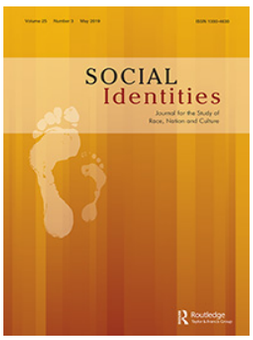

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(Re)-migration: Indonesians of mixed descent and the journey 'home'

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia has a long history of outward migration, with the result that many children have been born outside Indonesia but consider it, through a parent, a 'homeland' in an emotive sense. This article examines the experiences of a number of different groups of people of 'mixed descent' (termed 'Indo' in Indonesian) who returned to Indonesia and found that they did not feel that they belonged, whether because they experienced a sense of disjuncture upon discovering that their memories did not match reality, or because they had never lived in Indonesia previously and only imagined it through a parent's stories. I closely examine the interconnectedness in the popular imagination of nationality with race and appearance in the Indonesian context, and argue that Indonesian national identity is strongly predicated upon anti-foreign sentiment, thereby making attempts of Indos who grew up outside Indonesia to describe themselves as Indonesian contentious. I also draw out the historical development of contemporary understandings about who can claim to be a 'real' or 'pure' Indonesian, which are based on colonial categories that in practice were different to how they have been portrayed in historical consciousness. The strong links between nationality and appearance/race and the complexities of the lives of individuals who choose to call several places home because of ancestral links complicate simplistic narratives of 'local' and 'foreign', 'exile' and 'return' to a homeland.

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Introduction

Indonesia has a long history of outward migration. In the post-World War Two era, various violent and politically-motivated events led to mass exoduses of particular groups of people who were marked by their race, ethnicity or political loyalties. These events include Indonesia's revolution against the Dutch (1945–49), the expulsion of all Dutch nationals in 1957, and the departure of many members of the Indonesian Left after mass killings of accused communists from 1965. Many of these exiles married women and men in the countries to which they migrated and then later returned to Indonesia, bringing with them children who had never been to Indonesia but, in an emotive

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sense, were going 'home' to the country of origin of a parent. Yet many found that they were not made to feel 'at home' in Indonesia, despite their familial roots.

This article examines the experiences of different groups of 'return migrants' of mixed descent whose parents left Indonesia because of political events and later returned. The life stories of these groups demonstrate different facets of what it means to be both 'mixed race' and 'foreign' in Indonesia today. They also call into question what 'return' means in the context of individuals with complex roots spreading across different parts of the world. Despite their diverse backgrounds and histories, Indonesians of mixed descent are commonly referred to as 'Indo', a term used in Indonesia to describe those whose appearance marks them as of obvious foreign descent, in particular, *bule* descent (a term that loosely translates as 'Caucasian').

Race, nation and return migration

A considerable body of research exists on Dutch-Indonesians who repatriated to the Netherlands or migrated to third countries after Indonesian independence (Coté & Westerbeek, 2005; Jones, 2007; Oostindie, 2010; Pattynama, 2000; Van Leeuwen, 2008; Willems, 2005). A small amount of research also exists on political migrants who were forced to leave Indonesia, especially members of the Indonesian Left after the 1965 mass killings of accused Communists (Dragojlovic, 2012; Godley & Coppel, 1990; Hearman, 2010; Missbach & Myrttinen, 2014). Recently, attention has turned to Indonesians living outside Indonesia as part of the global Indonesian diaspora (for example, Missbach & Myrttinen, 2014). Little, if any, published research exists on return migrants to Indonesia and, in particular, postcolonial and political migrants of mixed descent who later chose to return to Indonesia when conditions became more favourable.

My starting point in this article is 'return migration', or 'the movement of emigrants back to their homelands to resettle' (Gmelch, 1980). Migration is often conceptualised dichotomously in terms of a home country and a destination country, with much research focusing on economic or humanitarian migrants. This has changed in recent decades, with scholars beginning to turn to the question of what happens to migrants who return to their home country (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 203; Harper, 2005, p. 2). Reasons for return include, for example, economic reasons, particularly if the migrant never intended to settle permanently in the destination country; family and other close personal ties in the home country; feelings of allegiance to the home country; and reaching the age of retirement in the destination country, thereby allowing the migrant the time and financial resources to return to their home country (Cassarino, 2004; Gmelch, 1980).

As Xiang (2013, p. 7) has noted, return migration was previously a norm in human migration. However, return migration became complicated with the rise of the nation-state and hardening of national borders. Xiang argues that 'what the word *return* actually means is the movement from overseas to any part of one's *nation* of origin' (emphasis in original). But this definition becomes more complex when considering what one's nation of origin means. Is it one's country of birth – an unlikely scenario when taking into account different generations of diasporic communities – or is it related more to the citizenship or country of birth of one's parents, thereby taking into account second and even third generation migrants? How does this concept work with children who identify or are identified as mixed race and have familial roots in several different countries – can these children be

said to be 'returning' to one of their nations of origins? As I outline below, for many the answer, in an emotive sense, is yes.

The complexity of the lives of people of mixed descent, who may have parents from different home countries and have grown up in a third country or moved from country to country, overrides simplistic narratives of exile and return. Mixed relationships and raising children in these families means negotiating multiple locations, whether real or imagined, and 'accommodating hyphenated senses of belonging' (Rodríguez-García, 2006, p. 426). Making the status of people of mixed descent even more complex is the association of race with particular places. As one scholar has argued, it is not uncommon for people of mixed descent to have their faces 'routinely scrutinised for topographic clues' (Mahtani, 2014, p. 3), demonstrating the continuing interconnectedness of place to appearance in the popular imagination.

Defining 'race' is complicated by the fact that it is a widely accepted popular concept in many parts of the world, yet generally disparaged among social scientists, at least in terms of biological differences. Race, Nobles (2002, pp. 47–48) argues, 'stems from and rests in language, in social practices, in legal definitions, in ideas, in structural arrangements, and in political contests over power'. Race has been defined in terms of a person's origins from a particular geographic location, or in terms of a person's skin colour (Nobles, 2002). Both, however, rest on the meanings attached to appearance. In this article I use the concept of race as my research participants has used it – that is, in both the sense of a person's origins and their appearance.

The issue of race is one closely interwoven with nationality, national identity and popular ideas about what it means to belong to a particular nation; after all, national identities also stem from and rest in language, social practices, legal definitions, ideas, structural arrangements and political contests over power. Ultimately, many popular conceptualisations of race expressed in terms of origin are based on historical connections between a common appearance shared by a group of people and the location where they predominantly lived in the past, whether 'Asia', 'Europe', 'Indonesia' or 'the Netherlands'. This is particularly evident in the anecdotes that many interlopers in my broader research project shared about how other Indonesians had expressed surprise that they were Indonesian because they did not 'look' Indonesian. It is also apparent in the ways in which many self-identified as being of 'Dutch' descent, or 'French' descent. Given that the nation-state is the predominant geographical point of orientation in the postcolonial world, it is no surprise that racial descriptions today often follow nationality in the first instance and regions, such as 'Asia, in the second, depending on how familiar the person doing the labelling is with the country or region.

Race and nationality are both about belonging, whether willing or ascribed belonging. In that sense, they are tied to the question of who can legitimately call a place 'home' and who is defined as a 'foreigner'. As Alison Blunt argues, 'the idea of a homeland is … bound up with the politics of place, identity and collective memory … and racialized geographies of inclusion and exclusion' (Blunt, 2005, pp. 74–75). Collective memory and political discourse have, in postcolonial Indonesia, consistently attributed domestic problems to foreign influences. These extend from governance (linked to past colonial structures) to moral issues (linked to negative stereotypes about the influence of Western mores) to economic problems (linked to foreign investment and foreign ownership). The founding of the Indonesian nation-state was rooted in a lengthy violent conflict that is generally

celebrated in Indonesian historical consciousness as being exclusively between locals and foreign forces, although in reality the sides were often not clearly delineated. Much Indonesian historiography and public historical culture has drawn this line clearly in the production of knowledge about Indonesia's past, emphasising that power and resources have been consistently controlled and manipulated by foreigners throughout Indonesia's history. The result is a national identity and historical consciousness heavily rooted in opposition to the foreign – with notable exceptions being religion and, in some instances, popular culture.

The current predominant version of indigeneity in Indonesia is intertwined with the concept of racial 'purity', which has its origins in former colonial categories treating those termed 'native' as different from other population groups. While most of the benefits attached to a legal status flowed to those classed as European and Foreign Orientals, only those classified 'native' could buy land. This requirement created a situation in which only 'natives' could legitimately consider the Dutch East Indies home on the basis of land ownership, while other groups, because of their foreign links, had no claim to land (Coppel, 2002, p. 133; Fasseur, 1994). These different legal categories, however, in practice incorporated a broad range of groups not necessarily in line with predominant ideas about race existing during that period. A small but significant number of 'Europeans', for example, were local Christians with no links to Europe besides Dutch Calvinism, while the Japanese were also included as Europeans for political reasons in the twentieth century (Luttikhuis, 2013).

A number of different concepts of indigeneity existed in twentieth century Indonesia, among them the concept of 'boemipoetra', meaning 'sons of the soil', or, loosely, 'Indies born', which became popular in the second decade of the twentieth century (Siddique & Suryadinata, 1981–1982). The concept was not taken up by the nationalist groups that eventually took power in postcolonial Indonesia. Instead, the Indonesian term '*pribumi*' was used to replace the Dutch *inlander* ('native') (Hewett, 2016a) – a term that took increasingly racialised connotations. Although former colonial categories had featured considerable overlap and often were related to class and social status (Luttikhuis, 2013), in postcolonial Indonesia, the carryover categories from the Indies became increasingly racialised. Chinese-Indonesians with former Foreign Oriental status became the focus of assimilation programmes of Suharto's New Order government, even while they continued to be treated differently in bureaucratic terms by having a special code applied to their identity cards so that their Chinese descent was immediately identifiable for government officials (for example, Aizawa, 2011). Indos who had held European status were forced to carry naturalisation certificates in their dealings with the bureaucracy to prove that they were Indonesian citizens. While anyone with Indonesian citizenship was technically able to purchase land, in everyday life those whose features marked them as 'foreign' – despite considerable phenotypical diversity across the Indonesian archipelago – experienced discrimination such as being charged higher prices in the marketplace and being subjected to different terms of address.

Origins of the term 'Indo'

Since the nineteenth century, many of those living in Indonesia popularly considered to be of mixed '*bule*' and 'local' descent have been termed 'Indo' (Hewett, 2016a, Chapter One).

While a number of other terms were used to describe people of mixed descent, the term 'Indo', from the Dutch *Indo-Europeaan* or *Indo-Europeesch*, became the most well-known in the twentieth century, thanks to the political activism of Indos in the Netherlands Indies who publically campaigned for the collective interests of Indos, especially in the Indo-European Alliance (Indo-Europeesch Verbond) in the decades leading up to the Second World War. The term continued to be used in postcolonial Indonesia to describe the population remaining behind after the mass exodus of most Indos in the 1950s, their descendants – if they looked particularly 'foreign' – and new generations of Indonesians with mixed descent.[1]

Unlike the Eurasians in neighbouring British Malaya and Singapore, the Indo population in the Netherlands Indies was never explicitly defined in colonial censuses as a distinct category or ethnic group. Instead, they could hold European status if their parents were married and they had a European father or their European father legally acknowledged them; Foreign Oriental status (those of, for the most part, Chinese, Indian and Arab descent), if their father held this legal status; or Native status, if their parents were not legally married and their father had not acknowledged them, or if their father held Native status (see Fasseur, 1994; Hewett, 2015). From the late nineteenth century, women took the legal status of their husbands. This created a situation in which some Indo women with European status may have been reluctant to marry men with Native status because it could mean both a perceived and real drop in social status in terms of the advantages and benefits attached to European legal status (Van der Veur, 1969).

In social terms, Indos formed a distinct class of people in twentieth century colonial Indonesia who often worked in the middle ranks of the civil service, were stereotypically conservative and popularly known to support colonial rule while protesting everyday practices that privileged '*totok*', or 'pure', Europeans (Hewett, 2017). Many of those involved in the Indo-European Alliance sought to promote an Indo identity separate from a growing nationalist Indonesian identity. Both movements drew increasingly racial lines between 'Indonesians' (or those with Native status) and other groups within the framework of the identity politics movements that characterised the last few decades of colonial Indonesia.

Tensions between different groups came to a head in Indonesia's revolution against the Dutch in 1945–49. In 1945–47, many Indos living in Java became targets of young bands of independence fighters, while other Indos formed their own gangs to support the return of the Dutch after the Japanese surrender (Cribb, 2011; Frederick, 2012; Hewett, 2016b). After the Netherlands formally recognised Indonesian independence in 1949, successive waves of Indos with European status, particularly those who were Dutch citizens, migrated or repatriated to the Netherlands after it became clear that the privileges attached to European status had been irreversibly erased, and discrimination grew against groups who were noticeably 'foreign' in appearance. These discriminatory practices later extended to official government policy during the years of Suharto's New Order government (1966–98), particularly towards Chinese Indonesians but also, in theory, towards other groups termed 'Indonesians of foreign descent' (Hewett, 2017). Most research about this broad legal category has focused on Chinese Indonesians who remained in Indonesia, with a small body of work on Indian Indonesians (Myutel, 2016, 2017), Arab Indonesians (Mandal, 1996) and Indos in postcolonial Indonesia (Allard, 1955a, 1955b; Annink, 1993; Boon, 2004; Hewett, 2015, 2016a, 2016b; Huisman-Carels, 1990; Pattynama, 1996).

As outlined, a major legacy of Dutch colonial structures in colonial Indonesia was the division of the population into three different groups using racial labels, even if in practice these labels were more diverse than later popularly conceptualised. The result of these labels was popular understandings of identity in postcolonial Indonesia that normalised, or made 'natural', racial and ethnic categories invented by colonial policy makers and census administrators (Antons-Sutanto & Antons, 2017; see also Nobles, 2002). These included the concepts of *pribumi* Indonesians, popularly considered to be poor and those who have no mixed descent; Chinese Indonesians, who are thought to be wealthier than the *pribumi* population; and persistent racialised ideas about those termed *bule*. *Bule* and those of *bule* descent are typecast as having loose morals and being much wealthier then *pribumi* Indonesians, even if they had been raised as Indonesian and work poor-paying jobs (Hewett, 2016a). This stereotype appears to have remained relatively consistent over time.

Since 1949, different generations of people with vastly different backgrounds have come under the umbrella term 'Indo'. These include the colonial and war generation who stayed, as well as those who left in the 1940s and 1950s and chose to later visit or retire in Indonesia; their children and grandchildren if they have noticeably 'mixed' features, such as paler skin than other Indonesians, brown hair or brown eyes; children with Indonesian-Australian parents who met in Australia during the Second World War when the Dutch East Indies government was temporarily located in Australia in exile, or who met under Colombo Plan scholarships; the children of Indonesian scholarship holders in Communist countries who married locals and then returned to Indonesia; and 'Third Culture kids', or the children of expatriates with Indonesian spouses who have lived in several countries. However, the term today is most popularly associated with celebrities, models and entertainers in Indonesian popular culture (Kebon, 2011).

The following section draws on life history interviews that I carried out in 2013–14 with Indos who spent a considerable portion of their lives outside Indonesia and later returned 'home'. These life histories were carried out as part of my broader doctoral project that looked at the history of Indos in postcolonial Indonesia, which was based on oral history interviews in Indonesia, the Netherlands and Australia, as well as extensive archival research in the Netherlands.[2] The experiences of those who 'returned' to Indonesia as foreigners differs in a number of ways to those who stayed. These are discussed further below.

The colonial generation who left Indonesia

The Dutch-Indonesian Round Table Conference, held in The Hague in August-November 1949, provided Dutch citizens staying in Indonesia with the option of taking Indonesian citizenship (Van der Veur, 1954); Meijer, 2004). Most of this group were Indo. They were allowed two years in which they could make the decision. Around 200,000 Indos lived in Indonesia at the transfer of sovereignty (Hewett, 2016, p. 79). A tense political environment and anti-Dutch sentiment of the early 1950s, along with the desire to continue to give their children a Dutch education, led to reluctance on the part of many Indo families with Dutch citizenship to change their citizenship. Around 30,000–33,000 people eventually took Indonesian citizenship (Meijer, 2004, p. 330; Van der Veur, 1960). The remainder left in increasing numbers throughout the 1950s, until Sukarno ordered all Dutch nationals

to leave Indonesia in late 1957, after tensions flared over the Netherlands continuing to hold Netherlands New Guinea.

Most 'repatriated' to the Netherlands, a country that the majority had never seen, despite holding Dutch citizenship. After the fall of Sukarno in 1965, small numbers began to return to Indonesia, largely to visit family. By the time I carried out interviews in the Netherlands in 2012, there was a small but booming guided tour industry catering to 'Indisch' (Indies) tourists from the Netherlands – largely an elderly group who wanted to visit the land of their childhood. To a lesser extent, the children and grandchildren of this generation also 'returned' to Indonesia, though most had never been there, to see for themselves the places of their parents' and grandparents' stories. Ana Dragojlovic has argued that the use of travel by this group to areas where their parents and grandparents had experienced happy childhoods and, later, mass violence, torture and internment, led to an 'intergenerational transmission' of memories of trauma and loss and a collective longing for 'the good old days' before migration and violence (Dragojlovic, 2014). For this group, modern Indonesia is, in an emotive sense, 'home', even if it has radically changed from the 1930s.

Some members of the colonial generation, because of their traumatic experiences, never returned to Indonesia. But others chose to return to live in Indonesia permanently or semi-permanently in their retirement, surviving on their foreign pensions or savings. I encountered a number of elderly Indos in social gatherings who had spent the great majority of their lives outside Indonesia but had returned to spend their twilight years in the land of their childhood. One of these was Jack, from Malang.

Jack was born in Semarang in 1942. His mother was from Yogyakarta and his father was Dutch. Jack was forced to leave for the Netherlands at age 17, 'when the Dutch were expelled from Indonesia'. Because of his age, he could not opt to remain, but he explained that if he had been given a choice, he would have stayed. He spent 54 years in the Netherlands but often returned to visit family in Indonesia, sometimes several times a year. Jack described a difficult life in the Netherlands in those first years, saying that he 'was always alone'. After his first wife died, he married an Indonesian woman. They lived first in the Netherlands and then moved to Indonesia around 2010, choosing to live in the Batu/Malang area because of the cooler climate. He told himself repeatedly before moving that 'I was born in Indonesia and I want to die in Indonesia'.

Despite his resolve to return to his childhood homeland, Jack explained that, 'I'm happy here in Malang but life here is very different from the Netherlands.' He often met with other Indos in a local Indo club in the Malang area, including those who had returned from the Netherlands to retire there, whose experiences were not dissimilar from his own. Jack found a changed country in his retirement. For example, when he was a child, he said, 'I spoke a different Indonesian to now'. He also shared some of the difficulties that he experienced after returning to live in Indonesia, including finding Dutch food. He mentioned the bakery chain Holland Bakery that, despite its Dutch name, provided bread and cakes more suited to local tastes. Jack had spent his childhood in Indonesia, but he still described a sort of reverse culture shock, saying that workmen never turned up to fix things, and the pace of work was much slower than in the Netherlands.

This phenomenon has been described in relation to return migrants in general, with Harper (2005, p. 3) arguing that 'emigrants in all generations tended to construct and freeze their own chosen image of the homeland as they left, an image which became

more indelible and unalterable as time went on'. Blunt and Dowling (2006, pp. 203–204) have also noted the difficulty for transnational migrants returning 'home' when 'home' did not match what they had imagined for years. The result, for those Indos who went back to Indonesia after decades away, was surprise and a sense of disjuncture at the realisation that the place that they remembered had changed irreversibly, as had they.

Not all children of the colonial generation migrated to the Netherlands. Ron, born in 1953, left Indonesia at the age of five with his family when all Dutch nationals were expelled, migrating directly to the United States. Both of his parents, he said, were Indo. The family settled in California and then Hawaii. Ron returned to Indonesia at the age of twenty, 'to see where my roots are. This is where I'm born; this is where I belong … When I left I only spoke Indonesian.' By the time he returned, however, he could not speak Indonesian. He married an Indonesian woman, and decided to raise his family there. He was the only member of his family to return to Indonesia and stay. However, he noted that 'anybody who is born here [Indonesia] feels like it's their home.'

Ron's American accent speaking Indonesian marked him as a foreigner. His appearance – in a country in which nationality is strongly tied to one's appearance – further marked him as foreign, but in the United States this was not the case. He said,

> Actually I turned out white. My dad always said you're lucky you're one colour, you really should think twice about having a mixed marriage because your children are the ones who pay, they're the ones who have to suffer … .I was raised in Hawaii so what I experienced is, because a lot of the white people, not only because of that, but because the white people were discriminating against the Asians; the Asians also discriminated against the white. So while my father looks very Asian, he got along well with the Asians, they liked him. But they would say to me, 'why white boy?' So how can you win? Then when they would see my dad, he would say 'that's my son'. 'Oh how can that be your son? He's so white.'

Although Ron may have been considered 'lucky' for 'turning out white' in the United States, in other contexts his appearance was problematic, particularly when he tried to emphasise to other Indonesians that Indonesia was his homeland and that he belonged there. Despite his American citizenship, Ron said he felt that Indonesia was 'home', but others in Indonesia did not necessarily affirm his sentiment because of his appearance. He went on to say that:

> I don't think they make you feel at home … . I say, I'm from Indonesia. 'No, impossible.' 'Why is it impossible?' 'Where do you come from?' … 'Well, I'm white and I'm pribumi [indigenous].' 'What do you mean you're pribumi?' 'I have pribumi blood, indigenous blood.' It's not their fault, it's just the way you look, people generalise or stereotype you by the way you look. If I walk with my grandmother, 'who is this boy?' 'Oh this is my grandson.' 'Impossible that's your grandson – he's white'. So I can see what my dad said, that when you have the mixed blood depending on how you look, you can either be accepted by both sides if you look a certain way and if they happen to be on good terms [or not].

Ron's experiences show the strength of ideas connecting nationality to popular understandings of race based on particular physical characteristics, in particular skin colour. Even if Ron had been able to speak Indonesian like a local and had grown up in Indonesia, it is doubtful that he would have been accepted as any other Indonesian. This was certainly not the case for one woman I interviewed as part of my broader research project who had grown up in Indonesia, was an Indonesian citizen and had never lived elsewhere, yet was identified as being Dutch and was treated as though she was foreign.

The strength of opinions expressed in opposition to Ron's statement that he was of Indonesian descent reveals deeply rooted expectations about what someone who is *mixed* should look like, not merely someone who is Indonesian. Ron was excluded not only as a *pribumi* Indonesian but also as someone who could claim Indonesian descent, purely because of his appearance. While language, citizenship, everyday practices and knowledge are very relevant factors in decisions about who is excluded and who is included in ascriptions of race and nationality, ultimately appearance is the foundation upon which both of these rest in contemporary Indonesia, demonstrating the strength of the link between the two.

Children with Indonesian-Australian parents from the second world war

A large number of children labelled 'Indo' in Indonesia today have an Australian parent thanks to a booming tourism industry, particularly in Bali and Yogyakarta. Early predecessors to these contemporary mixed marriages include a small number of relationships in the 1940s in Australia, between Indonesian seamen who fled to Australia during the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia, and Australian women. After the Colombo Plan granted Indonesian students scholarships to study in Australia from 1951, a number of Indonesian men from this generation also married Australian women, despite difficulties encountered under the White Australia policy. One woman's life history covered both of these eras.

Judith's mother was an Australian war bride, and her father was a seaman from Sulawesi with the Dutch shipping company *Koninklijke Paketvaart-Maatschappij* (KPM), which sent its ships to Australia from the Dutch East Indies during the Second World War to avoid the Japanese navy. They met in Australia and were married in 1945, and then moved to Indonesia. Judith was born in Jakarta in 1949, the youngest of two girls. When she was three years old, the family moved to Surabaya. Her father died when she was young, but her mother continued to live in the kampung (neighbourhood), and worked as a writer for a local newspaper and as an English teacher. Judith recalled going to school by *becak* (rickshaw). At home they used English, Javanese, Indonesian and Dutch, because most of her mother's friends were Dutch during the 1950s. Judith recalled a childhood playing with other Indonesian children in the kampung and with Dutch-Indonesian children. When the political uncertainty surrounding *Konfrontasi* during Sukarno's later years flared, the family 'left everything' in 1963 and settled in Sydney.

Judith later met her Indonesian husband, who went to Australia on a scholarship under the Colombo Plan in 1966 and stayed until 1980 (see Purdey, 2014 for a discussion of the Colombo Plan scholarships). Judith said that 'we both found that there was still a fair bit of prejudice even then' in Australia. They subsequently decided to move back to Indonesia. Judith retained her Australian citizenship. When Suharto fell in 1998, Judith feared another situation like in 1963 that would require her to relocate to Australia but, she explained, that 'situation was different because Mum no longer had a husband so she had to make a decision whether to stay or get out'. At the time we met, in 2013, she continued to call Jakarta home.

Judith described how when she went to markets in Jakarta, she was asked '*asli mana*', a term which in English translates as 'where are you from' but literally means 'native of where'. Judith said she responded by saying 'well if you say *asli* [native], I'm not *asli deh* [a native]. I [say], I'm Australian-Indonesian.' She stated that when she and her husband lived in Sulawesi, she 'used to go by boat to the markets, and in general, they were

Javanese, it doesn't matter where you go, there are Javanese, so I'd speak the dialect and they'd go [expression of shock], absolute stunned. But I don't feel that I look very western.'

Despite her linguistic fluency in Indonesian and Javanese, as well as her Australian accent when she used English, her appearance marked her as foreign in either country. Judith outlined the different ways people labelled her in Australia versus Indonesia, saying that 'When I go to Australia … they pick me as Asian, but here they pick me as Western'. Unlike Ron, described above, who felt he was permanently labelled as white, Judith's identity because of her appearance changed wherever she was, with the result that she was labelled as foreign no matter the context. Judith appeared to be aware of the arbitrariness of this label, and of the people around her making a conscious decision in how to label her, in her choice of the phrase 'pick me as … ' Despite her appearance and her ability to speak Indonesian and Javanese, still she was unable to appear as a local in Indonesia – and her decision to describe herself as Australian-Indonesian suggests that she did not feel the need to, unlike some Indos who lived in Java their entire lives and for whom foreign descent could have precluded their access to particular forms of employment (Hewett, 2016a, p. 133).

Children whose parents were scholarship holders in communist countries

In the 1950s and 1960s, during the years of the Sukarno government, young Indonesians were granted scholarships to study abroad in Communist countries in Europe's Eastern bloc. Following an attempted coup in 1965 against Sukarno, purportedly by members of the Indonesian Communist Party, Major General Suharto took power on the back of strong-anti-Communist rhetoric. The country embarked on mass anti-Communist purges, leading to the deaths of approximately half a million people, imprisonment of many tens of thousands and discrimination against those suspected of having links to the subsequently banned Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI) (Cribb, 2001). As a result, scholarship holders in Communist countries found themselves 'accidental' exiles – caught overseas, they dared not return home for fear that they would be marked as Communist themselves. Students were screened at Indonesian embassies and consulates to check whether they were pro-Communist. Those who expressed anti-army or pro-PKI sentiment lost their passports and were unable to return to Indonesia (Hearman, 2010).

Ari's father was among the first batch of Indonesians to obtain a scholarship to study abroad during the Sukarno era. His father went to Berlin. Following the change of government in Indonesia, Ari explained, 'all the people from the Sukarno era, most of them didn't come back, so they stayed there [abroad], they married there … .' His father married his German mother, and Ari was born in 1970, the second of two children. The family remained in Germany until Ari was ten, and then took the risk of moving back to Indonesia.

Living in Germany, Ari said, was very different compared to his later life in Jakarta:

> In Germany it was more that you're coming from a third world country and they do treat you differently in a negative way. … I was living in a small town … so if somebody is a darker skin colour, it definitely stands out, and [there were] not that many immigrants in that area at that time during the '70s.

In Jakarta, children teased him for being unable to speak Indonesian. While he did not outline in detail how his schoolmates had treated him during the 1980s, he noted that

because 'we look different, then they treat us different, they make fun of us'. He said that 'You are always different. You always feel that you don't belong. Because I'm mixed, I feel that in Germany, that I didn't belong, because I'm different, and then moved to Indonesia, it's the same thing.'

After the family moved to Jakarta, he continued to take the bus or cycle to school, as he had in Germany, although other children with foreign parents were driven by chauffers in private cars. He said 'that is one part that I still maintain[ed], I still [went] by bus alone, even though [I was] the son of a white person.' Ari said that it was his choice, but he also noted that he did not have enough money to buy a car. While he did not expressly describe a childhood marked by relative difficulties in comparison to other children with foreign parents living in Indonesia at the time, he outlined that he worked as a teenager, like his older sister, in modelling and acting, so that he could pay for his schooling and, later, university education, despite the relative affordability of education in Indonesia.

When Ari was seventeen, he chose to become an Indonesian citizen to make his employment situation easier. He thought that his career as a celebrity ultimately helped him gain acceptance in Indonesia, despite his foreign descent:

> The good thing about it is that I started my career at a very early age. Before, I honestly didn't really care … when I was 14 years, 15 years, I wasn't really thinking about cultural differences … and I have a very Indonesian name … I think because people recognise me as an actor … because being on TV, the good thing about it is that you are in their living rooms, in their area of comfort. Because they see me on TV every day, people feel close [to me].

Ari did not detail whether his father had experienced difficulties obtaining employment, or experienced discrimination, upon returning to Indonesia in the early 1980s, although his narrative suggested that the family was not well-off when he grew up.

However, Jovanka, who also worked in acting and modelling, described how her father was unable to obtain employment in the 1980s because of his purported ties to Communism thanks to his scholarship. Jovanka was born in 1978 in Prague in what was then Czechoslovakia. Her father, like Ari's father, went to Czechoslovakia on a scholarship. As a result of political circumstances in Indonesia, he stayed there for seventeen years, married Jovanka's Czech mother, and the family moved to Indonesia when Jovanka was one.

Shortly after the family arrived, Jovanka's father was forced to take a job abroad for around a year,

> because it was a good offer and because he couldn't find any job in Indonesia, and the reason is politically, at that time, Eastern European countries were Communist, and so my father even had a hard time getting decent jobs here. Because of that … he had to go to interviews, checking backgrounds [of] whether he was still nationalist [or] socialist and so on, and so he had to take a job in the Middle East.

Jovanka's mother learned Indonesian in the absence of Jovanka's father, and adapted to life in Indonesia. However, life for the family was not easy, not just because of discrimination attached to former scholarship holders. 'Back then,' Jovanka explained, 'mixed marriage was not so popular and not so acceptable.' As a teenager, Jovanka, like Ari, also turned to modelling to earn money, and was able to save enough money to go to university for a year in the United States. Both were able to use their foreign appearance to their advantage in the 1990s, at a time when mixed appearance was celebrated in popular

culture, despite the difficulties their families had experienced adjusting to Indonesian society in the 1980s (see Hewett, 2017 for further discussion of Indos in popular culture). Jovanka went into this in detail, saying that growing up in Jakarta during the 1980s was:

> not easy, I have to say. It's nice that you can make money as a model because they like your face, but in school you get bullied because you're different. I was always bullied, all my life … .What was also not fun was going on public transport, on the bus. I hated that ride because it was a half hour ride … and it was just terrible, it was unbelievable. I was the only white girl on the bus and sometimes you passed by state schools, and state schools are very Indonesian … .In a private school you have mostly Chinese and it's just a very different mentality, and the state schools are local Indonesians and usually from [the] lower class, and so these kids would go on the bus, and they're in a group, in a gang … .I was just terrified because … here no one will help you … . I knew I had to protect myself and just do whatever it takes to not be noticed … but thank God nothing major happened.

Ari and Jovanka described how they had been teased and bullied in Jakarta during the 1980s for looking 'different', yet as adults they used this appearance to forge their careers. Their stories highlight that under certain circumstances, having a mixed appearance may be celebrated and be beneficial. In Indonesia, these circumstances are almost always disconnected from political and economic arenas and confined to sectors such as popular culture and modelling, where most meanings attached to a mixed appearance except that it is attractive are removed. Even early criticisms that Indos may be inappropriate casting choices for particular characters have not entirely led to their removal from advertisements, films and TV series in Indonesia (e.g. Depari, 1990; Sunindyo, 1993).

Ari and Jovanka returned to Indonesia during the height of the New Order government's attempts to enforce Indonesia's national motto of 'unity in diversity' by reducing discussions of ethnic differences to superficial displays, including appearance, costumes and festivals. One of the most representative examples of state rhetoric that attempted to reduce difference to the level of appearance was the theme park Taman Mini, which featured stereotypical displays of statues, clothing, houses and other items intended to represent ethnic groups from around the archipelago (see Hitchcock, 1998). While the focus of this rhetoric was ethnic groups considered to be 'indigenous', it is likely no coincidence that around the same time, the meanings attached to individuals thought to be of European descent featured the same level of superficiality and did not, for the most part, draw on deeper historical or social conversations beyond occasionally questioning their appropriateness to play particular characters because of their appearance.

Conclusion

The nation-state remains the primary point of geographical orientation when expressing one's identity in legal and cultural terms. But the main way to identify one's *origins* is appearance; this was markedly evident for the Indos described in this article, who discovered that declaring that they belonged in Indonesia because of their ancestral connections was not enough for other Indonesians to move beyond the meanings attached to their appearance. Other Indos who have spent their lives in Indonesia are able to indicate that they are from the Minahasa region of North Sulawesi because the considerable history of colonial contact and intermarriage in that region has in many cases resulted

in a common appearance that is equated with being 'mixed' in Indonesia – that is, paler skin, lighter eyes etc. (Hewett, 2016a, p. 132). In doing so, these Indos are able to establish that they are still 'authentic' Indonesians, but from a region far from the political and cultural centre of power in Java, where most popular and official norms about who can claim to be authentically Indonesian originate. Demonstrating the centrality of other aspects of race besides appearance, the Indos that I have discussed in this article who returned to Indonesia were unable to use the same claim – in part because their ability to speak Indonesian and local languages marked them as foreign, but also perhaps because many did not have sufficient insider knowledge about ethnic stereotypes to employ this strategy.

Having Indonesian 'descent' was not sufficient for other Indonesians to accord Indos belonging status. Just as having any 'Black' descent in the United States was equated, in the past, with being 'Black' (see Nobles, 2002), so in Indonesia having any foreign descent, unless one can prove through linguistic ability and insider knowledge that one is a 'legitimate' Indonesian, marks one as being indelibly foreign. In a country in which national identity and historical consciousness are strongly bound up in opposition to foreign influences, whether colonial powers, economic interests or moral norms, being both Indonesian and foreign is often implied to be an inherent contradiction. This is despite centuries of interaction through trade and intermarriage stretching back before the colonial period. Popular understandings rooted in what 'Native' status meant in the Netherlands Indies continue to affect attitudes today that emphasise being 'pure' (*asli*) Indonesian. The bullying that several Indos described experiencing growing up in Jakarta in the 1980s is emblematic of the tensions attached to looking or acting 'foreign'.

Yet, awareness of mixed race in one sense – appearance – is widespread and, in some instances, celebrated, thanks to the prevalence, since the late 1980s, of Indos in popular culture and modelling. The state may no longer regulate foreign descent through policies, and it may never have included in its census a category for Indos, but in popular consciousness mixed-race lives on, and it is largely restricted to appearance. This is especially evident in assertions made to one of the individuals described in this article that he could not possibly be of Indonesian descent because of his appearance – that is, he did not 'look' like he was even of mixed descent.

The complexity of the lives of people who identify or are identified as being of mixed descent calls into question simplistic narratives of exile and return. While some, who grew up in Indonesia but spent the majority of their adults lives elsewhere, may express a sense of disjuncture at discovering that the land of their youth is different to their 'frozen' childhood memories, those who grew up outside Indonesia but then moved there as children or adults experienced a disjuncture of a different sort, that called into question whether they could call Indonesia 'home' and be considered genuine Indonesians because of their appearance. The result is that those with connections to multiple locations and multiple nationalities through their family histories have been caught in the crossfire as boundaries have been drawn, based on appearance, about who can belong to the Indonesian nation and who cannot.

This research raises questions about what is 'special' about the experiences of people identified as being of mixed race and/or European descent in Indonesia, compared with other experiences in other contexts. Certainly the presence of people of mixed descent is apparent in the popular culture of other postcolonial nations, especially in Southeast and South Asia. Further, the concept of racialised national belonging and exclusion on

the basis of a 'mixed' heritage is not unique to Indonesia, yet what is specific to the Indonesian context is the ability of those who grew up in Indonesia to draw on their 'insider' knowledge by pretending that they were from far-flung corners of the archipelago or from a minority ethnic group with typically lighter skin than most other Indonesians, such as the Manadonese. The superficial meanings attached to an 'Indo' appearance in New Order Indonesia, removed from larger historical and social questions, also cannot be separated from government policy at the time to superficialize ethnic difference and diversity in the name of national unity. Finally, the background of a parent – in particular, whether they had links to Communist countries – and how these circumstances were connected to government policy determined in a number of cases the opportunities given to their children once these transnational families decided to move back to Indonesia.

Notes

1. The term 'Indo' was originally often used to label people of European descent of a lower socio-economic status as compared to those occupying the upper classes of Indies society, who tended to use the term 'Indische' (Indies) or 'Indische Nederlanders' (Indies Dutch) to describe themselves. To some extent this distinction has been carried over into postcolonial Netherlands, where not all Dutch-Indonesians are comfortable with identifying as 'Indo'. Recently, however, activists in the Netherlands have begun to reclaim the term. Activists writing in English, particularly those based in the United States, usually use the term 'Indo' (Hewett, 2016a, pp. 22–24),
2. The research carried out for this project included life history interviews carried out in 2012–2013 and 2015 in English, Indonesian, Manado Malay and Dutch, with 81 people who identified as being Indo or having mixed European descent. Of these, 41 were female and 40 were male.

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