary for his entire adult life, recording both banal and dramatic events that occurred in and around his home in Groningen. In reading and rereading his diary – in particular the dark years of Nazi occupation – I have become intimately familiar with the quotidian details of his life as a tobacco-store owner, as a doting husband to his homemaker wife, and as a caring father to his son and daughter (my mother). Theo's descriptions of tangible objects including heirlooms or food items are easily detectable in my own upbringing as a second-generation immigrant growing up in Canada. Between the lines of the details, however, I also recognize a number of abstract attributes of Theo's Dutch and Reformed world that were present in my upbringing. In this article, I have begun what I suspect will be a life-long process of unpacking these abstractions, and how they may have contributed to my own worldview.

Key terms: Diary; immigrants; identity; memory; Dutch-Canadian culture; World War II.

Although I lived with my parents for the first twenty-three years of my life, I only discerned their distinct Dutch accents after I married and moved away. Of course, there were other attributes of my Dutch heritage that I could identify, easily named by thousands of other Dutch-Canadian immigrant children: *oliebollen* ('dumplings'), *sjoelbak* ('shuffleboard'), *stamppot* ('potato and vegetable stew'), *dropjes* ('black licorice'), to name just a few. But I did not detect my parents' accents. Over the course of the subsequent twenty-three years, while visiting my parents with my wife and two children, I began to perceive that, just like their accents, there were other – but less visible – Dutch attributes that influenced my upbringing as a second-generation immigrant. More recently, my perspective has been enormously enriched by my maternal *Opa*'s ('grandfather's') thoughts as expressed in the *dagboek* ('journal') he maintained for much of his life. Hidden beneath the floorboards of his home in Groningen during World War II, his

dagboek reveals to me some of the mores and values that have helped shape my worldview.

The secure and *gezellig* ('cozy') world I inhabited as a child was a microcosm of the Dutch and Reformed church world inhabited by my parents and grandparents in mid-twentieth-century Holland. Virtually all my classmates at my Hamilton, Ontario Reformed Christian elementary school were children of recent Dutch immigrants – parents who, I later realized, also had strong Dutch accents. A highlight of the annual school bazaar was watching our seventh-grade teacher lower a shimmering, pickled herring into his upturned mouth while standing in the middle of a gym filled with students, parents and grandparents eating plates of *boerenkool met rookworst* ('kale stew with smoked sausage'). When I was not at school, I was likely at our Christian Reformed Church a few evenings each week, and twice on Sundays. My parents' social group was largely comprised of fellow émigrés, and my father was employed at the head office of a lumber yard owned by a Dutch immigrant family. After immigrating to Canada in 1963, my parents maintained a close connection with the Netherlands, and each year either one of them would return to Holland to visit family.

My perspective of this microcosm began to shift after I entered a public high school, and befriended teenagers my parents referred to as "Canadians," that is, non-Dutch. Many of these friends were also second-generation immigrants, but whose parents had emigrated from Italy, Greece, Germany, Scotland, or Vietnam. Over time, my exposure to non-Dutch customs, foods, and religious faiths caused me to recognize additional attributes of my Dutch and Reformed heritage. For example: I learned that *Ere zij God* ('Glory to God') was not a well-known Christmas carol; that *chocolade hagelslag* ('chocolate sprinkles') were not a common sandwich topping; or that from among 1,000 students in my high school, I was likely the only one memorizing a "Lord's Day" from the Heidelberg Catechism each Tuesday evening. School friends who came over to my house would ask me questions about Dutch artefacts that graced every table and shelf, and about the large painting of Groningen that dominated our living room. I can still hear my *Italian* friend recite, in his best Swedish-sounding Dutch accent, the words of the LP album that sat against our living-room stereo: *Hier ik kom met al mijn noden* ('Here I come with all my needs'). After which he asked: "Why do the Dutch have so many nuts?"

Of course, some of my high school friends were female, and soon the prospect of actually marrying "a Canadian" entered my mind, and eventually became a reality. As she joined our family events, my wife would apprise me of some of our customs, and even today when I asked her to reflect on what these Dutchisms were, she produced a list of ten items within thirty seconds (for

example, why do Dutch people insist on serving large pieces of *gebak* ('cake') using doll-housed sized plates and forks?).



Figure 1. My family's kitchen ca. 1970, complete with faux Dutch tile wallpaper, and a purple hanging flowerpot purchased on a trip to Holland and transported back to Canada full of dropjes ('salty black licorice').

Since graduating from University in the mid 1990's, I have read books and articles that have helped shape my perspective of my Dutch heritage and upbringing, including what may have motivated my parents and so many of their countrymen to immigrate to Canada after World War II. For example, Herman Ganzevoort suggests in *A bittersweet land* (1988) that so many Dutch people equated their freedom from Nazi oppression "with the arrival of the Canadians," and "while communication was difficult, the Dutch were generally impressed by the

behaviour, good manners, and generosity of their liberators. People who had lived with shortages since [...] the beginning of the war, were overwhelmed by the apparent affluence of the Canadian soldiers" (1988, 64). I recognize some of the immigrant experiences retold in Van der Mey's *To all our children* (1983), which describes the hardships and joys experienced by so many families during their migration and when setting up a new life in Canada. In his autobiographical book *Becoming Canadian*, Michael Horn (1997) describes his own life-long process of assimilation after immigrating from the Netherlands to Canada at the age of twelve. And through the stories retold in Anne van Arragon Hutten's *Uprooted: The story of Dutch immigrant children to Canada, 1947-1959* (2001), I read about the high financial and emotional costs of moving one's family to a new country.



Figure 2. The Polman family go for a walk with friends while on vacation at Schipborg in 1943. Theo is lying on the ground at the bottom left. Bep is in the centre, with daughter Nelly on her lap, and son Aldert standing at the top left.

In addition to describing the joys and sorrows of the immigration experience, most of these sources include experiences of life during World War II, such as the grief of concentration camps, the anxiety of resistance, and the quotidian activities of life under a Nazi regime. In the Dutch language, the word “*egodocument*” is used to describe this type of autobiographical writing. This term was introduced by Jacques Presser, a Dutch Jewish teacher dismissed from his post during the Nazi occupation, and refers to “texts in which an author writes about his or her own acts, thoughts and feelings” (Dekker 2002, 7). Egodocuments lift “individuals out of the maelstrom of history by endowing ordinary lives with agency, dignity, and texture” (Lindemann 2001, 9).

When I look through my collection of black-and-white family photographs taken during the war – where my *Opa* lounges on vacation in a wool suit – it is difficult to comprehend the *agency* or *texture* of my parents’ and grandparents’ lives. The photographs often raise more questions than answers. Were the smiles on their faces short-lived, wiped clean by yet another instance of Nazi brutality? What did they do or say immediately after these photos were taken? What, besides blood, actually connects me to these people and the lives that they led? In addition to a handful of photos of my grandparents, I consider myself extremely fortunate that I have access to my *Opa*’s daily thoughts contained in his *dagboek*, an *egodocument* that answers many questions I didn’t even know I had, and which imbues “agency, dignity, and texture” into the lives of my mother and her parents. My *Opa* describes the ordinary minutiae of the conventional life he and his family lead during World War II; but more significantly, he unintentionally reveals a rich context, which helps contextualize aspects of my Dutch heritage and upbringing that has influenced how I conduct myself, and where my interests lie.

Throughout most of his adult life, Theodore (Theo) Polman (1904-1965) wrote daily entries into his *dagboek*. After his death, the *dagboek* collection went first to my uncle, and in 1987 my mother brought the diaries to Canada. Since then, the entire set of journals occupies a specially-made glass case in my parents’ Hamilton home. While studying history at university in the early 1990’s, I began to take an interest in what my *Opa* wrote. The tight handwriting and Dutch language made it difficult for me to digest, so I was pleased when my mother agreed to translate a portion of the diaries – the war years – starting with the German invasion on that bright spring morning of May 10, 1940, to Liberation Day on May 5, 1945. Over the next twenty years my mother translated the daily entries, first on paper, then on a computer. Together with my mother and father, I edited her translation and packaged it into a 390-page hardcover volume. To date I have read the 344,000 words of this English translation three times, and through each reading I am thoroughly engaged.



Figure 3. Theo Polman standing proudly alongside his dagboek collection, ca. 1963.

Theo lived in the northern city of Groningen, and owned a tobacco store and home near the city centre. According to my mother, his brothers – one a medical doctor, and the other the theologian Andries Derk Rietema Polman – helped set Theo up with the store since he (like this author) was afflicted with congenital cataracts, and had already lost his right eye following surgery in 1915. Theo married Albertina (Bep) Ritburg in 1930, and together they had two children: Aldert (1934-2017) and my mother, Nelly (b. 1938). Despite his poor eyesight, Theo was able to function as a caring husband, father, son, merchant, and church member. Theo's war-time resistance activities were limited by his poor eyesight, and his doctor

brother advised that he should not become an *onderduiker* ('underdiver')¹ by avoiding the forced labour draft,² since his condition made it likely he would already get an exemption, and moreover he would "be taking the space of somebody who really needs it" (Polman, 29 Sep 1944). Theo passively and actively resisted in other ways: by hiding contraband, listening to his hidden radio, temporarily taking in *onderduikers*, and, most consistently, by delivering the illegal *Trouw* newspaper. My mother suggests he was exceptionally good at this role, since his poor eyesight augmented his ability to sneak around a blacked-out Groningen. Theo even hid his reading and writing habits from the authorities: "I started reading a book about the family of Orange, by [...] Eelco van Kleffens. The Germans should not find out about this, since it is on the list of forbidden books. As far as that goes, they better not find these journals either and after every use I hide them very carefully" (Polman, July 30 1942).



Figure 4. Theo Polman in 1941.

¹A colloquial term for a person in hiding.

²In German: *Arbeitseinsatz*. Civilians in Nazi-occupied countries were rounded up to be sent to Germany as forced labourers in German factories and agriculture. The work could also involve, as was the case for my *Opa*, digging defense works to thwart the liberating allied forces.

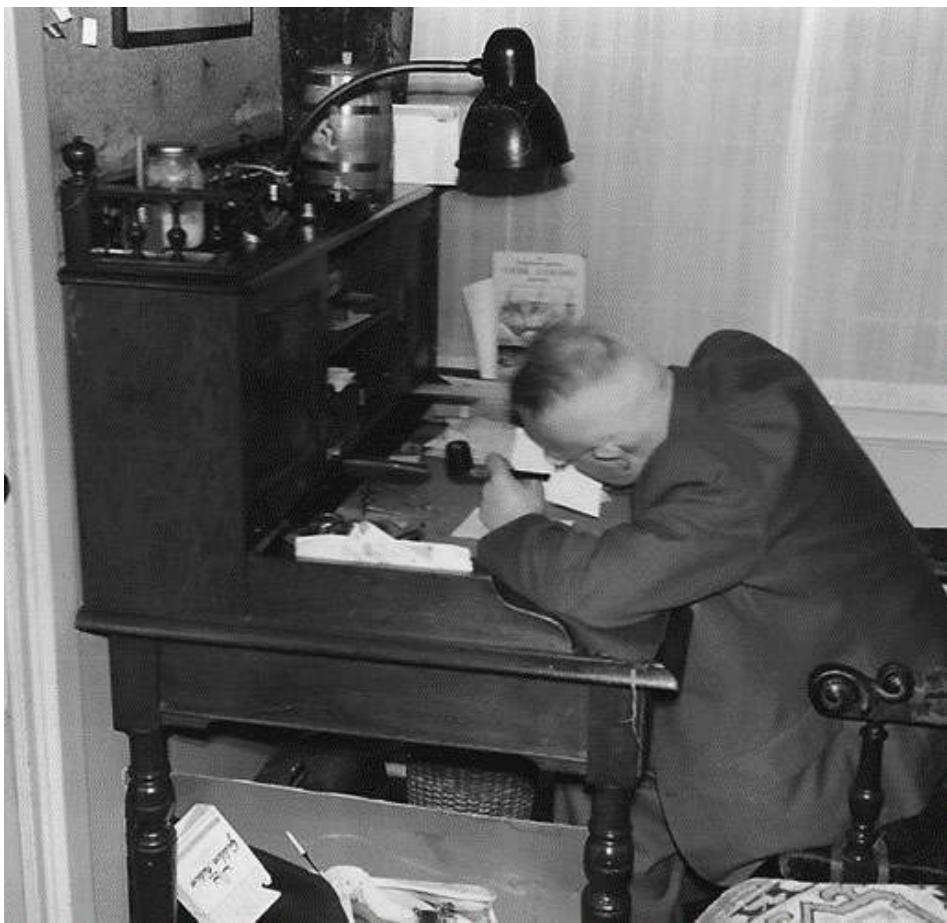


Figure 5. Theo Polman writing in his dagboek, ca. 1960.

Despite descriptions of despair, outrage, and stress, I delight in my *Opa*'s warm portrayal of his family. After my *Oma* ('Grandmother') Bep had returned from a three-week hospital stay in February 1942, he writes: "I don't know who is happiest that mother is back home, the children or I!" Theo describes how he and Bep read stories to their children, took them for walks and bicycle trips throughout the city, and played with Aldert and his model train set. Theo describes returning by train to Groningen with Nelly, and she "played with the cardboard train tickets, pressing them against the windows where they soaked up condensation and when thoroughly wet, took them apart and made 'sandwiches' for us to enjoy" (Polman, 18 Jan 1944). Theo and Bep also doled out tough love, with regular spankings for infractions including bedwetting, or going outside without shoes. On one occasion Nelly was so slow in eating her dinner that Bep poured her pudding dessert over her potatoes. I imagine the twinkle in Theo's one eye as he relates that "I could not help smirking a little bit and she said: 'what's so funny?'."



Figure 6. Theo advertises the opening of his new store ("Advertisement" 1938, 12).

This story reminds me how uniquely fortunate I am to have detailed descriptions of my mother as a child, and to catch glimpses of her outside of our own mother-son relationship. For example, Theo reports on Nelly's antics: "When mother scolded her and reminded her that she had to ask permission to get out of bed, the little imp said: 'How could I, you were far away in the kitchen!'" (Polman, 17 May 1941). Or when "the children played indoors. They entertained themselves with a couple of empty cigar boxes, or at least Aldert did. Nelly had taken a few boxes that were still full, and when I caught her she had a cigar hanging from her lips" (Polman, 17 Oct 1941). Theo describes Nelly as "our thumb sucker" (my mother also called me this), and writes of her vivid dreams and nightmares, a presage that as an adult, Nelly would continue to wake her husband and children with her nightmares.

Through his illegal radio and clandestine newspapers, Theo was keenly aware of the news from within the Netherlands and throughout the world. He writes often about Princess Juliana and her daughters living in Canada, and frequently comments on a good friend who had emigrated to Canada before the war. As the liberation forces drew near, Theo learned from customers and from the news on his hidden radio³ about the progress of the *Canadezen* ('Canadians')

³ Theo kept his illegal radio hidden underneath a coal pile in the cellar. A friend did some wiring so that Theo and Bep could listen from the comfort of the main floor, although they had to take care that their children did not hear. On March 23, 1945, Theo wrote: "When we listened to Radio

as they raced northwards from the liberated south, finally arriving at the south end of Groningen on April 13, 1945. By April 15 they had seen their first Canadians, snipers on neighbouring rooftops, and then later when they utilized Wasp flamethrowers to rout the *Moffen* ('Krauts') from the *Noorderplantsoen* ('Northern city park') across the street from their home.

Despite the constant shooting that caused Nelly to creep into her parents' bed ("*Nelly is van angst in ons bed gekropen!*") and the resulting destruction to parts of the city, Theo and his family were overjoyed to finally gain their freedom. He describes standing at the door and watching both the revellers as well as the NSB⁴ traitors paraded along the street, including a "man, walking in slippers and his wife wearing a fur coat [...] mocked and ridiculed from all sides" (Polman, 16 April 1945). Bep promptly placed an orange bow in Nelly's hair and sashes around her children's waists. "We have waited five long years for this moment and now it is really here!"

Theo and his family were thrilled to see the Canadians. Nelly and Aldert, using English phrases written down for them by a neighbour girl, walked the neighbourhood hoping to receive gum or chocolate handouts from the soldiers. One time, Nelly "got a slice of white bread with a big piece of cheese. She had never tasted white bread and thought it was cake. She also got an English cigarette, 'for your father.'" (Polman, 4 May 1945). Nelly often "played in the park, around, and with, Canadian soldiers." Theo writes that his family attended a church service for Canadian soldiers, and that "even though we could not understand a word [...] it was interesting to watch." Yet, as Michiel Horn points out, "the Canadians were not saints; they were mostly young men who had fought, faced death, and lived" (Horn 1981, 158). Theo writes that a Canadian soldier had stolen his sister-in-law's purse full of jewelry, that soldiers were often intoxicated, and that many young women, previously in the company of Germans, were now seen hanging off the Canadians. Horn points out that despite this, any resentment "soon vanished after the Canadians left [the Netherlands in 1946] while the gratitude remained" (Horn 1981, 171). My parents are two of the more than 184,000 Dutch immigrants who came to Canada between 1946 and 1982 (Van der Mey 1983, 53).

Orange in the evening, after the children were in bed, it was kind of loud. Aldert could apparently hear and cried: "Mother, radio!" But I immediately reassured him and called out that there were Germans walking by."

⁴ The *National-Socialistische Beweging in Nederland* ('The National Socialist Movement in the Netherlands') was the Dutch fascist party.



Figure 7. Nelly wearing an orange dress on Liberation Day, May 1945.

Beyond the description of family life during the stressful Nazi occupation, I sometimes sense I am catching glimpses of my own childhood in Canada, and of my parents' outlook and approach to life. The material comparisons are easy to identify, such as the frequent references to food. Theo's description of family meals is not so different to how I would describe the food my parents provided to my siblings and me: *poffert*,⁵ *koek* ('ginger cake'), raisin bread, strawberries served on bread, Brussels sprouts, endive, pea soup, liverwurst, marrow fats with bacon, *karnemelkse pap* ('buttermilk porridge'), and, of course, potatoes. Our weekly groceries included items that could only be found in the local Dutch store. And upon returning from their annual trips to Holland, they presented their children with candy and other Dutch knick-knacks.⁶ In addition to food, our tables and shelves were decorated with many of the items my *opa* refers to in his *dagboek*, such as a letter weigh-scale, a metal hot water bottle, a gift necklace for Bep, and

⁵ A cake unique to the province of Groningen, cooked in a special pan surrounded by hot water.

⁶ I still have the modernized *knijpkat* ('dyno torch') that my mother brought home in 1978. She told us that they used this type of hand-powered flashlight during the war, although my brother and I found it hard to imagine hiding from the Nazis with such a noisy contraption.

even a doll my mother received for her third birthday. The stories of these items were repeated throughout my youth, and I continue to hear them as my parents tell the same stories to their third-generation Dutch immigrant grandchildren.

In addition to these material manifestations of my Dutch heritage, there are other, less tangible aspects of my upbringing that I recognized within the *dagboek*. For example, the tough love doled out by my *Opa* and *Oma* was likely reflected in my own mother's style of parenting. Often recalled at family gatherings are my mother's words to me when, at six years old, I bit my brother's arm: "If you are going to act like a dog, then we'll have to treat you like a dog," before proceeding to tie me to the kitchen fridge with kite string. I'm pretty certain – or at least a little hopeful – she had a twinkle in her eye just as Theo might have when punishing his daughter. Theo also describes that as a child, Nelly sang incessantly. While visiting a relative for tea, "Nelly had to use the bathroom. She was singing so loud that we could hear her all the way in the sun room" (22 May 1941). Singing was a trait that my mother carried on into adulthood. I recall her constantly singing, whistling, or humming throughout the day – although the tunes were more likely from *Hier ik kom met all mijn noden*, and not *Wir fahren gegen Engeland* ('We are sailing against England'), a song Theo writes Nelly learned from the German soldiers at the beginning of the Nazi occupation. Theo also writes that as she played in the streets surrounding their home, Nelly would go to the "bathroom in the air raid shelters because she was too busy playing to come home." I now wonder if my mother had memories of this when she scolded me (when I was five years old) for a similar transgression, mine involving an empty yellow margarine container tucked behind our backyard shed. And finally, I feel a distinct connection with Theo as he confirms the *jammer genoeg* ('unfortunate') detection of cataracts in the eyes of his eight-year-old son in 1942, a confirmation my mother had when I was born in 1969, and one that I had when my second son was born in 2001. For many years, I needed to walk to the front of the classroom to read the blackboard, a hardship shared with my *Oom* ('uncle') Aldert, described in the *dagboek*.

Some of Theo's war-time routines described in the *dagboek* – covertly grinding wheat into flour, or daily picking up milk in a metal hot water bottle concealed beneath his coat and strapped to his back – were fortunately not present in my own family's life in Canada. Other habits, including sewing homemade clothes, taking Sunday afternoon walks, and habitually following the morning coffee and tea schedule (tea with breakfast, coffee at 10am, tea at 3pm, coffee before dinner, tea at 8pm), were – and in some cases still are – present. Theo's description of their Reformed church and religious life is extremely similar to what I experienced in Canada: annual home visitations with our elder; morning and evening Sunday church services; church services on both Christmas Day and

New Year's Day; and after dinner devotions – although our devotion time was never skipped because the “roar of planes [English bombers on their way to Germany] was so deafening” (Polman, 9 Oct 1943). As was the case in my own childhood, minor lapses in the Sabbath rest rules were discussed and eventually tolerated by Theo and Bep. “Mother cycled,” Theo wrote, “to have a look at the picture a street photographer had taken of Nelly in her pretty dress, when she walked with mother to the cemetery on Sunday. Mother could not resist buying it, despite the fact it had been taken on a Sunday!” (Polman, 2 Sep 1942).



Figure 8. The photo of Nelly taken on a Sunday in 1942.

I also recognize many of the leisure and holiday activities described in the *dagboek*. Theo often played games with his children, family, and friends, reminding me of the countless hours spent with my *Oma* connecting dots playing the pen and paper “SOS game” during one of her frequent visits to Canada. Some of the more memorable descriptions of Theo’s family life involve celebrating *Sinterklaas* (‘St. Nicholas Day’). While my own parents did not precisely follow the December 5th present-giving tradition, aspects of the event made it into our annual routine. Placing carrots in the wooden shoes by the *kachel* (‘woodstove’) to feed *Sinterklaas*’ horse in exchange for a small gift, receiving a chocolate letter

(for the initial of our first name), and of course the secrecy of the presents given the evening before.



Figure 9. Bep Polman sitting in her daughter's living room in 1985, beneath a painting of Groningen and surrounded by Dutch artefacts.

Theo's description of their *Sinterklaas* celebrations in 1943 – a period in Aldert's life when he started to doubt the existence of *Sinterklaas* – is particularly heartwarming. After Theo had left to go on an "errand" in the city, the children

were in our living room and suddenly heard a tinkling noise coming from the bedroom. When they looked, they saw *pepernoten* [small and round spice cookies] scattered all over the floor. Nelly was afraid and looked on from a safe distance. When she looked up, she said: "Oh no!" and sure enough, a parcel attached to a rope was coming down through the ventilation shaft. More parcels followed until there was a present for everybody: a book and an agenda for father; mother got a new purse, a food masher, a cheese slicer and a package of (real) tea; Aldert got a book, a game and an ink blotter and Nelly got a doll, the game Tiddlywinks, crayons and a colouring book. When Aldert saw the presents descending slowly, he kept on shouting: "Sing, sing, we have to sing the Santa songs!" And although he does not believe in Santa anymore, he sang the loudest! Nelly did not sing; it was too overwhelming for her; she was scared and was white around her nose. When I came home from my "errand," the children told me what had happened, and that they were sorry I had missed it all! We let them stay out of bed an hour longer, and when it finally was time to go, they were apprehensive to walk through the dark corridor to go to the

bathroom. Aldert was too wound up to sleep, and when we went to bed at 11 p.m., he was still awake [...] and when mother said: "Don't tell me you do, after all, believe in Sinterklaas?" he said: "I believe in this one, he was for real!"
 (Polman, 5 Dec 1943)

in Soek		Thos. E. J. 8	R. E. 15h 14h
1-	1-0	17.	1-0
9-1	{ 0-0	18.	1-0
1-	2-1	19.	0-1 J 2
3-	1-0	20.	0-1
9-1	{ 0-0	1-0	1-0
h-h	2-3	1-0	1-0
0-1	{ h-h	1-0	1-0
h-h	1-0	1-0	1-0
4-	1-0	1-0	0-1 { 3-1
h-h	{ 0-1	1-0	1-0
h-h	2-2	1-0	1-0
5-	1-0	19.	0-1 { 1-2
h-h	{ 0-1	0-1	0-1 { 1-2
h-h	3-1	1-0	1-0
1-0	{ 0-1	20.	0-1 { 1-3
9-	1-0	0-1	0-1 { 1-3
0-1	{ h-h	1-0	1-0
h-h	2h-3h	1-0	1-0
1-0	{ 0-1	21.	1-0
0-1	{ 0-1	h-h	3h-1h
10-	0-1 { 1	1-0	1-0
1-0 { 1		1-0	
11-	1-0 - 1-0	22.	1-0 { 1-3
12-	h-h { 1-2	0-1	0-1 { 1-3
0-1		0-1	0-1
h-h		0-1	
13-	h-h	23.	1-0 - 1
0-1			
14-	0-1 { 1-1	24.	0-1 { h 2h
1-0		0-1	
15h-14h			25h-23h

Figure 10. Theo kept detailed scores for his checker tournaments, this one from July 1944. My Oma and I would keep a similar tally sheet for our "SOS game" tournaments.

Like many of the *dagboek* entries, this *Sinterklaas* passage is interesting to me from an historical point of view. In his descriptions of commonplace events, Theo continually refers to aspects of life that were a result of the Nazi occupation, in this case the reference to "real" tea – typically only ersatz tea could be purchased with their ration coupons. Theo's *dagboek* illustrates how one Dutch family coped during the war: children shivering in their classroom since there was not enough heating coal; adults bartering or scrounging for food, or chopping trees down for heating fuel; and everyone at times crying, trembling, rejoicing, and praying. Theo would often describe his personal feelings and opinions about his family's living conditions, about the actions (or inactions) of fellow countrymen, about his

church connections, and about the progress of the war. The *dagboek* is now part of my growing collection of books, articles, memoirs, and diaries pertaining to Dutch war-time experiences and the postwar Dutch immigration experience.

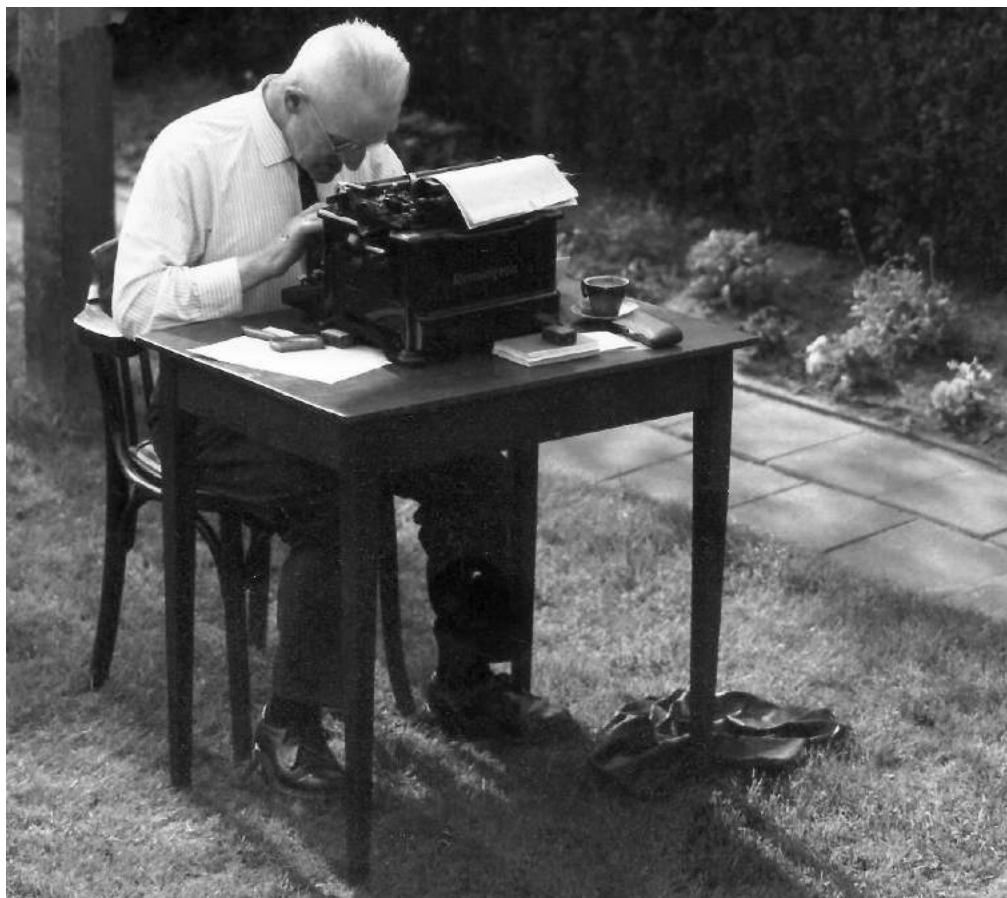


Figure 11. Theo Polman ca. 1964.

The photos that I have of my *Opa* Theo seem to emphasize the distance between the “then” and “now” of our relationship. What could I possibly have in common with the Theo Polman I see sitting at a typewriter corresponding with who knows who about who knows what? His mid-twentieth-century Dutch concerns must be completely different from my twenty-first-century Canadian concerns. Theo’s *dagboek*, on the other hand, emphasizes the connection between the “then” and “now” of our relationship. His writing, including the *Sinterklaas* passage with its textured description of family life and the love Theo and Bep felt for their children, indicate to me that we share the same story, despite our difference in time and location.



Figure 12. Theo Polman's *dagboek*, written between 1936-1965, stored in a display case in my parent's home.

Theo maintained his *dagboek* – at least during the war years – in order “to write about the simple things which happen and make life interesting and challenging. Our daily activities continue to be the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. I

hope the children will remember the days of their youth when they read this journal, and if that's the case, it will have been worth my while and troubles" (Polman, 1 Jan 1945). My *Opa* passed away before I was born, yet through reading the *dagboek*, and through the similarities between him and Nelly – his daughter, my mother – I feel as though I have personally known him. My parents' stories of their war-time childhood, their courtship in the Netherlands, their cautious emigration to Canada, and their assimilation into Canadian culture, were continuously weaved into dinner-time conversations throughout my life, and although I am a Canadian citizen, these stories continually remind me that I am a second-generation Dutch immigrant.

My "Canadian" wife and our third-generation immigrant children continue to see this influence in their lives, as when we wipe up the *fritessaus* ('fries sauce,' similar to mayonnaise) or the *chocolade hagelslag* from our table with a *doekie* ('dishcloth'). When visiting my parents in their (unofficially Dutch) Christian retirement home, we are surrounded by the same clocks, pewter pots, and Delft blue ceramics that are described in the *dagboek*. In July 2015, I travelled with my wife and two teenage boys to the Netherlands, and together with my *Oom* Aldert we had dinner at the pizza restaurant that today occupies Theo's home and store. Of course, much has changed, including the disappearance of interior walls, the replacement of flooring, and the lowering of the ceiling. But based on my mother's and Aldert's description, I am fairly certain that my chair rested on the very spot that in former times was occupied by the workroom table, right where Theo would "fold the carpet in half, and under a few loose boards" would hide his illegal newspapers and radio, and his *dagboek*.

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About the Author

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Sous les planches

Mon grand-père, Theo Polman (1904-1965), a entretenu un journal quotidien durant sa vie adulte entière, notant les évènements banals et dramatiques qui avaient eu lieu chez lui à Groningue et dans les alentours. En lisant et en relisant son journal – notamment les pages sur les années sombres de l'occupation nazie – je me suis intimement familiarisé avec les détails quotidiens de la vie de ce responsable de bureau de tabac, ce mari aimant envers sa femme au foyer et ce père aimant envers son fils et sa fille (ma mère). Les descriptions par Theo d'objets tangibles, y compris des trésors familiaux et des produits alimentaires, sont faciles à percevoir dans ma propre éducation en tant qu'un immigré de deuxième génération au Canada. Entre les lignes de ce journal détaillé, pourtant, je reconnaiss aussi plusieurs particularités abstraites dans le monde néerlandais et reformé de Theo qui étaient présentes aussi dans mon éducation. Dans cet article, je commence – je le soupçonne – un processus permanent de déballage de ces abstractions, déballant les façons dont elles ont contribué à ma propre vision du monde.

Under the Floorboards

Mijn grootvader Theo Polman (1904-1965) hield zijn hele volwassen leven dagelijks een dagboek bij, waarin hij zowel banale als dramatische gebeurtenissen noteerde die plaatsvonden in en rond zijn huis in Groningen. Door het lezen en herlezen van zijn dagboek, vooral de donkere jaren van de Duitse bezetting, ben ik intiem bekend geraakt met de alledaagse details van zijn leven als eigenaar van een sigarenzaak, als liefhebbende echtgenoot van zijn vrouw die het huis bestierde, en als ene zorgzame vader voor zijn zoon en dochter (mijn moeder). Theo's beschrijvingen van tangible objecten zoals erfstukken etenswaren zijn gemakkelijk te herkennen in mijn eigen opvoeding als een tweede-generatie immigrant opgroeidend in Canada. Tussen de regels door herken ik echter ook een aantal abstractere eigenschappen van Theo's Nederlandse en hervormde wereld die deel uitmaakten van mijn eigen opvoeding. In dit artikel begin ik wat naar ik verwacht een levenslang proces zal zijn: het uitpakken van deze abstracties, en hoe die wellicht hebben bijgedragen aan mijn eigen wereldbeschouwing.

Some of the words: Birthday

Grace Hols

Remember the saying “A picture is worth a thousand words”? Well, I have a lot of pictures: black and white, some already fading. So I am trying to write the words, or at least a few of them. This process involves an intimate study of a photo, to the point where I take a magnifying glass to zoom in and capture details otherwise overlooked. The result of all this is a growing collection of vignettes that I am calling “Some of the words.”

Birthday

There they sit, around the table for Clarence’s birthday, fourth or fifth, we are not sure. Mom, Clarence, Ally, Lucy, Henry and Ann. Dad’s not in the photo; he was working. I am not in the photo either, so I must have taken it with Dad’s prized 35 mm camera. Henry and Ann both have elbows on the table and are resting their heads on their hands, looking a little bored or tired. The table is a new grey Formica one, with grey plastic and chrome chairs to match. There used to be a homemade heavy wooden table in the kitchen, and this is a new set Mom was very proud of. She has set out her precious Bavaria dessert plates, and on each plate is a little spoon with a festive ribbon tied around it. Also on the table is a balloon with a face hand-painted on it for the occasion; she had extra time that day! In the centre of the table, under a blaze of lit candles, is a large cake. Mom has made her usual sponge cake (we had chickens and lots of eggs) and iced it with Japanese frosting from the *Five Roses* cookbook, which had a beaten egg white and almond flavouring in it. Clarence proudly holds a big knife, also festooned with a large bow, and the camera has caught him at just the right moment, cutting into the cake with the serious but proud smile of a pre-schooler now allowed to do this all by himself.

There is no one else at the party except for our family. It was a different world then. We had no phone, and had only recently got electricity. We were five miles from town and with only a pickup truck to get around, our trips into town were carefully planned because time and gas were in short supply. So this was our after-school snack. Clarence must have waited all day, and I can imagine how that went. He was home alone with Mom while the rest of us were in school, and they must have spent the day getting ready. He probably helped blow up the balloons and maybe even “helped” bake and decorate the cake; for sure he would have been allowed to lick the hand-operated beater Mom used to make the icing. He probably asked a million times if it was time for us to come home. Maybe Mom had him watch out the window to wait for the bus to go up Silverthorne Hill so he would know we were on our way.



Clarence's birthday party, early 1960s. From the author's personal collection.

Behind the table is the blue linoleum which went halfway up the wall. Above that the wall was painted pink. In the corner is the white cupboard with two doors built by Dad out of one by fours he had probably cut himself. The bottom door opened to a firewood bin, which the younger boys kept full from the pile outside. The top cupboard was where Mom kept our clothes, piles of homemade sweaters and pants and knitted socks. The only store-bought things were underwear, and, if

they could afford it, they would have well-made white *hempies* and *broekies* ('undershirts' and 'underpants') sent from Holland. A worn pair of oven mitts hangs on the wall next to the new white electric range Mom now cooked on. They had recently replaced the old black and chrome McLarey woodstove that could be so finicky if the firewood was wet. The new electric range must have been fun for her to bake the cake in, although I missed the old McLarey stove. It was always warm and cozy, and there was a small corner next to that stove where I loved to curl up with whatever book I was reading at the time.

I guess we sang happy birthday and ate the cake and drank the Freshie that we usually had in those days. I am sure Clarence got to open a package containing a new truck or a toy of some sort. Then it was probably time for Ann and Henry to feed the calves and collect the eggs and for me to peel potatoes for supper, which followed shortly after. I wonder how much supper we would have eaten that day, with our stomachs full of cake!

"If I'm around Dutch people or around anything that is even slightly Dutch I feel very very Dutch and the other times I am mostly Canadian"

A narrative account of the identities of Dutch-Canadian emerging adults

Jasmin F. Keijzer

With this research I provide an empirical account of the way Dutch-Canadian emerging adults (EA) between the age of 19 and 26 perceive their Dutchness in relation to their identities in Canadian contexts. I build this research upon concepts of migration, identity and belonging, and by exploring the interrelationship of these three concepts. Through the analysis of nine interviews three major themes related to informants' identification emerged: narratives of authenticity, narratives of self-exploration and narratives of negotiation. After analyzing these three themes four other themes came to the surface: language, roots and routes, behaviour, and appearance. Looking at how Dutch-Canadian EA narrate their experiences I aim to provide more insight into the complexities of identity as a narrative construction. With these findings I contribute to the fields of cultural and migration studies while also shedding some light on European migrants as this is a topic that not often reaches public debate. Even though the usage of the terms Dutch and Canadian implies homogeneity, this research shows that the Dutch, as well as Canadians, are hybrid, dynamic and diverse.

Key terms: Culture; anthropology; identity; migration; emerging adulthood; narratives.

Introduction

As teenagers we always have struggles with identity and commitment.

Or like an identity crisis. Who am I and who am I supposed to be? But because I felt like I was transplanted from one place to the next I really didn't know where I belonged so that was hard. (Marieke¹)

In the short excerpt quoted above, a young Dutch-Canadian woman named Marieke points out one of the many questions faced by emerging adults (EA): who am I and where do I belong? The term EA captures the transitional period between a person's late teens to their mid to late twenties. During emerging adulthood, people try to become independent from their parents, question things around them, explore who they are and what they want to become while also experiencing feelings of in-between-ness and instability that are associated with these constant changes (Arnett 2007). Although questions like that of Marieke affect many people while growing up they seem to be very common among migrant youth, especially when looking at issues of diaspora, nationalism and dislocation (Anthias 2002). When talking about her second relocation Marieke later on refers to herself as a "tripod", indicating that she feels connected to three different places: The Netherlands, Alberta and Ontario. Narratives, such as the one from Marieke, demonstrate how there seems to be a constant quest to find out who we are and where we belong.

Habacon (2007, 4) mentions that second and third-generation descendants "have an incredible combined social, economic and cultural mobility. Their experience of cultural identity is so complex that it has been challenging to articulate." However, due to a large amount of immigrant communities, second and third-generation descendants in Canada seem to have the freedom to explore their different backgrounds without distancing themselves from Canada's mainstream culture (Wong & Guo 2015). Canada's multicultural policies and programs ensure that "unlike their Australian and American counterparts, Canadians are not burdened by having to cut their ties to a culturally rich ancestry in order to find acceptance as part of mainstream culture, or vice versa" (Habacon 2007, 4).

The increase of cultural globalization and mobility seems to have profound implications for identity formation during emerging adulthood as concepts of citizenship and national identity no longer equate attachments or loyalty to one particular nation state (Hoerder, Hébert & Schmitt 2005; Huntington 2004). The search for identity and belonging thus seems to go hand in hand with the concept of globalization. On the one hand, globalization contributes to homogeneity,

¹ All names used in this study are pseudonyms, either chosen by informants or myself.

universality and unity as technologies have made it possible to bring people from different places together through, for example, the use of internet. On the other hand, globalization also contributes to heterogeneity, differentiation, and diversity as people from different backgrounds come into contact and realize their differences (Bornman 2003).

So far the majority of research into migration issues focuses on what happens to identity when people migrate from one country to the other (Anthias 2012). Research often questions whether migrant groups integrate and identify with the country of migration or with the homeland. The timing of my research coincides with the continuous debates about the current migrant ‘crisis’ in Europe. Up until now research in the field of culture and migration studies tends to focus on the Other, often non-European migrants, while putting emphasis on marginality and inequality (Dong 2012). However, limited research puts focus on European migrants. By focusing on European migrants who have migrated from one western country to another I hope to shift the focus in both the public debate and academic field by shedding some light on how Dutch-Canadian migrants in Canada shape, adapt, or create identities.

Altogether I found it interesting to figure out how Dutch-Canadians articulate themselves in relation to migration, identity, and belonging as these concepts influence one another greatly. Therefore, the central focus of my research was to investigate how Dutch-Canadian EA between the ages of 19 and 26 develop identities in relation to migration and settlement processes. I tried to do this by interviewing them about their experiences in relation to the Netherlands and Canada. Thus, this research addresses the following research question:

How do Dutch-Canadian EA mobilize Dutchness in relation to their identities in Canadian contexts and how do they shape, negotiate and narrate these identities?

Context

Dutch migration to Canada

According to the 2011 Statistics Canada Census, the Dutch population in Canada is one of the few ethnic minority groups that surpass the 1-million mark. In 2011, of the 32,852,320 ethnic origins in Canada, 1,067,245 were said to come from Dutch descent (Statistics Canada Census 2011). Dutch migration to Canada started when Dutch settlers made their way to the West of Canada between 1890 and 1914 (Ganzevoort 2009). This was followed by a second period of migration from 1923-1930 that was halted by the Great Depression. An estimated 25,000 Dutch or Dutch-American migrants entered Canada between the period of 1890 and

1930 (Klatter-Folmer & Kroon 1997). From then onwards there has been a continuing influx of Dutch migrants with the migratory peak being after World War II when over 170,000 migrants moved to Canada (Klatter-Folmer & Kroon 1997). After World War II the economy and job market in the Netherlands was at an all time low. In order to reduce the population and stimulate economic growth, the government decided to support migration by giving governmental grants (Klatter-Folmer & Kroon 1997).

As a whole, most Dutch migrants settled in the urban areas of the western provinces and nearly half settled in Ontario (Schryer 2006). Within these areas the linguistic landscape is characterized by visible landmarks such as Dutch stores, Dutch societies, Dutch churches and Dutch retirement homes. Although many Dutch landmarks still exist, Schryer (2006) states that Dutch migrants have been known for giving up their ethnic identity much faster than other Canadian migrant groups. The Dutch show a high level of linguistic assimilation resulting in second or third generations that often speak little Dutch. However, Schryer (2006) does state that the children of Dutch migrants in Canada often develop a strong awareness of their Dutch-Canadian origin when they grow up or approach marriage. It is therefore interesting to see how Dutch-Canadian EA deal with their Dutch roots while growing up in Canada and what is common among them.

Conceptual framework

Migration

Broadly speaking, migration could refer to all types of human movement ranging from cities to villages, from one village to another and even from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. Anthias (2012, 1) adds to this that migration can be identified "with movements of people across nation-state and territorial borders with issues of ethnicity, and cultural and social dislocation, being prominent concerns". The movement from one country to another is often done for different reasons. While some people migrate to escape war and conflict, others migrate for economic or personal reasons. The latter is often referred to as voluntary migration as it focuses on migrants who have the freedom and ability to migrate to a new country for personal reasons. Not surprisingly, this type of migration often consists of people who move from one affluent, often first-world country, to another (Dong 2012). Until now, most of the research on migration focuses on how marginalized migrants adapt to their new environment and the degree of assimilation and integration that they demonstrate (Alba & Nee 1997). The focus often lies on marginalized groups who are portrayed to have problems integrating into their host countries. However, there is a small body of research on voluntary migrants

that demonstrates how they contribute to globalization by bringing diverse cultural and linguistic features into the country (Segal, Berry & Poortinga 1999).

Migration also raises questions on where we belong. It often makes people reassess their identity as processes such as adaptation and integration influence the way people identify themselves. Levitt (as cited in Vertovec 2003, 655) points out that migrants “self-consciously reflect upon their identities” by “making values of two worlds fit” in order to enhance the understanding of who they are and how they are affiliated with different cultures.

What is identification?

Identity seems to embody a multitude of concepts that are open to different interpretations. While outdated theories have suggested that identity is singular and fixed, others believe in multiple identities that are negotiated in interaction, overlap, intersect and can change depending on what context a person is in (Josselson & Harway 2012). As Hall (Rutherford 1990) notes, identities are fluid and multiple in nature, meaning that they are constantly in the process of change. Another interpretation on identity is that of Bhabha (Rutherford 1990). Bhabha uses the term “third space” by linking identity to hybridity. He believes that when two or more cultures come into contact they merge together and evolve into new cultural forms and identities.

Although differences of opinion still exist, there appears to be some agreement that identity can be linked to individuals’ explicit or implicit answers to the question: “Who are you?” (McAdams 2008). At first glance this question might sound simple but the answers usually mask various complexities. First of all, the self can often be referred to as an autobiographical author who continuously shapes and reshapes their own life story. This internalized and evolving story is often referred to as narrative identity as it provides the self with an encompassing story about one’s past, present and imagined future (McAdams 2008). Identity narratives therefore often focus on questions such as “Who am I?”, “How did I come to be?” and “Where is my life heading?”. Habermas & Bluck (2000) note that this sort of reasoning does not happen until adolescence. McAdams (2017) adds to this that:

Adolescents and emerging adults author a narrative sense of the self by telling stories about their experiences to other people, monitoring the feedback they receive from the tellings, editing their stories in light of the feedback, gaining new experiences and telling stories about those, and on and on, as selves create stories that, in turn, create new selves.

This indicates that identity formation during adolescence entails the exploration and negotiation of old and new roles, norms, values, goals and perceptions through the construction of a person's individual life story (Erickson 1995). People seem to have some sort of agency when it comes to telling life stories as they can decide for themselves which stories to tell or not to tell. In contrast to agency, however, it must also be noted that stories are only partly of our own making as people often perform certain roles based on already existing scripts. It is therefore important to note that "who you think you are" is not necessarily the same as "who you act as being" (McAdams 2017). In some cases, migrants appear to adopt a hyphenated identification by using, for example, the labels "Dutch" or "Canadian" and vice versa depending on what identification they feel most strongly about (Tastsoglou & Petrinioti 2011). Accordingly, the self comes into being by performing various embodied characteristics on an imaginary stage (Butler 1988). These performative acts are usually related to social categories of gender, race, ethnicity and/or class. By answering questions about who we are we are unknowingly abiding by these available narrative scripts.

Where do we belong?

It is interesting to study how EA interact in relation to migration and transnational identification and this can further be studied through the concept of belonging. Although we might not always be aware of it, the spaces that we inhabit form an important role in constructing our identities and sense of belonging (Blunt & Dowling 2006). Traditionally, home has often been defined as a fixed place, as being "at home" meant "being stationary, centered, bounded, fitted, engaged and grounded" (Garrett 2011, 46). Nowadays, however, the conceptualization of home becomes more problematic due to migration. This is mainly because home is hard to define as people have different connotations with the term. So how, then, do we define home and how do we know where we belong?

According to Gilroy (1993) where we come from and what we identify with can be described by using the terms "roots" and "routes". Roots refers to how individuals identify themselves with a shared community or heritage group that constitutes of common historical experiences and shared frames of reference. Routes, however, recognizes that cultural identification is shaped by active encounters. This means that identities are often fluid and flexible as they change over time depending on the context that the individual is in. Yeoh, Willis & Fakhri (2003, 213) argue that "identities, behaviour and values are not limited by location [...] instead they construct and utilize flexible personal and national identities". I find it important to note that rooted identity is rather essentialist as it implies that being raised somewhere automatically links oneself to a certain place. Essentialist theorists even state that "natural identity" can only come from "full belonging,

the warm sensation that people understand not merely what you say but what you mean [and this] can only come when you are among your own people in your native land" (Ignatieff 1993, 7). This statement is different from constructionist theorists who claim that identities are formed and reformed through our interactions in the outside world. I partially agree with the constructionist approach as it shows us that identity often transcends national boundaries as traditional categories of nations, ethnicity, and language do not always apply. However, I also believe that both roots and routes influence each other and give us a more accurate perception of identity as migration has shown us that identity often transcends national boundaries as traditional categories of nations, ethnicity and language do not always apply. Moore (1994, 21) encourages the focus on routes by saying that:

we need to talk not about roots but about routes: trajectories, paths, interactions, links. The root itself is not a bad, false or wrong story. It is, rather, a narrowly true narrative in the midst of a broader and more tangled truth, or richer story... The metaphor for human culture should be more the mangrove than the tree.

When building upon the framework of roots and routes, we could therefore say that the notion of home could have multiple meanings and cannot necessarily be pre-defined as it depends on how groups or individuals construct their own meaning of home in new, or unknown contexts (Sigmon, WhitComb & Snyder 2002). From this, it can be concluded that home is not always tied to our place of birth but also to our creation of memories and ties. Hall (Rutherford 1990) refers to this conceptualization of identity as a matter of both "becoming" and "being" as it captures experiences of the past, present and future surpassing location, time, history and culture.

According to Loader (2006, 25), the question "Who am I?" is hard to separate from the question "Where do I belong?", meaning that our identities are closely linked to place. Yuval-Davis (2003, 141) underlines this notion as "belonging is multiplex and multi-layered, continuous and shifting, dynamic and attached". In that sense, belonging can be conceptualized at various scales as individuals' sense of belonging varies considerably; it can concern our own house, our street, our neighbourhood, our municipality and even our national homeland. But what factors contribute to our sense of belonging? And how is this linked to the concept of home? Antonsich (2010) describes four important factors that contribute to the feelings of belongingness; auto-biographical, relational, cultural, and legal.

Firstly, auto-biographical factors describe a person's past experiences, networks and history by focusing on memories and emotions that have linked a

person to a certain place. Examples can be found when looking at feelings that are associated with childhood memories, a person's place of birth or their ancestral country. Therefore, it can be said that in order to feel at home in a certain place one must have certain attachments to the place in order to make it their home.

Secondly, relational factors describe the interpersonal and social relations that an individual has with a given place and how they contribute to our sense of belonging. For example, family, friends and loved ones hugely affect our sense of belonging. These relations often constitute the self as they give us a feeling of stability and comfort. Bourdieu (cited in Richardson 1998) uses the term social capital to describe social networks as a resource that gives individuals a sense of belongingness to a group. Of course, not all relationships provide us with a sense of belonging. Baumeister & Leary (1995) assert that in order to feel a sense of belonging, relationships have to be long-lasting, positive and stable. In that sense, occasional everyday encounters do not necessarily provide us with feelings of belongingness as they do not always generate a deep sense of connectedness.

Thirdly, cultural factors play a major role when it comes to belonging. Among these factors language can be seen as one of the most important factors that help us feel at home (Buonfino & Thomson 2007). When people speak a common language it invokes a sense of community in which people not only understand each other but also know what meaning their words convey. In this sense, language can be seen as an element that contributes to a person's sense of belongingness as it captures the essence of feeling at home. Besides language other cultural factors such as traditions, habits, religion and food also contribute to a sense of belongingness. For example, some of my informants actively celebrated *Koningsdag*² ('King's Day'), got together with other Dutch people when the national soccer team had to play, or made *oliebollen*³ on New Year's Eve.

Fourthly, legal factors such as citizenship and resident permits also produce security for migrants as it provides them with certain rights and benefits that open up new opportunities such as getting a job. Not surprisingly, there appears to be a link between an individual's legal status and their sense of belongingness (Nelson & Hiemstra 2008). The traditional conception of citizenship is formed upon the idea that individuals belong to only one nation-state and so migrants might feel left out when they are not provided with equal access to social, civil and political rights (Bloemraad et al. 2008). For example, Tamara mentioned that Dutch-Canadian dual citizenship is not possible for her in Canada as she was not born in Canada and arrived there after a certain age. In Tamara's case, not having a Canadian passport meant that she had to make certain sacrifices

² A national holiday in the Netherlands, held on 27 April, to celebrate the birth of King Willem-Alexander.

³ A Dutch deep-fried delicacy that is consumed around New Years Eve.

when it came to jobs that required Canadian passports. However, having a Dutch passport does have meaning for Tamara as it ties her down to the Netherlands. Bourdieu (cited in Richardson 1998, 47) calls this symbolic capital and describes this as "... any property (any form of capital whether physical, economic, cultural or social) when it is perceived by social agents endowed with categories of perception which cause them to know it and to recognize it, to give it value". Altogether, the combination of the four factors mentioned above can contribute to the feeling of belongingness and a sense of home among migrants.

Methodology

To answer my research question, I employ a series of qualitative in-depth interviews with Dutch-Canadian EA. The results are analyzed in order to describe and explore the themes that emerge from the interviews. Thus, the purpose of this research is to better understand the role of identity as modern-day EA try to develop certain identities by adapting to life in Canada while also retaining some sort of attachment to what has been left behind. By analysing migrant communities in Canada I hope to understand the degree of integration of migrant communities and to uncover how certain themes can be related to research on migration, identity, and belonging. Studying identity formation and all its complexities calls for an approach that is flexible and focuses on the understanding of the different facets of identity. Therefore, I decided to use qualitative methods in order to understand the process through which Dutch-Canadian EA deal with issues of identity, belonging and migration. Qualitative methods offer an effective way of data collection as they are very suitable to capture, understand and describe the behaviours and experiences of this chosen research group (Boeije 2005). By adopting a qualitative research methodology, I was able to generate a holistic but explanatory description of the phenomena of identity formation among Dutch-Canadian EA. As this research is mainly exploratory I thus avoided hypothesizing an a priori relationship between migration, media and identity. Instead, I identified new themes that emerged from the interviews while keeping pre-existing models in mind.

The researcher as an insider

Working with a collection of data that has been obtained through interviews raises questions about the relationship between the researcher and the informants. I believe that my own background has played an important role in the data that I collected. I am part of Dutch-Canadian EA and have often struggled with the question of where I belong. This personal struggle has ignited my interest in the field of identity and migration. Of course, my personal familiarity with the topic

poses several advantages and disadvantages. Among the advantages is the fact that my background can enhance my understanding of Dutch-Canadian experiences and can provide a sense of trust with the informants. My informants were incredibly interested in my background and often asked me where I was from, which places I had visited in Canada and how often I went back. However, a disadvantage might be that my background could create some sort of bias regarding the outcome of this research. For example, it is possible that I highlighted themes and aspects that were equivalent to my own personal experience while potentially disregarding themes that I could not relate to. I find it important to be aware of the influences that I, as a researcher, might take with me while writing this research. This sort of reflexivity provided me with new impressions and interpretations that I would not have been able to get by merely observing informants (Sultana 2007).

Sample selection and characteristics

The data builds upon interviews and observations of nine Dutch-Canadians (see Table 1). Only nine informants were selected, due to a lack of time, resources and funding. Before collecting the data, I tried to set up criteria for selecting the informants. As I had no idea what to expect, I decided not to be too demanding, as I wanted to find as many informants as possible in order to set up a reliable research design. I decided to start with the age group of 19-26 as this age group is generally known for the alterations and growth of their self-awareness as they try to find out who they are in relation to the physical, cognitive and social changes that occur in their lives (Erickson 1995). Second, I looked for people who had Dutch roots, meaning that at least one of their (grand)parents grew up in the Netherlands. This criterion was mainly set in order to ensure some sort of affiliation with the Netherlands, however big or small. The third and final criterion was that the informants had lived in Canada for most of their life. This criterion was set in order to ensure that the informants had some experiences with life in Canada and had knowledge of the values and social norms of Canadian society.

All the informants that participated were aged between 19 and 26 with a mean age of 23. Seven of the informants were female while only two informants were male. The gender proportion was not intended to be out of balance. However, last minute cancellations left the composition of the group unbalanced. In addition, almost all informants were students or recent graduates from educational institutions. More information about informants' background, age and migration history can be found in appendix A.

As a whole the informants consist of second and third generation Dutch-Canadians. While a variety of definitions of the term generation exist, I refer to my informants as merely Dutch-Canadian. Of course, it is important to note that the

mere usage of terms such as Dutch-Canadian might suggest an essentialist view. However, I believe that identities and generations are not based on simple dichotomies such as “here” or “there” and “Dutch” or “Canadian”. Identities are never singular static entities but are hybrid, fluid and multiple entities that are in constant flux. Nevertheless, it must be noted that I use this term for conceptual purposes only as I am aware that this usage might not coincide with the self-identification of the informants involved in this research as some call themselves Canadian or Dutch as well. In order to honour at least one of their favoured self-identifications while maintaining conceptual consistency, I decided to use the term Dutch-Canadian throughout this research.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Gen der</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Nationality of parent(s)</i>	<i>Country of Birth</i>	<i>Country of residence</i>	<i>Grew up in</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
Yvette	F	23	British, Dutch- Canadian	Canada	The Netherlands (for studies)	Canada	Student
Jay	M	22	Dutch- Canadian, Dutch- German	Canada	Canada	Canada	Data analyst
Nathalie	F	26	Dutch	Canada	Canada	Canada	Teacher
Marieke	F	24	Dutch	The Nether- lands	Canada	The Netherlands and Canada	Recent graduate
Tara	F	24	Dutch	Canada	Canada	Canada	Student
Jolijn	F	21	Dutch	The Nether- lands	Germany (for studies)	The Netherlands and Canada	Student
Lee	M	19	Dutch, Irish	The Nether- lands	Canada	The Netherlands and Canada	Student
Tamara	F	23	Dutch	The Nether- lands	Canada	The Netherlands and Canada	Recent graduate
Lisanne	F	26	Dutch	The Nether- lands	Canada	The Netherlands and Canada	Works part time for her parents, mother

Table 1. Overview of informants.

Procedure

During the first few weeks of data collection I tried to talk to as many people as possible about my topic of interest. Due to my familiarity with Dutch migrants in

Canada I was able to use my own network in order to access possible informants. I reached out to my online, and offline friends who helped me find names of possible informants. Thus, in order to recruit informants, I relied on snowball sampling, a method that obtains informants through a researcher's existing network where informants nominate others to expand the amount of data (Morgan 2008). A major advantage of the snowball method is that it opened up a diverse range of people that I could connect with easily. Initially, access to informants was made through a variety of channels. First, I reached out to my own network by telling people about my research through Facebook. People then tagged friends who fit the criteria in the post after which I sent them a message with more information about the research. Second, I reached out to several Dutch-Canadian Facebook groups where I posted a message about my research. The Facebook groups that were used are: Dutch-Canadian Friendship Garden (Bridgewater), Dutch-Canadian Association P.E.I., Dutch Treat Canada – Toronto/GTA, Dutch Canadian Society of London and District and Nederlanders in/random Calgary/Dutch people in/around Calgary (Canada). Within these Facebook groups people commented on posts and offered their help. Third, my parents knew several Dutch crop growers who moved to Canada. I contacted these growers through email and they kindly provided me with their networks as well.

Dealing with narratives

Informants' narratives that were collected through the interviews were considered as the main material of analysis. Narratives are defined as subjective personal stories in which individuals position the Self and the Other in order to make sense of past, present and future experiences (Trahar 2009). Similar to plays, films, and books, narratives capture stories that include characters, a setting, plots and themes that provide individuals with meaning. As such, I decided to use narratives as my main source of data because I believe that this is the best way to capture the informants' feelings, experiences and views when it comes to their life stories. I mentioned before that the term identity is in constant flux and is an unstable, every-changing notion that is understood differently by many. As a result, identity is hard to capture through quantitative measures as it is hard to categorize. Through a qualitative discourse analysis of these narratives I thus hope to collect rich, detailed narratives about the informants and their perspective on their lives as Dutch-Canadians.

Interviews

For the purpose of this research a total of nine semi-structured interviews were held with a total length of 298 minutes. Each interview lasted between 21 and 53

minutes. This has resulted in a word count of 33,367 that captured every word that had been recorded. As a whole, eight interviews were held through Facebook and one interview through Skype.

An ethics approval for interviews and human subjects was unnecessary as this research was written in the Netherlands under the supervision of Utrecht University. However, before undertaking the interviews the informants received a consent form that gave them a brief explanation of the research and asked for their informed consent to participate (Appendix B). In addition, the consent form informed informants about their guaranteed confidentiality as none of their information would be made available to anyone who was not directly involved in the research. In order to ensure their anonymity, the participants in this research will remain anonymous by using pseudonyms. In the interviews I therefore started with a brief introduction in which I explained the aim of the research, confirmed their anonymity, and asked whether they preferred a specific pseudonym (Appendix C). The interview continued with questions about upbringing and family as well as general questions about their age, country of residence and place of birth (Appendix C). Additionally, I also tried to link the questions to things I saw on their profiles in order to gain a more personal connection with the informants and to make them feel comfortable. After this the interview was more unstructured, following the pace set by the informants rather than that of the researcher. For each interview the same topic list was used in order to generate answers related to the purpose of this research. According to researchers, this semi-structured approach is one of the more practical ways to gain information about informants' lives (Edwards and Holland 2013). During the interviews I tried to ask open-ended questions that were formulated differently to fit the need of the informants. I hoped that this type of approach would yield more complex answers than simply yes or no. In addition, open-ended questions might reveal answers that could provide new insights in the field that could further be explored and studied.

Analysis

As narratives are open to different interpretations it is possible that other representations than my own were possible. However, the data gained from this research has been coded based on what I thought was important. I started by transcribing all interviews verbatim. I then carefully read the transcripts and started coding and highlighting interesting responses that were related to the topic list while also taking into consideration answers that brought in new and unexpected issues. I immediately noticed that many informants saw their cultural background as an advantage and that this made them feel special and unique. Informants also indicated that they often compared the Netherlands with Canada while trying to find out where they belonged. In addition, most participants

continued certain Dutch practices in Canada while others tried to find some balance between the two cultures. In order to create some sort of predictability, as time was limited, I tried to keep in mind the theoretical frameworks that guided me to focus on certain patterns related to migration, identity, belonging, and media while also identifying and labelling new findings. I then reread the transcripts and revisited the initial coding so that I could rename and clarify certain codes in order to create consistency. These codes were then developed into a list of categories that were modified after an additional rereading of the transcripts (Straus and Corbin 1990). After revisiting these categories, I sorted them in order to create the following three themes: narratives of authenticity, narratives of self-exploration and narratives of negotiation. After analyzing these three themes four other themes came to the surface: language, roots and routes, behaviour, and appearance. These themes are discussed and analysed in the following section.

Analyses

The following section describes three major themes related to informants' identification that emerged from the data: narratives of authenticity, narratives of self-exploration and narratives of negotiation. On top of these three themes four other themes came to the surface: language, roots and routes, behaviour, and appearance. Together, these themes form the basis of how Dutch-Canadian EA narrate their identities while also demonstrating how different cultural backgrounds are seen as a form of symbolic capital. After discussing these themes I will shortly discuss the limitations of my research.

Narratives of authenticity

"I love being Dutch. I love that [...] it makes me different than most people and I ... Most people would not like being different but in that way I liked it." (Lisanne)

A recurrent theme was the sense of authenticity amongst informants. Informants seemed to not only feel authentic and different from people around them but also from people with similar Dutch-Canadian roots. The theme of authenticity came up in, for example, discussions about growing up with Dutch influences but also when receiving remarks from outsiders about their Dutch features. Despite the fact that informants mentioned the diverse Canadian culture and the abundance of people with migrant backgrounds, informants still felt like they stood out from the rest. Throughout the interviews, words related to authenticity were very recurrent such as "special", "unique", "stand out" and "different". When asked

about Nathalie's experiences in Canada while growing up with Dutch influences she said:

I would say in my experience of knowing another language and growing up with another culture I think it was really beneficial and lovely to grow up with the experiences of two worlds rather than just one. And I think it was kind of nice because it did feel special at home having another language that I could speak with my family. It kind of made it like almost this special experience of having our own language and our own ... you know ... traditions that we did at home that were different than what everyone else at school was doing. I don't really remember meeting a lot of Dutch kids at school so it was kind of unique to us if that makes sense.

Nathalie seems to emphasize the importance of speaking a different language, having different traditions and growing up with another culture. She seems to use these features as markers of distinction in order to differentiate herself from her peers by noting that their lives were very different from those of many other people in Canada. EA perceive their Dutch and Canadian background as symbolic capital in the sense that they find it an asset that distinguishes them from the crowd. However, it is remarkable that in Lee's case being authentic also means being part of Canada's mainstream culture. He states that:

There's so many different cultures it's hard to say what Canada is strongest in. I feel like out of a country with so many different cultures it was easier for me to adjust to such a big move as a kid. Just because you meet other people who are maybe not from Europe but their parents are. I remember in elementary school that there were only thirty kids there but already over ten or fifteen different nationalities in a single classroom.

Lee indicates that migrant communities seem to be considered part of mainstream culture in Canada. In that sense it is possible to be authentic while also being part of the mainstream collective.

Besides the fact that informants felt different from their peers, illustrating the constructive and diverging forms of identification, some also seemed to have different perspectives on what it meant to be Dutch. It seems that growing up in the Netherlands provided some informants with a different experience than the informants who were born in Canada and had no direct experience when it came to living in the Netherlands. As Lisanne puts it:

The area that we live in it's like all the Dutch people are here when they move here. There's the church I go to that is pretty much all Dutch people even if they are not directly from Holland ... their parents were or their grandparents were. And all the names ... it's all Dutch last names. There's

so many in this area it's crazy. Mostly when I meet them they are like "I'm Dutch" but it's more back further. When I say I'm Dutch to people they are like "oh yeah everybody is Dutch around here" but I'm like "I'm actually Dutch" and they are like "oohhh okay".

Lisanne mentioned a certain distinction that could be made based on Dutch-Canadians who were born or not born in Canada. Her search for authenticity underlines the internal heterogeneity that is present in Dutch-Canadian communities.

It was interesting to find that informants like Lisanne and Marieke also mentioned that even among Dutch people a distinction could be made based on generational differences. By looking at Jay's account of his Dutch heritage I noticed that he felt different from other Dutch people as he was not born there. During our interview Jay quite doubtfully said: "There's probably not too much I can tell you. I'm not myself ... I don't come from Holland. I'm just around all the Dutch stuff." This shows that some informants might not feel as Dutch as others because they were not born in the Netherlands. For others, however, identity is about performance and how they decide to enact certain parts of their heritage. Yvette's experiences were similar to Jay's because her personal identification with the Netherlands was made stronger after her first trip to the Netherlands. It is interesting that accounts like that of Lisanne, Marieke, Jay and Yvette, suggest the importance of place when it comes to our identities and sense of belonging.

Narratives of self-exploration

"I feel both. I feel Dutch and I feel Canadian. I don't know. It's a really weird feeling. If I'm around Dutch people or around anything that is even slightly Dutch I feel very very Dutch and the other times I am mostly Canadian."

(Lisanne)

A variety of views were expressed by informants in relation to their search of identity. They surfaced mainly in relation to how they came to be and how they made sense of having different backgrounds. An interesting finding that emerged from the narratives is that the informants often voiced their personal changes in life. They were often aware of their different backgrounds and tried to make sense of them while growing up. When asked about what his Irish, Dutch and Canadian backgrounds meant for him Lee said:

I tend to think about that a lot actually because it's hard to say oh well I'm born in Holland but my mom's from Ireland but I live in Canada. What really is my true home if I were to call it home? I call.. I mean obviously from like a birth right standpoint I would call Holland my home. But it's something

that I'm still looking the answer for I think. I probably will have it if I end up going back for a Masters or something like that. I just want to see ... I just want to relate back to what I thought Holland was like and then see it through my eyes now and be able to relate to it in other ways. But as a kid obviously I would say Holland was my home and then my mom ... after growing up I've had comments ... when my aunt came to Canada she was like "you look so much like your aunt or like your mom". So I think it's edging to Ireland right now as I'm growing up.

Lee seems to be very aware of his changing identity as it is constantly shifting while he grows older. For Lee, the Netherlands is his home from a birth place standpoint but is not necessarily what he identifies himself with at present. Experiences while growing up seem to affect how Lee identifies himself and he even states that he has received comments on his physical features as he looks like his Irish side of the family. Context and agency are influencing factors when it comes to identity construction. Lee's narratives exemplify that identity formation is a continuous process that is always in the making and can never be finalized. In addition, it shows that identity formation is, indeed, present in the lives of EA. While Lee tends to talk about Canada, the Netherlands and Ireland separately, Yvette often uses the hyphenated term Dutch-Canadian in order to describe her identity:

I've always sort of identified as English and British-Canadian and Dutch-Canadian. I was always very aware of the fact that three of my grandparents were not born in Canada and came from a different place. But when I had that first trip when I was 21 it definitely shifted to being Dutch-Canadian because just that part of the heritage and even it not being a family thing it just became a me thing. Because my sister does not really feel Dutch-Canadian at all but I've sort of discovered I quite liked it here so I've actively acknowledged that. That is part of my heritage ... I'm very happy to be Dutch-Canadian. To identify as both I also don't really always feel like I'm a very good Canadian I always feel very European. So this gives it sort of a grounding in a specific European place.

The use of hyphenated identity seems to imply the presence of a hybrid identity. It shows that both her Dutch and Canadian identities seem to merge into one as they influence each other. Similar to Lee's account, Yvette mentions that what she identifies with is largely a matter of personal choice. In comparison to her sister, Yvette actively pursues her Dutch heritage as a marker of individuality and authenticity. Marieke also alluded to the notion of hyphenated, or hybrid, identity as she mentioned that she does not pinpoint certain aspects in her life as "this is my Dutch culture" or "this is my Canadian culture". Rather, they seem to merge into a third space.

I find it remarkable that Yvette and Lee also touch upon the importance of location. For Yvette, it was important to be in the Netherlands physically in order to make sense of who she is and how she identifies herself. She even mentions that it grounded her European identification in “a specific European place”. For Lee, the Netherlands is his home from a birth place standpoint but is not necessarily what he identifies himself with at present. These narratives show that the interplay of roots and routes is constantly present and are understood differently for both informants.

The maintenance of the Dutch passport is another way in which both Tamara and Marieke stay connected to their Dutch roots. For example, Tamara said:

I still have a Dutch passport which I've always felt was something that would always tie me down. And I got offered a job here to work as a flight attendant for a Canadian company but they required a Canadian passport. I just wasn't ready to give ... I just couldn't do that.

Of course, having a Dutch passport does not necessarily mean that informants automatically feel affiliated with Dutch culture. However, the choice of deciding to get a Canadian passport gives informants some agency when it comes to their official nationality. Tamara seems to give social and personal meaning to having a passport. Although she mentions that having a Dutch passport might limit her from certain jobs that require a Canadian passport, she states that just having it makes her feel more Dutch as she has something that officially states this. In Tamara's case, her Dutch passport can be seen as symbolic capital as it is of value to her and identifies her with the specific position of being Dutch.

Narratives of negotiation

“I feel like there’s pros and cons in both countries and you can’t really ... you can’t have both, you can’t just have all the goods so you have a bit of each.” (Lisanne)

In their narratives informants were constantly making comparisons between the Netherlands and Canada. Almost all informants cited differences which marked the boundary separating Dutch and Canadian culture. For example, Jolijn, Lisanne and Tamara all reported a sense of difference when it comes to *gezelligheid*.⁴ Both Jolijn and Lisanne point out that *gezelligheid* is something that they only

⁴ An untranslatable term that the Dutch often use to describe the cosiness or warmth that you feel when with loved ones.

experienced with other Dutch people as a certain feeling is missing with Canadians. In addition, Lee mentioned that he is sometimes frustrated with the differences between social relations in the Netherlands and Canada. He mentions that Canadians are very careful with their words and try not to offend people whereas Dutch people are more straight forward. Almost all informants seem to favour some parts of one culture over the other and have to find a way to negotiate between the two.

Although some informants seem to favour certain aspects of a culture others have accepted that one culture does not necessarily outweigh the other. Marieke states that, at the beginning, she often focused on distinct differences between cultures such as clothing or food. However, growing older she notes that she looks at it not as “this is better” or “this is better” but now has a more realistic perspective. At the same time Nathalie also considered she has changed since childhood since she now has a different perspective on the *Zwarte Piet*⁵ ('Black Peter') debate:

It's one of the things I noticed having grown up with Canadian culture but then also experiencing Dutch culture growing up. And I know a lot of people ... Dutch people do not like this ... I know they don't ... but the whole *Sinterklaas* and *Zwarte Piet* and that whole you know ... where the tradition comes from ... a lot of people get super super defensive if they even ... even one little thing about it: IT'S NOT RACIST. If it wasn't racist you don't have to react ... have to defend it because there's nothing to defend. I think it almost speaks to the fact that they know it's not right like some of it. And you know it's like he's his helper he's his helper and he's his friend and then sometimes ... he's only black from going down the chimney but then why does he have the big gold hoop earrings and the big red lips. That doesn't make any sense right?

Nathalie seems to be using both of her upbringings in order to make sense of the debate by, in the end, choosing where she stands. She seems to be very critical about certain aspects of Dutch culture and differentiates herself from other Dutch people by saying that she does not share the same view when it comes to *Zwarte Piet* as this tradition is something that she does not take for granted unlike other Dutch people. She later on states:

I was able to say okay just because that's what I experienced growing up doesn't mean that that's what necessarily should continue as an adult. I still

⁵ A now controversial character that helps *Sinterklaas* (Saint Nicholas) hand out sweets and presents to children during the annual celebration of *Sinterklaas* in the Netherlands. Traditionally those portraying *Zwarte Piet* put on black face-paint, golden earrings and red lips, although this has been criticized in recent years due to its colonial history.

would love to do *Sinterklaas* in the whole with the shoe out and everything with my kids. I think I would really love to do that but I think I would change it a little bit.

It is evident that Nathalie has decided to adjust certain Dutch traditions in order to fit her own perceptions. These perceptions probably arose while being immersed in Canada, a multicultural society where the idea of *Zwarte Piet* is problematized. She seems to internalize the Canadian moral structures when reflecting on the issue of *Zwarte Piet*. I found it interesting to see how informants state that growing up with two or more cultures has made them aware of certain differences that they either like or dislike and use their own interpretations according to their own set of norms and values. Altogether, identities can be sites of boundary construction and maintenance where informants are constantly negotiating meaning based on their different backgrounds. Whether the differences are positive or negative, informants have the opportunity to strengthen, sustain or desert particular characteristics. The boundaries between both cultures are therefore not static but are constantly being negotiated, changed or abandoned refining and deepening their cultural awareness in the process.

Emerging themes

After analysing the above three narratives I noticed that there were other themes that came to the surface: language, roots and routes, behaviour and appearance. These themes are also worth discussing as they provide us with a bigger picture of Dutch-Canadian EA in Canada.

Language. As mentioned by Buonfino and Thompson (2007), language plays a major role when it comes to belongingness and the essence of feeling at home. So what happens when EA move to a new country and have to learn how to speak the language? Lisanne and Marieke both indicate that they were hesitant about using English once they arrived to Canada. When talking about her first months in Canada, Lisanne states:

I refused to speak English. I was learning but I refused to speak it. I went to school and my teacher always told my parents I didn't say a word. And then all of a sudden one day I just spoke it fluently and kind of started and never stopped. We all kind of had a hard time with it. It took a long time to adjust but we did eventually.

The sudden switch to English might indicate that Lisanne finally started to feel at home in Canada. Although she did speak English at school she, just like other informants, indicates that speaking Dutch among family members was still

common. Alternatively, Nathalie indicates that when her father died her mother soon stopped talking Dutch and “transitioned over to the Canadian side of living”. This indicates that migrants need a social network in order to keep using their native language.

Once informants have interpersonal and social relations with Canadians they create social capital that provides them with stability, comfort and a sense of belongingness. For example, informants state that their families have become more diverse with the arrival of Canadian boyfriends and friends. Nathalie, Lisanne, Jolijn, Tamara, and Marieke mention that they used to speak only Dutch among family members. At present, however, they mention that they often end up speaking English in order to include people in the conversations. Interestingly, the use of the Dutch language makes some informants feel authentic. Yvette mentions that she felt special when her friends asked her “What’s an *oma* (‘grandmother’) and *opa* (‘grandfather’)?” Tara also states that she felt special when people asked her about her accent.

Roots and routes. I mentioned earlier that the term roots refers to how individuals identify themselves with a shared community or heritage. It seems that for some informants growing up in a common place does seem to matter. Talking about this issue Marieke mentioned that:

I don’t know if you know a lot about Dutch immigrants in Canada but they all kind of are very proud of it and I’m like ... really you’re not Dutch at all. Their ways are not Dutch at all and I think I really remember that from the beginning that we moved that people always claimed to be so Dutch and I was like you have no idea. You’ve never been. You don’t speak the language. You don’t know what you are talking about.

Marieke’s response indicates that, for her, being Dutch meant a lot more than just labelling oneself as Dutch; it meant speaking the language, being born there, and having visited the Netherlands. Marieke’s disqualification of Canadians with a Dutch heritage does not necessarily mean that she wants these Canadians to change. It merely shows that her own personal identity has probably been constructed by, on the one hand not identifying herself as Canadian or Dutch-Canadian, and on the other hand not identifying herself as an authentic Dutch person. In contrast, informants like Yvette and Nathalie identify themselves as Dutch, or Dutch-Canadian despite being born in Canada. When talking about her first trip to the Netherlands Yvette states:

My mom said in like first year of university ... she was like “do you want to go somewhere for a few days?” I was like “okay” and she said “where do you want to go?” and I’m like “I guess I’m half Dutch... not really thought

about it much before... might as well go there see what that's all about." And I think that immediately getting off the plane at Schiphol I'm just like (inhaling) "What is this feeling?" And so I sort of changed my plan for my Erasmus year. I ended up coming to the Netherlands and I really liked it. And I thought about doing a Masters. And everything sort of fell into place. The program I wanted was here, I knew the city I was comfortable here it just made sense to come back.

Yvette embodies the idea that identity can freely be regarded as something that is constantly in flux. Together, both examples show that informants have different ways of constructing their identities. For some, roots play a central role whereas for others identity is not limited, or predefined by location.

Behaviour. As mentioned earlier, cultural factors such as traditions, habits, religion and food also contribute to a sense of belongingness. Similar to language, traditions and customs slowly seem to die down after being in Canada for numerous years. Lisanne comments that:

I don't really remember that many traditions from Holland. So I don't know how many we still have but we kind of just adapted I guess. We kind of made sense of what we used to do there and what we can do here.

Having a hard time identifying her Dutch traditions might indicate that Lisanne is having a hard time distinguishing her old identity from the new. She emphasizes that both identities seem to overlap and that she has adapted to a new way of living. This is similar to the narrative where Nathalie mentions that she has adapted the celebration of *Sinterklaas* in order to fit her new norms and values. Moreover, Lisanne mentions that as she got older she started to switch more to Canadian traditions. Although her mother-in-law comments on the amount of work that goes into celebrating a "Dutch" birthday, Lisanne replies to her with:

I don't need everybody to bring presents every year, I just want everyone to show up and have a coffee and say happy birthday. I love the way that Dutch people celebrate birthdays, it just feels ... I don't know ... *gezellig*.⁶

Migrant nostalgia seems to play an important role in the lives of informants. Informants emphasize the longing for the Netherlands, with its traditions and culture, that they once were a part of. These autobiographical factors link informants to the Netherlands and give them a sense of belongingness.

⁶ See note 4.

In addition, religious practice also enhanced the sense of belonging to a Dutch community. Jay states: "All four of my grandparents are pretty religious so ever since I was a kid I went to Christian reformed church. It was almost like a Dutch community because everyone there was Dutch and it seems like they all stick together." It seems as if going to church plays a significant role in Jay's identity construction as many Dutch people appear to have a similar religious background. Lisanne also explains that she never really went to church while she was in the Netherlands. However, when they moved to Canada she indicates that they started going to church. By joining and creating these religious Dutch communities, people can communicate with each other in their own language while also practicing faith.

Appearance. Another notion that I picked up on during the interviews was that outsiders often noticed that informants were not originally from Canada. Informants seemed to have to negotiate with and defend themselves against how other people categorized them. The identities and labels that other people give us greatly affect the way people position and identify themselves. For example, Lisanne's comment below touches upon the concept of these ascribed identities:

People hear me speak Dutch, especially for the first time, they are very like "Wow, what is that?" It's very ... it's ... I don't know. I always got told that I looked different which makes no sense to me. Even my husband says it, he says "You don't look Canadian." And then I'm like "I'm not Canadian." And his family always goes like "Oh you're so Dutch." And I'm like "It's fake blond ... I don't have blue eyes. The only thing I have is that I'm tall. I don't know how you think I look Dutch but okay."

Lisanne mentions that people often link her physical appearance to being Dutch. Her response to "You don't look Canadian" clearly shows that she, in some way, seems to have to prove why she does not look Canadian or why she is not Canadian. It would be interesting to find out whether this racialization happens before, or after people find out that she is not Canadian. If she was Canadian and had the same traits she would probably have never been linked to being Dutch. In that sense, it seems as if certain traits are found a posteriori in order to justify that she is Dutch. Similar encounters have happened to Tamara who states:

Yeah most people notice we're Dutch. They sometimes ... after I tell them they say yeah you kind of have an accent or people will ask me ... I'm a waitress ... so customers ask me if I'm Dutch because I'm tall blonde and have blue eyes.

In addition, Marieke mentions that people sometimes make comments such as "Oh you're so Dutch" and "You're so convenient" indicating that she has certain traits that can be ascribed to a stereotypical image of the Dutch. Marieke even states that even though she has been in Canada for most of her life she still finds it frustrating when people persistently ask her where she is really from. In most cases, she decides to either share, or not share where she is from based on the context. In both Lisanne, Tamara and Marieke's cases their authenticity or uniqueness seems to be noticed by other people, which can sometimes result in negative or positive experiences.

Discussion

Based on the above analysis, several limitations of this research need to be acknowledged. First, there were a number of issues that were not possible to deal with due to time constraints. It was impossible to do an in-depth ethnographic research as there was limited time to find and interview informants. Moreover, time constraints also made it hard to thoroughly analyse all the transcripts, and therefore it is possible that important themes might have been overlooked. Another limitation is the representativeness of the data. The data collected for this research was relatively small as it consisted of seven female, and two male informants. In addition, almost all my informants were either students or recent graduates. The data was therefore imbalanced when it came to the representation of people from different gender and class. This is a limitation because I did not have time to focus and analyse dimensions of age, gender and class as they were not equally distributed and I was dealing with a limited number of informants and a limited amount of time. Although the data might not be representative for the entire population of Dutch-Canadians in Canada it does give some insights into the lives of my informants. For obvious reasons, these insights cannot be generalized and therefore only relate to the informants that I interviewed. A third limitation was the subjectivity of the researcher. As mentioned before, there was a limited amount of time to categorize the transcripts and find key elements and themes. It is possible that other researchers would find completely different themes. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that the analysis of the data is highly influenced by my positionality. The themes that emerged were based on my own personal interpretation of the data and might be influenced by my personal background with Dutch-Canadian identity. However, my position can also be considered an advantage because it made me see patterns that researchers with less familiarity of the subject might not have found.

Conclusions

In this research I have presented a detailed empirical analysis on the relationships between migration, identity and belonging and, specifically, how Dutch-Canadian EA between the age of 19 and 26 articulate identities. Through in-depth interviews I established that migration seems to be accompanied by cultural and identity shifts among Dutch-Canadian EA. However, these shifts seem to vary among informants and are largely influenced by factors such as the amount of time spent in the Netherlands, whether they ever visited the Netherlands, and how much they were in contact with friends and family in the Netherlands. The three themes that emerged from the data clearly reflect the changes that Dutch-Canadian EA go through while growing up. Throughout these three major themes there were emerging themes such as language, roots and routes, behaviour, and appearance.

Narratives of authenticity show how informants feel unique and authentic when it comes to their language, appearance, and behaviour. In addition, informants not only feel unique and authentic from people around them but also from people with similar roots. Some informants touched upon the generational differences and how growing up in the Netherlands provided some informants with a different experience than the informants who were born in Canada and had no direct experience when it came to living in the Netherlands. Surprisingly, the importance of place recurs throughout informants' narratives and shows that the interplay of roots and routes is constantly present as informants deal differently with the question of where they belong or what they identify with. For some, home is seen from a birthright, or blood-based standpoint while others identify home as the place where they have most affiliations and connections with.

In narratives of self-exploration, I found out that identities can have different forms and are constantly changing while growing up. Context and agency seem to be influencing factors when it comes to identity construction as informants become less attached to their parents and try to forge their own path and form their own opinions. While some informants talked about different identities separately (e.g. Dutch or Canadian), others used hyphenated terms such as Dutch-Canadian to imply the presence of a dual identity. The influence of legal documents such as passports also seemed to contribute to symbolic capital of certain informants since keeping a passport tied them down to a certain nationality and officially identified them as being Dutch.

Narratives of negotiation gives a clear overview of how informants constantly compare the Netherlands and Canada. Almost all informants cited differences which marked the boundary separating Dutch and Canadian culture. Although some informants seem to favour certain aspects of a culture, others have accepted that one culture does not necessarily outweigh the other. Some

state that they can also pick and choose certain parts of a culture to make it fit into their worldview such as Nathalie's modification of the *Sinterklaas* tradition.

Despite its exploratory nature, the results of this research raise many questions in need for further research. Considerably more research needs to be done to fully capture identity construction among Dutch-Canadian EA. Since the writing of this research was limited due to lack of time it would be interesting to expand future research by focusing on a larger and more balanced set of data. Future research could further explore concepts that I left untouched such as gender, age, and class. It would also be interesting to further explore the concept of class as my informants were predominantly students and graduates which indicates that they are from at least middle class. Identity formation among lower class EA could therefore be different. The issue of place-belongingness would also be worth studying, as informants indicated that their identities changed after physically being in the Netherlands. Of course, my methods could be applied to other migrant groups as well. It would be interesting, for example, to focus on marginalized migrants to see how their behaviour differs from voluntary migrants.

Returning to the research questions posed at the beginning of this research, "How do Dutch-Canadian EA mobilize Dutchness in relation to their identities in Canadian contexts and how do they shape, negotiate and narrate these identities?", it is possible to say that Dutch-Canadian EA continuously negotiate, articulate, and perform multiple identities depending on the context that they are in. Even though the usage of the terms Dutch and Canadian implies homogeneity, this research shows that the Dutch, as well as Canadians are hybrid, dynamic and diverse. Thus, identity construction is not something that can be generalized, but rather, it is something unique that is experienced differently by everyone.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: MEET THE INFORMANTS

Nathalie

I got into contact with Nathalie through the Facebook group 'Dutch Treat Canada – Toronto/GTA'. Nathalie is 26 years old, was born in Canada and is currently living in Toronto with her husband. Nathalie's parents are both Dutch. Her father is deceased and her mother still lives in Canada. During the interview Nathalie brought up lots of interesting topics such as the controversy of *Zwarte Piet*. She seemed to be very aware of Dutch colonial history and the representation of 'blacks' in North America. It was refreshing to hear a different opinion on the matter and it seemed that she was able to decide for herself how to shape the tradition of *Sinterklaas* to fit her own world and thoughts. Nathalie had some cute bunnies roaming her garden that distracted me from the interview at times. She seems to travel a lot and enjoys her job as a supply teacher.

Yvette

I met Yvette through one of my Dutch friends in Ottawa. I posted a status on Facebook so that friends could help me with the search for Dutch-Canadians. Our mutual friend tagged Yvette and we got into contact. Yvette

is 23 years old, was born in Canada and has a British mother and a Dutch-Canadian father. Ever since her first visit to the Netherlands Yvette has been going back and forth between Canada and the Netherlands for her studies. She is currently doing her Masters in Nijmegen. From looking at her profile and talking to here I noticed that she has travelled a lot and has friends from all over the world. On top of that Yvette makes beautiful artworks and shares these on social media.

Jay

Jay and I came into contact through a mutual friend in Ottawa. Jay is 22 years old; she has a Dutch-Canadian father and a Dutch-German mother. Jay is currently working as a data analyst and hopes to get a full-time contract soon. Jay and I immediately hit it off and talked about a lot of non-study related things. He seems like a really relaxed guy and could tell me a lot about Dutch influences (and swear words!) that he picked up on while growing up. Although he has only visited the Netherlands once he hopes to go back soon.

Jolijn

I got into contact with Jolijn through one of the Dutch growers that I met through my parents. Jolijn was immediately interested in the search and was very glad to participate. Jolijn is 21 years old and moved to Canada from the Netherlands at the age of twelve. Jolijn is currently studying international business in Germany as part of her degree in Canada. Jolijn still seems to have a strong connection with the Netherlands and often goes back to visit friends and family, go shopping, and catch up on Dutch foods and *gezelligheid*.

Tara

I got into contact with Tara through the Facebook group Dutch Treat Canada – Toronto/GTA. Tara is 24 years old, was born in Canada and has Dutch parents. Tara is currently studying in North Bay at teacher's college. Tara has spent many summers in the Netherlands and seems to travel around a lot. She has done a study-abroad in France and planned to go to Curacao the week after our interview.

Lee

I got into contact with Lee through one of the Dutch growers that I met through my parents. Lee is 19 years old, has a Dutch father and an Irish mother and moved to Canada from the Netherlands at the age of seven. Just from talking to Lee it was evident that he had a great passion for architecture as he was very descriptive when it came to countries, cities and houses that he lived in. Not surprisingly, Lee is currently studying Architecture in Toronto. Lee often goes back to both the Netherlands and Ireland to visit friends and family. In addition, Lee is thinking about doing a Masters in Delft.

Tamara

I got into contact with Tamara through one of the Dutch growers that I met through my parents. Tamara is Jolijn's older sister who has also been interviewed. Tamara is 23 years old and moved to Canada from the Netherlands at the age of thirteen. Tamara recently graduated from political science and is looking into pursuing law school. Tamara goes back and forth between the Netherlands and Canada almost twice a year to visit family and friends. Moreover, she often celebrates King's Day in the Netherlands as well. It was interesting to see how her stories differed from that of her sister.

Lisanne

I got into contact with Lisanne through one of the Dutch growers that I met through my parents. Lisanne is 26 years old and moved to Canada from the Netherlands at the age of nine. Lisanne has her hands full as she is the mother of twins. Besides taking care of her twins she also works at her parents' company. Although Lisanne seems to go back to the Netherlands quite frequently she also enjoys exploring new countries.

Marieke

I got into contact with Marieke through the Facebook group 'Dutch Treat Canada – Toronto/GTA'. Marieke is 24 years old, was born in the Netherlands and moved to Canada when she was 13 years old. Both of her parents are Dutch. Marieke recently graduated from university with a bachelor of education and a bachelor in English and psychology. She seems to be very busy at the moment as she teaches grade 5 part-time and is also an educational assistant in grade 3 and grade 8 at a local Christian school.

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

Jasmin Keijzer
Utrecht University, Utrecht, the Netherlands

I am writing to ask for your help with a study that is being conducted on young Dutch-Canadians in Canada. This research was carried out by Jasmin Keijzer, a young researcher from the Netherlands.

For this study one Skype conversation will take place in the month of January or March. The interviewer will ask about your Dutch-Canadian background and your experiences of the internet – this will include discussions about how you uses Facebook, Twitter, Skype and Instagram.

The interviews will be relaxed and informal and you are free to talk about whatever you feel comfortable with. Whatever information you will be able to provide will be of great help.

In addition, it would be much appreciated if you could show your social media activity to the researcher. For this purpose, Jasmin Keijzer has been in contact, and you have expressed initial willingness to give her access to your social media activity on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and/or YouTube. If you want to participate please connect to the researcher using the following details:

Facebook: (anonymized)

Twitter: (anonymized)

Instagram: (anonymized)

Everything you wish to share will be very useful to me. This phase will run for the maximum duration of 3 months (15 January, 2016 – 15 April, 2016). Your name and personal details will never be used by me or the university. Your privacy will be guaranteed; I will be the only one that studies your activity. Companies or authorities will not have access to your personal information. I do hope you will be able to take part in this important study.

Are you happy to take part?

Yes (circle and proceed to complete personal information below)

No (close)

Complete if consent given

Name

Date and place.....

Nationality mother.....

Nationality father.....

Amount of years in Canada and/or other countries.....

If you have any questions about the research please ask!

For more information about the study you can write Jasmin Keijzer (email anonymized). Jasmin is supervised by Abder El Aissati, and questions and complains can be directed to him (email anonymized).

Thank you very much for taking part! - Jasmin Keijzer

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Background

Age
 Country of Birth
 Nationality
 Nationality parents
 Occupation

Personal

Childhood/Upbringing
 How was it growing up?
 Life
 What does your life look like at the moment?

Migration

Moving to Canada and first arrival
 How did you feel?
 Reasons to migrate
 Did you know people there?
 Did it take long to adapt to the country?

Memories

Memories of the Netherlands
 Connections with Canada
 Connections with the Netherlands
 Friends and family in the Netherlands
 Friends and family in Canada

About the author

Jasmin Francis Keijzer is a Dutch-Canadian researcher who was born in Nieuwveen, The Netherlands. Throughout her life Jasmin has resided in Lillooet, New Liskeard, Ottawa, Cambridge and Bonn. Having both a BA in English Language and Culture, and an MA in Intercultural Communication has led her to pursue her studies in the fields of linguistics, migration, media, culture and identity. Growing up with parents from different nationalities invoked a strong interest in studying the individual experiences of migration and ultimately resulted in this research. Jasmin is currently living in Amsterdam where she fulfils the role of a volunteer coordinator and brings together Dutch locals and newcomers. She also facilitates and teaches at two language cafés in Amsterdam where locals and newcomers can talk Dutch in an informal setting.

Author's contact: j.f.keijzer@outlook.com.

Un compte rendu narratif des identités d'adultes émergeants canado-néerlandais

Je présente, avec cette recherche, un rapport empirique sur la façon dont les adultes émergeants canado-néerlandais entre les âges de 19 et 26 ans perçoivent leur héritage néerlandais en relation avec leurs identités dans des contextes canadiens. Cette recherche se fonde sur les notions de la migration, de l'identité et de l'appartenance. J'examine aussi les interactions entre ces trois concepts. Au cours de l'analyse de neuf interviews, trois thèmes clés liés aux identités des informateurs sont apparus : les narrations de l'authenticité, de l'auto-exploration et de la négociation. À travers une analyse de ces trois thèmes, quatre autres thèmes se sont révélés : la langue, les racines et routes, le comportement et l'apparence. En examinant comment les adultes émergeants canado-néerlandais racontent leurs expériences, j'envisage d'offrir un aperçu plus détaillé sur les complexités de l'identité comme construction narrative. Avec l'aide de ces constatations, je contribue aux domaines des études culturelles et à celles de la migration tout en éclairant le sujet de migrants européens, ce qui ne touche pas souvent le débat public. Même si l'usage des termes « Néerlandais » et « Canadien » implique l'homogénéité, cette recherche révèle que les Néerlandais, ainsi que les Canadiens, sont des personnes hybrides, dynamiques et diversifiées.

Een narratieve analyse van de identiteit van Nederlands-Canadese jongvolwassenen

Dit onderzoek geeft een empirische beschrijving van de manier waarop Nederlands-Canadese jongvolwassenen in de leeftijden tussen 19 en 26 jaar hun Nederlandsheid beleven in verhouding tot hun identiteit in de Canadese context. Het onderzoek bouwt op concepten gerelateerd aan migratie, identiteit en behoren, en verkent de relatie tussen deze drie thema's. Uit de analyse van negen interviews met Nederlands-Canadese jongvolwassenen kwamen drie hoofdthema's naar voren: authenticiteit, zelfontplooiing, en bemiddeling. Een nadere analyse bracht vier andere thema's naar boven: taal, wortels en wegen, gedrag, en uiterlijk. Door te kijken naar hoe Nederlands-Canadezen over hun ervaringen vertellen probeer ik meer inzicht te geven in de complexe narratieve constructie van identiteit. De resultaten leveren een bijdrage aan de vakgebieden cultural studies en migratiestudies, en werpen ook licht op Europese migranten, een onderwerp dat niet vaak deel uitmaakt van het publieke debat. Hoewel het gebruik van de termen 'Nederlands' en 'Canadees' homogeniteit impliceert, laat dit onderzoek ook zien dat de Nederlandse identiteit, net als de Canadese, hybride, dynamisch en divers is.

Some of the words: *Een boer met 'n hondje*

Grace Hols

Remember the saying “A picture is worth a thousand words”? Well, I have a lot of pictures: black and white, some already fading. So I am trying to write the words, or at least a few of them. This process involves an intimate study of a photo, to the point where I take a magnifying glass to zoom in and capture details otherwise overlooked. The result of all this is a growing collection of vignettes that I am calling “Some of the words.”

Een boer met 'n hondje

My father was the youngest of six and grew up on a farm in Holland. When he was still very little, someone asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up. His answer was immediate and unswerving – he would be “*een boer met 'n hondje*” – a farmer with a (little) dog. He had a natural love for animals and wanted to have land of his own on which to raise a herd of cows.

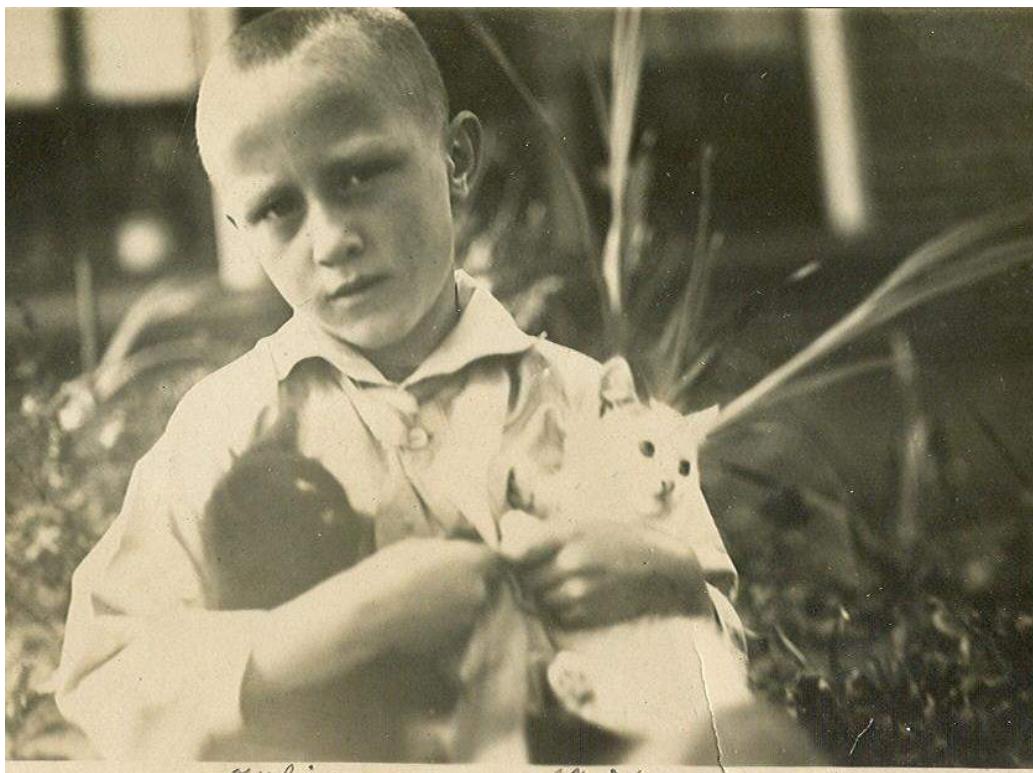
By the time he had grown up, however, it was the 1940s and a lot had happened to make that almost impossible. The Second World War had left the country in shambles and the family farm was too small to subdivide.

So when he was first married, in 1947, Dad worked for another farmer. He was up at four a.m. to begin milking 20 cows by hand. Breakfast was at six, usually buckwheat porridge. At ten there was a warm meal, and then he had an hour and a half free before going to work in the fields. At four it was time to milk again.

The milking was twice a day, seven days a week, with barely enough time off on Sundays for him to rush to church on his bike, pulling on his good coat as he pedalled. Eventually he had one Sunday off a month.

He liked the work, but not the long hours, and not the fact that he couldn’t be his own boss. Two years of that was enough. A brother and a sister had already moved to Canada and the letters they sent back to Holland contained glowing

reports of a land of opportunity: land was plentiful and cheap; there were mountains, rivers, and wildlife. Dad remembered the Canadian soldiers rolling their tanks through the streets in Holland at the end of the war, throwing cigarettes and chocolate bars and bringing liberation. Canadians ranked high in his estimation and Canada seemed like an exciting dream worth pursuing. He started filling out emigration paperwork.



*Albert Seinen, here about four years old, was born with a soft spot for animals.
From the author's personal collection.*

In the spring of 1949, he and his little family arrived in northern British Columbia, where he immediately found work in a logging camp. Almost as quickly, he got a dog, a black and white mutt that is proudly included in our earliest photos of that first Canadian winter in the bush.

After a couple of years of working to save money, he bought 110 acres of farmland for \$800. He continued to work in the lumber industry for the first years, but his goal was to be an independent farmer, living off the land. In his spare time he built a house, a log barn, a chicken house and a pen for pigs. He worked longer hours for himself and his family than he had ever worked for anyone else. Soon there was a milk cow, there were chickens for eggs and meat, long rows of

vegetables for eating and selling, and fields of oats and potatoes. The family grew to six children. Dogs were a regular part of our daily life.

Dad was all about being self-sufficient. He was a hard worker to start with, but growing up during the Depression years of the 1930s and then experiencing World War II had taught him to be innovative and self-reliant.



*Living in a logging camp; my dad with me and our first dog during our first winter in Canada.
From the author's personal collection.*

In Canada, he had his own little sawmill and enough trees on his farm to make lumber. So he hooked up a belt and pulleys to run the mill, and soon green planks of freshly cut, fragrant spruce and pine were stacked up to dry in large triangles in the new clearing by the house. Eventually a milking parlor was constructed to hold several cows and a new electric Surge milking machine. My father loved to sing, and his clear tenor voice could be heard daily above the noise of the machinery as he belted out hymns and songs from the war as he worked.

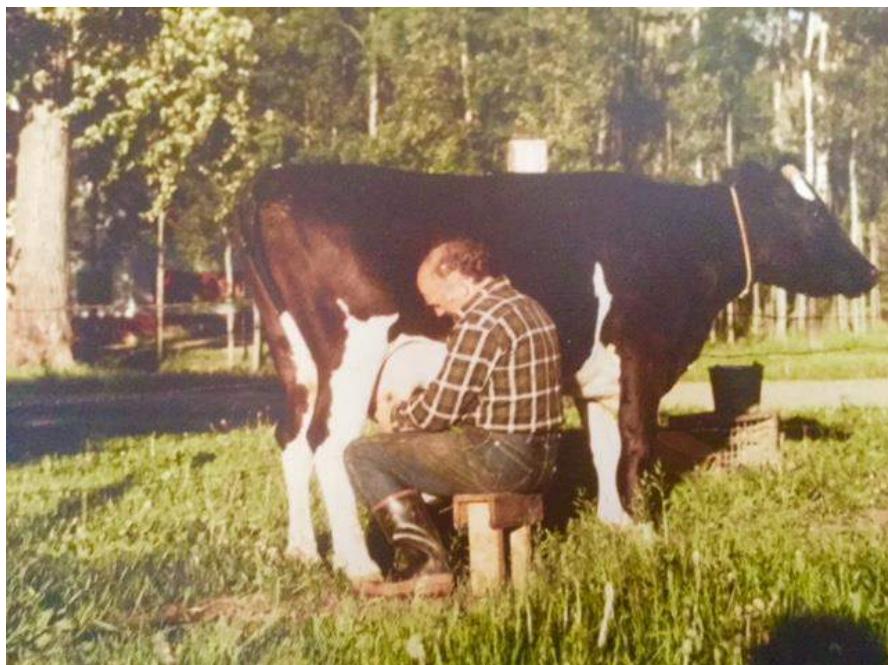
He built a large barn with an attached dairy, all the while scouting neighbouring farms for good dairy calves. His herd of cattle grew. They were mostly black and white milk cows, with an occasional brown one thrown in. He had names for them all and kept track of their gestation periods, writing names and dates in pencil on the inside walls of his new barn. He shipped off cans of milk to a plant in another town.

After successfully applying for a Grade "A" dairy licence, he began to sell milk in glass bottles around town. He made it a family business, with the younger ones feeding calves, the older ones helping with the milking and washing milk bottles. Mom used a hand-cranked bottling machine in the corner of the dairy to produce wooden crates full of finished product for Dad to deliver to his customers.

Not long after things had begun to go well in his dairy, a large corporation made plans for a lumber mill in our little town, and those plans included a takeover of the land that Dad had worked so hard to build up. He was bought out and had to move. He did buy more land, but was never able to return to dairy farming and bought beef cattle instead.

I don't remember any complaining or expressions of dismay at this new turn of events. Dad embraced the unexpected opportunity to build up another farm. He single-handedly cut down more trees, made more lumber and began constructing another barn, another house. To him, the possibilities in this new country were endless, and, until the day he died at age 90, he always had a farm, a building project on the go and a dog in his backyard.

In Canada, my father had accomplished what he had set out to do. He had his own land, he had a dog and a herd of cows, and he had a family to share it with. He couldn't have been happier. He had fulfilled his dream of being "*een boer met 'n hondje*".



Dad kept a cow to milk by hand long after the dairy was sold, and this chore, carried out on a homemade stool in the early morning or evening sun, was always something he enjoyed.

From the author's personal collection.

Some themes in *Indische* identity remaking

Hendrika Beaulieu

Over the past 15 years, I have conducted an extended oral history project with Dutch, Dutch-Indonesians, Eurasians and Indonesians in North America who were resident in the Dutch East Indies prior to, during, and after WWII. Participants in a “political order that inscribes in the social world a new conception of space, new forms of personhood, and a new means of manufacturing the experience of the real” (Mitchell 1988, xi), they encountered the Japanese invasion and occupation from unique perspectives. More than two thirds of the interviews cover the so-called *Bersiap* period¹ and the 1945-1949 war with Republican forces, while other narrators struggled to maintain their Indonesian identity until the 1956-1957 crises. A significant number of these consultants left for the Netherlands during one of those critical confrontations; others departed directly for North America. Comparing thematic analyses of life stories collected in the Netherlands concerning this history (Steijlen 2002) with the materials in my database reveals multiple overlaps, but also significant divergences in emphasis, recall and their impact on identity formations. My North-American consultants do not engage the ongoing dialogues in the Netherlands (Houben 1997, 47-66) and Indonesia (Stoler & Strassler 2000, 4-48) that constrain or facilitate what ex-colonial subjects in those countries share. Hence, they utilize divergent schemata to frame how, what, and why they remember. In this paper I focus on two interlocked themes that emerge in my North-American *Indische*² life stories sub-database: ‘Kinship’

¹ *Bersiap* = a name given to the period at the end of the Japanese occupation when terror and violence reigned in the streets and countryside of Java and youth attacked and killed those of Dutch and Eurasian blood as well as members of the Indonesian elites who had played a role in the colonial administration. Later, Chinese and other Indonesians were also targeted.

² I use the term *Indisch(e)* to denote people from Indonesia whose ancestry includes both indigenous-Indonesian and Dutch heritage. As I note in this paper, in the Netherlands, *Indisch(e)* also refers to ‘full-blooded’ Dutch people who had lived in Indonesia for generations. I distinguish between the two by referring to those people as “Dutch-Indonesians”.

and ‘the Father’. Utilizing an extended interview with an *Indische* woman visiting Canada, I set up aspects of her narrative as a foil to examine the ways in which the *Indische* in the Netherlands and North America construct their complex identities.³

Keywords: Immigration, prescribed identities, identity markers, narrative recall, kinship, wartime fathers, Indonesia.

The data

The database that constituted the framework of my initial analysis (Beaulieu 2009) consisted of 52 extended, multi-tape interviews conducted with interviewees in North America who responded to ads soliciting life stories from Dutch, Dutch-Indonesian, *Indische* and Indonesian people who had lived in Indonesia during the final colonial period and the occupation and its aftermath. A complete breakdown of that database is given in Beaulieu (2009: 4-10). Since then, I have continued to conduct interviews, with the result that the database now holds the oral histories of 123 different narrators and has additionally expanded to include documents and photographs that have been bequeathed to me.⁴

Anonymity has been preserved at the request of interviewees. As I noted in 2009, “through the interviewee release forms, participants had the choice of releasing their names and ‘words’ for use in my doctoral dissertation” (Beaulieu 2009). Over 80% of them choose to do so; the individuals most reluctant to expose themselves to potential identification were the veterans I interviewed. Accordingly, early drafts of my thesis referred to peoples, locations, and opinions, by name, where facilitated through Intellectual Property consent. The initial dissertation draft fully revealed the identity of all interviewees who had given me permission to do so.

Once interviewees were aware that this material would be available in Holland, however, the number of people requiring anonymity increased; “It’s such a small country. Someone is sure to read it who knows someone else and before you know it, I have trouble on the doorstep. So and so will tell so and so, and they will have said it better ... no better take it out” (Oral History Interview (follow-up phone call re ethics), May 2007, Dutch-

³ Some of the data in this paper has been previously presented and discussed in Beaulieu 2009.

⁴ Ethics approval for this research was initially granted under the Human Subjects Protocol Review Committee of the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, and then through the Human Subjects Research Committee at the University of Lethbridge, in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, thereby meeting all standards and protocols required by the Canadian Tri-Council Policy on Human Subject Research in Canada.

Canadian female). In addition, consultation with learned individuals in the Netherlands counselled complete anonymity. I have therefore taken out names, place names, references that might facilitate identification such as people in connection with certain camps, etc., particularly since interviewees spoke so freely in the certain knowledge that they were 'safe', and any threat to that safety is, in my eyes, completely unacceptable.

(Beaulieu 2009: 36)

In addition, many of my initial interviewees have since passed away, and altering their initial release forms would be a matter for their estates/heirs.

In the homeland

Eurasian people – those of mixed European and Asian descent – embody the fact that pluralism and porous ethnic relations have long marked South East Asia. The Dutch colonial administration attempted to impose order on the archipelago's composite human population by roughly sorting the people into three broad categories: Indigenous peoples, foreign Orientals and Europeans. Each of these categories was multifaceted; urban Javanese *bupati* occupied the same classificatory niche as a Sumbanese tribesman. On the ground, however, operational principles other than ethnic taxonomies were evident. Interviewees distinguish characteristics of self-social relations, as well as categorical interactions, on the basis of multiple factors, speaking directly, for example, to Colombijn's discussion of the importance of class (Colombijn 2009, 12). Concurrently, for Indonesians and Eurasians in my data, there is a critical emphasis on kin and client-patron relationships.

The problems of categorizing the archipelago's peoples into these three categories can be seen when we examine the 'European' label. Under this category, the administration included:

- a. Any people in Indonesia who stemmed from the Americas;
- b. Any people in Indonesia who stemmed from Europe;
- c. All women married to men classified as European;
- d. All in wedlock children born to men classified as European;
- e. All out-of-wedlock children formally recognized by fathers classified as European.

The domain 'European' therefore included multiple sub-domains such as 'Dutch', 'Americans' etc. Under the 'Dutch' subcategory, the administration recognized:

- a. Dutch singles, couples and children who had recently come to Indonesia from the Netherlands;

- b. Long term residents of the archipelago whose families spanned generations in Indonesia (Dutch-Indonesians);
- c. The indigenous or ‘mixed-blood/Eurasian’ wives of men classified as ‘Dutch’;
- d. The children of ‘c’;
- e. As a result of ‘c’, all generations descending from ‘c’ (including mixed-blood + mixed-blood who were ‘Dutch’ by virtue of ‘d’).

In fact, in *Nederlands Indië*, the majority of the European population was composed of Dutch-Indonesians and Eurasians, people born and raised in Indonesia, “whose first impressions were Indonesian, who formed their worldview in their natal milieu” (Bosma & Raben 2003, 11). Consequently:

[...] quickly after the first-generation colonialists, communities arose that although they had close contact with the colonial administration and colonial regulations, they had equally close ties with local circumstances and people; a strong local perspective. [...] This world [the *Indische* world; HB] was a [...] local community under colonial administration, an administration that left its marks on those communities, yes, but communities that had their own logic and evolved independently. The colonial administration was a sometimes dominant, but not an all pervasive, element.

(Bosma & Raben 2003, 11)

Although scholars regularly maintain that the colonial classificatory system was predicated on ‘race’, the people content of each category suggests that ‘race’ was not the only contributing principle to the colonial system of categorization. Instead, the Dutch system evidences a rigorous adherence to patrilineality. Where Dutch women married Indonesian men, their children – if that Indonesian society was patrilineal – belonged to the ‘house’ of their fathers, suggesting the importance of ordering through the patriline to the colonial regime. The entire colonial classificatory system appears to rest on the ordering principles that inform descent groups, including the establishment of group membership, responsibilities and rights aligned with that status, including who could and could not own land and the careful delineation of belonging in the social sphere; in short, the imposition of order on (potential) social chaos. Although it is certainly the case that a multiplicity of ethnic backgrounds regularly co-mingled in the South-East-Asian world, hybrid ethnic classifications did not represent an alternative category for the colonial administration. Unilineal taxonomies are intended to preclude hybridity; one’s descent is Dutch or Javanese, for example. Yet even a cursory examination of the European category reveals its hybridity; the label ‘European’ glosses as monolithic but the ‘contents’ of the category are decidedly not. We ignore the contrast between self-perceived identities and imposed identities at

our own peril; classificatory members of the category ‘European’ did not necessarily self-identify as such. A tension between who I describe as being, and how I am categorized as being, existed for individuals within the system; the difficulty inherent in that etic/emic distinction critically escalated during WWII.

Expatriate life stories speak directly to the polymorphy of the Indonesian archipelago, its multiple ethnic layers and the cultural and land-body formations that lie at the core of *Indische* identity. The daily realities of Eurasian life confronted their official (legal) delineation. Governing bodies, first the Dutch, then the Japanese, and finally the Government of Indonesia, negated the indigenous matrilineal webs that bound Eurasians to their land. However, during the colonial period, the slotting of Eurasians as ‘Europeans’ did not have the same connotations as the identification would have during and after the Japanese occupation. Pre-World War II, many Eurasians were an integral part of the Indonesian social fabric; they were members of a society that numbered literally thousands of diverse ethnic groups across the archipelago. Subsequent to the Japanese occupation, however, ‘European’ denoted, as per Japanese and subsequent republican rhetoric, a dangerous alien in our midst. The Japanese, who “made mathematical ancestry decisive” (Van Schaik 1996, 56), abolished the tripartite classificatory system and stipulated blood quantum as the wellspring of ethnic, hence externally prescribed, identity: Dutch-indigenous persons with at least 50% European blood went to the camps with Europeans; those with less than 50% stayed outside the camps (Van Schaik 1996, 56).

The republicans/revolutionaries in Indonesia followed the Japanese formula. During the occupation and afterwards, the amount of ‘European blood’ coursing through one’s veins had important consequences: blood spared you from incarceration, or it did not; blood rendered you an ‘inside’ member of the Indonesian social fabric, or it set you apart (outside) as a ‘non-Asian’ foreigner. In his discussion of the Indonesian revolution and reservoirs of violence in Indonesian society, Cribb notes the implications of these externally imposed identities during the occupation and after the surrender of the Japanese. Seeking an explanation for the significant amount of violence directed at the Eurasian population, he analyzes their importance as figureheads of the *Indische*-independence-with-association option and correlates the attacks on their persons with an Indonesian ‘inferiority’ complex as the nation embarked on independence (Cribb 2007, 31-48).

While racial categories were not determinate of social relations in late colonial Indonesia, they most certainly were the key factor for the subsequent life trajectories of those who lived in the colony and retained a percentage of European blood. Interviewees, who adamantly avow that they were citizens of the Indies, found that their official classification as ‘European’ overrode their self-

perception. From European, to camp internee, to victim of the *Bersiap* rage, the official labelling equally determined eligibility for ‘repatriation’. The categorical affiliation (“European”), on the one hand the source of persecution in occupation and post WWII Indonesia, simultaneously offered escape for classificatory members through the possibility of a new life, often initially in the Netherlands.

While, as I note below, the term ‘*Indisch(e)*’ in the Netherlands includes ‘white’ settlers from Indonesia, I separate out the two labels on the basis on my narrators’ identity references. I use ‘*Indische*’ as a correspondent term for ‘Eurasians’, and ‘settlers’ for the descendants of long term Dutch families in Indonesia, or Dutch who self-identified as Indonesian.

Battered souls: The *Indische* (Dutch-Indonesians) in the Netherlands

The *Indische* form a distinct group in the Netherlands where Indonesia “sits in the heart” (Pattynama 2003, 3) of national culture. Memories of the East Indies are not even peripheral to Canadian or American society, nor does either country have a deep historical bond with Indonesia outed in public discourse and national literature. Moreover, the *Indische* people in the Netherlands have formed an identifiable community with attendant political and social standing (Pattynama 2003, 4). The fluid symbol of that community is the remembered Indië.

Pattynama’s analysis of *Indische* literature distinguished between first and second-generation *Indische* writers and isolated the narrative building blocks common to both:

- a. The silence imposed on their collective past;
- b. The disappointing trip back to Indonesia;
- c. The wartime father;
- d. The family stories;
- e. The ongoing problem of the ‘I’.

First-generation repatriates in the Netherlands write themselves as a fated community bound by the destiny that brought them to that country. This community-through-circumstance resists identification through ‘race’ since in the Netherlands, ‘*Indische*’ includes ‘full blooded’ whites (Pattynama 2003, 3). Unlike *Indische* interviewees in North America, who are immersed in their current societies, many *Indische* people in the Netherlands resist full textual/bodily immersion into Dutch society through the repatriate stories that define their Indonesia-to-Netherlands transition. Concurrently, the schema that binds their personal identities to Indonesian place permeates a processual ‘I’ formulation that situates Dutch society as ‘not-me’.

The difference between North-American *Indische* absorption into the social fabric, and *Indische* resistance to a parallel trajectory in Holland, stems from the haunting questions of identity that are ever-present in the Netherlands: there is no reprieve from Indië for the *Indische* community. Adults and children live in a milieu where, seemingly, their past is ever-present in the form of national discussions and “technologies of memory” (Sturken 1997) that concretize, while re-constructing, that past. As visible signifiers of colonialism, including Dutch-indigenous sexuality, the *Indische* are not only re-inscribed with the how and why of history, but with ongoing political and social significations. Whether the East Indies are paradise lost, evil regime, or a *verzonken* ('drowned') Indonesia (Pattynama 2003), *Indische* identity transforms as Indies mythology in the ‘Motherland’ alters. Dutch-Indonesian narratives in the Netherlands signal their struggle with self and group identity and the search for “viable practical models to help them endure” (Cole 1998, 285).

While public discourses, made and remade, reverberate on the bodies of *Indische* individuals and community, evidence from *Indische* literature illustrates that group members are fully participant in the search for those viable models through the remaking/re-shaping of the *Indische* identity. For second-generation writers, the problem of ‘I’ making is compounded by the problem of received identity, the burden of first-generation ‘I/we’ transmission. Their eternal return to the re-working of *Indische* identity building blocks suggests incomplete mourning for an inconvertible and unspeakable loss initially suffered by parents and transmitted to children as identity legacies. Thus, first-generation writers articulate memories silenced upon their introduction into a Dutch society focused on its plight under the Nazis (Withuis 1994, 46-74), while second-generation writers exemplify Morrison’s (1989, 154) discussion of the slap and embrace relationship they maintain with parental transmissions. Symptomatic readings of both narrative sets suggest writers continue to bang on the doors of Dutch awareness in order to achieve experiential validation, reclaim voice, and construct an *Indisch*-Dutch identity.

A North-American interviewee expressed regarding a sister in Holland:

[We are speaking of being *Indisch* in the Netherlands as opposed to North America]

Interviewee: There is no recognition, none, of what they have experienced.

Self: (!) The discussion of *Indische* people is everywhere!

Interviewee: Oh exactly. They talk *about* them, not *to* them. And now there is a lot of “not that old song again” – you know? Even some of the kids have it. (Oral History Interview, June 2005, Tape 1, Dutch-Settler, female)

Second-generation writers confront Goss' claim that, "many of the Eurasians who came over as adults were indeed never able to feel at home in the Netherlands, but their children did" (Goss 2000, 18). His confident assertion is clearly not reflective of second-generation children that carry memories inspired by "living room conversation, servants, and *Indische* literature" (Pattynama 2003, 4). Instead, children write a schizophrenic sense of non-belonging while belonging in terms of their biological nation, exhibiting that the Indies-to-Netherlands origin myth profoundly affects both self and national identification (Lyotard 1993, 193).

Since Goss overgeneralizes second-generation adaptation, we can ask if his attribution to first-generation *Indisch*-Dutch citizens – that they were never able to feel 'at home' in the Netherlands – is an accurate one. Interviews with *Indische* people in the Netherlands suggest the situation is far more complex than a simple belonging/non-belonging polarity. There are first-generation immigrants, such as the narrator presented in this article, that came to feel at home in Holland, recall the past but do not construct their identities wholly on or in it, and think of Indië with love, but not with reclamatory longing. In short, they do not participate in Dermoût's assertion:

I have experienced a rather traumatic past. Therefore, I can only write about one subject – that time, those consequences, in that place at that time, and never about a subject now and here. (Van der Woude 1974, 74)

On the other hand, one of my interviewee notes:

Self: How do you define yourself today? What is your nationality?
 Interviewee: Oh, Dutch of course. I am Dutch. There is no question.
 Self: So, you are not involved politically with the *Indische* community?
 Interviewee: No. I have other *Indische* friends of course, but I have just as many friends who have never been to Indonesia. You know, there is no going back... There is no going back there. I think that to keep memories in front of you like that ... you forget to live now. I am not taking anything away from what happened. But you cannot change it, acceptance is hard, but it is important.

(Oral History Interview 2004, Tape 3, Dutch-Settler, female)

The building blocks outlined by Pattynama as fundamental elements in *Indische* narratives exhibit some overlap with my data but deviate in others. In this paper, I focus on two themes identified by Pattynama: the 'father/wartime father' and 'family stories' in the context of an overwhelming narrative/structural focus on kinship in my own North-American data. Indeed, the 'father/wartime father' arises in all Dutch and Eurasian narratives as a sub-theme of Family and kin, The occupation, and Exile/immigration in my collected narratives. I additionally touch

on two dominant landmarks in *Indische* lives that Pattynama does not identify as narrative building blocks, but that formed a focus in my collected oral histories: (1) the Japanese occupation and (2) exile in the Netherlands, experienced as the ‘betwixt and between’ stage Turner refers to as liminality (1969, 93-111), and the subsequent immigration. Space prohibits an in-depth analysis of any of these themes, but the two latter ones are integral to the cause-effect sequencing that frames my narrators’ life stories. It is the immigration watershed that separates North-American narratives from *Indische* self-understanding in the Netherlands. Once my interviewees left the Netherlands they ceased to participate in the ongoing discussions surrounding Dutch colonialism and Eurasian identities.

The interview

Excerpts from an extensive Eurasian interview conducted while the narrator was visiting Canada signal the departure point of my discussion.⁵ Born in Batavia, the narrator remained in Indonesia until 1949, when she and her husband repatriated to the Netherlands. In grounding this discussion in her narratives, I make no claim to representative status for the excerpts of her life story. It does, however, validate the notion that “each human being occupies a legitimate position from which to experience, interpret, and constitute the world” (Stiver 1993, 409). As the life story emerges in its unique, particular presence, “social structures are as recoverable from single social beings as they are from groups of them” (Stanley 1993, 413).

The interviewee, who I will call Ali, lived in the Netherlands where she remained subsequent to her repatriation. Ali spent six months per year in Indonesia, where she built a house on a small island approximately 26 sea miles from Singapore. Via a mutual friend, I initially contacted Ali’s daughter and son-in-law, let us call them Piet and Jennie, in the hopes of interviewing *them*. That email resulted in a response that Ali was on her way to Canada and an invitation to come and stay with them so that I could meet and interview her. I accepted with alacrity. The interviews took place in Piet and Jennie’s home over an extended weekend. In all, I recorded four full tapes of data (90 minutes per side), although a good amount of conversation took place that I did not tape. On a number of occasions, when the conversation became intensely personal, I turned off the recorder. Throughout the interview process, Jennie remained indispensable. Fascinated, and having previously engaged some of Ali’s stories, she acted as prompter: “Was that the time?”, or, “Oh but Mama, where was your brother?”

I introduce excerpts from the interview and combine and contrast them with narrative bits drawn from North-American *Indische* narratives. Unlike Ali,

⁵ Both these wonderful women have since passed away.

they reside in countries where '*Indië*' evokes no angst, no communal or historical memories, and no clashes between widely divergent memories on what or how it was. Ali's *Indisch*-in-the-Netherlands remembering further confronts Pattynama's analyses of the life story building blocks that characterize (Netherlands) *Indische* recall. Her narrative, while containing some of the building blocks identified by Pattynama, deviates significantly in others, while exhibiting overlap with my North-American Eurasian database narratives.

The format of Eurasian narratives required an adjustment to transcription since naming – both proper names and place names – is an oral composition technique utilized by these narrators to establish identity, articulate history, and contextualize bodies in space. Replacing a name with a placeholder such as 'X' or 'XX', destroyed and misrepresented the narrative sequence. Therefore, I have taken the liberty of replacing all names in the narratives with wholly fictive ones, not only to ensure that the texts do not lose their exemplary flavour, but also to protect identities that, in these narratives, are easily traceable. Indeed, that is the thematic consequence of the narrative schemata: the binding of people and events to place. In all cases, I have imposed a semi-structure on the free flow of our conversation, as I did not follow a question-answer format, nor did I direct our conversations into certain channels, favouring an 'unravelling process' that would allow the interviewee to follow the skeins of her thought as one story or memory evoked another. To impose textual order, I correlated diverse excerpts into focal themes. I also 'cleaned up' hesitations, some repetitions, and used English translations for Indonesian words. A number of paradigms however, such as *gezellig* or *feestje*, presented nuance problems in translation; I could not get it 'just right'. I settled for approximation.

The *Indische* family: The right way to initiate a story

I am Ali Antonia van Meer, born in Batavia, Netherlands Indië, 1923. My mother was Charlotta Inge Rijker and my father, Hans Bohn. They met in Indonesia. My father was born in Putten and worked with XYZ Maatschappij in the Netherlands. He was sent to the Indies, yes, a young man of about 23. Well ... his company had an office in the Batavia harbour and so he arrived. Naturally then, he needed to find a place to live so he landed up with my Oma, he rented a room from her. Ja, she had just started to rent rooms, so he was her first 'guest', I would say. Well there he met my mother.⁶

⁶ From this point forward, unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are from: Oral History Interview, *Indische* female, Tapes 1-4, May, 2004.

Compare the beginning of her narrative with this sequence lifted from a male *Indisch*-American's letter to me:

My name is Johannes van der Haven, Date of birth 10-24-26 in Bandoeng, Java, Netherlands East Indies, presently called Indonesia. Youngest of 5 children. Father Hendrik Pieter van der Haven and Mother Petronella Josephina Carolina Gustavina Schwager. Father was a trader in coffee, tea and rubber. He left Holland in 1906 and was a 'full blooded' Dutchman. Mother had at least 25 to 50% Indonesian heritage. From an early age it was understood that Java was our home and Holland a faraway item ... I consider that I had a very happy youth until World War II struck ...

(Oral History Interview, Dutch-Indonesian-American male, initial correspondence prior to interview, cited with permission, June 2005)

The centrality of family to the Eurasian life/narrative is immediately apparent: Eurasian interviewees uniformly embarked on their oral histories by positioning themselves within their extended families. Names of the parents were given in full; although I have replaced the proper names for the mother in the quote found above, the writer did in fact provide me with all five of his mother's given names; names that clearly outlined her kinship with historically identifiable Eurasian families that reach deep into the colonial period. The narrative scheme further requires the narrator's position in the birth order and then explication of the father's employment position and the mother's bloodline. The latter is the focus; the father's line will disappear in his parents' generation as narrators dismiss both the patriline and the Netherlands, while they embark on an expansion of their matrilineal roots within their Indies home.

... My Oma was also *Indisch*; she was divorced, oh! a very courageous woman. That did not happen very often in that time (divorce) ... she was self-made, self-taught – she studied, she delivered babies – her own and other peoples ... and then she rented rooms and became a teacher at a Dutch-Chinese school. (chuckles) I don't know if I should say this but! Opposed to what happens now that children are never to be touched! ... well the Chinese parents they said, if they don't behave, well you let them know ...!

... My mother also went to school, well my Oma insisted, education is so important ... and she became a teacher at a Dutch-Indonesian school ...

During the 19th century Eurasian families progressively placed a greater emphasis on education for both boys and girls. As Ali notes, her Oma insisted on education for her daughters and her granddaughters. Consider, if you will, the years in which this occurred! Ali herself was born in 1923, her mother in the late 1890's, and her grandmother in the 1860's (see Figure 1 for a kinship chart showing Ali's

matriline). Her Oma was a divorced woman in a time when divorce was virtually unheard of in ‘Dutch’ society, and ‘self-taught’, becoming by turns a midwife, a teacher, and a small hotelkeeper. She ensured that Ali’s mother also became a teacher. Ali herself completed her *HBS* (secondary school) before the war intervened in her further plans; she has certainly stressed education for her own very successful children. These women utilized education as a tool for self-sufficiency.

Ali: ... I knew my great-grandparents well too you know ... My great-grandfather was a de Roo. That was Oma’s name after she divorced – her maiden name. My Oma had four children. My mother was the youngest daughter, and there were in all three daughters and one son; he was the youngest of all the children.

Self: Did they all go to Holland after the war?

Ali: My Oma died in Indonesia. My Opa was in the army (KNIL). He died on Java. Well Mammie and Pappie went to the Netherlands, but Ben [her husband] and I, we stayed ...

In terms of the four generations of kinship data collected from Ali, in each generation of her matriline, women married Dutch or Eurasian men. The families were very close:

Ali: ... Naturally ... well you know ... I was a child before the war. [She was 19 in 1942.] I had always a lovely youth, a darling father, my mother was, well extremely, well (laughs) well really, a dear. My Oma lived two streets behind us, we went every day to her house. My sister was Papa’s darling, my brother was my mother’s, but I, I was Oma’s darling. When ... I was 13, I remember, it was time for my first *HBS* ball, and I wanted a long dress and my mother she thought that utterly unnecessary ... but my Oma, she had a charming, simply charming long dress made up for me, green tucks and frills, organdy ... it was ... oh so lovely! And I believe, no I know for sure, I remember that I went with a pimpled youth, on the back of his bike ... off to the ball ...

(Jennie interjecting: On the back of a bike with that dress!)

... holding a lantern. I can’t remember anything of the party, but I remember that ...

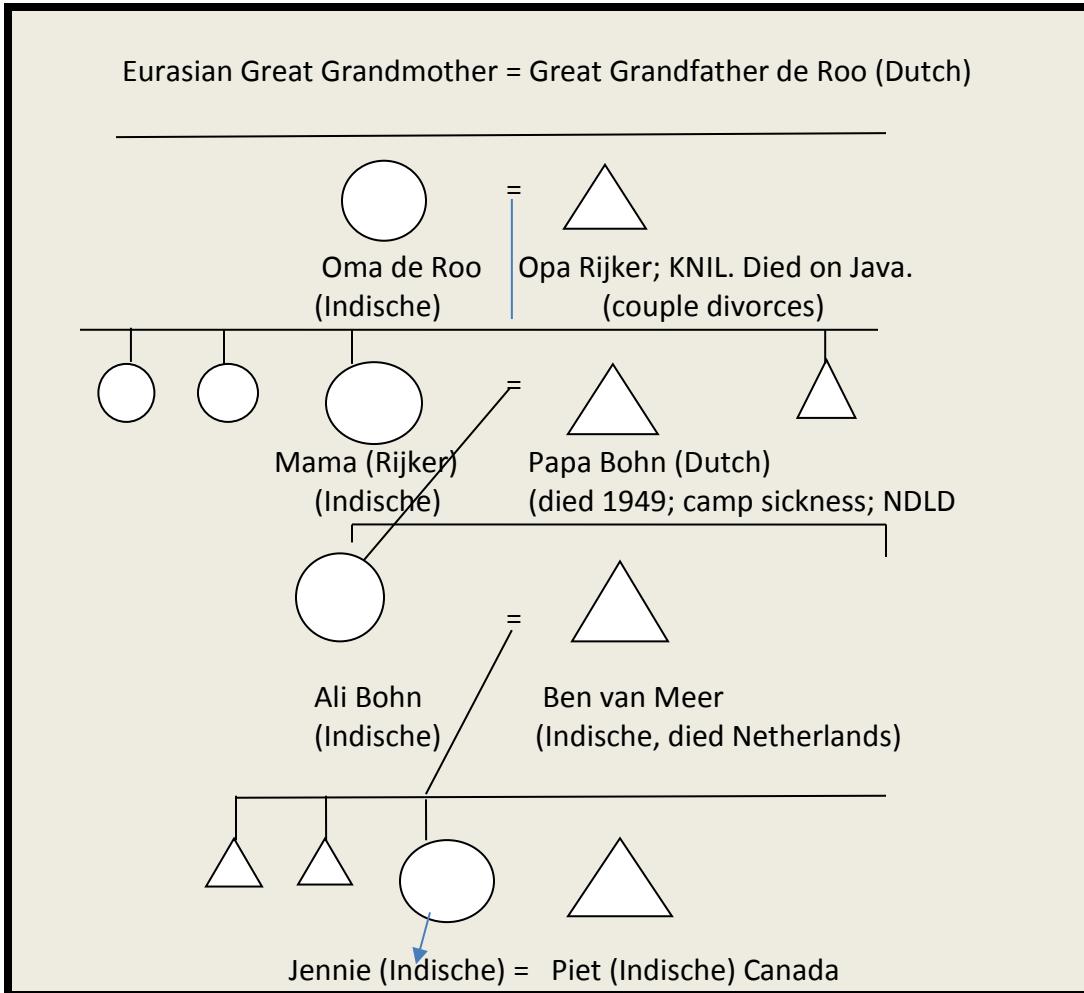


Figure 1. Simplified van Meer Matriline⁷ (Indische/Dutch/Dutch-Indonesian).

Ali's narrative, filled with anecdotes about experiences shared with family members, stresses the support network amongst her kin, networks that would ensure their survival during the occupation. They took their holidays together:

Ali: ... Every year we went on vacation to Bandung – ahh ... so nice and cool. Batavia got very warm and close in the summer, but Bandung was ‘high up’. You know what I remember – well I said we went to Bandung – Well, that’s where my mom’s oldest sister lived, my darling cousins. I went there every year; we would go with the train, *ja*, even when we did not go as a family I

⁷ Connections to families in the Indies are linked through the women in each generation (to their sisters who are also often married to Dutch men) and brothers, who married a variety of ethnicities, including other Eurasian women – again creating wider settler family links.

went to stay with them. Later my parents took us to my grandfather⁸ at ?Sukibumi,⁹ – so nice and cool – and then later we rented a house there ... and then we built a house there because my father never wanted to go back to the Netherlands. ... yes, that was to be mammie and pappie's house ... and we never lived in it, and then there were Indonesians that wanted to break down everything, tear it apart, and they burned it down. Yes, they burned it. After the war. Burnt. We never lived there.

Self: Who burnt things?

Ali: Youth gangs. Yes, ... so terrible. (shakes head and looks off into distance ...)

In her discussion of family, Ali introduces crucial information. As the kinship chart makes abundantly clear, Ali's matriline reaches back into the VOC period on Java. In succeeding generations, Dutch men came to Indonesia, married an indigenous or Eurasian woman and remained in Indonesia; the pattern of Eurasians marring Eurasians also emerges.

As well, it is evident that multiple children were born to each of the couples. Whom did the siblings marry? Eurasian interviews quickly revealed the answer: siblings married other Eurasians, indigenous people, or Dutch men/women. Tentacle-like marriage intersections crept across Indonesian society, linking geo-spatial terrains, deepening in time, mingling blood, languages, and cultural customs. Networks of kin interacted together, picnicked together, talked together about their lives, including, as one informant noted, their politics:

Interviewee: ... My brother was married to a Sundanese woman, and her brothers, who visited us all the time, were very political. So of course, we discussed politics, of course we did. My mother, who was *Indisch* as you already know, had strong opinions herself on those matters, and she was not afraid to speak out.

Self: What kind of opinions did she have, or your sister-in-law's brothers?

Interviewee: Well I can tell you we did not have Soekarno in mind, but we did think it was time for the Indies to stand on their own and govern themselves. The Netherlands really did not know anything about our lives and we thought it would be better for the country if we could steer it ourselves. For my mother this did not mean getting rid of the Dutch. She was married to my father for heaven's sake! But men like my sister in law's brothers who were educated, they were getting tired of being treated as

⁸ This was the grandfather who was divorced from her Oma. Divorce did not usually cause a lapse in familial relations and in fact, this grandfather re-married later to a Eurasian woman that was kin linked.

⁹ Words marked with ? were inaudible on tape.

children. They wanted some say, they wanted to do something, something meaningful. It was really time Jetty. You could see it coming.

Self: How did your father feel about all of this?

Interviewee: Papa? Papa was Indonesian. He was never going back to the Netherlands. So, he agreed. But he always told the men (his son-in-laws thus) that it would have to go slow ...

(Oral History Interview, *Indisch*-American female, August 2005, Tape 2)

Family narrative forms the backdrop for all utterances that arise in an *Indisch* interview, whether these be political, economic, historical or personal. In turn, families are located in place/space; the landscape permeates the discursive skein and the two merge as an inseparable concept in the narrator's understanding of his/her Indies life. As Pattynama has noted, family stories are endemic to Eurasian (*Indische*) remembering in the Netherlands and we see this in Ali's narrative as well as in all interviews I conducted with *Indische* peoples in North America.

Family: The Dutch father and the *Indische* mother

Cribb states:

Indische culture was marked by distinctive uses of language, dress, cuisine, entertainment, recreation, housing, family structure and so on, all of them loosely speaking hybrid between Western and Asian cultures.

(Cribb 2003, 52)

Ali's kinship chart demonstrates that women overwhelmingly contribute the indigenous element to Euro-other marriages, and their background was vital to the socialization process and the hybridization of cultures. Mothers, as well as Asian nursemaids, transmitted diverse Indonesian or Euro-Asian customs, norms, and mores to children.¹⁰

¹⁰ I discussed the role of women in the Dutch-Indonesian household with an Indonesian academic visiting Canada. She was also the only example in my database of a marriage between a Dutch woman and an Indonesian man. Her Dutch grandmother and Javanese grandfather saw their family torn apart during the Revolution, with a number of sons supporting the Dutch, and an equal number the Republic. My interviewee is the daughter of the eldest son. Commenting on the importance of women in the socialization process, she imparted that her grandmother ensured that all of her sons spoke fluent Dutch as well as their natal Javanese. Since her grandmother transmitted the Dutch language to her father, he considered it extremely important that his daughter become familiar with both sides of her heritage. He therefore hired an instructor to teach his wife and children the language since she was home with the children; here the importance of the socialization process is explicitly articulated.

Ali: I always asked myself, about my father you know, how a young man who came to a totally strange country, did not know the language, and how he loved the country!!! How did that happen? Well ... my mother! That's how! He got to know it well. My parents married in (mammie was ...) ... let's see I was born in 1923, they must have married in 1921, then three more children, well four, the second baby died at birth so then there was five years between the next two ...

Taylor (1984) compellingly analyzed the matrilineal clan character of access to regent power in Batavia among the Dutch men who circulated through the *Raad van Indië* ('Council of the Indies'; acted as advisory to the Dutch East Indies Company Governor General), and discussed European male and Asian female alliances. The pattern evinces great historical stability. As Ali's (and other *Indische*) kinship chart demonstrates, Dutch men came to *Nederlands Indië*, took a bride of Indonesian or Eurasian descent, and then, turning their face away from their home country, they attached himself to kin, people, and the land in which their children were born. Indeed, the pattern reiterates in each generation. From the 17th century onwards, Dutch men who married into Eurasian/Indonesian families accessed Indonesian life, culture, identity, and interaction through women and their matrilineal links. *Indische* families are interconnected through women; the links that weave the web-like structures that absorbed Dutch men.

The attributions assigned by interviewees to either parent were startling in their similarities. Ali offers a typical example:

Ali: ... my father a darling ... He had always been a quiet, rather closed man, (compared to my mother) ...
 ... My mother was very religious; I have mentioned that a few times ... It was a carefree life. My mother was cheerful (*opgewekt*) and loved life, my father a darling, we all believed that God was good. Well, then came the war. And then ... it was not so easy to believe that anymore. But somehow ... it is embedded ... your faith comes back. We were raised, well that there is no difference in race, colour. We had an open, free house ... laughter, people in and out ... Ahh. The house ... (grins) we had a verandah ... and a flat roof, we always climbed up there, naturally because it was strongly forbidden ...!

This contrast between a quiet, rather reserved father, and a joyful, positive, very 'alive', and strong mother dominates these family narratives. 'A light touch' might be the best way in which to render my impressionistic response to the maternal style conveyed by informants. Life portraits were filled with the sunshine and the 'openness' Ali ascribes to her mother, and the formidable strength the mother possessed is often openly as well as subtly conveyed: "my mother was, well extremely, well (laughs) well really, a dear".

These quiet, beloved fathers had no interest in a return to the Netherlands. Family relations between his Indonesian family and his natal family were rarely close, not even subsequent to 'repatriation'.

Ali: ... I only knew my father's mother a little ... we had very little contact; well his parents were not happy that he married in the Indies ...

... Father did go to the Netherlands again ... well the way the holidays worked was – one time a year *binnenlands* (inside the country) holiday, one time in six years – 6 months holiday to the Netherlands, but that included the boat trip and that took two months, so yes, all in all, eight months.

Self: Did you meet your father's family? (she has not mentioned them at all in 3 hours)

Ali: ... well yes, we saw my father's family – there was no quarrel ... but my father felt he had outgrown them. One of his aunts once said ... he was different, he was always different. Yes, he was ... he studied and learnt ... I did meet my Oma on that side when I was two, and then when I was eight ... I remember, I can remember, we arrived at Den Haag ... and then ah! I remember this beautiful big house, and *Ooms* and *Tantes* and all well – not unkind ... (hesitates) no, not unkind at all. (Did you go back in the 1930s?) Yes, in 1931 – I was 8. But not in 1937. No, not again, not again. That was it.

Papa was not so interested ...

"All well – not unkind ... (hesitates) no, not unkind at all." Ali finds good in everyone; had she found anything to complain of in her father's family I would have been extremely surprised. Nevertheless, the gaps in her text and her wavering voice reveal that the 'not unkind' family greeted mother, father, and children with – let us say – something less than enthusiasm. Evidently, the Dutch family had decided on good manners when greeting the Indonesian connection, but not much more.

"I only knew my father's mother a little ... we had very little contact; well his parents were not happy that he married in the Indies." Why? This theme emerged consistently in Eurasian narratives; when I put the question to informants, it troubled them, and they tried to avoid it. One daughter (family members were usually present at Eurasian interviews) urged: "Oh go on, tell her, Mama. What does it matter?" The narrator responded:

... We were not Dutch. My mother especially, they objected to her. Not that Mama ever let it bother her, no, even when they came to the Netherlands; she just carried on with her life. It hurt her for Papa, because there was no family. You need family. Our family was still in Indonesia, I have told you we were so close, and Oma and Opa – dead. Then there was no one in Holland and that was strange. Papa said it didn't matter, but it did, it hurt, for them both. They said he died of camp sickness, but I think he died of a broken

heart. Broken because he loved the Indies, he loved the family, the life and there was nothing left. He gave up. Mama ... never did ...

(Oral History Interview, May 2005, Tape 2, *Indisch*-Canadian female)

An abhorrence of mingled blood is unsurprising in a Dutch society at that time characterized by 'pillars', where children ideally did not marry outside of a religious branch, let alone outside of a 'Dutch' ethnicity. However, given their immersion in the plurality of South-East Asian societies, informants were hurt and alienated by the marked differences in the ethnic interaction they encountered in the Netherlands as compared to Indonesia: "I never witnessed any discrimination although I am sure it happened ... people being what they are and what they do ..." (*Indisch*-American male, May 2005, correspondence, cited with permission).

The above Eurasian interviewee is responding to my query regarding discrimination in Indonesia against *Indische* people by the Dutch. Indeed, allegations of discrimination in the Indies are impossible to verify through my data. Eurasian consultants state that they did not notice or experience discrimination against them by the Dutch in Indonesia and avow that they did not discriminate against indigenous people; *they were part of our families*. However, they did feel familial and societal discrimination against them in the Netherlands, often subtly in the form of comments on their eating habits, manner of dress, and manners.

... She didn't like us. She didn't. She would say things like ... "Yes, well, it is easy to see that you are used to servants looking after you, but you don't have that here. You better get used to it." Or she would say, "Hmm ... yes, well *you people* don't like potatoes" if I or my sister left a potato on our plate. All the time, pick, pick, pick. It was so hard after the camp. We longed for home ...

(Oral History Interview, June 2005, Tape 1, *Indisch*-American female; emphasis mine)

Given the family/social reception many Eurasians/*Indische* received in the Netherlands, and the loss of kin ties that joined families together across the Indonesian landscape, with little in the way of new family ties to bind them in the Netherlands, it is no wonder that the Eurasian/*Indische* life narrative is rooted in family stories. The alienation they experienced in the Netherlands aligned with a deep mourning for Indonesian families/nation/homes, indeed an entire identity, lost.

Family/kin: Women and the Japanese occupation

Self: Did you talk about independence?

Ali: ... No, no we never did. We had a lovely family life, but really, not a lot of politics. My father did get the (?) *Haagse Post*, it was rose coloured, very lively, there were always great satires, drawings you know, ... Well that paper still exists today, but it is so different ... laughs! Not so lovely anymore ...!

... We learned that the Japanese were coming closer and closer. So some of the families ... decided to go to? (Dwajalaja?) on Middle Java – what were we thinking – that the Japs would not get there? So, everything we packed it all up (gives list). So, then! We had nothing – there was a house free across from Oma and we lived there. We lived across from Oma. So then – there were the Japs. They got there. And nothing that was important or could help them could fall into their hands. Anything that we could not let the Japs have, we had to burn it. My father, well with a lot of others, they burned everything ...

... Ahh ... My father's life work, his life work, with his own hands, I don't know how long he had worked on those papers; he had to burn it himself. So, we had nothing. That's how that goes. Yes, that is when I saw my father cry. The first time I ever saw him cry. I remember he walked into Oma's house, I still see him today, there was an old-fashioned fridge, there he stood, he leaned ... so broken, and *ja* ... he cried ... Somehow, we got back to our old house, some of these things are all mixed up because it was such a difficult time. But, we got back to our house. And they came and got pappie. They took him away. Well then, in 1942, pappie was in the camp.

Self: Where?

Ali: Well, in the beginning in Batavia.

Jennie: In the beginning Mama? He was moved then?

Ali: *Ja*, they moved them and moved them ... You know it is very sad, we never talked about it, ever afterwards. We never talked. I never saw him again

Self: Never again?

Ali: No, no, after they took him ... (Ali saw her father again after the war but was not to see him again during the war).

... We never went, we didn't go into the camps. Well some *Indische* people did go to camps, some of our family, my cousin, among others. But it depended on where you lived. We had to interact with Japs. *Ja* ... there were anxious moments, but I never had a terrible experience. On the contrary, we had a 'good' Japanese man who lived in our street. (She picks this up later) Now our father was gone, we had no money, and we had to live. So mammie had to think of something. Well, my mother was very religious, she went to the church often, and she had a lot of contact with the minister. Each year she made up Christmas baskets for the poor and the minister he decided something had to be done about the poor, everyone was hurting – the Japanese you know. So, he decided to re-distribute goods to those who needed them, and then he asked my mother one day – do you possibly have

a free room that we can use to distribute rice and oil? Do you think you could regulate that for me? Well yes, mammie said she could – *ja*, then it was done. We used my father's study, and then (whoosh) there came a weight scale and tables, and *tombak*, well that was the start of the shop. We were not hungry. There was the distribution post. Well we had to live. Something had to be done ... and then it changed even more ...

... I can't quite remember how it all started, this was all mammie you know. Well – one woman made *croquetten*, one made bread, the other made crafts from glass, or from straw ... embroidered purses – oh my sister-in-law made beautiful ones she sold with us – quite a family affair! Another made pastries, or – well all kinds of things. If you come and visit me in Indonesia I can show you everything! So: we earned everything on commission. We would sell it and then we got a percentage. Well it went wonderfully! Life had to go on. There were birthdays ... I remember, well I remembered later with hindsight. You know (she reflected this completely apropos) Indonesia is an extremely fruitful land, you put something in the ground and it grows

...

As soon as the Japanese established themselves in any area of the Dutch East Indies, they proceeded with the mass incarceration of all Dutch/European men, women, and children. In some areas, Eurasians formed part of the target population, while settlers (Dutch-Indonesians) in my database were all incarcerated. Whether inside or outside of the camps, the Japanese split Eurasian mothers and children from Dutch husbands. This was blanket policy under the Japanese, all women and children spent the war separated from their men, including, and dependent on blood quantum, their sons after they turned 10. Wives, girls, and young boys fashioned resources to survive. As shown in Figure 2, those *Indische* women like Ali's mother, who lived outside of the barbed wire enclosures, harnessed their knowledge of the social environment and possibilities inherent in tight family bonds and clan networks to survive. As Ali notes, "it was the women and children – they did it together." The strong reliance on female kin is evident in the way in which the women supported each other by living together and pooling resources. It emerges again in the structure of her mother's family shop; almost all of the female kin submitted goods for sale and relied on the distribution center for their extended family's economic well-being throughout the war.

Ali met her husband through that same shop:

Ali: ... 1945 – well then came my husband – well he wasn't at all my husband then, he came home to his parents and they were people who sold things through our shop. Isn't it lovely how life links together (muses for a moment). His mother's first husband died right before the war, and then

she married Opa van Steeg – a wonderful man and he loved her and the kids. Oh! how she loved him and she took *such* care of him – well because of the four kids you know – he married her and loved them all – *ja*. He was also in the camp the entire war and so my mother-in-law, she was not in the camps, she lived with *her* sister-in-law because her man was in a camp too – yes, it was the women and children, – and they did it all together...¹¹

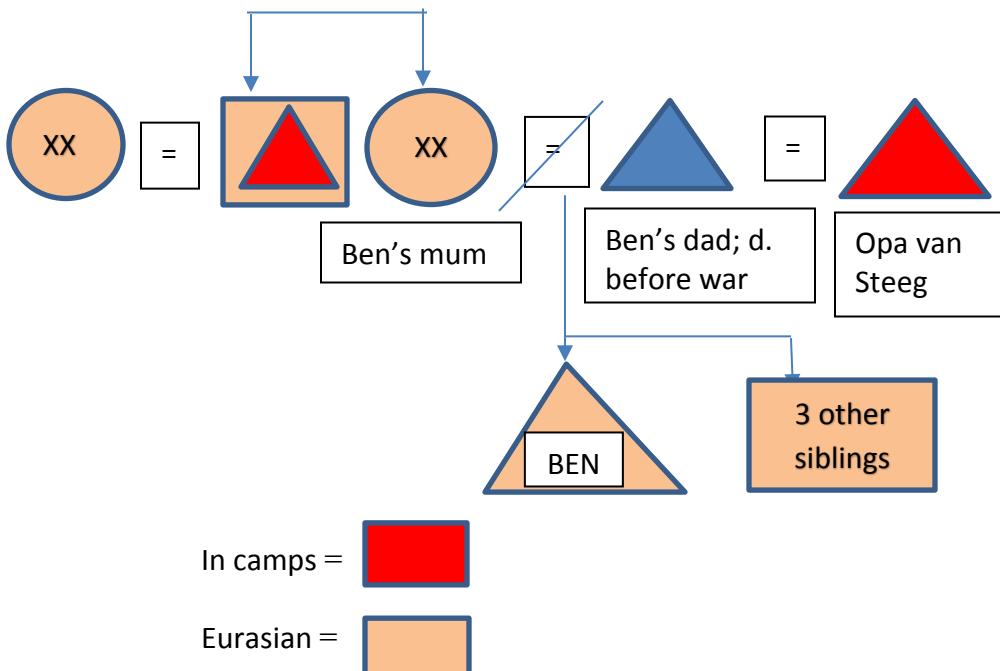


Figure 2. Ali family housing arrangements during WWII. Those in camps marked in red, Indische marked in orange and women who lived together during the war denoted by XX.

A small number of Dutch informants noted that some Eurasians escaped incarceration and I have narrative data that suggests resentment informing boundary demarcation between those who did and did not experience incarceration. Ali's statement, "well no ... not as bad as the camps, no but we did have anxious, yes very anxious moments", was offered without any provocation from Jennie or myself. We never queried for example, if 'inside' was worse than 'outside' – such

¹¹ An illustration of the manner in which re-marriage was accomplished within the linked circles. More importantly, the parents of the man she would marry were linked to her mother's sister. Finally, her statement: "... how she loved him and she took such care of him – well because of the four kids you know – he married her and loved them all" – is a wonderful introduction to a possible analysis of an 'understood pact' regarding economic and other responsibilities in marriage. I intend to probe this sequence and others like it, in a separate article, where I can focus solely on a single set of discourses.

a question would not have occurred to us. Ali's uneasy assessment suggests that she is overtly aware of resentment or criticism – of a 'we had it worse than you' syndrome. Found in Ali's text and not in the narratives of North-American Eurasian interviewees, this un-sought explanation answering unspoken criticism suggests a discourse in Netherlands – or Netherlands-*Indische* – society not found in North America.

The terror of the *Bersiap* period at the end of the Japanese occupation on Java sent a message to Eurasian men and women that the new revolutionary regime categorized them as not only non-indigenous but as aliens. They were Eurasian, contaminated by European blood. Where prior to the war they had been proud of their unique blended identities, those same identities now became a dual burden; they were recast as pollutant and dangerous within the Indonesian social fabric and their identities as 'Dutch' became a challenge in the repatriation process where many in the Netherlands equally perceived them as pollutant.

Kinship: Papa, or 'the wartime father'

Male remembering of the war period is suffused with the isolation and physical brutality of their wartime experience. Moved constantly, their accounts travel from one location of extreme deprivation and hard labour to another. Eurasian men, who overwhelmingly fought alongside the Dutch against the Japanese invaders (indeed they were a critical component of KNIL forces), formed a significant portion of POWs and were utilized throughout South East Asia as slave labour. They suffered with the prisoners taken from other Allied forces, particularly the Australians, British – including a significant contingent of Canadians who fought under British command in WWII – and Americans. Violence, terror, torture, death, and exhaustion permeate the narratives, and desperation resurfaces in the narrative tone. As one camp child recalled to a male survivor, "... we were old when we got out ..." (Oral History Interview, July 2005, Tape 2, female settler, Sulawesi). That feeling of agedness, constituted through pure exhaustion, desolation, torture, and unbearable emotional trauma, now haunts the dreams of many elderly survivors who were able to put it aside during their middle years.

North-American Eurasian narratives participate completely in the 'wartime father' theme identified by Pattynama. Mama was known and familiar, but narrators, in particular women, return repeatedly to the effects of the war on Papa, since many were unable to obtain closure in relation to their fathers. If Papa came back to his family, he was a changed man; Ali's father retreated within and died in 1949 from camp inflicted illnesses. Indeed, the very high death rate among male camp survivors merits further serious study. The pattern of repatriation and almost immediate death for men is consistent and noteworthy.

Ali: I saw him when he came back. He came back. *Ja.* (sighs) He had always been a quiet, rather closed man, (laughs) compared to my mother, but he was so closed then ... His life work destroyed ...

Given that both a mother and father survived, their re-union, at best made difficult through their experiences under the Japanese, often confronted the death of a child. Family members did not know of the fate of the other until the end of the war, neither husbands nor wives (and hence children) were able to ascertain the status of family members unless they were on island and able to access underground communication systems. Eurasian or indigenous citizens on the 'outside', who risked their lives as transmitters, endeavored to pass information between camps.

Men, women, and children, separated for over three years, lived completely separate lives, and experienced the unspeakable. Women and children discovered resources in themselves they had never had to tap into prior to the war. Children's identities, structured through terror, fear, death, and angst, confronted mothers, who, in the face of hate and their own despair, tried to keep love alive (as did siblings for each other). However, the children *knew Mama*. For many young children – Dutch, Dutch-Indonesian or Eurasian – in the camps or outside – Papa was only a name, a symbol of a stable time before the occupation when the family was together with Papa a strong, reassuring, and at times legitimating presence within colonial society.

Children's pre-war narratives stress close relationships with their Dutch father. The oral portraits depict a quietly firm, loving, utterly reliable, sometimes stern but wise father figure – a man you could trust and count on. Children who remembered Papa state that the hope of seeing father again kept them going throughout the war, a direct correlation between normal times and Papa's symbolic strength; to see Papa was to return to the way we were. However, Papa was not Papa when he came home. Interviewees found this transition unbearably painful; the pre-war Papa reduced to a shell of a man when he returned. Home again, but not fully present, they hurt and longed for him. "When he came home, we didn't know him anymore. Mama would hold him and rock him, and sometimes you would see tears – just quiet tears you know. He died in 1948 ..." (Oral History Interview, February 2004, Tape 2, *Indisch-Canadian female*).

Unable to recover their bonds with Papa, to re-capture Papa-as-he-was, children silently acknowledged this final symbolic alteration of their lives. There was no turning back.

Children too young to recall Papa before the war envisioned him as an icon of stability through their love for Mama and her stories. They were also, in multiple cases, unable to connect with the stranger that returned from the camps. 'Papa' became a fictional figure, the hero of stories, a person who 'had been' but

was no more. Life before the war paralleled the father myth, a wonderful place, unreachable, over, alive only in stories. Silence on the part of men regarding their experiences became the great enemy that stood in the way of family, hence life-historical, reconciliation. Unable to reach father, not ever talking through what they had mutually experienced, Papa slipped from life, and past life slipped away, leaving many unanswered questions for surviving children, as well as some of the wives.

From an interview with an *Indische* woman in her '90s:

Interviewee: The separation during the war changed us both.

Self: How did you handle that?

Interviewee: You couldn't. I mean – I couldn't – reach him. He was happy to be home, happy to see the children ... I know he had longed for us to be together. But when I say he was happy – that is the wrong word. He was glad – maybe that is better – glad – content to see us again.

Self: Did you ever reach him?

Interviewee: No. He died in 1949. From the time he came home until the time he died he was gone from us. Always kind, always courteous, but no longer involved with life ... (hesitates and then makes up her mind to go on) Jet, I had changed too. I had gone from being a spoiled woman to having nothing in the war, and I found out that I was pretty strong ... a survivor. Now ... in talking about it after all these years, I think – was I too impatient? Did I think, just get on with it, we suffered too? Did I act that way? When we went to Holland, I thought it would be over. A new beginning. Build up 'from scratch' you know? He couldn't do it, didn't want to be there. I took over. Someone had to do it. There were the children to think of still. I did it in the war, I did it after the war.

(Oral History Interview, December 2004, Tape 1, *Indisch*-Canadian female)

Exile: The Netherlands

While commonalities of experience characterize the repatriation process for Dutch, Dutch-Indonesian and Eurasian citizens upon their arrival in the Netherlands, they diverge on crucial aspects of the adjustment process. The Dutch who came to Indonesia before the war returned to a Netherlands where they had family and other attachments. Ideally, but certainly not always, the country was still familiar, and its social structure, culture and morality, remembered.

Many Eurasians, even if they had paternal familial ties in the Netherlands, found themselves without kin. Moreover, they were 'identifiable' peoples, their bodies written as colonial by virtue of their colour and their divergent customs and dialects. As 'Displaced Peoples', the Dutch government quickly identified them as a matter requiring attention; Goss exhaustively describes the initial and

follow-up reports, policy papers, and analyses requested and rendered on their circumstances (Goss 2000, 9-36).

The Netherlands receives the credit for the first formal identification of the *Indische* as a separate group requiring attention, analysis, and integration. Characteristically Dutch, the ordering of people into groups manifested in *Verzuiling* ideology and the care principle, beautifully captured by Furnivall in his address to a colonial Indies audience:

... let me recapitulate for you the main points of difference [between British and Dutch rule; HB]. Our officers are magistrates; yours are policemen and welfare officers. Our methods are repressive; yours are preventive. Our procedure is formal and legal; yours, informal and personal. Our civil service is an administrative machine; yours is an instrument of Government. Our aim is negative – to suppress disorder; yours is positive – to maintain order. Order – it is a word we both use frequently, but with a significant difference of context. We talk of “law and order” and you of “rust (peace/quiet) and *ordebaboe*, a nursemaid, and ours as a *babu*, a clerk, does emphasize a difference in vital principle. You try to keep a man from going wrong; we make it unpleasant for him if he does go wrong. You believe in protection and welfare; we believe in law – and liberty.

(Furnivall 1956, 271)

Buried deep in the Civism paradigm, care was an integral aspect of ongoing attitudes towards, and policies in, the archipelago. It surfaces again in the scrupulous attention paid to the integration of *Indische* peoples in the Netherlands. However, seen from the perspective of a person with a foot on either side of the Atlantic, it exhibits both the strength and the greatest weakness of Dutch Civism, the proclivity to decide for others. As the *baboe* metaphor implies, policy makers and experts brought to bear on a problem know best what is required to resolve a particular issue. Potential disruption is envisioned before it occurs – it may indeed never happen. Programs are in place in anticipation of possible necessities; rules and regulations cover every contingency for the good of the common weal, as well as the people or problem under consideration.

Schama analyzed the Dutch Civism paradigm through his examination of 16th/17th-century Dutch metaphors that juxtaposed society/soul/dirt/cleanliness (Schama 1991, 15-50). That fear of dirt in the body of the nation; dirt-as-pollution of nation, peoples, and individual and national soul, clearly manifests during the immediate post-war period, provoked by the chaotic conditions under and after the Nazi occupation. Integration of the *Indische* into the Netherlands population

was an absolute during the post-war rebuilding process; leaving *Indische* individuals to 'get on with it' meant, in expert opinion, that they could threaten the orderly and peaceful reconstruction of Dutch (civil) society. Yet while the Indonesian diaspora represented a potential threat to the reordering of post-WWII society, those responsible for the integration of repatriates were concomitantly and genuinely concerned that the *Indische* individual find a place in the Netherlands.

Policies however, were group prescribed for the *Indische*, structuring a clear, yet externally imposed identity that carried normative standards. *Indische* people 'are this', 'need that', 'should do', 'require', ... In turn the Nation 'prepared to receive', 'recognized', 'facilitated', 'addressed', 'ensured'... (Goss 2000, 9-36). What is missing in Goss's recapitulation is dialogue between people and experts. At what point did policy makers and analysts of the *Indische* sit down with them in those early years and ask how it was going, what they needed, what they felt? The Dutch pre-answered those questions on the basis of a Civism principle – what was best for the community as a whole – and this tendency to decide for the Eurasians/*Indische* lies at the root of their conviction that silence met their articulated experiences and their awareness that they were seen as pollutant and alien in both Indonesia and the Netherlands. Narrators articulate their perceptions that no one was interested in who they really were, how they identified, in what they had experienced, or in their perceptions of colonialism. Indeed, as they note, colonialism became a 'dirty word' shortly after the war and as resistance to it gained in intensity, so too did aversion to those who had been part of colonial society.

We could ask, since informants claim this was the reason they emigrated, if the pre-preparation and careful herding of their integration, or the lack of voice imposed on repatriates, was wise or necessary. Although the Dutch would not be Dutch without scrupulous civic planning, evacuees claim they could not 'get lost'. Once again they experienced the pain of imposed identities; they were confined to the displaced colonial category, and the attempt to refashion their lives into Dutch lives that had little resemblance to Indies normative living, was felt as an intolerable and intrusive imposition. The dominant theme, however, involves their reaction to the mother country's definition of 'who' the *Indische* person was – clouded by then current aversions to mingled blood and all of the colonial mythology that for years had enthralled the Dutch 'who never saw' Indonesia – that were brought to bear on their imposed identity.

Let me add that Eurasian-in-America interviewees warmly appreciate the Dutch efforts on their behalf. Indeed, they are far less critical of the Netherlands than my Dutch informants are and they do not echo the 'betrayal' motif that dominates Dutch discourse with respect to the Netherlands. It does arise, but it is

inconsistent, specific where it occurs, and does not dominate the refugee-to-immigration story.

Loss and alienation

Of all of the different groups of people targeted during the *Bersiap* period, or persecuted later under other policies, only Dutch and Eurasian peoples ranked as 'Europeans' had clear options in that they were able to go to the Netherlands as Dutch citizens. Those who chose to leave during the first 1945/1946 repatriation were exhausted, sick, had lost their homes and all their belongings, and often had occupied employment positions that they could not take up during the revolutionary period. In 1946, as was the case with Ali's mother, a number of Eurasian women left with their formerly incarcerated husbands for the Netherlands, but in the majority of the cases in my database, while small children accompanied their parents, adult children like Ali, who self-identified as Indonesian, remained in Indonesia, hoping to make a life in their own country.

Wives discuss the very difficult adjustment process for their husbands, rather than focusing on their own emotions and feelings. It is no exaggeration to state that the condition of many of the post-camp men caused their wives great concern, and that the return to the Netherlands was a burden, rather than a solace, for many of these men. Having consciously rejected their biological nation and chosen to connect fully with their Indonesian localities and kin, no 'precarious belonging' or thoughts of optional obligations marred their dedication to the adopted land they called home (Anderson, 1999). The coerced return, as many were without other options given their health, previous employment, and state of mind, did little to psychologically assist their burden of loss and the feeling of failure they carried, since they felt alienated from the land of their birth and, often, their natal families.

Even under ordinary circumstances, many immigrants perceive a return to the country from which they emigrated as an admission of failure, that they could not 'make it' in the new country. Dutch men who married in Indonesia, and subsequently immersed themselves in land and people through kin, were, in actuality, immigrants to Indonesia, not 'visiting workers' awaiting a return to the land of their birth. They identified as Dutch-Indonesian, while those who had been born into Eurasian or settler families self-described as Indonesian. In my database, both Dutch-Indonesian and Eurasian men, who lived long lives after their camp experiences and immigrated to the 'New World' with their young families, continue to narrate a sense of failure vis-à-vis the termination of their lives in Indonesia. They admit that this is not rational:

Self: But it wasn't your fault – you cannot blame yourself that circumstances unfolded the way they did.

Interviewee: ... I know that. But this is about what I feel. Many times I thought we should have seen it coming before the war. We should have taken steps. We should have fought harder. Or the Dutch government should not have given in. Because when we first went to the Netherlands, I thought we would be going back. I truly believed that the revolution was bad for Indonesia and Indonesians and that the Dutch would hold firm, we would go home, and we would do Independence in the right way – all citizens together in a good democracy. It was a big shock when I realized that *our country* had just been handed over to Soekarno. We left ...

(Oral History Interview, July 2006, Tape 1, Eurasian-American male)

Dutch men married to Eurasian women were often not overly concerned to build a life in the Netherlands, hoping instead for employment that would feed their families, while awaiting a return to Indonesia:

... Once they sent the volunteers out, I thought, well now we will get somewhere and soon we will go home to rebuild the country. But that was not to be and we could see things change in Holland. You had people saying all kinds of things about colonialism, you had a government that wasn't sure what they stood for, or what to do, and you had lots of international pressure from the USA and others. I don't blame the Dutch. You know, they had just come out of a war too. But they did not do right by Indonesians, and we too, were Indonesians, not Dutch. That was one thing the Dutch people did not seem to understand. They really seemed to think we were pretty much Dutch and that my wife and children, born in another country for Pete's sake, were Dutch because I was the husband and father. At the same time, we heard all kinds of things about how we were colonial, how bad that was, and we thought, what do these people really know? Nothing, really, nothing. They knew nothing about Indonesia. And ... all that time the pain ... Our home, our plans ...

Self: When did you decide to immigrate?

Interviewee: We started to talk about it as early as 1947. I was feeling better, the medication had really helped, they fixed me up ... we wanted to get on with life. After the first agreement with the Republic, we were pretty sure they would sell us out. So we started to plan and my wife wanted to go somewhere where she could hear and see the sea, and where it was warm! Yes, the climate in Holland was a big surprise for her! So a few years later we left for California. We became American citizens about 10 years after that. We raised our children out here, we have our grandchildren and great-grandchildren now ... I had a great job, we had a good life. Lots of friends ...

Self: How did your children find being *Indisch* here in the States?

Interviewee: ... Well you can ask my daughter tomorrow, she will be here with the kids. But there was no '*Indisch*' (laughs) here in California, they just look tanned (laughs again). They are all just Americans. I never kept up with my family in Holland, not after the way they treated my wife. So we started from nothing here and this is where we built our lives. Our children know our story of course, and some of the grand-kids have been pretty interested to hear about Indonesia and what it was like. A couple of them have taken trips out there to see it. They really liked Bali. But for them it is just an interesting place. No memories ...

Self: What about your wife's family?

Interviewee: ... Well we helped some of them come over after we had been here a few years. So they also became Americans and we have a big family – reunions every year. We also found some of our connections in Indonesia and wrote letters, some of them have been here to visit us. We helped with that ... money-wise you know ...

(Oral History Interview, July 2006, Tape 1, Eurasian-American male)

Although this phenomenon may not be typical of the Eurasian experience in America, it is significant in my database; *Indische* narrators had little contact with Holland or with the Dutch in the American or Canadian communities in which they lived. On the other hand, we see that Eurasian accounts form a portion of camp and post-camp published recollections, and Eurasians play an important role in 'remembering' associations in North America. It bears repeating that my observations regarding the stance of Eurasians to their life in North America, Indonesia, and the Netherlands derive specifically from these database narratives and do not generalize the Eurasian experience; clearly some of them maintain ties with the Dutch-from-South-East-Asia communities, each bound to the other by common experience.

My Eurasian narrators from North America, however, tended to lose themselves within the social framework of Canadian and American locales; indeed leaving the Netherlands was the first step in setting aside an *Indische* identity. Instead, they eagerly accepted a merging of their lives into the politics and economies of their chosen countries; they became 'Canadian' or 'American', for the first time that many of them could recall, the identities the state imposed on them coincided with how they self-perceived. Although beyond the scope of the current paper, I note that the colonial Eurasian identity – one that arose in precisely the same way as the officially recognized Métis identity in Canada, is a dying identity; the Dutch-*Indische* community may be the last refuge for its maintenance.

While Dutch-Indonesian fathers articulate a 'rejected Netherlands' schema, this is not the case with Eurasian men, wives or children who had minimal time to become acquainted with Holland and little longing to get to know it better.

Their discourse focuses on loss of Indonesian place; their home and family. Revolutionaries, along with the Japanese, are the cause of that loss. While many of them state they were ‘shocked’ or ‘surprised’ when it became evident that they could not go home, they do not hold the Dutch accountable for that loss. Having uttered that generality, it should be noted that many also adhere to the narrative that:

... Life for everyone was much better under the Dutch. You will never convince me that it was a good thing that they turned the country over to Soekarno. We know what our families there have gone through, and what life has been like for them in Indonesia. The Dutch seemed to have no confidence in themselves that they were doing the right thing by fighting for the people so that Independence could be done the right way. Look at what happened to the Ambonese. I feel so sorry for them. They truly believed in the Dutch and fought hard for the Indonesian people. Really, they were betrayed. We were all betrayed. But it was so long ago now ... so long ... and there is nothing left to fight about. My kids sure wouldn’t move there and well ... you know I would like to go and see it one last time. But I am getting too old. So I have the memories of when I was young and what was ...

Self: So, you don’t blame the Dutch?

Interviewee: ... What’s to blame? What was is what was. The rest is just talk. Like I said, I am sorry for the Indonesian people. They have suffered and suffered again. We were the lucky ones. Our lives have been so good. It was the Dutch who gave us that chance – they got us out, even though we were not Dutch. So, in a way, they made our lives possible here too. Yes, it was very wrong what happened to Indonesia. The sad thing is, no one learns from those mistakes ...

(Oral History Interview, August 2005, Tape 2, *Indisch*-Canadian female)

Immigration: An alternative identity choice

The schema mapped in Figure 3 for the Eurasian-to-America transition maps closely to the refugee narrative structure illuminated by Westerman (1998, 224-234) and the rite of passage typology first identified by Arnold van Gennep (1908; 1961). Significantly, Turner’s elaboration of Van Gennep’s transitional stage, the middle stage of the rite that Turner (1969, 83-111) dubbed ‘liminality’, focuses on disorientation and the potential for individual growth and creative self-reflection as an individual or group stands on the threshold ‘betwixt and between’ statuses; not the person they were in Indonesia, but not yet the person they will become. The enforced separation from their previous way of life – indeed from their society – marks the separation step of the rite for Eurasians, while the liminal stage in the Netherlands is followed by reincorporation in the ‘new’ country. A significant fact

that arises from these narratives is that the Eurasians I interviewed experienced closure, a marked characteristic of the advent of reincorporation, when they consciously made the decision to move to another country. Indeed, the fact of choice was critical; narrators characterized their arrival in the Netherlands as one coerced by political circumstances and triggering a sense of dislocation that required resolution based on an active search for identity frameworks. Utilizing the creative potential inherent in their liminal situations was crucial to their ongoing identity making; I map this process in Figure 3.

Persecution in Indonesia: Decision to repatriate stems from exhaustion, sickness, total loss, no future, and violence against them.

Escape to: The Netherlands.

Refugees: In the Netherlands: Alienated, lost, ‘not home;’ liminal phase: await return to Indonesia.

Hope lost: Indonesia gains independence; (in many cases) other family members arrive; solidifies outcast status.

Crisis: We are refugees from Indonesia that are not at home here and we cannot go back.

Options: Let’s explore possibilities for a life elsewhere.

Decision: We put away any hope of a return to Indonesia and decide to leave the Netherlands.

Immigration: We put our liminal lives behind us.

Closure: We arrive in the new country: we start from scratch- we build a life.

Transformed identity: We are Canadians or Americans. While we cherish memories of Indonesia, and they are part of ‘who we are’ and ‘where we came from’, we are no longer refugees, but home.

Figure 3. Eurasian immigration schema.

The refugee experience in the Netherlands therefore represents the liminal phase in these narratives/lives. Separated from their homes following the persecution phase in Indonesia based on the signification attached to their ethnicity by Japanese, *pemuda* and revolutionaries, they awaited a return to their natal nation. Although many of them attempted to convey the realities of life in Indonesia to Dutch citizens, they were ‘cried down’ by self-determination rhetoric, colonial shame felt by those who had never participated in Indies life, and politicians and experts who advised them to forget their lives and start anew in the Netherlands; their identities were once again externally prescribed. Continuing to cherish a hope that they might someday return, they held aloof, indeed chose to remain liminal, from the well-intentioned efforts to integrate them into the Dutch social fabric, and awaited the outcome of Dutch-Indonesian negotiations. Interviewees

state that they would never have 'fit' into society in the Netherlands, nor did they have a desire to do so. Resisting the path to 'Dutch' identification laid out for them, and dismissing an interest in an ongoing dialogue with the 'mother' country with respect to the colonial-*Indische* identity, they additionally articulated their genuine dismay of the climate, the size of the country, the lack of linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity, and what they interpreted as a very 'stiff' way of life with a suffocating morality and tendency to 'check to see what the other person is doing'. There was no hope of 'forgetting' in a country engaged in relentless discussion of self and the colonial period. 'Reincorporating' into the Dutch social fabric was therefore not a viable option.

Once it became clear that Indonesia would pass to the Republic, and many older children, initially left behind, repatriated from Indonesia in 1949/1950, potential immigrants came to grips with the fact they could not return to their homeland. The awareness of non-return instigates 'crisis' and initiates the 'closure' sequence that will end in Canada or the United States; a reincorporation denoted by a new status. In making that decision, they articulate their awareness that they were simultaneously setting aside the Dutch-*Indische* connection that historically fed, and in the Netherlands continued to feed, their identities. They made the choice to start anew.

Families consulted together as to their options. Many of them methodically sent out letters to any contacts they had made with people from Canada and the US. Others initiated their immigrant explorations through their churches; these were interviewees whose faith, although severely strained during the occupation, did not cause them to withdraw from that belief altogether. The key theme that emerges from these oral histories is that the Netherlands was not an option for any of these immigrants. In making the decision to leave, they simultaneously altered the trajectories of their future identity perceptions and closed the door on the Netherlands-Indies chapter, the dialogue in the Netherlands on the Dutch colonial period, and their *Indische* identity. Each one of these interviewees describes themselves as 'American' or 'Canadian' and understands their natal land in the same way that other immigrants to North America do – Indonesia is the land where I was born and while it forms part of who I became, it is no longer my identity.

Lifestyle, climate, contacts, and employment opportunities in a potential immigration destination gravely influenced the decision of final 'place' for these narrators. Once location was determined, however, immigrants agree that excitement set in, and planning for their new home began to change their being in the world. Following the long trip overseas and their settlement in the new place of residence, they initiated their lives in the new country. No longer liminal, they embraced their new identity/status, reincorporating as Canadian or Ameri-

can immigrants, casting their lot with those who had come from all over the world to start anew, exchanging many stories:

In those early years what really struck me is that everyone had a story to tell. There were refugees from all parts of the world and many of them had it even worse than us in the countries they left – far worse. We learned very quickly to value what we had. We were educated, we could get good work and the language we had started to learn it in Indonesia and before we left Holland.

Self: In Indonesia?

Interviewee: Well sure. There were lots of Americans in Indonesia before the war, and we would have a drink with them and so ... Not so strange. So, the language was not a problem and the kids picked it up so fast. In the 50s too, America was booming. Well like I said, jobs were there for the taking, we were educated and soon we were doing really well. Our family thrived.

(Oral History Interview, August 2005, Tape 1, *Indisch-American male*)

The impossibility of ‘forgetting’ (a.k.a. getting lost) and lack of closure in the Netherlands, where the loss of the Indies was continually re-visited, represents the divergence between *Indische*-in-the-Netherlands and North-American identities; *Indische* in the Netherlands identify as *Indisch*, those in the Americas do not. Discourses on the colonial period, the multiple opinions that defined the role of the Dutch in Indonesia for those who had been there, programs and prescribed options put in place for *Indische* integration; these factors facilitated a feeling of ‘non-escape’, while immigration and life in a new land evoked the possibility of re-writing the self in historical and psychological freedom. No, narrators have not forgotten the Indies. What they have been able to do is ‘place’ their experiences within the context of their wider lives and tie their lives to other immigrants who also dealt with persecution. More importantly, the identity ‘Eurasian’ is moot for these narrators. They fully belong in Canada and the USA; they no longer experience the turmoil that stems from the conflict between self- and etic identification. While honoring their natal origins, they are Canadian or American.

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About the author

Over the past 17 years, Hendrika Beaulieu-Boon has been engaged in oral history/life story research, initially with North American interviewees who were citizens of the Dutch East Indies during the last years of the colonial period and World War II, and who experienced the subsequent diaspora to the Netherlands. In 2009, she obtained her Ph.D. from Leiden University based on that study. Thereafter, she has been primarily engaged with life story/documentary research among the Blackfoot of Canada and the United States and with various immigrant communities. A historical anthropologist who commonly approaches analyses through the lens of multiple socio-linguistic methodologies, her focus is on extending and challenging official – and hegemonic – documented History through accounts derived from people ‘on-the-ground’. As an immigrant herself, she believes that there is a lacuna of detailed work around the immigrant experience, and advocates for extended social science research among immigrant communities, with a particular focus on cross-cultural experiences.

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Des thèmes du renouvellement de l’identité *Indische*

Depuis 15 ans, je mène un projet d’histoire orale approfondi avec des Néerlandais, des Indonésiano-néerlandais, des Eurasiens et des Indonésiens en Amérique du Nord qui ont vécu dans les Indes néerlandaises avant, pendant et après la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Des participants d’un « ordre politique qui inscrit dans le monde social une nouvelle conception de l'espace, des nouvelles formes d'identité individuelle et un nouveau moyen de fabrication de l'expérience sur le réel » (Mitchell 1988, xi), ils ont vécu l'invasion et l'occupation japonaise avec des perspectives uniques. Dans plus de deux tiers de ces interviews, il s'agit de la période du soi-disant *Bersiap* et de la Guerre de 1945 à 1949 contre les forces républicaines, tandis que d'autres narrateurs luttaient pour maintenir leur identité indonésienne jusqu'aux crises des années 1956 et 1957. Un nombre significatif de ces consultants étaient partis pour les Pays-Bas pendant un de ces affrontements cruciaux ; alors que d'autres étaient partis directement pour l'Amérique du Nord. La comparaison entre les matériaux de ma base de données et des analyses thématiques des histoires de vie qui ont été rassemblées aux Pays-Bas et qui portent sur cette histoire (Steijlen 2002) révèle plusieurs concordances, mais aussi des écarts significatifs concernant l'emphase, le récit et les formations d'identité. Mes consultants nord-américains ne s'engagent pas dans les discussions en cours aux Pays-Bas (Houben 1997, 47-66) et en Indonésie (Stoler & Strassler 2000, 4-48) qui

limitent ou facilitent ce que les anciens sujets coloniaux racontent dans ces pays. Par conséquent, ils emploient des schémas divergents pour encadrer les comment, de quoi, pourquoi ils se souviennent. Dans cet article, je me concentre sur les deux thèmes interconnectés qui apparaissent dans ma sous-base de données d'histoires de vie nord-américaines *Indische* : 'la Parenté' et 'le Père'. En employant une longue interview avec une femme *Indische* qui visitait le Canada, je mets en place des aspects de son récit comme un faire-valoir pour examiner les façons dont les *Indische* au Pays-Bas et en Amérique du Nord construisent leurs identités complexes.

Thema's in de recreatie van de "Indische" identiteit

Gedurende de afgelopen 15 jaar heb ik een uitgebreid "oral history project" uitgevoerd met (Indische) Nederlanders, Nederlands-Indiërs, Indo-Europeanen en Indonesiërs in Noord-Amerika die zich in Nederlands-Indië bevonden in de periode voor, tijdens, en vlak na de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Als deelnemers in een "political order that inscribes in the social world a new conception of space, new forms of personhood, and a new means of manufacturing the experience of the real" (Mitchell 1988, xi) beleefden zij de Japanse invasie en bezetting vanuit een uniek perspectief. Meer dan twee derde van de interviews betreffen de zogenaamde *Bersiap*-periode en de oorlog met de Republikeinse troepen in 1945-1949. Sommige geïnterviewden probeerden aan hun Indonesische identiteit vast te houden totaal de crises van 1956-1957. Een belangrijk deel van deze informantenvlakken vertrok naar Nederland gedurende een van deze cruciale confrontaties; anderen emigreerden direct naar Noord-Amerika. Een vergelijking van thematische analyses van levensverhalen over deze geschiedenis opgetekend in Nederland (Steijlen 2002) met het material in mijn database levert zowel overeenkomsten als afwijkingen op in termen van wat wordt benadrukt en wat wordt herinnerd, en de gevolgen daarvan op de formatie van een nieuwe identiteit. Mijn Noord-Amerikaanse informantenvlakken zijn niet betrokken bij de voortdurende discussies in Nederland (Houben 1997, 47-66) en Indonesië (Stoler & Strassler 2000, 4-48), die in zeker mate beperken of bepalen wat ex-koloniale burgers in die landen met elkaar en anderen delen. Als gevolg daarvan gebruiken zij andere schemata om vorm te geven aan hoe, wat en waarom zij zich bepaalde dingen al dan niet herinneren. In dit artikel vestig ik de aandacht op twee gerelateerde thema's die naar voren komen in mijn sub-database van Noord-Amerikaanse Indische levensverhalen: 'Familie' and 'de Vader'. Aan de hand van een uitgebreid interview met een Indische vrouw op bezoek in Canada gebruik ik aspecten van haar verhaal als een handvat voor een beschrijving van de manier waarop Indiërs in Nederland en Noord-Amerika hun complexe identiteiten construeren.

What do you gain?

Jenny Radsma

What do you gain when you lose control? When I pondered this unusual question, my mother came to mind. For so much of her life, my mother fretted about matters the rest of us thought trivial and inconsequential. She visibly relaxed when a daughter arrived home after a flight or road trip. Stormy weather on a day she had committed to a task caused her no end of agitation, especially if others depended on her to drive. She worried about what the neighbours would think should one of us happen to raise our voices while conversing over coffee on the back patio. Daily headline news – wars, famines, politicians exchanging barbs, murders, assaults – all of it added to my mother’s sense of insecurity. “Hé” she’d say, “always trouble stories.” To avoid adding to her fears, my sisters and I offered selective information in up-beat, bite-sized pieces, doing our best to avoid mention of anything that might distress her.

But my mother, we learned, could also keep private anything she did not want her daughters to know. After my father died, and after she moved into a seniors’ apartment, my sisters and I deduced from our respective conversations with Mom that she often slept on the love seat in her living room, whether for an afternoon nap or through the night. “Why, Mom? You have such long legs; you must be so uncomfortable.” She evaded our questions and offered no explanation, annoyed with herself for having divulged too much, irritated by our intrusive probing and uninvited advice. Her daytime naps, we told her, interfered with her sleeping well through the night. Then she let slip that she didn’t always undress to don her pajamas, that she slept frequently in her clothes. After a fire alarm went off in her apartment building in the middle of the night, thanks to an unwitting resident, something that happened more often than my sisters and I appreciated, my mother’s seeming oddities took on a clear focus.

“I hate that sound,” my mother said with unusual forcefulness about the shrill noise that pierced the usual quietude of the building. The alarm reawakened her dread of the air raid sirens that wailed impending danger during the Second World War. One of my sisters recognized Mom’s terror from the fire alarm as symptomatic of post-traumatic stress. Because of her remembered fear, and not wanting to be caught unawares, especially in her night dress, our mother chose to

sleep fully clothed. In this way, should the alarm sound, she was at the ready to seek safety, decades ago from a bomb or a German attack, now prepared and dressed to walk down the stairwell, complete with wallet and purse in hand, to traipse down the stairwell with her neighbours, even to evacuate the building if necessary.

Surprisingly, my mother's dementia released her from the worries and cares that clung to her for so many years. In this photo, taken by my sister when Alzheimer's disease already held my mother in its clutches, her eyes are alight with love and laughter, delighted to be in her daughter's company, unconcerned about world strife, alarms, or the uncertainties of the future. She felt anchored and safe.



Jenny Radsma and her mother, 2006. From the author's personal collection.