

# Master Thesis

*A postcolonial perspective on ethnic minority entrepreneurship: 'Experiences of entrepreneurial identity construction by second-generation Indos in the Netherlands'*

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## **Abstract**

Ethnic minority entrepreneurship is a rising topic in academic literature. The scope of this study lies within the realm of ethnic minority entrepreneurship, as it focuses on entrepreneurial identity construction by ethnic minorities, seen through a postcolonial lens. The eleven life story interviews that are conducted in this study draw on the experiences of entrepreneurial identity construction of second-generation Indos in the Netherlands. The Indos possess a Dutch-Indonesian mixed ethnicity as a result of colonialism, which causes the inability to fully identify with the Dutch colonizers and colonized native Indonesians. The context of the Indo entrepreneurs in postcolonial the Netherlands is considered as well, and mainly concerns the cultural and social environment. This study shows that the conscious and subconscious values that are transmitted by family play a definite role in entrepreneurial identity construction. The complex search for the Indo identity impacts this process as well, and the ethnic physical appearance of second-generation Indos has additionally emerged as an influential factor. These experiences add novel knowledge on theories of postcolonialism and entrepreneurial identity construction, as they largely influence the entrepreneurial identities of second-generation Indo entrepreneurs.

**Keywords:** *entrepreneurial identity construction; ethnic minority entrepreneurship; postcolonialism; second-generation Indos*

## Preface

Looking back at my journey makes me very much aware that I am blessed with a rather careless and breezy life, which makes me feel advantaged. An abundance of wonderful and magnificent things have exposed itself to me during my lifetime. And then the mighty task to write a Master's thesis was thrown upon me. This is a formidable challenge for me, as my inner circle knows that I highly value the hedonistic philosophy, and that I live by the Indonesian concept of *'jam karet'*. In my youth I was often called 'lazy Indo' by my family, and even though I sensed a motivational undertone, it touched me. At this point in my life I am thrilled to prove them wrong, but even more excited to make them proud.

The ferocious trajectory of writing this thesis would not have gone so smoothly if my interests did not match the topic of this thesis. I was fortunate enough to get in touch with my roots, and further discover the Indo identity whilst writing this thesis. For this opportunity, and the exquisite supervision and collaboration during the process I would like to thank dr. Caroline Essers. An obvious shout-out goes to the Indo community and all respondents that participated in this study. And I am not afraid to give myself a very small and humble pat on the back, because what is life if you cannot appreciate your own achievements. But in the end, my biggest thank goes out to my family. My mother Helen, my father Ronaldus, and my little sister Deniece. They have not largely contributed to this thesis, nor my tuition fee, but they have been my solid ground for all those years. I love them, and I know for a fact that they will roll with me 'till the sun goes down.

To everyone that shows interest in this thesis, I highly recommend you to listen to the songs 'Rumah Saya' by Doe Maar and 'Wat is een Indo?' by Wouter Muller. These songs emphasize the equivocal identity of Indos, and partly reflect and add an extra dimension to some narratives and discourses in this thesis. Enjoy the splendid read, and 'sampai jumpa lagi'!

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# 1. Introduction

An introduction of the topic of this thesis is displayed in this chapter, and the academic and societal relevance are discussed.

## 1.1 Introduction of the topic

‘Tempo Doeloe’ is an Indonesian term that literally translates to ‘good old times’. The term is often nostalgically used by Indo-Europeans and refers to the era of Dutch colonization of the Indonesian archipelago that was then called the Dutch East Indies (Gan, 2021). The historic understanding of this period is essential to comprehend the content and narrative of this thesis. Because of the colonization of Indonesia, many interracial marriages and relationships between Europeans, mainly Dutch men, and Indonesian natives took place (Pattynama, 2000). This resulted in a significant quantity of mixed-race inhabitants amongst the population of the colony, who are called Indo-Europeans (Doornbos et al., 2021). With the vast majority of the Indo-Europeans being from Dutch Indonesian descent (Willems, 2005; Doornbos et al., 2021), this thesis aims to focus on this ethnic group and refers to them as ‘Indos’ in the continuation of reporting. The Indos occupied a unique status in the colony whilst they could identify with both the native Indonesians and the Dutch, which would eventually drive them socially apart from both groups (Tajuddin & Stern, 2015). When Indonesia declared their independency in 1945, the Indos were forced to take on Indonesian citizenship if they wished to stay in Indonesia, or ultimately flee to the Netherlands if they remained a Dutch citizen (Willems, 2005; Doornbos et al., 2021). This caused what is called the ‘repatriation’ of approximately 300.000 Indos to their unknown yet official fatherland of which they never touched soil (de Vries, 2009; Willems, 2005). Even though their new country of residence was not the expected fatherland for the Indos, they presumably put their resentment aside and allegedly an uncomplicated assimilation in The Netherlands followed (Captain, 2014; de Vries, 2009; Pattynama, 2000). However, it seems that the resentment that the Indos experienced is still existing, causing a never-ending nostalgic desire for ‘Tempo Doeloe’ amongst the first generation Indos (Gan, 2021).

After delineating the historic narrative of the Indos in the Netherlands, it shows that they can be seen as distinctive from the Dutch. Pattynama (2000) even labels the Indos as the largest ethnic minority group in the Netherlands. When the Indos repatriated to the Netherlands they had to give up their jobs in Indonesia and join the labour market in the Netherlands. Ethnic minorities are often seen as a threat to the labour market because they exploit labour market

opportunities (Sithas & Surangi, 2021). This made it considerably difficult for the Indos to integrate well on the Dutch labour market since they were frequently seen as a threat and were subsequently excluded from the labour market as employees. As a response to labour market exclusion and as a means of economic survival, ethnic minorities proceed to employ entrepreneurship. Even though equal entrepreneurial opportunities are questioned when comparing ethnic minorities with natives, since natives have substantially more access to entrepreneurial capital (Ram & Smallbone, 2003; Addo, 2017). Considering equal entrepreneurial opportunities, it is interesting to note the concept of opportunity structures, which reflect the opportunities in the environment and availability to entrepreneurial capital for an entrepreneur to fulfil entrepreneurial potential (Kloosterman, 2010). A way to benefit from opportunity structures as an entrepreneur is to construct an entrepreneurial identity as it gives meaning to the individual's purpose of being an entrepreneur, making the process of discovering and exploiting opportunities more straightforward (Murnieks & Mosakowski, 2007). Entrepreneurial identity construction and opportunity structures are often interlinked, because the design of the opportunity structure influences the choices on how to construct an entrepreneurial identity in order to become successful (Ozasir Kacar & Essers, 2019). The two are also both discursive social constructs (Ozasir Kacar & Essers, 2019), meaning that social context is pivotal in understanding both concepts. Welter (2011) added that social context is of significant importance to entrepreneurial activities since it indicates the thresholds and boundaries of entrepreneurs. Basu (2004) emphasizes the importance of culture in relation to ethnic minority entrepreneurship and Ibrahim & Galt (2012) state that historical context is essential to understand ethnic minority entrepreneurship. The context of Indos in postcolonial the Netherlands will be drawn upon in this thesis, with the aim to better understand the construction of entrepreneurial identities amongst this ethnic minority group. Since most of the first-generation Indos are not entrepreneurial active, the focus of this study will be on the second-generation of Indos. The sole focus on the second-generation as the scope of this study can be backed up by the findings of Tao et al. (2020), who state that first-generation and second-generation should be treated as different generations in ethnic minority entrepreneurship. Although it is not proven that second-generation and third-generation are different relating to ethnic minority entrepreneurship as well, this study assumes that they are, and therefore excludes the third-generation as well. All generations of Indos experienced mental decolonization that developed over time, which resulted in a different attitude towards the Dutch culture between the generations (de Vries, 2009). This also indicates differences in postcolonial perspectives between generations, hence the focus will be on the second generation

only to restrain these differences from this study. Relating to the postcolonial perspective in this study, Frenkel and Shenav (2006) found that postcolonialism in management is shifting from binary to hybrid views. The difficulty to grasp the hybrid view on postcolonialism from multiple generations makes the choice of focus even more justified.

## **1.2 Academic and societal relevance**

In contemporary Dutch society the Indo community is becoming more and more prevalent. In 2017 the Dutch government initiated ‘the collective recognition of the Indo community in the Netherlands’. And in 2021 the government added an extra 20,4 million euros to the collective recognition to overcome the disappointment and resentment that sticks with the Indo community about the Dutch governmental and societal treatment of the repatriated Indos in the Netherlands (Ministry of general affairs, 2021). This indicates that the Indos in the Netherlands are a unique and special ethnic minority in the Netherlands, of which the recognition requires enhancement by studying their postcolonial behaviour. Way before this recognition by the government, Willems (2005) urged social scientists to further research the influence of the historically determined mixed identity, the mental remains of the war and colonization, and the process of emigration on the life and identities of Indos. The societal relevance of this research is to study the context of Indos in terms of entrepreneurial identities. And therefore contribute to the knowledge of the influence of the colonization on the Indos, as well as to foster the recognition of de Indo community in the Netherlands. A last note that is raised by Meijer (1995) is that studies regarding colonial history needs to take place swiftly in order to better understand the mental remains of the colonization and participation in contemporary Dutch society of the Indos, before all generations conscious of the colonization are extinct.

The postcolonial perspective that is exerted in this study adds societal relevance by elucidating the treatment of a colonized ethnic minority by a Western country. But in addition to that, the postcolonial perspective will increasingly contribute to existing literature and theories about ethnic minority entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial identity construction. There is a multitude of existing literature on ethnic minority entrepreneurship, but adding a postcolonial perspective is fairly novel and will expose the identity construction of formerly colonized and ostensibly oppressed ethnic minorities in Western society in their entrepreneurial career. It adds to the literature on how power structures and seemingly rooted exclusionary practices still play a role in unequal opportunities for ethnic minority entrepreneurs in becoming entrepreneurs, and how this issue is dealt with by the entrepreneurs by constructing an entrepreneurial identity. This



will be seen through a postcolonial lens since postcolonialism exposes inequality among other societal issues as the aftermath of colonialism (McEwan, 2001).

Furthermore, in terms of academic relevance many studies about ethnic minority entrepreneurship tend to over-generalize, resulting in undistinguished perceptions about distinctive ethnic minority entrepreneurs according to Nwankwo (2013). He states that not studying the historical and cultural context of an ethnic minority group leads to fuzziness in the understanding of the entrepreneurial behaviour. In addition to that, Ibrahim and Galt (2012) write about different immigration experiences having various outcomes for ethnic minority entrepreneurs, meaning that it is unsecure to generalize the behaviour of one ethnic group through another. Therefore, the entrepreneurial identity construction of Indos needs a contextual approach which will be executed in this research in order to comprehend this phenomenon. This thesis contributes to academic literature by embracing the growing trend of a contextual view on entrepreneurship that is found by Welter (2011). Additionally, Sithas and Surangi (2021) discovered a paradigm shift in ethnic minority entrepreneurship research from an interest in prevalent and more perceivable traits such as type of business and ethnicity towards a softer approach of sociological traits e.g. social context. This research takes this paradigm shift into account and therefore focuses on the contextual factors and sociological traits of an ethnic minority group to foster the understanding of their entrepreneurial identities. Willems (2005) proposes further research on the social evolution of the Indos as a colonial society and how this has affected their assimilation and settlement in the Netherlands. He also proposes research on how multiple backgrounds have an effect on the second and third generation of Indos, and how the colonial heritage of their ancestors influences how they construct their identity. This postcolonial perspective on ethnic minority entrepreneurship is exactly the realm where this research will contribute to academic literature, with a focus on entrepreneurial identity construction.

### **1.3 Objective and research question**

The objective for this research is to get a better understanding of the experiences of entrepreneurial identity construction by second-generation Indos in the Netherlands in order to contribute to theories on ethnic minority entrepreneurship, postcolonialism, and entrepreneurial identity construction. This will be attained by examining the context of the Indo entrepreneur through a postcolonial perspective. Therefore, the following research question is formulated:

- How do second-generation ethnic minorities of Dutch-Indonesian descent experience the construction of their entrepreneurial identity, taking their context in a postcolonial era into account?

#### **1.4 Outline of the thesis**

The thesis started with an introduction of the topic, and the academic and societal relevance of this topic is discussed. The next chapter discusses the relevant theories and concepts relating to the topic at hand, and puts them into the perspective of this study. Then the methods of research are discussed, and how data is gathered and analysed. Subsequently the results will be presented, interpreted, and discussed using a variety of quotes from the respondents, leading up to the conclusion. The last part includes the discussion about the research process, findings, and future research.

## 2. Theoretical background

The most important theories and constructs relating to the research question are discussed in this chapter, and the conceptual model is shown.

### 2.1 Second generation Indos and entrepreneurship

The introduction of this thesis briefly describes the historical situation of second-generation Indos in the Netherlands. This generation is typified by their mixed Dutch/Indonesian ethnicity of which at least one parent is born in Indonesia (de Vries, 2009). The literature about this generation is plentiful and a consensus is that the second-generation of Indos develop an identity that is shaped by both the Dutch and Indo culture. And also having to deal with confusing power relations since their parents found themselves in-between two ethnic groups, superior to the native Indonesians and subordinate to the Dutch (Aartsma et al., 2009; Pattynama, 2000). This subordinate attitude towards the Dutch is characterized by some typical 'Indo' traits of which one was to adapt (Aartsma et al., 2009), resulting in what de Vries (2009) claims as a successful assimilation in the Netherlands. How this relates to entrepreneurship is also briefly discussed by de Vries (2009), as she states that the Indo generally lacks assertiveness to take on the role of an entrepreneur. This finding was also established by Robinson (1994) in 1994 where he stated that Indos are generally not entrepreneurial or occupy leadership positions, and do not make themselves heard in society. The second-generation nowadays allegedly still believes that this narrative applies to them and the ones who do not relate to this narrative are seen as an exception (de Vries, 2009).

The definition of entrepreneurship that is accepted in this thesis can be highly associated with the alleged lacking traits of Indos. Long (1983) studied several definitions of entrepreneurship and extracted three main themes which are *uncertainty and risk*; *complementary managerial competence*, and *creative opportunism*. The entrepreneurs who are studied in this research will be assessed on these themes to see if they are an exception to the narrative of second-generation Indos. Furthermore, in contemporary Dutch society it is unknown how the Indo community participates on the field of entrepreneurship in terms of numbers. Their mixed ethnic background is disregarded in statistics and they are treated as Dutch natives. The absence of distinction in statistics and the deficiency of literature on how second-generation Indos relate to entrepreneurship raises a valid question that is acknowledged by this thesis. And even though de Vries (1995) stated that every member of the second-generation Indos has their own story and meaning of what being an Indo is, he found that their resemblances are uncanny. Aartsma

et al. (2009) attribute the drive and passion of Indos to an emotional source that entails the impetuous history and the tension of adhering to two cultures. They add that this emotional source is deeply rooted and difficult to explain, and can be indicated as ‘the silent force’ of Indos. This theory is used and assessed in this thesis during the interviews with the Indo entrepreneurs to see how it drives them and how it can be described. When talking about the alleged smooth assimilation of Indos in the Netherlands (de Vries, 2009), Pattynama (2000) theorizes that the ‘silence’ of Indos whilst settling in the Netherlands can be described as masquerading instead of adapting and assimilating. The narrative of a smooth assimilation that is socially accepted by the Dutch was created by the Indos with the use of masquerading at the cost of their own culture. This phenomenon can be compared to what Bhabha (1984) calls mimicry, and entails imitating the dominant power to fulfil the need for identity. Pattynama (2000) also stated that masquerading influenced the construction of identities of the Indos, resulting in hidden identities. This thesis will study how this alleged mimicry, masquerading and hidden identities of second-generation Indos influence the construction of their entrepreneurial identities.

## **2.2 Postcolonialism**

The aftermath of colonization is generally indicated with the term ‘postcolonialism’ (Frenkel & Shenhav, 2006), and also includes the aftermath of the Dutch colonization of Indonesia (Pattynama, 2000). Postcolonialism refers to the legacy of colonization that is often politically loaded (Rizvi et al., 2006), and inevitably embeds power relations that retain marginalization, powerlessness, and cultural imperialism (Alvi, 2020). Postcolonial theory highlights the disadvantaged position of colonized that is rooted in Western hegemony (Morales et al., 2021). Frenkel and Shenhav (2006) add that postcolonial theory involves the experience of former colonization and the past and present effects on society. This study accepts the statements of Morales et al. (2021) and Frenkel and Shenhav (2006) and departs from these theories by using a postcolonial perspective on entrepreneurial identity construction by second-generation Indos in the Netherlands. Dirlik (1994) however, argues that a postcolonial perspective is typified as a discourse that is often produced by the West, and thus fails to comply with the sentiment of the colonized. This study will particularly focus on the colonized and their life stories, with the main researcher of this study being from the third-generation of Indos to emphasize the postcolonial view from the colonized perspective. Taking on this perspective created a critique on postcolonial theory in general as it merely focuses on the oppression and marginalization that is still taking place in contemporary society (Westwood & Jack 2007). But with

postcolonialism being defined as the aftermath of colonization (Frenkel and Shenhav, 2006), the literature grants very few attention to the personal consequences of colonized people in a postcolonial context. In light of the Indos these consequences go beyond the ‘regular’ narrative of oppression and marginalization and involve traumatic experiences like wars, being captured in concentration camps, and forced migration to an unknown ‘home’ country.

Bhabha (1994) found that postcolonial studies underline the importance of unequal power relations in order to understand the formation of culture and the transfer of knowledge. Frenkel and Shenhav (2006) also indicate that a postcolonial perspective can disrupt the colonial worldview, and that it gives a voice to the subordinates to challenge that view. As argued by McEwan (2001), the shift from colonialism to ‘post’ colonialism criticizes the colonial discursive, which results in postcolonialism highlighting oppressive practices. She additionally states that a postcolonial approach to discourse attempts to expose inequalities and create agency for non-Western people. Rizvi et al. (2006) claim that postcolonialism is not amenable to dominant discourses to treat the colonized as victims, showing systemic denial of defective residuals of colonization. How much the Indos are affected by this denial is concealed by the alleged smooth assimilation and their mixed ethnicity (Pattynama, 2000). An interesting theory relating to the Indos mixed ethnicity is that of Said (1978), who brought the term ‘Other’ to life that described the prejudiced view of the West towards ‘Others’ from the East with a negative connotation. The term shows that the world in a postcolonial era is still centred around the power and knowledge of the West (Said, 1978; Mohrem, 2020). Since Indos are from Dutch and Indonesian descent, it can be questioned if they are seen as ‘Others’ in Dutch society. The earlier mentioned confusing power structure of superiority towards Indonesians and inferiority to the Dutch, intensifies this question. However, Pattynama (2000) claims that the Dutch saw the Indos as ‘Others’ since the Dutch cultural supremacy classified the Indo culture as ‘Other’. The context of Indos in the Netherlands also relates to the concept of hybridity, which is the mixing and integration of colonizers’ and colonized cultures (Lye, 1998). The critique on the concept of hybridity is that it can be viewed as oppressive since the colonized lack agency (Lye, 1998). The inferior culture of ‘Others’ has to flow into the supreme and dominant culture of the West (Bhabha, 1984). So hybridity can also be seen as a postcolonial structure of power relations and oppression (Frenkel, 2008). It makes this thesis worthy of finding out whether Indos were found to be treated as ‘Others’ and how they experienced agency in hybridity in postcolonial the Netherlands. The earlier mentioned concepts of mimicry and hybridity founded by Bhabha (1984) are used in this thesis as a conceptual framework on how agency by second-generation Indos is experienced.

### 2.3 Entrepreneurial identity construction

An entrepreneurial identity can be defined as a socially constructed concept that gives meaning to questions of who an entrepreneur is and what an entrepreneur does (Anderson & Warren, 2011; Navis & Glynn, 2011; Shepherd & Patzelt, 2018). Expressing an entrepreneurial identity can enhance the identification of entrepreneurial opportunities (Wagenschwanz, 2020), as well as creating legitimacy (Marlow & McAdam, 2013). It also fosters a sense of meaning and motivation regarding the actions of an entrepreneur as it reflects the individual's identity (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011), which fulfils the requirement of an entrepreneur to be distinctive (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2018; Shepherd & Haynie, 2009). As Burke and Reitzes (1981) declared: *“An identity is like a compass helping us steer a course of interaction in a sea of social meaning.”*

Entrepreneurial identities are constructed on an organizational and individual level (Navis & Glynn, 2011), whereby this research focuses on entrepreneurial identities on the individual level. Anderson and Warren (2011) note that entrepreneurial identity is not a passive concept, since identity work needs to occur to construct an entrepreneurial identity. Identity work is described as an individual's communicative and mental process of creating a self-narrative with the use of cultural resources, memories, and desire to understand their identity and self (Alvesson et al., 2008). Identity work therefore extends the descriptive character of entrepreneurial identity to who and what an entrepreneur wants to become in order to gain an advantage (Alvesson et al., 2008; Anderson & Warren, 2011). Gill and Larson (2013) add that entrepreneurs construct an entrepreneurial identity that fits with the conceptualization of their current identity, but going forward also seek to align their entrepreneurial identity with discourses of their ideal self. This study progresses on these theories and concludes that the Indo identity of an Indo entrepreneur is closely linked to their entrepreneurial identity, since it is aligned with their current identity. An entrepreneurial identity becomes noticeable when entrepreneurs engage in rather traditional activities such as commercializing, managing, or growing the business (Wagenschwanz, 2020). These activities are not observed in this study, but this theory will be used in subtracting the entrepreneurial identity from the Indo entrepreneurs during the interviews.

A widely discussed paradox in entrepreneurial identity theories is the distinctive and conforming character of the concept (Anderson & Warren, 2011; Navis & Glynn, 2011). The need of an entrepreneur to be distinctive and unique (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2018; Shepherd & Haynie, 2009), is contradictory to the need of belongingness and conformity (Shepherd & Haynie, 2009). Being distinctive as an entrepreneur benefits efficacy, entrepreneurial

opportunities (Mmbaga et al., 2020), and legitimacy (Navis & Glynn, 2011). Opposed to being distinctive, an entrepreneur conforms to demands, needs, and rules in order to fit in and also gain legitimacy (Middleton, 2013). Smith & Anderson (2003) claim that entrepreneurs also conform to identities of successful entrepreneurs, with success being the stimulating factor of conformity in both cases. An entrepreneur can be seen as an individual entity, which contradicts with the need to belong to a social group (Jones et al., 2019). The sense of belonging and differentiation from social groups, also social context, that an entrepreneur experiences is contributing to the construction of the entrepreneurial identity (Donnellon et al., 2014). For Indo entrepreneurs who are allegedly seen as ‘Others’ in a Dutch societal context it is interesting to see how they experience a sense of belonging or conformity in the field of entrepreneurship. The paradoxical nature of entrepreneurial identities causes entrepreneurs to embrace hybrid identities (Navis & Glynn, 2011). A hybrid identity entails entrepreneurs who possess multiple identities to combine the meaning of both identities to foster entrepreneurial actions or decisions and vice versa (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011). This theory can be linked to the cultural hybridity theory by Bhabha (1984), and this thesis will study how Indo entrepreneurs operate both types of hybridity in their entrepreneurial life story.

#### **2.4 Entrepreneurial identity construction and context**

To understand the construction of entrepreneurial identities it is important to take context into account, as entrepreneurial identities are context-specific and can be interpreted based on social norms, beliefs, and culture (Jones et al., 2019). Radu-Lefebvre et al. (2021) add that entrepreneurial identity is inseparable from context since it is produced through narratives and interaction with the sociocultural environment. Context relating to entrepreneurial identities involves the socioeconomic environment of an entrepreneur (Carlsson et al., 2013), whereas this thesis focuses on the social and cultural environment of the entrepreneur from a postcolonial perspective. Jones et al. (2009) argue that there has been a neglect of context relating to entrepreneurship theory by literature, whilst context is considered in this study to add this view to existing literature.

An entrepreneurial identity is socially constructed (Navis & Glynn, 2011) and therefore it is important to take the social context of an entrepreneur into account. Based on the findings of Sánchez-Rada and Iglesias (2019) we can define the social context of an entrepreneur as the entirety of interaction with groups or individuals which describe the environment in which social activity takes place. Werthes et al. (2017) add that social interaction and discourses shape the entrepreneur’s identity. They are imposed on the environment of the entrepreneur and

cannot be chosen unconstrained to shape the ideal self (Wieland, 2010). Meaning that the ideal self is created by discourses that are forced upon the entrepreneur. However, interests and social attractiveness decide which discourses wield more influence on the process of identity construction (Wieland, 2010). Wieland's (2010) theory is used in this thesis to find the dominant discourses in the Indo entrepreneur's social environment that shapes their entrepreneurial identity. Donnellon et al. (2014) state that social context is a significant contributor to entrepreneurial identities, since it provides the social signs that influence the entrepreneur's sense of belonging or differentiation from their social groups. This theory links with the previously discussed theory about conformity versus differentiation in terms of entrepreneurship by Anderson and Warren (2011) and Navis and Glynn (2011). Both theories will be used to find similarities in the experiences of Indo entrepreneurs in terms of this paradox and how it relates to their postcolonial behaviour. Social context influences the motives, cognition, intention and action upon entrepreneurial activities (Liñán et al., 2016; Welter, 2011), and Dy and Agwunobi (2019) found that it influences the entrepreneur's identity as well. Family can also be seen as part of the social context of an entrepreneur (Welter, 2011), and Pio and Essers (2013) found that the opinions and expectation of family members influence how the entrepreneurial identity manifests itself. Based on this theory the Indo entrepreneurs in this research will be questioned on how this entity influenced their entrepreneurial identity, since family ties are very strong and common within the Indo culture. The close link of culture with social capital is found by Hayton and Cacciotti (2014), who state that culture moderates the strength, utilization, and availability of social capital that will impact the entrepreneurial identity.

Culture can be defined as *'a set of shared values, beliefs and norms of a group or community'* (Basu & Altinay, 2002). Whilst Hofstede (1991) defines culture as *'a collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another'*. These two definitions reach consensus in that cultures differ among groups or communities, and that culture is socially constructed. A culture provides its members with codes of conduct (Stephan & Uhlaner, 2010) and a dominant logic of action for behaviour (Swidler, 2003). This ultimately shapes the members of the culture in a way that social interaction is structured through the norms of a culture (Stephan & Uhlaner, 2010). Cultures shaping their members relates to the findings of Glinka and Brzozowska (2015), who state that self, identity, and culture are interdependent. Meaning that culture shapes identity and therefore shapes the entrepreneurial identity. The Indo culture in this report entails a mixed culture of Indonesian and Dutch aspects. Pattynama (2000) argues that the supremacy of the Dutch culture in the



Netherlands resulted in masquerading and mimicry practices of the Indos to the detriment of the Indo culture. Cultural values determine to which degree a society partakes in entrepreneurial behaviours like risk taking and independent thinking. Drori et al. (2009) found that every entrepreneur uses culture in a different way to act on entrepreneurial activities. Hayton and Cacciotti (2014) state that ethnic entrepreneurship involves multiple cultures that shape the cultural identity of an entrepreneur. The combination of multiple cultures to adhere to, which is also the case with Indos, influences the beliefs and values of an entrepreneur (Frederking, 2004). Another interesting theory that Frederking (2004) has found is that of the ‘organization of culture’, and means that the varying influence of culture on entrepreneurship is shaped by certain aspects. These aspects include the conditions in which ethnic minorities arrive in a country, the political and economic climate which they are confronted with, and the unique history of ethnic minorities and the development within the new country of residence. These are aspects that emphasize a contextual approach towards ethnic minority entrepreneurship given each group’s unique status, which is also the case with Indos.

## **2.5 Entrepreneurial identity construction and postcolonialism**

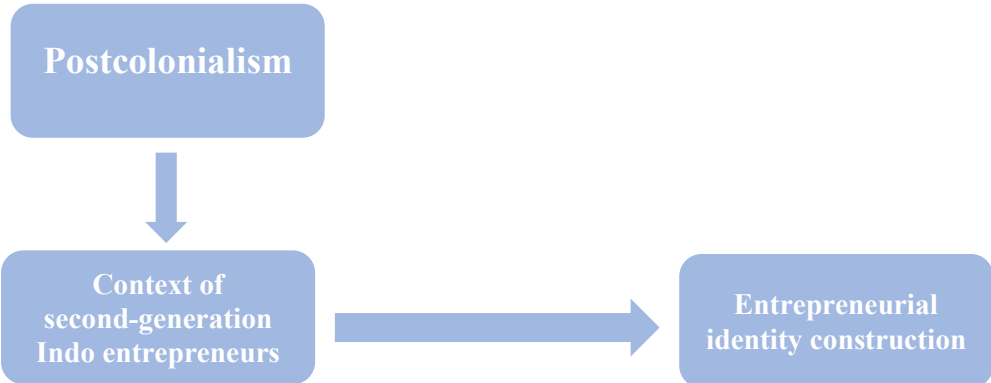
Postcolonialism can be used as a perspective to understand the dominance of Western society on business practices (Pio & Essers, 2013; Frenkel & Shenhav, 2006), which includes entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial identity construction. It also sheds light on the politics around those practices and how they are shaped to control others (Essers & Tedmanson, 2014; Frenkel & Shenhav, 2006). Essers and Tedmanson (2014) also state that the judgement with different standards of non-Westerners in terms of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial identities is rooted in postcolonialism. And that postcolonialism can be a helpful perspective in understanding rooted exclusionary practices by Western society, which also influences politics and culture. Westwood and Jack (2007) state that postcolonialism releases the colonized of heavy oppression and marginalization, which restores people’s agency to construct an identity. This identity is considered strategically essential in the resistance of domination and exclusion by the colonizers. Frenkel (2008) does however claim that postcolonial contexts have a legacy of subjugation, which in the light of entrepreneurship affects business practices. The critique of this study on postcolonial theory and its deficiency to account for the personal consequences of heavy experiences during colonial times is also valid regarding entrepreneurial identities. This study encompasses the experiences of war, concentration camps and forced immigration to find how it shapes entrepreneurial identities in a postcolonial context. Ozkazanc-Pan (2014) adds that postcolonialism highlights that knowledge ensures identities to

take shape because people understand themselves and others through historically grounded relations of gender, race, class, and power. Meaning that the historically grounded relations of Indos relating to the Dutch creates a certain type of knowledge by the Indos that shapes their identity. It is therefore interesting to study this relation thoroughly in order to explain the construction of their entrepreneurial identity.

Entrepreneurs in a postcolonial context tend to lack entrepreneurial capacity in terms of skills and initiative as a result of the colonial oppression (Tipton, 2008). The supremacy of the colonizers diminishes the opportunities of new entrepreneurs, since they lack entrepreneurial capital due to their inferior position in society (de Clercq & Voronov, 2009). The lack of resources that is suggested by these theories will be reflected on the context of Indo entrepreneurs to see how they experienced these aspects. Solving the alleged issue of lacking resources would encourage an entrepreneur to conform to the colonizer’s practices, and therefore taking on a hybrid identity that mixes two cultural views (Frenkel, 2008; Frenkel & Shenhav, 2006). Moving along multiple cultural frameworks like the Indos, creates a frame of reference that shapes the entrepreneurial identity (Alvi, 2020). Since Indos are of mixed ethnicity it is interesting to see how their hybrid identities take shape, whilst Essers and Tedmanson (2014) found that entrepreneurs who are seen as ‘Others’ take on mimicry and masking practices. This suggests that a hybrid identity can be dominated by mimicry and masking to adhere to the colonizer’s identities in order to belong.

**2.6 Conceptual model**

The relation between the concepts that are described above are represented in the conceptual model below. The context of second-generation Indo entrepreneurs is influenced by postcolonialism, and this thesis studies how this relates to entrepreneurial identity construction.



### **3. Methodology**

The methods of conducting this research are discussed in this chapter, starting with the general research methods. Subsequently the processes of data collection and analysis are discussed.

#### **3.1 Research methods**

This study aims to find an answer to the question of how second-generation Indos in the Netherlands construct their entrepreneurial identity, taking their context in a postcolonial era into account. Given the complex character of this question, a qualitative approach is used since this method is suited for understanding complex phenomenon (Silverman, 2020; Neergaard & Ulhøi, 2007). This study is premised on social constructivism, taking on the perspective that reality and knowledge are socially constructed (Famiola, 2021).

The choice for collecting qualitative data is preceded by the choice for a deductive and inductive method of research. The deductive method tests theories based on a thorough review of existing literature (Pearse, 2021), whilst the inductive method ensures that data is collected first, after which conclusions and theories are established (Thomas, 2006). It is often assumed that these are opposing methods, but can also be viewed as complementary since they adopt a different role in a research stage (Pearse, 2021), as is the case in this study. The deductive method within this research entails the literature review and conceptualization of the main topics, and the operationalization of these concepts to turn them into more measurable terms. There is however not a preconceived theory in this research that is tested, which means that the inductive method is utilized for theory construction based on the collected data. Therefore, this study is inspired by an inductive method which is the grounded theory method. Corbin and Strauss (2014) defined the grounded theory method as the construction of theory based on systematically gathered and analysed data with the use of an iterative process that considers and compares literature, data, and the emerging theory. This means that the method takes no preconceived theory in mind as the grounded theory method allows theories to emerge from the data. Corbin and Strauss (2014) argue that these theories are more likely to resemble reality and offer insight and understanding than other methods. These characteristics of the grounded theory method comply with the purpose of this study to better understand in what way the context of Indos influences the construction of their entrepreneurial identities.

In light of the qualitative nature of this study, textual data is gathered using semi-structured life story interviews. Gathering textual data is suited for studying the context of Indo entrepreneurs, as it gives clarification and understanding to complex phenomenon (Thomas, 2006; Silverman,

2020; Neergaard & Ulhøi, 2007). The life story interviews are chosen as the ideal vehicle to gather the textual data because it gathers in-depth information about someone's life and allows participants to tell their life stories in detail. It uses a holistic approach which captures all life events that matter relating to the topic at hand, allowing the researcher to get a better understanding of a situation (Atkinson, 2012). Atkinson (2012) states that the essence of a life story interview is to discover how people see themselves at that specific time, and how they want others to see them. This goes hand in hand with the entrepreneurial identities that are studied in this research. This interview technique apprehends the stories and narratives that are of importance to this study, because it describes 'why' or 'how' something is, after which theories can be extracted. The life story interviews are semi-structured with open ended questions to let the participant and interviewer expand on their questions and answers. This is necessary for life story interviews since participants need to be guided through the interview to extract and capture anything of relevance, complying with the inductive method of this research.

### **3.2 Data source & sampling**

The main data source and unit of analysis of this study are 'Indo entrepreneurs' in the Netherlands. They are interviewed using semi-structured life story interviews of which textual data is gathered. The term 'Indo entrepreneur' and the participants' characteristics need to be demarcated to fit within the realm of this study. A first requirement is that one or more parent(s) of the 'Indo entrepreneur' has lived in Indonesia in times of the colonization to validate the postcolonial idiosyncrasy of the participant. A second requirement is that the 'Indo entrepreneur' is from the second-generation of Indos in the Netherlands, and is raised in the Netherlands. This ensures that participants are all equal regarding their postcolonial view, whereas participants that are not raised in the Netherlands can experience their entrepreneurial identity construction differently. A third requirement is that the participant is entrepreneurial active for over four years, and has one or more employee(s). This indicates the maturity of the entrepreneur and that presumably an entrepreneurial identity is already constructed. There is no requirement in terms of the type of business of the 'Indo entrepreneur', since a sample is drawn from the entire population 'Indo entrepreneurs'. It is however monitored that there was no excessive overrepresentation of any type of business within the sample.

The subsequent step in this trajectory was to identify and find 'Indo entrepreneurs' who are willing to participate. There are no existing databases that indicate whether an entrepreneur is Indo given their complex mixed ethnicity, so participants needed to be found using the

researcher's network and through word of mouth. When participants were found, snowball sampling was used by asking participants to recruit and recommend more participants from their network (Heckathorn, 1997). Beneficial to using snowball sampling is the tight and close character of the Indo community. This strong character of the Indo community is also expressed in the existence of Indo business networks as the 'Indo Business Club' and 'Business Brandal', who both were contacted to recruit participants for this study.

The selection of participants to this study is called sampling, and was the next important step in the trajectory. Purposeful sampling is used in this study, which means that the researcher selected participants based on their own judgement of suitability (Palinkas et al., 2013). This ensures that participants meet the before mentioned requirements and not too many participants have Indonesia-related businesses. Having an overbalance of participants with Indonesia-related businesses can influence the outcome of the study since they are more likely to be biased towards their Indonesian heritage. Purposeful sampling can combine theory-driven sampling and data-driven sampling. This means that sampling is executed based on the theoretical framework of this study, and when there was still need for additional data as the research unfolded, then data-driven sampling would be used (Palinkas et al., 2013).

This study interviewed eleven 'Indo entrepreneurs' of the second-generation Indos, the characteristics as age, gender, and type of business can be viewed in appendix I. The sample size of eleven is deemed right considering the time frame of this study. Determining the sample size is closely linked to the concept of saturation, which means that interviewing additional participants does not yield novel data (Marshall et al., 2013). Within the purposeful sampling ideology can be determined whether collected data is saturated, or when additional data is necessary (Palinkas et al., 2013; Neergaard & Ulhøi, 2007). Meaning that the sample size could be amended during the research, which is backed up by the statement of Coyne (1997) that sampling procedures in qualitative research can be flexible and unsystematic. An interesting note is that of Neergaard & Ulhøi, (2007), who state that sampling size in qualitative research is relative and that saturation is a myth because additional interviews always gather new data and insights. Whilst Marshall et al. (2013) did find that saturation can be reached, and recommended to thoroughly examine the expectations and culture of the study to agree upon an estimated adequate sample size.

It is unknown how large the entire population of 'Indo entrepreneurs' in the Netherlands is, and if it represents the population. This means that this study is unable to generalize with the chosen sample size, however, qualitative research intends to explain the complexity of the phenomenon rather than to generalize (Payne & Williams, 2005). And although this study is context bound,

the theories that emerge from this study might be generalizable towards theories of ethnic minority entrepreneurship. This notion is called theoretical generalization and entails generalizing the theoretical findings to a larger cluster of theories instead of generalizing them with a larger collective (Eisenhart, 2009).

The measures that are used during this study are incorporated in the questions of the semi-structured interviews, and can be found in appendix II. These questions derive from an operationalization of abstract terms relating to this study, which can be found in appendix III. These abstract terms emerge from the theoretical framework and increased validity triangulation is used by means of the thesis circle. Increased validity triangulation contains other researchers validating the measurement instrument of a study to verify if the instrument is adequate (Moran-Ellis et al., 2006). Using a questionnaire for the semi-structured interviews also increased the reliability of the collected data because all participants received the same questions. The validity of the data can however be in dispute with using semi-structured interviews because it can cause participants to go less into detail about a question. This is overcome by asking follow-up questions so the participant elaborated on a topic, providing valid data.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

The semi-structured interviews are audio-recorded with consent of the interviewee. The audio fragments that are non-textual are manually transcribed to textual data using verbatim transcription. The verbatim method is used to capture the way a participant says something and can contribute to the narrative (Bleijenbergh, 2015).

The main part of this study is the analysis of the transcribed textual data in order to draw conclusions and theories. The collected data is analysed using a thematic analysis method and looks at all the collected data in order to find patterns and recurring themes (Rowley, 2012; Neergaard & Ulhøi, 2007). The data is coded to structure and crystallize the data into themes, which resulted in the coding scheme that can be found in appendix III. After coding the data into themes, the interpretation of the data began to extract meaning from it. The data is interpreted using discourse analysis, which examines the data beyond the plain text and considers elements such as the tone of speaking, body language, and context. The researcher is from Dutch-Indonesian descent and therefore it is argued that he is better able to value and interpret data as he 'speaks' the same mental language. This involves 'Indo terms' that are used by the respondents and monologues where they describe 'Indo attitudes', resulting in better interpretation. This way of knowledge production is called situated knowledge and involves the

researcher to continuously reflect on the context and relation to others in the research process from its own stance (Caretta, 2014). Hunter (2009) adds that the essence in situated knowledge is for the researcher to be engaged and that knowledge is manifested through this engagement. The acknowledgement of the role of the researcher on the outcome of a study is called reflexivity (Neergaard & Uihøi, 2007; Rowley, 2012). The researcher takes on a social constructivist approach in this study, which makes it inevitable that the researcher's values will influence the process. In this study it is known that the researcher is also and Indo and can relate to this ethnic group. The reflexivity in this study is considered as added value in interpreting the results and drawing conclusions. Other research philosophies might not support this method of interpretation, making this approach in line with the epistemology of this study.

### **3.4 Research ethics**

Research ethics are considered throughout this study by treating participants with utmost respect and confidentiality. The life story interviews can be a sensitive journey as the researcher enters the personal world of the participant, desiring a respectful and sensitive attitude from the researcher (Atkinson, 2012). Reaching out towards potential participants is done with care and on an individual basis. If participants wished to participate then they have signed a form of consent, and their consent was also necessary for audio-recording the interviews. The participants were well informed prior to the interviews with the purpose and timeframe, and were free to abstain or withdraw from participation at any time. All sensitive information is treated discreetly, and the participants' names remain anonymous and are treated as confidential information.

## 4. Results

After conducting and analysing eleven life story interviews with Indo entrepreneurs, the thematic analysis produced five main themes. The themes all relate to the research question on how second-generation Indo entrepreneurs experience the construction of their entrepreneurial identity.

### 4.1 Breaking Indo stereotypes

Indos are represented in the Netherlands in all shapes and sizes. Black or white, assertive or sub assertive, entrepreneurial or not entrepreneurial. And despite their multifariousness, a returning topic in the interviews was the stereotype of Indos that apparently does exist. Stereotypes can be the result of identities, and reversely stereotypes can influence identities. The Indo stereotype can be described as being very modest, humble, and submissive, and relating to entrepreneurship the avoidance of risks. This is illustrated by three quotes:

**Shelza:** *“I think that Indos in general are very modest, and experience difficulties with putting themselves in the spotlight.”*

**Edo:** *“My parents were very submissive, people could walk into their house and steal stuff from the fridge. My parents thought that was funny and amusing while I remember it as not so amusing.”*

**Dimas:** *“Entrepreneurship equals risks, and the core behaviour of the Indo community is to avoid risks. Working at the government, being a civil servant, old and familiar.”*

These are three of many quotes about stereotypical Indo character traits. The narratives of the Indo entrepreneurs exposed a negative sentiment towards this stereotype, as is visible in Edo’s quote. The humble and submissive attitude can be a result of marginalization and oppression during colonial times, although this is not proven. A theory that is closely linked to these quotes is that of Aartsma et al. (2009), who stated that the subordinate attitude from Indos towards the Dutch is characterized by some typical ‘Indo’ traits of which one was to adapt. The most important discourse about dealing with this stereotype is that the interviewed entrepreneurs either resisted against this stereotype or did not believe this stereotype applied to them, since they believed that the stereotype Indo is not suited to become an entrepreneur. The entrepreneurs committed effort in constructing their entrepreneurial identities in order to disjoin from the Indo stereotype that is deemed unsuitable with regard to entrepreneurship. These



efforts and the divergence of this stereotype by the entrepreneurs are shown through the following quotes:

**Budiman:** *“I am raised in Rotterdam, and some argue that Rotterdammers are very eloquent and have a big mouth. And I consciously choose to adopt this, to make sure I would become harder and protect myself, even though I know it is not in my nature and it is very forced. I get annoyed by the typical humble Indo and it makes me think ‘come on, show some more power, stand up for yourself and tell them what you want’. So being confronting and hard is really something that I had to purposefully learn.”*

**Oktafian:** *“The Indo modesty really is a thing, but it never stood in my way. The average Indo is very reserved but I deviate from the average Indo. I always want to be in the spotlight and do not possess that modesty, I do what I want.”*

**Edo:** *“We were very submissive and I always have refrained myself from this type of behaviour. But doing so also made me bleed for it.”*

It is uncertain if the character traits of the ‘average Indo’ can be attributed to their colonial history. But what is certain is that the entrepreneurs explicitly mention that they deviate from the stereotype. Budiman expresses his aversion towards the stereotypical Indo behaviour and took measures to overcome this behaviour. This relates to the theory that entrepreneurs exert identity work to construct and sustain an entrepreneurial identity, as discussed by Essers and Benschop (2009). Additionally, Oktafian mentioned that the modesty never “*stood in his way*”, giving both quotes a negative undertone towards stereotypical Indo behaviour. This negative association was also expressed by Edo, who implicitly also mentioned that it was a difficult process to refrain from that type of behaviour. The overall narrative of the interviewed entrepreneurs about this stereotypical behaviour is that they experience it as a sub assertive attitude that does not comply with entrepreneurship. This conforms with the findings of de Vries (2009) and Robinson (1994), who found that Indos generally lack assertiveness to take on the role of an entrepreneur. The deviation of the stereotype by the interviewed entrepreneurs is also in line with the findings of de Vries (2009), who stated that the second-generation allegedly still believes that the narrative of sub assertiveness applies to them and the ones who do not relate to this narrative are seen as an exception. The respondents in this research also claim to be an exception, and whether it is a born or trained deviation, the acknowledgement of this deviating behaviour contributes to the process of constructing an entrepreneurial identity.

Another typical Indo trait that emerged from the interviews is the tendency to give, to please, and to be kind to people. This trait is detected on the crossroads of cultural embeddedness and stereotypical behaviour, and can also be linked to submissive behaviour. The majority of the respondents struggled with this trait relating to entrepreneurship and also had to overcome this kind of behaviour, as Gita, Farah and Budiman stated:

**Gita:** *“You want to be kind, but not at the expense of business outcomes. I came back from saying yes and amen to my customers and became harder. Now they sometimes banteringly say: ‘hey Gita, you act like a Belanda (Dutchmen)’.”*

**Farah:** *“I use bamboo as a metaphor to describe myself, I flow along with a solid ground. But at a certain moment I struggled a lot with pleasing too much and I thought wait a minute, I want to be autonomous and independent combined with authenticity and setting boundaries. And I think that going too far in pleasing people can be ascribed to my Indo roots.”*

**Budiman:** *“Pleasing others is definitely embedded in the Indo culture, and I still have that part in me that wants to be liked by others. I had to force that behaviour to the background with the help of a life coach. Constantly pleasing others was an issue for me and in the end it becomes unbearable.”*

These quotes show that the trait of giving, pleasing, and being kind to people takes on excessive forms on the entrepreneurs as Budiman states it as *“unbearable”* and Gita states it is *“at the expense of business outcomes”*. The struggle that Farah experienced also indicates that these excessive forms are judged as negative, especially towards entrepreneurship. Therefore, the entrepreneurs embraced identity work in order to *“become harder”* and *“set boundaries”*. These examples of identity work that are discussed above comply with the statements of Alvesson et al. (2008) and Anderson and Warren (2011) that entrepreneurs exert identity work to construct an entrepreneurial identity to generate an advantage.

#### **4.2 Living in a postcolonial era**

The second-generation of Indos were born and raised in a postcolonial era. Their experiences of living in this era have shaped their identities and flowed through on their entrepreneurial identities. The interviews showed that the second-generation is already distanced from the colonial times since they did not consciously experience it, and no noticeable resentment is detected in their narratives. This is illustrated by quotes from Putri and Shelza:

**Putri:** *“I think it is really heavy and inhuman what happened back there, but there are things in life we can’t change. We can look back and be angry, but we can also focus on the present. My generation doesn’t know the entire story, it is fractured. And we didn’t experience the misery.”*

**Shelza:** *“I am very aware and conscious of the many things that happened back then, which we disapprove now. But you have to look at it from that time’s perspective. Colonization happened back then, but is now unthinkable.”*

The phlegmatic attitude that Putri expresses towards the colonial times can be ascribed to her personality, but is also the general feeling that is expressed in the interviews. Shelza adding the perspective of time also indicates her distance from the colonial times. Given the respondents’ distance from colonial times, it is the next step to analyse what consequences they experienced from these times. Growing up in white dominated the Netherlands caused some agitating situations since the Indos were the first major ethnic group in the Netherlands with a different skin tone and physical appearance. The skin tone of the second-generation of Indos varied since their parents’ descendance also varied, but the majority has a brown skin tone. The respondents all talk about being discriminated based on their ethnicity in a sense, and it ranges from innocent comments to very disturbing practices. This is described by two quotes:

**Myrna:** *“When I was younger I experienced my different colour as difficult. I recall being in love with a boy in elementary school, but he didn’t like me back. He said that he didn’t want his future kids to drink chocolate milk during breastfeeding, because I had a brown skin tone. That really hurt me and made me cry. At that time you are only 11 years of age, I think that is not normal.”*

**Edo:** *“I was the only brown kid in the street where I grew up. And because of that I got beaten up multiple times. I even ended up in the hospital once, just because I was different.”*

Myrna’s experience is a bit innocent and comical, but the underlying conception is daunting. She also expressed her feelings about that incident, which makes it obvious that she was very upset about it. To a worse extent, Edo was not only mentally harmed but also physically, as he very rationally spoke about this incident. But later Edo spoke about something that concerned every discriminated respondent, which was the development of coping mechanisms to these discriminating and exclusive practices, which ultimately shaped their identities. These coping

mechanisms mainly involved becoming emotionally stronger, but also varied among respondents. Two examples of coping mechanisms are quoted here:

**Ricky:** *“My coping mechanism was trying to not be bothered by it (being discriminated), and always reason from my own strengths. I could always fall back on my own knowledge and capacity. But of course it has an impact, and you try to overcompensate everything. But that made me who I am today, perseverance and going full steam towards my goals.”*

**Farah:** *“I really didn’t like it (being discriminated), it was awful. I personally developed a sense to feel the atmosphere in a room, and it really put me on guard. And when something didn’t feel right, I immediately withdrew.”*

Every respondent that is discriminated or excluded seemed to have developed a coping mechanism. Ricky’s narrative is very rational and powerful, as he exploited discrimination as a driving force. Whilst Farah’s narrative is very sensitive and emotional, which presumably resulted in issues regarding her identity. An interesting finding in the life story interviews was the development of discriminative and exclusionary practices. The respondents indicated that they were all discriminated or excluded in their youth, but as their life developed they all indicated that they did not experience these practices anymore. When linking discrimination and exclusion to entrepreneurship, the general moral amongst the respondents was that they did not feel these practices were affecting them. But when looking back there were some stories where respondents experienced it. Edo and Aditya stated:

**Edo:** *“Me and my associate wanted to buy a van. So when I walked into the car dealership, they only noticed my presence. But when my white associate entered a couple of minutes later, they immediately approached him and offered him a cup of coffee. I joined their conversation and we just left because I didn’t get any appreciation.”*

**Aditya:** *“There was one time before a meeting where I introduced myself to the receptionist. She asked me to take place in the waiting room and she called the person I was supposed to meet, saying: ‘Mr. (Dutch last name) is waiting for you’. But after 15 minutes nobody picked me up and eventually the person I was meeting said he saw me, but he didn’t match my physical appearance with my Dutch name, so he left, thinking that I was not Mr. (Dutch last name). I shook his hand and said: ‘I’m leaving’.”*

Both Edo and Aditya have a brown skin tone which was presumably the basis of these discriminative events. They dealt with this very composed, which resembles how they spoke

about the incidents. These two stories were actually the only two cases where respondents spoke about discrimination during their entrepreneurial career. They were both astonished by these events, which means that these events can be interpreted as an exception rather than a regularity. The general moral of the Indo entrepreneurs was that they did not experience discrimination and therefore it was not seen as a barrier. This is backed up by a quote from Ricky:

**Ricky:** *“I didn’t feel discriminated in the Netherlands relating to my entrepreneurial career. Everything is about knowledge and skills, and not about the colour you have or where you are from.”*

But contrary to Ricky, Aditya had a completely different feeling:

**Aditya:** *“You are always 1-0 behind. Always. No matter how good you are. I don’t know why. But when you have that feeling you should embrace it because it makes you stronger. Do not think about it, it will make you stronger.”*

The feeling expressed by Ricky is the dominant narrative that is found during the interviews. Apart from one-off situations, the respondents generally did not indicate discriminative or exclusive practices during their entrepreneurial career that shaped their identity. Even Edo who was discriminated in the early stages of his entrepreneurial career did not indicate a disadvantaged position. Which is in contrast to the theory of Morales et al. (2021), who theorize that postcolonialism highlights the disadvantaged position of the formerly colonized rooted in Western hegemony. Yet we have to be cautious in claiming that this theory and disadvantaged position does not apply to the second-generation of Indo entrepreneurs, as Aditya does experience his ethnicity as a disadvantage relating to entrepreneurship. His expressed feelings show incomprehension and seem deeply rooted, claiming to be *“Always 1-0 behind”*. Where his feelings derive from is a conjecture, since he could not bring his feelings into words. But Aditya’s suspicion can be backed up by the theory of Essers and Tedmanson (2014), who state that non-Westerners are judged with different standards in terms of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial identities, which is rooted in postcolonialism. And even though the dominant narrative resulting from the interviews is that respondents do not feel disadvantaged, they might be judged differently as only Aditya indicated. Their possible ignorance to these judgements does not affect the construction of their entrepreneurial identities, as they do not feel disadvantaged. And what also backs up the dominant narrative is that all respondents indicated that they always felt the freedom to act how they wanted. This agency that they experienced is in compliance with the theory of Westwood and Jack (2007), who stated that postcolonialism

releases the colonized of heavy oppression and marginalization, which restores people's agency to construct an identity. A footnote to be placed alongside this theory is that the mixed ethnicity of the Indos does not clearly put them on the side of the colonized nor the colonizers, which actually adds a different perspective on postcolonial theories.

### **4.3 Cultural values imposed by family**

The theoretical framework extensively discussed the context of an entrepreneur, and how culture and social environment play a role in constructing an entrepreneurial identity. A theme that emerged from the data combines both aspects of context and involves the cultural values that are imposed on the entrepreneur by their family. These cultural values are highly shaped by the colonial era and repatriation, and are often used as a mechanism to succeed in postcolonial the Netherlands. The first-generation of Indos who repatriated to the Netherlands were generally wealthy and occupied high positions in Indonesia. But once in the Netherlands their status was worth nothing and they had to start at the bottom. This is reflected by quotes from Myrna and Gita:

**Myrna:** *“My parents were actually refugees. One month on a boat and then to a random pension. Later I heard that my father had a really good job in Indonesia, he was a clever man. He had nothing in the Netherlands and had to work in a factory, but he never complained. That is quite something.”*

**Gita:** *“My father was discriminated in the Netherlands. He had his own company in Indonesia, but once in the Netherlands he had to start all the way from the bottom. The discrimination he experienced was a reason to start his own business here.”*

This phenomenon occurred to the majority of the first-generation Indos who repatriated to the Netherlands. Gita's quote implies a difficult situation for her father, and that she is pleased he overcame that situation by starting his own business. Myrna's tone of voice reflects admiration towards her father, which is a shared feeling amongst the second-generation Indo entrepreneurs. But what is more important are the values that originated from this phenomenon. The dreadful situations of the first-generation in terms of labour inspired them to mightily encourage their children from the second-generation to exert every effort in performing at school, and reach as high as possible in society. This tendency is shown by quotes from Budiman and Shelza:

**Budiman:** *“My father always said: ‘Study study study, or you will end up like me in a factory, is that what you want?’ And that is how he continuously drilled me.”*

**Shelza:** *“That is exactly how my father tutored me. Reach as high as possible, try to do your utmost, be the best in what you do. And let nobody think that you are anything less than others.”*

The sense in Budiman’s and Shelza’s quote is that they both seemed grateful for this type of education by their parents. And that they used these values to shape them to the entrepreneur that they are now, which is in line with the findings of Werthes et al. (2017) who stated that the discourses that are imposed on the entrepreneur shape their identity. Another common discourse that is imposed on the respondents by their parents is striving for independency. As is indicated by quotes of Farah and Budiman:

**Farah:** *“My mother always said: ‘you have to be able to take care of yourself’. And that meant being financially independent. She wasn’t, but that was her conception. So I thought okay, I won’t be dependent.”*

**Budiman:** *“Kids from my school said that I was different. And that was also the reason my father emphasized that we had to do our best at school, to get a good job, and to become independent.”*

Both quotes add to the narrative of the values that are imposed on the second-generation Indo entrepreneurs. From Farah’s quote derives a feeling that she did not necessarily understand why her mother transferred this value to her, but she accepted it blindly. Whilst Budiman has a clear explanation for this value, which can also be interpreted as a coping mechanism of *“being different”*. The respondents overall thought that their parents conveying these values was also a result of adjustment. Which corresponds with the findings of Pattynama (2000), who found that the Indos were well educated and economically independent, which contributed to the alleged smooth assimilation. But after describing the fundament of these values, we can also describe how these values impacted the entrepreneurial identities of the respondents. As Ricky and Dimas stated:

**Ricky:** *“My situation at home back then really shaped me in the way how I act now. I developed a drive that was related to my ethnicity. Never giving up and always going the extra mile. Constantly. And not because I had to, but it just happened.”*

**Dimas:** *“My values are work hard play hard. And I can attribute these values to my Indo heritage. Work hard as part of the discipline of Indo life, and play hard as part of embracing the warmth of the Indo culture. The social attitude, eating together, the parties.”*

In both narratives a feeling of pride towards their ethnic values is detected. Ricky described his drive as a positive force that is organically created. And Dimas emphasizes the warmth of the Indo culture. Both indicate that these cultural values shaped their identity and behaviour, which can be linked to the theory of Stephan and Uhlaner (2010) and Swidler (2003), who stated that culture provides its members with codes of conduct and a dominant logic of action. All respondents acknowledged that their ethnicity and culture influenced their entrepreneurial identity. And the theory of Glinka and Brzozowska (2015) who state that self, identity, and culture are interdependent is found back in their narratives.

#### **4.4 The effect of traumatic experiences**

The description of the Dutch Indies with the melancholic term ‘Tempo Doeloe’ indicates a desire for the Indos to the good old times, but there were also bad times. This is the build up towards a narrative that ultimately influences the entrepreneurial identities of the second-generation Indos. During the Dutch colonial reign over Indonesia, there was a time period of three years that the Japanese occupied Indonesia. The Japanese tyrannized every object and every human being that was related to the Netherlands, which also included the Indos of mixed ethnicity. Indos were captured in Japanese concentration camps, and treated very badly (de Vries, 2009). When the Japanese retreated from Indonesia, it was time for the native Indonesians to stand up against the Dutch and the Indos. This battle for Indonesian independence is denoted by the term ‘Bersiap’ and goes down in history as a very violent period (de Vries, 2009). All respondents indicated that their ancestors had been captured in Japanese concentration camps and experienced horrific situations. This is illustrated by two quotes:

**Farah:** *“I only heard about the terrible things that happened in the Japanese camps when my father died. Before he was captured he had to hide for them. One day they were being shot at by the Japanese, and at that moment he saw a girl falling towards the ground.”*

**Oktafian:** *“My grandpa and my father were captured in the same camp, and they battled for survival. When my dad was 16 he entered the camp, his task was to cut off little pieces of hair of the deceased and send it to their relatives in an envelope. That was his duty.”*



Farah spoke about the horrible events with a soft and tragic voice, emphasizing the seriousness of the situation. Oktafian on the other side spoke about it with a sense of astonishment, as he could not believe what it must be like to be forced to execute that kind of duty. Almost every respondent indicated that the stories about the captivity in the concentration camps were fractured, because their parents did not speak of these events. This is a common phenomenon that repeatedly came back in the interviews, and is called ‘the Indo silence’, which is described here by Edo and Putri:

**Edo:** *“My father did not want to speak about it (traumatic experiences). Even at the end of his life, on his death bed I asked him: ‘Dad, is there anything you want to get off your chest? Then now is the time.’ And I saw in his eyes there was a yes, but he said no.”*

**Putri:** *“There are so many mysterious stories in the family. I think they don’t want to be reminded of the past, it is too painful. Their mentality is to act nice and fun, to evade the complicated things from the past. And that is also my mother’s mentality.”*

Both Edo and Putri expressed a slight feeling of vexation and a larger feeling of incomprehension about why their families did not speak about the past, and why the Indo silence is a thing. The Indo silence can be linked to the theory of Pattynama (2000), who wrote about the masquerading practices of the Indo. Putri stated that her family’s mentality was to ‘act nice and fun’, which is a clear sign of masquerading. And even though the second-generation did not experience the fierce situations and their families were reserved in passing on stories and information, it did shape them. Many respondents indicated that they had an indefinable feeling that the experiences of their ancestors resounded in their current behaviour and identity. A quote by Dimas reflects this feeling:

**Dimas:** *“I have a profound need for fair treatment and respect. And although I can’t prove it, I ascribe it to the unfair and incorrect treatment that my parents experienced during the Japanese occupation as well as during the repatriation.”*

There were many stories from respondents with a similar tenor. Dimas shows his uncertainty on how the need for ‘fair treatment and respect’ has grown on him, but he states that it supposedly derived from the experiences of his parents. This occurrence can be labelled as transgenerational transmission, which includes the transmission of mental representations across generations that form self-images (Stoute, 2021). More significant, Stoute (2021) writes about the transgenerational transmission of trauma. This includes the transmission of

unprocessed mass shared traumatic experiences to future generations, who are thrown at the task to deal with these often subconscious feelings. This theory applies to story of the Indos and became apparent during the life story interviews. The respondents indicated that their ancestors had experienced traumatic events, and they subsequently generally claimed to sense behaviours that derived from their ancestors. The behaviour of second-generation Indo entrepreneurs that surfaced in this research as a result of transgenerational transmission has two themes. The first theme is *'issues with authority'*, as is described by quotes of Oktafian and Ricky:

**Oktafian:** *"One thing that I really think is important is cooperation, and not feeling superior. My employees are just as important as me, and I never act like a director. I can't stand authority, which is probably also a reason I started with entrepreneurship."*

**Ricky:** *"Ideally I don't do things alone, but with a team of people. Which is also where my power lies, the coaching entrepreneurship so to say. I am not a director who tells everyone how it should be. I really dislike directing leadership and to boss people around."*

The issues with authority can be attributed to the oppression by the Japanese, and perhaps to the harsh treatment during the repatriation by the Dutch. Oktafian exposes a grudge towards authority in his statement, as he later claims it derives from the experiences of his father. As Ricky also abominates authoritative leadership styles in his statement. The issue with authority is a common finding in the interviews. And in relation to this finding, a theory by Lewis (2015) describes leadership as the enactment of identity. The respondents generally created an organization that is rather flat in terms of hierarchy, and do not identify with a bossy type of leadership. This ultimately shaped their entrepreneurial identity in being cooperative and not feeling too big for any chore. These identities also relate to the Indo 'stereotype' of being liked by others. Which some respondents also indicated as a barrier in terms of entrepreneurship. Overall, as a response to issues with authority, the respondents aim for equality. They value their customers, but moreover they highly value their employees as well. The second theme that emerged was the *'will to survive'* of the entrepreneurs. This inner urge causes the entrepreneur to go the extra mile and exhibit determination and perseverance. Edo and Oktafian state the following about their inherited 'will to survive':

**Edo:** *"That mentality, the will to survive. It always played a role and shaped me to the person I am now. A part of my father's family got captured in a Japanese concentration camp, and that affected them mentally. And I think that is where my will to survive derives*

*from, at least that is how I analysed it. Nobody is going to give it to you on a silver platter, so if you want something, you should get it yourself.”*

**Oktafian:** *“If you look at it pragmatically, then I also made some big mistakes. I went too far in my will to survive and ‘pukel terus’ (fumbling through), and I relate that to my father’s time in the Japanese concentration camp. He also had the drive to survive at the expense of anything. So that is a trait that I very much link to my Indo origin.”*

Both Edo and Oktafian clearly state and assume that their will to survive derives from their ancestors’ experiences in Japanese concentration camps. This is another example of transgenerational transmission, and most respondents are aware of this occurrence. Edo’s narrative shows a rational explanation of his own behaviour based on heavy events, but in the end he shows gratitude to possess this mentality. Oktafian on the other hand indicates that his will to survive has gone too far on some occasions, treating it more as a malicious mentality. But whether it is argued as a good or bad mentality, the behaviour that precedes from it has a reciprocal relation with entrepreneurial identity (Werthes et al., 2017), meaning that it will shape the entrepreneurs’ identity regardless. It has become evident that the traumatic experiences of ancestors shape the entrepreneurial identities of the Indo-entrepreneurs through transgenerational transmission. This can be concluded with a quote from Ricky:

**Ricky:** *“I have learned from my origin that suffering is also part of the process. And that helps me, also in terms of entrepreneurship. I am not easily impressed, I can let things go and rationally look for a solution.”*

The tranquil way how Ricky expressed this statement shows his serenity towards the events from the past. It seems like Ricky has processed a lot of the transgenerational transmitted values and revolved it to his advantage.

#### **4.5 Identity tensions as a result of adhering to two cultures**

One of the closing questions in the interviews was if the respondents felt Dutch. Some stated they felt completely Dutch, some added a special Indo touch, whilst others indicated that they felt ‘mixed’. The variety in answers had to do with the nurture they received from their parents, and their physical appearance, as some Indos barely look different from the Dutch. Oktafian and Gita stated:

**Oktafian:** *“I feel absolutely Dutch, and I think a large part of that can be ascribed to my physical appearance. If I had the same physical appearance as my aunts who are a bit darker, then it would perhaps be different. I have never been addressed to my physical appearance, like: ‘hey Indo, or hey katjang (peanut)’.”*

**Gita:** *“I feel Dutch because we are raised in the Netherlands and possess the freedom of the Netherlands, but I also feel Indo because it is also my home and origin. So actually I feel mixed, because I will always remain Indo.”*

The difference in feelings between Oktafian and Gita is also reflected in their physical appearance, as Gita has a darker skin tone. This ultimately suggests that physical appearance influences the extent to which someone feels ‘Indo’, which influences their identity. This suggestion is backed up by the findings of Gonzales-Backen and Umaña-Taylor (2011), who found that having a physical appearance that was more consistent with a person’s ethnic group, such as having a darker skin tone, would shape their ethnic identity more towards that ethnic group. Tao et al. (2020) add that expressing an ethnic identity influences the entrepreneurial identity as well. This stresses the importance of physical appearance in identity formation, and suggests that the degree to which a respondent relates to ‘being an Indo’ influences the experience of entrepreneurial identity construction. Being raised in the Netherlands, as Gita stated, implies a Dutch education. This type of education was displayed by all respondents, which once more shows the adjustment mentality of repatriated Indos to the Dutch culture. This mentality is demonstrated by a quote from Putri:

**Putri:** *“When my mother arrived in the Netherlands she was taught by her parents to adapt. They said: ‘We are chased away in Indonesia and this is our new home country, so we are trying our best to fit in’. So my mother deliberately didn’t speak Bahasa (Indonesian language), and has been fully raised in Dutch. They felt like they needed to adapt to determine their lives, and be grateful for being repatriated to the Netherlands.”*

This story by Putri shows how much effort the repatriated Indos took to adapt to the Dutch culture, which was the general discourse in the life story interviews. Putri speaks about it with a regrettable tone, since she later declared that she would have loved to be raised with more involvement of the Indo culture. This adjustment mentality of the Indos caused what Pattynama (2000) described as masquerading practices, to the detriment of the Indo culture. That is also a reason why the respondents generally started late in their entrepreneurial careers with unravelling their Indo roots and background. The masquerading and the ignorance of their

origin could be the cause for the issues the second-generation of Indos experienced relating to their identities. Aditya and Edo shared examples of these issues:

**Aditya:** *“Around my sixteenth I was stuck in an identity crisis. I did everything the Dutch way, but when I looked in the mirror I saw a different person. At those moment I thought ‘hey, something is not right.’”*

**Edo:** *“I possess more Indo heritage than I initially thought. I recognized that it was in my DNA by the manners I used, but I always rebelled against it. I said: ‘yes I have the colour, but I am not an Indo’. And I struggled a lot with that tension.”*

Both Aditya and Edo describe their mixed identity as a slightly unexpected finding, and also indicated to struggle with the multiple identities as a result of their ethnicity. The majority of the respondents is aware of their multiple identities, and many of them struggled with it as well. In relation to entrepreneurship, the mix of two cultural views is defined as a hybrid identity (Frenkel & Shenhav, 2006). Additionally, Alvi (2020) states that moving along multiple cultural frameworks creates a frame of reference that shapes the entrepreneurial identity. These theories certainly apply to the multiple identities that the Indo entrepreneurs showed in the interviews. The theories about hybrid identities generally have the tendency to view the concept as an advantage for entrepreneurs, but that tendency was not expressed by the respondents in this study. The following quotes by Ricky and Farah reflect this feeling once more:

**Ricky:** *“I am continuously going back and forth. I am raised hardcore Dutch, but I can’t deny my Indo origin. I am constantly putting the right bits together to form my identity. Every day I carry that field of tension with me, privately and in business. And eventually it will balance me out, but I am always uncertain.”*

**Farah:** *“You can see the dichotomy everywhere. But for me, I have a need for freedom and autonomy, but on the other side also adjustment because that is also in our culture. And I sometimes experience the inner struggle of the contradiction. And the adjusting bit also involves the pleasing behaviour of our culture.”*

Ricky very obviously states that he navigates between two cultures, and that “bits” from both cultures shape his identity. The uncertainty is expressed as an endless struggle to find the balance between those cultures. Farah also expressed the struggle of “the contradiction”, which involved the contradicting cultural values, but also relates to the entrepreneurial identity paradox of conformity versus distinctiveness (Navis & Glynn, 2011). Farah indicates that the

Indo cultural values incline to the conforming side of the paradox, whilst her personal need for “*freedom and autonomy*” direct her identity towards the distinctive side. More respondents indicated to struggle with this paradox, and that the Indo values rest on adjustment and conformity instead of distinctiveness. This is also in line with the Indo ‘stereotype’ that is discussed, and ultimately all respondents exerted identity work to vanquish the cultural values and stereotypical behaviour that was not deemed right for their entrepreneurial path.

## 5. Conclusion and discussion

The results are concluded in this chapter, and the relevant outcomes of this study are discussed. Additionally, the implications for theory and practice are given, and the agenda for future research and the limitations of this study are presented.

### 5.1 Conclusion

The objective of this study was to get a better understanding of the experiences of entrepreneurial identity construction by second-generation Indos in the Netherlands in order to contribute to theories on ethnic minority entrepreneurship, postcolonialism, and entrepreneurial identity construction. To accomplish this objective, the following research question is formulated: *'How do second-generation ethnic minorities of Dutch-Indonesian descent experience the construction of their entrepreneurial identity, taking their context in a postcolonial era into account?'* The eleven life story interviews that are conducted in this research produced very similar discourses and narratives among the respondents.

The stories of second-generation Indo entrepreneurs all commenced in Indonesia, as history plays a huge role in the entrepreneurial identities of second-generation Indos. The Indos in the Dutch Indies were unable to fully identify with both the native Indonesians and the Dutch colonizers because of their mixed ethnicity, and repatriated to the Netherlands under heavy circumstances. The first-generation was stripped of their status and had to start from scratch in the Netherlands. These events caused the first-generation to impose values on their children such as 'work hard', 'perform at school', and 'become independent'. These discourses ultimately shaped the identities of the second-generation (Werthes et al., 2017), and these cultural values are visible in the entrepreneurial identities of second-generation Indo entrepreneurs.

The second-generation Indos, especially those with a darker skin tone, were prone to discriminative practices to a small extent when growing up in postcolonial the Netherlands. These practices left its mark, as they created coping mechanisms that mainly involved becoming emotionally stronger and reasoning from own strengths. Discriminative practices diminished over time, as the respondents indicated they did not experience it throughout their entrepreneurial career, bar a few exceptional occasions. It therefore did not play a huge role in the construction of their entrepreneurial identity. In light of postcolonialism and the alleged oppressive and marginalizing practices that it involves (Westwood & Jack, 2007), the second-generation Indos experienced ultimate agency and indicated they felt free to take on any

entrepreneurial activity. This could be mainly ascribed to their mixed ethnicity, since theories about postcolonialism do generally not take mixed ethnicities into account.

The aftermath of colonization that did influence the second-generation Indos involves transgenerational transmitted values from their parents. The traumatic experiences such as being captured in Japanese concentration camps and war involvement created values amongst the first-generation that are subconsciously transmitted to the second-generation. The first-generation hardly spoke about these events, a phenomenon that is denoted as the 'Indo silence'. These masquerading practices (Pattynama, 2000) cause transmission of unprocessed traumatic experiences to the second-generation, resulting in values that shape their identity. One value is 'issues with authority', as a result of the oppression and captivity by the Japanese and perhaps the treatment of the Dutch during the colonization and the repatriation. This shapes the Indo entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial identity in a way that abomination is expressed towards authority, and cooperation is highly valued. A second value is the 'will to survive', and also derives from the captivity in Japanese concentration camps. It provoked a drive to work hard, and to single-handedly create opportunities, which ultimately shapes their identity. Not all respondents indicated to sense these values, but they all had relatives who experienced these traumatic events, so perhaps these values influenced them subconsciously.

An Indo 'stereotype' emerged in the life story interviews, and includes characteristics as being modest, humble, submissive, avoiding risks, and to please others. These traits can either be the result of colonial oppression, or be culturally embedded. The conception of the Indo entrepreneurs is that this sub assertive attitude does not comply with entrepreneurship. They therefore exerted identity work to deliberately deviate from the Indo 'stereotype', and to become more assertive and harder in doing business.

The suggestion that physical appearance influences the extent to which someone relates to an ethnic group (Gonzales-Backen & Umaña-Taylor, 2011) is also found at Indo entrepreneurs. Their physical appearance, particularly skin tone, not only determined the extent to which someone was discriminated, but also shapes their ethnic identity. The expression of this ethnic identity ultimately shapes the experiences of entrepreneurial identity construction (Tao et al., 2020). Additionally, the Indos experience multiple identities as a result of their 'mixed' ethnicity and adherence to two cultures. This caused identity crises and the subconscious adoption of hybrid identities that mixes both cultural views (Frenkel & Shenhav, 2006). The Indo entrepreneurs struggled with hybrid identities, and did not explicitly see this as an advantage in constructing an entrepreneurial identity.



## 5.2 Discussion

In this study, eleven life story interviews were conducted with second-generation Indo entrepreneurs. The almost identical narratives and discourses that originated from these interviews produced interesting empirical findings, and some of these findings went beyond the main concepts that were integrated in the interviews. One of these empirical findings was the influence of physical appearance on ethnic identity, which ultimately shapes the entrepreneurial identity. Even though the stories and experiences of the respondents were almost identical, there was a small variance in the answers that could mostly be explained by the emerged variable of 'physical appearance'. Gonzales-Backen and Umaña-Taylor (2011) found that physical appearance shapes one's ethnic identity when they studied Latinos as an ethnic minority in the United States. Tao et al. (2020) thereafter found that expressing an ethnic identity influences the entrepreneurial identity. These theories and the empirical findings in this study justify the bold claim that physical appearance influences the entrepreneurial identity of the Indo entrepreneurs. Smith (2021) has very briefly mentioned in his study that physical appearance influences entrepreneurial identity, but he mostly looked at appearance as a whole in relation to entrepreneurial identity.

Another concept that emerged in this study and proved to influence the entrepreneurial identity of Indos is the transgenerational transmission of trauma. This concept has been studied a lot and many academics, such as Stoute (2021) and Ceciu (2020), claim that it influences identity. Ceciu (2020) even claims that it influences culture, as the theoretical framework and empirical findings of this study also suggests that cultural values shape one's entrepreneurial identity. The transgenerational transmitted values clearly surfaced in this study to influence entrepreneurial identity. There are studies that focus on traumatic experiences during colonialism, but very few studies zoom in on the effect on identity. A dissertation from Garcia-Olp (2018) on colonized indigenous Indians in the United States found that their traumatic experiences did influence their identity, but further academic literature is not found. And since there is little to no literature that relates the concept of transgenerational transmission of traumatic experiences with entrepreneurial identity, the findings in this thesis can be considered as fairly novel insights.

The majority of Indo entrepreneurs in this study indicated not to experience marginalization or any sort of discrimination relating to their entrepreneurial career, and all respondents experienced full agency. This contradicts with the theories by Alvi (2020) and Westwood and Jack (2007), who found that these practices are a common phenomenon in postcolonial contexts, although Westwood and Jack (2007) also indicate that this context also restores

agency of the formerly colonized. The possible crux in this matter as argued in this thesis could be the variable of ‘mixed ethnicity’, which is generally denied in postcolonial theories relating to marginalization or discrimination. However, literature does incorporate mixed ethnicities in postcolonial theories relating to identities, including colonizer and colonized identity. Bhabha (1994) for example created the term ‘third space’ that reflects how navigating between cultures of colonizer and colonized can influence identity. This concept is noted as hybridity, and is extended by Frenkel and Shenhav (2006) to management practices. The hybridity that is found in this thesis among the Indo entrepreneurs include fuzziness and confusion, as it mostly involves identity tensions. Many theories about hybridity, such as Alvi (2020), emphasize the business advantage of moving along multiple cultural framework, which does not resemble the findings in this study. On the contrary there are many theories that indicate the existence of identity crises in a postcolonial context. Dizayi (2019) proposes one of these theories and states that mimicry is an outflow of identity crises, a practice that the Indo entrepreneurs perform as well.

### **5.3 Implications for theory**

The focus of this study contributes to the general theories of ethnic minority entrepreneurship, but zooming in on postcolonialism and entrepreneurial identity construction mainly produced detailed insights towards these topics. The postcolonial lens that is used in this study aims to contribute to theories about entrepreneurial identity construction in relation to postcolonialism. An interesting finding is that the entrepreneurs were discriminated in their youth to some extent, but subsequently indicated that they did not experience it during their entrepreneurial career, bar a few exceptional occasions. Postcolonial theories imply that oppression and marginalization that is still taking place in contemporary society (Westwood & Jack 2007). This did however not come to light, as postcolonialism mainly focuses on formerly colonized, whilst the Indos have a special status. Their mixed ethnicity possibly subducted this characteristic of postcolonialism, which led to this study producing novel findings with regard to postcolonialism. Another contribution to postcolonial theory is the discussed topics of masquerading and mimicry, as it emerged that these practices are implemented by second-generation Indos. This backs up the theories from Pattynama (2000) and Bhabha (1984) and exposes their similarities.

One of the findings that contributes to theories on postcolonialism and entrepreneurial identity construction involves the traumatic experiences that shape the entrepreneurs’ identity through transgenerational transmission. The aftermath of these traumatic events during colonial times

are generally not accounted for in postcolonial theory, and are also generally not included in theories about entrepreneurial identity construction in relation to formerly colonized ethnic groups. This study shows the effect of these experiences on entrepreneurial identity construction, labelling it as a significant influencer of the entrepreneurial identities of the Indo entrepreneurs. Another finding that contributes to both postcolonialism and entrepreneurial identity construction is the importance of physical appearance, which influences the ethnic identity that subsequently shapes the entrepreneurial identity (Tao et al., 2020). The physical appearance has predominantly to do with skin tone, yet is not accounted for by many theories about postcolonialism and entrepreneurial identity construction.

The context of the Indo entrepreneur that is considered in relation to their entrepreneurial identity contributes to theories on entrepreneurial identity construction. Embracing the growing trend of a contextual view on entrepreneurship (Welter, 2011) yielded interesting results about cultural and social values that are imposed on the Indo entrepreneur. These values did shape the entrepreneurial identities, meaning that context should be accounted for when studying entrepreneurial identities. Another contribution to entrepreneurial identity construction is the adoption of hybrid identities by second-generation Indo entrepreneurs. This theory as discussed by Frenkel and Shenhav (2006) implies using hybrid identities to one's benefit, yet Indo entrepreneurs seemed to struggle with doing so. This causes for more assured statements about the advantages that hybrid identities can bring.

#### **5.4 Implications for practice**

The experiences of entrepreneurial identity construction by second-generation Indos that are shown in this thesis create a specific type of knowledge. And even though this study is unable to generalize, the experiences create an awareness for fellow generation members and ethnic groups who experiences a similar life path in light of postcolonialism. Exhibiting these experiences particularly creates awareness of the presence of multiple and hybrid identities that shape the entrepreneurial identity. And whilst the majority of the respondents in this study indicated to struggle with the possession of multiple and hybrid identities, this study can foster the quest for solutions. And although the postcolonial perspective on this study did not expose severe oppressive or discriminative practices, it did create awareness of transgenerational transmitted values that descended from colonial rule. These subconscious transmitted values derive from traumatic experiences and can elucidate inexplicable behaviour when awareness is created. The Indos that take on entrepreneurship can deduct from this study where possible

pitfalls appear. The identity work that the Indo entrepreneurs in this study exerted is possibly necessary for becoming an entrepreneur.

The Dutch ministry of general affairs has just recently started with the collective recognition of the Indo community in the Netherlands. Yet on the field of entrepreneurship there is no abundance of information on how this ethnic group behaves, even though it is the largest ethnic minority group in the Netherlands. The findings in this research can commence research towards Indos and entrepreneurship since this study proves that the behaviour and issues of second-generation Indos regarding entrepreneurial identities are shaped by Dutch colonial reign. Furthermore, if the Dutch authorities discover an underrepresentation of Indos in the field of entrepreneurship, this study can be beneficial in tracing or tackling the causes.

### **5.5 Future research**

The findings in this study suggest future research on some themes. The first theme that requires future research is the influence of transgenerational transmitted values that shape the entrepreneurial identity in a postcolonial era. This is subsequently a critique on postcolonial theory, since they exclude the traumatic experiences that have taken place in colonialism. Postcolonial theories mainly highlight rooted practices of marginalization, discrimination, and the disadvantaged positions of colonized ethnic groups (Morales et al., 2021; Westwood & Jack, 2007; Alvi, 2020), but fail to focus on the heavy experience that took place under colonial reign. This major theme emerged in this study and affected the respondents' entrepreneurial identities heavily. The conception that this kind of phenomenon appears in a postcolonial context is plausible, since colonial reigns are often inflicted with traumatic experiences. It is these traumatic experiences that surfaced in this research as an influencer of entrepreneurial identities of second-generation Indos, but the refined theory behind this phenomenon is lacking. The second theme that requires future research is the influence of physical appearance on entrepreneurial identities. Very little literature is written about physical appearance and entrepreneurial identity construction, yet this study proved physical appearance as an important accountable variable. The Indo entrepreneurs indicated that their physical appearance influenced their ethnic identity, which in result influenced the entrepreneurial identity. But it is unknown how physical appearance, mostly linked to skin tone, influences the entrepreneurial identity directly.

The third theme that requires future research is how to deal with multiple and hybrid identities, as the Indos struggled a lot with that. The Indos indicated to struggle with constructing their identity because they possessed parts of the Indo identity and the Dutch identity. This common

struggle could also be present among other ethnic groups that feel the need to adhere to two cultures. If there is more research in relation to these issues, this problem could be diminished in benefit of every ethnic group that experiences it.

The fourth and last theme that requires future research is the effect of masquerading and mimicry, which in this research surfaced as the 'Indo silence'. There is a tendency amongst the respondents that the 'Indo silence' causes behaviour that is not favourable for a healthy assimilation. The masquerading and mimicry are already theoretically proven to be at the expense of one's culture, but is also deeply rooted in the values of the Indos. This is reflected by their submissive and adaptive character. And even though the Indos cope with this mentality, it remains mysterious and can inflict emotional damage and therefore requires future research.

## **5.6 Limitations**

The limitations to this study are discussed here. The first limitation is that the execution of this thesis was set within a timeframe of five months. And even though answering the research question of this study was deemed feasible within that timeframe, it left no room for expanding on the topic or additional elaboration of novel findings. The time constraint has also put pressure on the researcher and can therefore be considered as a limitation to this study.

A second limitation to this study is the inability to generalize the results, which is inherent to a qualitative method of research. According to Cronbach et al. (1963), social phenomena are too complex and context bound to allow generalization. This study is especially focused on the context of the Indo entrepreneurs, making it not generalizable towards other ethnic minorities. There is however the notion of theoretical generalization, and entails generalizing the theoretical findings to a larger cluster of theories instead of generalizing them with a larger collective (Eisenhart, 2009).

A third limitation to this study is the coding and transcription of the data. The life story interviews can be deemed as an intimate and emotional way of conducting research, and these emotions inevitably end up in transcripts. And although these emotions were observed during the interviews, they are not visible in transcripts which can cause inability to interpret the data in the exact manner. The verbatim transcripts that are used attempt to overcome this limitation. Additionally, the transcribed interviews are represented in this report as quotes. These quotes have been translated from Dutch to English and could therefore slightly diminished in value.

A fourth limitation is that this study focuses on the perspective of the Indo entrepreneurs, and therefore does not account for the perspectives of the Dutch. Taking on a different perspective can change the view on the practices of marginalization and discrimination, and can elucidate

the influence of the Indos' mixed ethnicity on these practices. Although taking on a different perspective conflicts with the theory of Dirlik (1994), who argues that a postcolonial perspective is typified as a discourse that is often produced by the West, and thus fails to comply with the sentiment of the colonized. This means that both perspectives can be put under scrutiny, but a combination of perspectives might ultimately fully illuminate these experiences and practices of marginalization and discrimination.

The fifth and final limitation to this study is about the respondents that are interviewed. All respondents in this study have successfully developed an enterprise, and constructed their entrepreneurial identity. The results of this study that contribute to theory are all based on these success stories, whilst the unsuccessful stories are not considered. The unsuccessful experiences of constructing an entrepreneurial identity also contribute to these theories.

### **5.7 Reflexivity**

The acknowledgement of the role of the researcher on the outcome of a study is called reflexivity (Neergaard & Ulhøi, 2007). A reflection on the role of the researcher is necessary since this study takes on a social constructivist approach, meaning that knowledge is constructed through social interaction (Famiola, 2021).

The topic of this study is chosen based on my personal interest. I am a third-generation Indo who studies a Master's specialization in innovation and entrepreneurship. I experience being an Indo from the third-generation in contemporary Dutch society as nothing special, and I surely do not feel treated differently. And I know that my mother from the second-generation experiences that slightly different, but I also do not notice any irregularities in her social participation. So this study commenced with me having the prejudice that second-generation Indos do not experience their participation in Dutch society as different. And the inability of my family to tell me a lot about their colonial history has sparked my interest in the story of the Indos, which eventually formed the topic of this thesis.

I consider the ability to recognize common themes such as the Indo stereotype and the period of Japanese occupation as an advantage to the outcome of this study. My background enables me to interpret the findings from an Indo perspective, although my search for the Indo identity is far but completed. I was also raised fully Dutch, but the slight Indo part in me did manage to connect with the respondents and to embark on their life stories. And even though I was surprised that the respondents spoke about familiar things such as the Indo stereotype, I immediately recognized it from my own environment. But having the prejudice that second-generation Indos participated in society like any other, made me even more surprised by the

results. I did not know that many Indos carry such a heavy load with them, making me able to zoom in on their history as the study progressed.

In the end I experienced this study as a very precious element in my quest for the Indo identity. It also definitely shaped my Indo identity in a positively sensible way. And eventually I hope that this experience develops into a rather tangible experience, in the form of my Master's degree.

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# Appendix

## Appendix I Respondent characteristics

Respondent	Gender	Age	Fictitious name	Duration	Business
<b>Respondent 1</b>	Female	43	Putri	1:38	Indonesian restaurant
<b>Respondent 2</b>	Female	58	Shelza	1:12	Indonesian restaurant/catering
<b>Respondent 3</b>	Male	64	Oktafian	1:02	Travel agency
<b>Respondent 4</b>	Male	63	Ricky	1:07	Gifts and personalized products (retail)
<b>Respondent 5</b>	Female	58	Farah	0:58	Assessment agency
<b>Respondent 6</b>	Male	59	Budiman	0:44	Financial and mortgage advise agency
<b>Respondent 7</b>	Male	46	Edo	1:06	Creative marketing and branding agency
<b>Respondent 8</b>	Female	62	Gita	0:45	Grocery store (toko)
<b>Respondent 9</b>	Male	61	Dimas	1:09	Software testing agency
<b>Respondent 10</b>	Male	67	Aditya	1:02	Industrial paint and coating agency
<b>Respondent 11</b>	Female	59	Myrna	0:51	Music band

## Appendix II Interview guidelines

### Interview guidelines

- Korte introductie
- Research ethics, alles wordt anoniem verwerkt
- Als je bepaalde vragen niet wilt beantwoorden dan is dat uiteraard oké
- Opnemen audio

### Introductie

1. Wat is je leeftijd en hoe ziet je etnische achtergrond eruit?
2. Hoe lang heb je al je eigen onderneming/ben je al ondernemer?
3. Wat was de reden voor jou om te gaan ondernemen?

### Life story interview

We nemen 4 periodes; *kinderjaren*, *tienerjaren*, *adolescentie*, en *volwassenheid*. Voor iedere fase de volgende vragen:

- Hoe zag je omgeving eruit en hoe heb je deze periode ervaren?
- Op welke manier was jij bewust van je afkomst en de geschiedenis van de Indo's (kolonisatie/repatriëring) in deze periode?
- Wie waren de belangrijkste mensen voor jou en hoe oefenden zij invloed op jou uit?
- Wat heb je van hen meegekregen over jouw afkomst?
- Hoe ervaarde jij je afkomst in deze periode en welke rol heeft dat gespeeld op jou als persoon?
- In welke mate heb jij je gediscrimineerd of buitengesloten gevoeld door je afkomst? En hoe heeft dit jou beïnvloedt?
- In welke mate kon jij altijd doen wat je wilde, of moest je doen aan bepaalde verwachtingen?

### Ondernemersidentiteit

1. Hoe omschrijf jij je ondernemersidentiteit?
2. Welke factoren hebben jouw ondernemersidentiteit beïnvloedt?
3. Welke stappen heb jij ondernomen om je ondernemersidentiteit naar buiten te brengen?
4. Welke barrières gerelateerd aan jouw afkomst ben je tegengekomen tijdens het proces?
5. Welke rol speelt het gevoel om ergens bij te horen of juist om onderscheidend te zijn op jou als ondernemer?
6. Was/is het moeilijk voor je om legitimiteit te verkrijgen en hoe heb je dat gedaan?
7. Welke rol heeft de Indische cultuur gespeeld op jou als ondernemer?

8. Welke rol speelt de Indische cultuur in jouw onderneming?
  - Is dit veranderd met de tijd, zo ja, hoe? En welke voor of nadelen brengt dit met zich mee?
9. Welke factoren bepalen succes voor jou?
10. Hoe ervaar jij het om een Indo-ondernemer te zijn, en welke voor of nadelen brengt dit met zich mee?

### **Sociale omgeving**

1. Hoeveel invloed heeft je omgeving gehad op jouw ondernemersidentiteit?
2. Hoe was de ondersteuning vanuit je familie bij de start van jouw ondernemers carrière?
3. Hoe was de ondersteuning vanuit jouw vriendenkring bij de start van jouw ondernemer carrière?
4. In welke mate was jouw sociale omgeving een barrière om te gaan ondernemen?
5. Welke rol heeft de 'indo community' gespeeld bij het starten van je eigen onderneming?

### **Post-kolonialisme**

1. Hoe is je connectie met Indonesië?
2. Wat heb je meegekregen van je ouders/omgeving over de kolonisatie/repatriëring?
3. Welk gevoel heerste er bij je ouders/omgeving over de kolonisatie/repatriëring?
4. Hoe hebben zij zich gesetteld in Nederland?
5. Wat heb/wil je anders doen dan jouw ouders op het vlak van je plek vinden in Nederland?
6. Welk gevoel heerst er bij jou over de kolonisatie/repatriëring?
  - Hoe heeft dat invloed op jou als ondernemer?
7. In welke mate merk jij verschil of juist overeenkomsten tussen Indische ondernemers en 'Nederlandse' ondernemers?
8. Hoe vrij voelde jij je om te gaan doen wat je nu doet?
9. Heb jij je buitengesloten gevoeld in Nederland als ondernemer door jouw afkomst, zo ja, hoe?
10. In welke mate voel jij je Nederlander?

### **Eindvraag**

Wat heeft jouw afkomst je geleerd?

Theoretical construct	Dimensions	Indicators
<b>Postcolonialism</b>	Power relations	Feelings of oppression or subjugation
		Feeling powerless compared to Westerners
	Agency	Control over making own decisions
		Control over own behaviour and actions
	Hybridity	Adhering to Indo culture
		Adhering to Indonesian culture
		Adhering to Dutch culture
	Inequality	Feelings of different treatment
		Feelings of judgement with different standards
	Traumatic experiences	Heavy experiences during Japanese occupation
Heavy experiences during Bersiap		
<b>Entrepreneurial identity</b>	Identity work	Communicating your own identity externally
		Thinking about your own identity internally
		Behaviour to show your identity externally
	Distinctiveness vs. conformity	Feeling the urge to stand out
		Feeling the urge to adhere to normative practices
		Undecisive behaviour relating to identity crisis
	Discourse attractiveness	Purposefully choosing discourses to build identity
		Purposefully neglecting discourses to build identity
	Hybrid identity	Multiple identities that influence the entrepreneur
		Multiple identities that shape the entrepreneurial identity
<b>Context</b> (relating to entrepreneurial identity construction)	Cultural environment	Core 'top of mind' values of the culture
		Traditional, and superstitious behaviour
		Interpersonal relations
		Mimicry of the Dutch culture
		Masquerading of the Indo/Indonesian culture
	Social environment	Influence of family
		Influence of friends
		Influence of other forces



**Appendix III Coding scheme**

Sub-themes	Main themes	Thesis topic
Discrimination and exclusion based on ethnicity Discrimination in entrepreneurship Route towards entrepreneurship Freedom and agency in society Transgenerational transmission	Racism or exclusion	<b>Entrepreneurial identity construction in a postcolonial era</b>
Indo stereotypes Mutual Indo connections Connected to Indonesia Proud to be an Indo Issues with authority Business has to feel good Interest in Indo background started late Identity struggles	Indo stereotypes & Indo traits	
Values from parents Cultural values Indo ‘pleasing’ Work hard mentality Adjustment mentality	Values from family & environment	
Indo silence Adjustment mentality Two cultures and homes Identity struggles	Indo silence & adjustment	
Starting from the bottom Feelings about the colonial era Japanese concentration camps and war related experiences Issues with authority Transgenerational transmission Indo silence	Heavy historical experiences	