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'Just a Piece of Paper': Dutch Women in Australia

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> Thinking about my own sense of identity, I realise that it has always depended on the fact of being a *migrant*, on the *difference* from the rest of you.[1]

Introduction

In this paper I explore the manner in which Dutch women, who left the Netherlands at various times during the postwar period, negotiated and carved out an 'identity' and satisfied their need for a sense of belonging in Australia. The interpretation derives its conclusions from oral history interview data[2] obtained from ten females who originated in various provinces in northern and southern Netherlands, and who variously ascribe themselves as having grown-up in either working or middle-class Dutch families.[3] These women, who range in age from 21 to 85 years, were approached using the snowball technique and subsequently interviewed in either their own home or at the researcher's office. Additional information was obtained from them via telephone conversations. The eight (four adults and four children) who arrived here between 1949 and 1956 when assimilation ideology prevailed, were compelled to construct and articulate an 'identity' in a society that disabled newcomers by stigmatising ethnicity.[4] These women's experiences are compared to those of a Dutch mother and daughter who settled here in 1989, by which time Australia had adopted a policy of multiculturalism. The women's responses are contextualised within the larger framework of migration history of the time.[5]

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1. S. Hall, '*The Real Me: Postmodernism and the Question of Identity*, ' ICA Documents 6, London, 1987.

2. I. Ang, 'On not speaking Chinese', *New Formations,* no. 24, 1994, p. 8; All the oral history interviews for this paper were conducted by the author during 1996. In their subsequent analysis I am heedful that people remember and therefore construct the past in ways that reflect their present need for meaning.

3. Whilst not necessarily a representative sample of Dutch women in Australia, the ten case studies upon which this paper is based are characteristic of the broad range of Dutch female types that migrated to Australia post WWII.

4. H. Eidheim, 'When Ethnic Identity is a Social Stigma', in F. Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Oslo, Sweden. 1969, pp. 40- 57. The concept of ethnicity as stigma was initially coined in this article.

5. The fundamental principle informing the analysis is that ethnic groups are social categories which provide a basis for status ascription and that inter-ethnic relations are organised around such statuses.

My tools of trade, thus my training as an anthropologist and my self-conscious awareness of the migration process, inform both the methodology and analysis in this paper. Frank Gelya describes the life history approach as a collaborative text involving the consciousness of both the investigator and the subject.[6] Given the subjective nature of the social sciences Callan and Ardener maintain, it is important to know the analyst, for it is through her (his) eyes that the reader is introduced to the subject matter.[7] An investigation has even further benefits if undertaken by a researcher who has endured similar experiences to the interviewees, as the researcher's examination of their personal experience becomes an additional resource - a construct for manipulation in fieldwork. My personal experience of migrating - I was born in the Netherlands[8] - and growing-up in a migrant milieu in Australia gives me an understanding of the facts and emotions associated with migration (dislocation, alienation and assimilation) and those related to constructing a new life and identity in a strange country, that cannot be derived from professional training.[9] For, as Hall has reasoned, '... identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation'.[10]

Analysis of the case studies revealed three notable distinctions. The first has to do with the role ethnicity plays in the construction of migrants' identity and sense of belonging. In this paper, minority ethnicity as an analytical tool is tied to experiences of diaspora, the individual, the family, collective identities and various forms of social organisation, within and across national boundaries.[11] It presents as a variable, incorporating elements of the primordialists, situationalists and constructionists perspective.[12] Thus, ethnicity is not only a given, fixed or unchanging phenomenon, but also imposed, assumed and/or inherited. It can also be a kind of consciousness, symbolic capital, a resource for mobilisation and motivation, and/or a stigma or liability depending upon the situation. Ethnicity is further influenced by generation,

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6. Frank Gelya, 'Finding the Common Denominator: A Phenomenological Critique of Life History Method', *Ethos, vol. 7,* 1979, pp. 68-94.

7. H. Callan and S. Ardener, *The Incorporated Wife:* London, 1984, p. 10.

8. I was educated in WA during the 1950s and 1960s when assimilationism dominated resettlement policy.

9. P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice,* Cambridge, 1972, p. 87. The understanding derived from my own experience of migration helps me avoid, in Pierre Bourdieu's terms, 'the unnecessary separation of subject and analyst'. When allied to an objective assessment this experience produces what he terms a 'practical mastery'.

10. S. Hall, 'Who Needs 'Identity'? in S. Hall, & Raul du Gay (eds) *Question of Identity,* London, 1996. p. 2.

11. H. Vermeulen & C. Govers, in *The Politics of Ethnic Consciousness,* London, 1997. In this paper , following these researchers, ethnic identity (interaction and consciousnes) is distinguished from other social identities by a belief in a common origin, descent, history and culture.

12. Ibid.

gender, social class and the host society's reaction to immigrants. The second distinction is connected with the influence changing material realities exert on the cognitive element of ethnic processes.[13] Thus. variance in awareness is produced by higher education, whether acquired locally, overseas; early or later in life, and social class. This is because an individual's notions of descent, class and kinship are conceptualised and valued differentially depending upon their ethnic group, family and/or class.[14] The focus of the third (distinction) are the peculiarities concerning identity and belonging that emerged between first and second-generation Dutch women and over historical time. Hall has proposed a theorization of identity as 'a form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak'.[15] Emigration imposes this action on incognizant women many of whom did not make the decision to emigrate but who nevertheless arrive in a strange land unable to speak the language and are prescribed 'otherness' - a sign of not belonging a declaration of actually belonging elsewhere.[16] For example, whereas first generation Dutch women most often derived their meanings about identity and belonging from the socio-economic conditions and relations of dominance in the cultural milieux they had left behind.[17] The second generation, who were children at the time of their arrival in Australia and who were not as firmly anchored in one culture as their parents, formulated their conclusions with reference to both the Dutch and Australian cultural domains in which they were raised. The remainder of this paper is devoted to unravelling these distinctions with reference to case study material.[18]

Women's History

The ten case studies are comprised of four - Cor, Jo, Henny and Nell - first generation women; four from the second generation - Wilma who arrived here at age 13, Hélèn 10, Jan 6 and Rikki 6; and two recent migrants Maria and her daughter Marylou who arrived here in 1989. Some of these women have tertiary

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13. M. Di Leonardo, *The Varieties of Ethnic Experience,* Ithaca, 1984, p. 23, - advances the situationalist perspective which views ethnicity as, 'a particular ideological configuration of self-conscious cultural practices, a prism through which individuals explain their place in the economy and in society to themselves and to others; a cognitive resource that individuals can strategically choose to use (or not) in interpersonal relations'.

14. Vermeulen & Govers, p. 7; M. Banks, *Ethnicity, Anthropological Constructions*, London & New York, 1996, p. 39.

15. Hall 1990, pp. 222-37 cited by Ang, p. 4.

16. Post-migration these women were forced to construct their 'self' through difference. See also Ang, p. 11 who cites Rey Chow, 1991; and Hall, 1987, p. 45.

17. G. Bottomley, *From Another Place, Migration and the Politics of Culture,* Oakleigh, Vic, 1992, p. 64. First generation Dutch immigrants perceive their ethnicity as a crucial element in the creation and transformation of their ethnic identity and as the central feature that gives meaning to their actions and existence.

18. Ang, p. 5. In this chapter diaspora refers to the (imagined) condition of a 'people' dispersed throughout the world, by force or by choice.

degrees others received minimal education. The first-generation females who all left school between the ages of 14 and 16, had been educated predominantly in the Netherlands. Until they were married Cor and Jo, who describe their backgrounds as working class were initially employed in domestic service. Later Cor acquired a job as a seamstress in a sweat shop and Jo a position with one of the town's textile factories.[19] In contrast the women raised in middle class families like Henny who attended four years of MULO[20] (higher elementary education, which equipped Henny for office work); and Nell who completed three years of domestic science school (in readiness for marriage, domestic service or the hospitality industry) were employed respectively as a clerk or helped-out in the family business - until they wed.

The four second generation women, who were wholly or partly educated in Australia, all started work at age 15 years. Mainly to supplement the family income but also because their parents did not place a high value on education for women. Three of these women completed university degrees after marriage and while raising families. Jan has a PhD in English literature, Wilma a Bachelor of Arts and Rikki a PhD in Anthropology. These women's current lifestyles place them in the 'Australian middle class'. Only one [second generation] woman pronounced herself as having originated from the Netherland's middle-class, the others described their background as working class. Maria who came to WA in 1989 describes her social background as 'middle class'. She left school at 16 to pursue a career as stewardess on the Dutch American Shipping Line. After marriage she and her husband Luke, an engineer attached to the Dutch Diplomatic Corps, lived and raised their two children - Marylou and Frank - in India for twelve years. From India the family moved to Australia where the couple purchased a business. Until emigrating, Marylou, Maria's daughter, was educated wholly at the International School in India. In Australia she completed secondary education at a public school and a Bachelor of Arts degree at a university. Four of the women (two from the first and two from the second generation) are active members of Dutch community organisations. Another two have at various times been members of co-ethnic social or welfare clubs. The remaining first-generation women belong to common interest groups made up of compatriots. The second generation have friends in both mainstream and Dutch cultural milieux.

[19]. During the 1930 and 1940s, the majority of workers in Tilburg, the town where Cor and Jo were born, were employed in the textile industry.

[20]. F.P.H. Prick van Wely, *Kramers Nieuw Engelsch Woordenboek*, Batavia, 1921, p. 504.

How did these women come to emigrate to Australia? In 1951, following the termination of the Displaced Person's (DPs) assisted passage scheme, the Netherlands became the first of a succession of source countries from which Australia drew foreign-born workers and their families. The Dutch were specifically requisitioned to fill existing employment vacancies in the skilled trades and semi-skilled labour areas in heavy industry, the burgeoning building and construction sectors and public utilities. Unlike the DPs, secured because they had 'healthy bodies' to perform 'labouring' and 'domestic duties', the assisted passage Dutch were expected to enter into an agreement with the Commonwealth government to remain in the employment for which they were selected for a period of two years. Intending emigrants were enticed to Australia with images of booming industry, boundless opportunity, full employment, good working conditions, a home of their own, whitegoods and a motor vehicle. In other words, with the promise of a level of materialism unheard of in postwar Netherlands. [21] An added inducement was passage assistance to which both governments contributed. The reasons Henny and her family gave for leaving the Netherlands are representative of migrants that left their homeland in the early 1950s:

> We lived crammed into the upstairs of my uncle's house with our child.' We had already been through the Depression, then the war and occupation followed by the Cold War, and the Netherlands simply didn't pick up'. There was little business confidence and we could see no future.[22]

Kovacs & Cropley describe the 'push for migration' as coming from feelings of alienation due to conditions of deprivation in the homeland.[23] Hofstede claims a state of anomie emerged in the Netherlands following the severe social and economic dislocation that followed WWII and the Occupation. This state of affairs which pervaded Dutch society into the late 1940s was expressed in the loss of a sense of collective security and self-confidence, and the reappearance of 'overpopulation concerns' among the polity. The Dutch government resorted to a combination of industrialisation and emigration to arrest the accompanying

[21]. R.T. Appleyard, 'The Economics of Recent Emigration to Australia from Germany and the Netherlands', *International Migration,* vol. 1, no.1 1963, p. 29 - 37; In 1959 only 40% of the German and 22% of the Dutch dwellings were owner occupied.

[22]. A. W. interview, 1996.

[23]. M.L. Kovacs and A.J. Cropley, A.J. *Immigrants and Society: Alienation Assimilation,* Sydney, 1975.

widespread structural unemployment and to help overcome the housing crisis.[24] The extent to which their efforts influenced the Netherlands' public is well illustrated by the results of a survey carried out in 1947/48 which found a third of the population favourably disposed to emigration; an overwhelming response from a people with a typically low pattern of emigration.[25] In reality the eventual diaspora of some 500 000 of these Dutch was driven by political, economic and personal motives. [26]

The Dutch Government's attempt to banish its 'surplus' population coincided with Australia adopting a policy of encouraging increased immigration from non-British sources.[27] When not enough Britons could emigrate due to Britian's postwar reconstruction plans and a shipping shortage the racially (physiognomically) similar, blonde, blue-eyed, Dutch families were given surrogate British status.[28] Between 1947 and 1970, 160,000 Dutch migrated to Australia. While some returned and some have died, today there are still some 95,000 residents of Australia who were born in the Netherlands and a further 140,000 Australians who claim to have at least one Dutch parent.[29] These numbers made the Dutch one of the largest ethnic groups in Australia in the 1980s.[30]

Compared to other ethnic groups, Dutch migration was overwhelmingly family oriented. Women generally accompanied their menfolk, not always out of choice but because it was considered their duty to go wherever their husbands chose to earn a living. Dutch Calvinist and Catholics - the two religions that rejected birth control both encouraged emigration.[31] Their clergy postulated that Dutch wives would ensure their family's successful migration because they would safeguard their husband's and children's spiritual welfare by creating a

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24. Beijer, G. Frijda, N.H. Hofstede, B.P & R. Wentholt, 1961. *Characteristics of Overseas Immigrants*, The Hague, 1964; J.H. Elich, *'Aan de Ene Kant Aan de Andere Kant: De Emigratie van de Nederlanders Naar Australië 1946-1986'*, Delft, 1987, pp. 112-113; To achieve these aims the Dutch monarchy and Government exerted pressure on its citizens to register for emigration at one of 300 emigration offices set up around the country to promote their exodus.

25. B. P. Hofstede, *Thwarted Exodus*. The Hague, 1964, p. 54; Christopher Bagley, *The Dutch Plural Society: A Comparative Study in Race Relations*, London, 1973.

26. Ibid; see also Hall, 1987, p. 44; Hall claims migrants asked to articulate the motive driving their migration, generally proffer standard 'acceptable narratives' rather than reveal their personal reasons.

27. Hofstede, p. 54.

28. W. Walker-Birckhead, 1996. 'A Dutch Home in Australia: Dutch Women's Migration Stories'. Paper presented at the Colloquium on Dutch Migration to Australia, RMIT, Melbourne, 23-24 June, 1996, p. 1.

29. Benoit Gruter, Introduction paper for the workshop on, 'The Move Down Under: The Dutch Migration Book', RMIT 23-24th June 1996, Melbourne.

30. R.T. Appleyard, 'The Economic Absorption of Dutch and Italian Immigrants into Western Australia 1947 to 1955'. *R.E.M.P. Bulletin*, vol. 3. no. 4, 1956, pp. 45-54; Beijer et al., 1964; Elich, 1987; Until 1956 the majority of Dutch to settle in Australia originated from the working class.

31. Walker Birckhead 1996, p. 2; Elich, p. 112. Both religions encouraged the exodus of large families as these were less likely to return.

gezellige (convivial) home in Australia, wherever the family had to live - reception centres, tents, garages, caravans, verandahs and houses.[32]

Emigration was perceived as an adventure until as their departure time drew near they were unexpectedly instructed - by the Dutch Monarch and the government - to maintain the Netherlands good name overseas by rapidly fitting-into (*aanpassen*) the ways of the new land.[33] Only then did the intending migrants appreciate that it was meant to be a one way trip. The society these Dutch entered into was ninety per cent Australian-born and English speaking. Once in Australia, they soon realised that they were expected to be 'New Australians' and become incorporated into the social structure without any radical changes being made by those already in Australia. Andrew Reimer's views are representative:

> Everyone [in the 1950s and 1960s] assumed that it was the newcomer's duty to fit in, to learn the language, to adopt the customs of the country. Whatever cultural heritage and language you brought with you had to be discarded; the past was irrelevant to the new life you were about to forge.[34]

Assimilation was at that time not only a theoretical concept, but also a policy goal.[35] Officially the policy of cultural assimilation was enforced and given credence by the White Australia policy and the newly conceived Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948. The newly arrived Dutch thus found the Australian public sphere defined by policies that were exclusionary towards people with non-white ancestry and did not allow the celebration of non-British traditions.[36]

Given assurances that the newcomers would not disrupt the Australian way of life, some Australians took it upon themselves to hasten the migrants' transition by pressuring them to speak only English. Others pushed their migrant friends to apply for naturalisation as soon as practicable. These assimilationist imperatives inevitably evoked a wide range of responses from the informants. All the first generation women interviewed were appalled when Australians first stopped them in the street to admonish them for speaking Dutch to their children. Australian teachers' also espoused this viewpoint:

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32. Ibid; van Campen, *Emigratie*, 1954, p.132.

33. H. Overberg 'The Dutch in Australia' in James Jupp (ed.), *The Australian People, 1988.*

34. Andrew Reimer, 1992, 'Between Two Worlds', in J. Lack and J. Templeton, *The Bold Experiment*, New York, 1995, p. 277.

35. Vermeulen and Govers, p. 3.

36. Eidheim, p. 47.

> I was at a parent's night and the teacher said. "Mrs W. are you still speaking Dutch at home?" I said "Yes." And he said, "You shouldn't, it is not good for the children, you should talk English to them this is the country they have to live in.[37]

Despite being confronted with these expectations Nell continued to actively transmit aspects of her homeland culture especially the, *Algemeen Beschaafd Nederlands* (the equivalent of BBC Dutch), language she spoke to her children:

> ...I thought to myself, You can say what you want but I say what happens in my house. ...So I made a rule: at home they were allowed to speak English while playing but at the meal table, only Dutch was spoken.[38]

In contrast many working class Dutch women complied with the assimilationist dictates because, as Nell explains:

> These women had been taught to look up to the teacher, and if the teacher told them to do something that was it, they would do it... because they believed the teacher would know best.[39]

Nell viewed the encounter with her children's school teacher from the perspective of 'identity'. This is revealed by her assessment of and separation from the attitudes of the working-class Dutch women who stayed at home. In the privacy of their homes, these women stayed committed to homeland values and ideals, as was expected of them, even though this rarely included passing on the Dutch language to their children. Unlike Nell they infrequently if ever questioned the right of Australian authorities to define the behavioural standards of migrants.

Cor, stopped speaking Dutch at home, except when conversing with her husband, primarily because a knowledge of English would make her job in a sweat shop much easier but also to help avoid her children feeling embarrassed or handicapped by being different. At work she did not want to attract the degrading treatment her Italian co-workers received from Australian bosses.[40]

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[37]. A.W. 1996.

[38]. Ibid.

[39]. Ibid

[40]. C.B., interview 1996.

Jo, did not make the switch from dialect Dutch to English because she was too depressed and homesick to care.[41]

> I didn't want to stay in Australia, I was homesick for four years. I hated everything here. Depressed, I used to walk the streets with my youngest child until my husband finished work. Then we would come home together and cook dinner. During that time, I refused to learn the language. Our five-year-old daughter learnt to speak English from the Irish children, whose family shared the house with us.[42]

On the other hand, Henny, who ordinarily spoke provincial Dutch[43] insisted, as had Nell, that the family make use of both languages at home. Older children, such as Wilma, already proficient in their own language were less affected by these strategies than were the younger ones. Hélèn, and to a greater degree Jan and Rikki - who were only five on arrival in WA - were unable to speak or write in their own language with any degree of aptitude. Neither could they access the support they needed at school to help them acquire fluency in English. The women who pursued higher education see their improved English proficiency as a much-appreciated side benefit. The dictate, *aanpassen*, pressured more compliant Dutch migrant women even further into meeting both countries assimilationist demands; particularly in the public sphere.

Aanpassen: Maintaining Dutch Culture in Australia

Aanpassen or Dutch assimilation ideology and practices are distinctive because, throughout the assimilation period, whether they considered them disagreeable or not, the majority of Dutch appeared willing to conform to them - at least in the public sphere. Generally, in public settings the Dutch appeared to want to get rid of or at least cover-up any social characteristics defined as 'ethnic' by Australians.[44] These Dutch typically promoted assimilation, which highlights the extent to which this ideology had pervaded public thinking:

> ... if people come out here to make this their new country, they should ...adapt themselves under all circumstances. When you are in Rome, do as the Romans do. You must fit in. After all, if you expect to

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41. The children of dialect speakers are only able to converse with similar language speakers.

42. J.A.P. interview, 1996.

43. Provincial Dutch is proper Dutch spoken with a regional inflection.

44. Eidheim, p. 45 noted that for Lapps (in Norway) to enjoy the same high level of materialism and social goods as Norwegians they had to cover-up behaviours and symbols considered 'Lappish' by the Norwegians .

further yourself economically and this country is prepared to give you a chance, then you have no right to be different.[45]

This was more difficult for then Indisch Dutch hybrids as one woman notes:

> Australians are very decent people, very decent. But there is a barrier between us, you know. I mean I am different and they also regard you as someone who is different.

As for citizenship the same woman also adds:

> If I take on a different nationality then my heart has to be in it. I love the country, I think it is a beautiful country but not as a nation. You are not able to be part of it. I have lived here for so long but I feel I am still on a holiday.

Outward conformity to assimilationist mandates such as that contained in this quote became the hallmark of 'Dutch identity' in Australia.[46] In the public sphere, de Longh maintains the Dutch in Australia, without exception, tried to be more Australian than the Australians.[47] Van De Berghe associates the tendency of an immigrant group to assimilate with the advantages in doing so. He claims that one of the conditions which encourages assimilation is an environment in which ethnic groups are clearly hierarchical.[48] Perceived from this perspective, Dutch invisibility in Australia can in addition be viewed as the way they sustained their privileged second place on the preferential ladder.[49] Maintaining this distinctive adaptive strategy became even more effective when it appeared also to facilitate their access to the economic benefits of the Australian market place and to better treatment in the work force.

Explanations by Dutch sociologists are equally compelling. They assert that Dutch people's accomplished manner at making themselves invisible is a characteristically Dutch way of protecting their 'inner inviolability' in a society

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45. A.W., 1996.

46. Eidheim, pp. 41-2, notes that in Norway the Lapp identity is treated as illegitimate, and that these Lapps also refrain from acting it out in institutional inter-ethnic situations.

47. De Longh is cited in 'It's the Dutchness of the Dutch', *The Bulletin,* Sydney, 1976.

48. P. van den Berghe, *The Ethnic Phenomenon.* New York, 1981, p. 259.

49. J. Wilton & R. Bosworth, *Old Worlds and New Australia: Post-war Migrant Experience*, Sydney, 1984.

which stresses social conformity to institutionalised difference. The peculiar mode of Dutch adaptation that occurred in Australia included the Dutch norm of civility. Instilled via socialisation practices in the Netherlands, it positively evaluates a resolute commitment to hierarchy and self possession - particularly the Calvinist and Stoical values of discipline, frugality, industry, responsibility, obedience and indefatigable allegiance to leaders regardless of circumstances. It was a combination of these socialisation practices and assimilationist dictates that eventually led many first-generation Dutch migrants into developing distinct public and private persona as a stratagem for maintaining their cultural integrity.[50] This is supported by recent research, which shows despite the first generation's sedulous Australian imitation that they remained simultaneously, steadfastly very Dutch in the privacy of their homes. This peculiar way of maintaining their culture has lead some social scientists to speak of the Dutch culture as a 'closet culture'. [51]

Aanpassen and invisibility would not have been so successful if Dutch women's lives in Australia had not stayed fundamentally the same as in the Netherlands. For, whereas Australia gave Dutch males more freedom to experiment with jobs or self-employment than they had in the Netherlands, it located Dutch women even more firmly in domestic life and the production of children. Creating a Dutch home in Australia is what the Dutch menfolk expected of their wives.[52] Dutch women complied by hanging lace curtains, filling their homes with copper and brass miniatures, delft blue china, a profusion of pot plants and by keeping a birthday and events calendar in a prominent place. Henny, Nell, Jo and Cor all served their guests strong percolated coffee and a selection of biscuits from the Dutch Biscuitman, or *speculaas koekjes* imported from Holland.[53] Moreover these women perceived their confinement to the domestic sphere as advantageous rather than oppressive, subservient or the outcome of male dominance. A popular adage among elderly first-generation women is 'My husband didn't want me to work outside the house'. In Australia, the 1954 Census of Housing and Population records only 18.2 per cent of Dutch females employed compared to 50 per cent for Estonian women. There were in fact fewer Dutch women employed in

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50. Walker-Birckhead, 1996.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

53. J.A.P & C.B. interviews, 1996.

permanent jobs than any other ethnic group.[54] In 1961 even when Dutch females educated in Australia were employed in the work force, the number had only increased to 20.4 per cent.[55] These were mainly clerk-typists, seamstresses, clothing factory workers, shop assistants or domestics. Less than five per cent were, in order of prominence, either nurses, teachers, musicians, chemists or draughtswomen.[56] This was due largely to the sway traditional beliefs about the working wife continued to hold in Australia. Dutch women were also hampered in their attempts to become employed by a lack of family support networks. They remained responsible for domestic chores even when they were engaged in waged labour.[57] 'Most Dutch women didn't even learn to drive a vehicle,' Nell exclaimed, in an attempt to communicate the extent of working-class women's confinement to the homefront.[58] Nell considers herself different, principally because she and her husband had purchased a business importing food products from the Netherlands. Nell ran the shop while her husband attended to its administration. Henny and Jo also helped-out in their respective family's delicatessen, bakery and liquor/grocery/newsagent stores. However, whereas Nell retrained as a medical receptionist after selling the family concern, Henny went back into domestic life and Jo gained parttime work cleaning hotels and private residences after her husband died. In the main, however, few first generation Dutch women entered the Anglo or Dutch socio-political or economic arena.

First generation interviewees also found it difficult to establish themselves as independent identities in Dutch social clubs.[59] The clubs were established on the principles of the traditional Dutch family, which had an authoritarian, patriarchal man at its head, although his wife had matriarchal power this did not extend beyond the confines of the home. Women therefore always occupied subordinate positions in the club structure; this only began to change when the community started to age. Henny is president of the *Jeugd van Vroeger* (the youth of yesteryear). Jo and Cor have, in the past, been members of the craft club, but generally they prefer to meet with region of origin Dutch friends in their own homes. Nell remained involved with *Neerlandia* even after Rolf, her husband who

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54. J. Zubrzycki & N. Kuskie, *Immigrants in Australia: A Demographic Survey Based upon the 1954 Census*, Melbourne, 1960; J. Zubrzycki, 1964. *Settlers of the Latrobe Valley: A Sociological Study of Immigrants in the Brown Coal Industry in Australia,* Canberra, 1964, p. 100.

55. C. Beltz, 'Dutch Migration to Australia', 1946-1961. Unpublished Thesis, Canberra, Australian National University, 1964, p. 196.

56. Zubrzycki, 1960, p. 99.

57. Ann-Mari Jordens, *Redefining Australians: Immigration, Citizenship and National Identity,*, Sydney, 1995, p. 17.

58. A.W., 1996.

59. Overberg, 1988. Intra-ethnic relations in the Dutch community in Australia, in the early postwar years, emulated the cleavages in Dutch society. Differentiation and club allegiance occurred on the basis of province, religion, class and gender.

was president for many years, died. The club membership does not generally include people from her social background unless they hold superior positions in the committee hierarchy. Nell continued to foster her attachment because she feared life as a widow might be too lonely after a lifetime spent supporting the club as Rolf's wife:

> You can't do that, you are not an island. So you have to put water with the wine. For years I have been the secretary of the Dutch club here, and at the moment I am treasurer of one of the card clubs, and I am vice president of the Dutch Australia Community Service (DACS).[60]

A number of first-generation Dutch women currently fill leading positions in the community's seniors social and welfare clubs whose membership is mainly elderly women and frail-aged males![61]

The Dutch population in WA has not been able to raise the funds necessary to establish an ethno-specific nursing care apart from that provided by DACS. Established by first and second-generation Dutch women from all social backgrounds, its volunteers visit the Dutch home bound and those in mainstream nursing homes. DACS became important to Cor when she was placed in mainstream care among people with whom she had few life experiences in common. While being near her children was advantageous, being far away from her Dutch niece and Dutch friends meant she rarely enjoyed visitors apart from the DACS representatives. Nell blames assimilation and *aanpassen* for the Dutch aged-care problems. Some elderly she claims have become so fearful they are even considering returning to nursing homes in the Netherlands. For, as one gentleman contemplating this move commented: 'I won't say that it will be better, but whatever they say, I'll know what they are talking about.'[62] Aged care, a fraught issue in all ethnic communities, has had catastrophic consequence for those Dutch who did not transmit their language to their children because fluency in English is often severely reduced by ageing and can even be obliterated completely after severe illness or stroke. This has left many first-generation women incapable of communicating with their exclusively Australian-speaking offspring. [63]

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60. A.W., 1996.

61. The failure of Dutch working-class parents to impart the language to their children keeps the second generation away from Dutch organisations.

62. A.W., 1996.

63. When Cor a fun-loving contented person, who had adjusted well to life in Australia, died last October her children felt very sad. The last years of her life spent in a mainstream nursing home had been a desperately unhappy experience.

The Netherlands continues to hold a special place in the hearts of first-generation Dutch women. Jo has been back to Holland 10 times. She managed to pay for this initially with money she made cleaning and then out of her small aged pension. Unlike Cor, who had been raised in particularly poor circumstances, Jo never wanted to stay in Australia. When her husband died 25 years ago - after 25 years in Australia - Jo still felt ambivalent about being in this country. However, she is drawn back to it each time by her four children, eight grand children and two great grand-daughters - who all live and work here. The interior of Jo's home is very Dutch, she cooks in the Dutch style and her friends are all Dutch. Jo experiences no uncertainty about her identity - she considers herself to be unquestionably - Dutch even though she is a naturalised Australian.

Any discussion about the construction of a sense of identity and belonging in a host environment also raises the question of citizenship,[64] particularly, social citizenship, which, as defined by T.H. Marshall, includes the right to: a modicum of economic welfare and security regardless of a persons' position on the labour market; the right to live the life of a civilised being according to the standard prevailing in that society and the right to share to the full of the social heritage of the country.[65] Seven of the ten women interviewed for this study are naturalised Australians. However, while they were all reasonably happy with the standard of living and the welfare services the Australian government provided, they did not feel 'Australian'. Nor do they believe that their migrant background or their contribution to the country's socio-cultural heritage and economic development has been adequately publicly acknowledged. As a consequence this analysis also addresses the contradiction inherent in 'being an Australian citizen but not feeling Australian'. Ultimately, it supports the view advanced by Egon Kunz, that 'lasting loyalties flow from a deep feeling of accepting and being accepted'.[66]

Like the decision to leave the Netherlands, the decision to become naturalised was, among the first generation, overwhelmingly made by the male head of the family. The women usually supported, consented or complied with their husband's decision. Jo and Cor were naturalised when their husbands arranged it. These women also voted for the political party their spouse endorsed. A form of passive resistance is, however, discernible in the way they nevertheless tenaciously cling to their Dutch identity. As Jo explained: 'Naturalisation is just a piece of paper, it did not change us, - on the outside we

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64. Bureau of Immigration and Population Research, *Community Profiles 1991 Census Netherlands Born*, Canberra, 1993. The proportion of Netherlands-born with Australian citizenship shows a strong positive correlation to their period of residence with pre-1976 arrivals recording an 84 per cent naturalisation rate and those who came after 1976 only 34 per cent.

65. R. Voet, 'Women as Citizens: A Feminist Debate', *Australian Feminist Studies,* Autumn 1994, p. 2 & p. 64.

66. Egon Kunz, *Displaced Persons; Calwell's New Australians, S*ydney, 1988, p. 216.

were Aussies but on the inside we were still Dutch. You can't escape your early years, your "Dutchness", it is all you know.'[67] Among Western Europeans, the decision to become Australian citizens was often made for pragmatic reasons. For example to gain a liquor store or post office license; or to avoid having to register a change of address at the local post office - a requirement under the *Aliens Act*.. Another inducement was the pressure exerted on them to become citizens by Australians. Jo's family were naturalised when Jan, her husband, could no longer bear the continual haranguing from his Australian colleagues and friends. 'John', they would say, 'you live in this country therefore you should be prepared to become a citizen.'[68] Australians typically believed migrants should consider themselves lucky to be among generous open-minded people in such a democratic and individualistic country.[69] Jan eventually complied because he perceived more hesitancy on his part would be seen as hostile and ungrateful, in fact, a downright rejection of the Australian way of life.

The better educated Dutch were more inclined to question the implications and benefits associated with the acquisition of Australian citizenship.[70] Nell traded Australian political rights to retain Dutch citizenship because:

> I am still Dutch, I feel Dutch, I like to feel Dutch. It is very hard, lots of people have become Australian citizens because of jobs or because their children wanted it. My husband was a businessman and we didn't have to become Australian to eat. We have brought our children up well. My son and my daughter are in business. They are both independent. What more can they [Australian Government] ask from me?[71]

Nell argues that Australia has profited enough from her. It has her children who are after all 'what Australia wanted!' She added that the family business had contributed to the economy, the family paid its taxes and were good citizens and none had committed a crime. Nell's resistance would not have been possible if the legislation on residency requirements for migrant widows and invalid or aged pensions had not changed. Residential requirements had initially rendered

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67. J.A.P., 1996.

68. Ibid.

69. Andrew Markus, 'History of Postwar Immigration', in *New History*, G. Osborne and W.F. Mandle, (eds) Sydney, 1988, p. 95.

70. S. Castles, M. Kalantzis, B. Cope, & M. Morissey (eds), *Mistaken Identity, Multiculturalism and the Demise of Nationalism in Australia,* Sydney, 1988. In the 1950s to be accepted for naturalisation required a person to: be of good character, have resided in Australia for five years, be able to speak and comprehend the English language and have knowledge of the responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship. Women were most disadvantaged by these criteria as working and non-working woman alike found it difficult to go to English classes.

71. M.V. interview, 1996.

aliens and therefore ineligible for widows and invalid pensions for five years, and age pensions for 20 years. Also, because Nell did not believe 'citizenship' to be part of the immigration deal, she decided to reject it at all costs even if her husband decided to go ahead with it.[72] Nell's position, though not strictly opposing Ien Ang's claim: 'that the subjective processes of diasporic ethnic identification are often externally instigated, articulating and confirming a position of subordination in relation to Western hegemony', shows instead that migrants can and do resist oppressive circumstances.[73]

There was little difference in the quest for identity between first and second-generation migrants and the recent arrivals except that the children (of the former) experienced more racism. Rikki reflects:

> In the 1950s, we migrant children were neither wanted or accepted by Australians as an Australian. We entered schoolyards which contained children who yelled at us, 'Go back to your own country.' Despite the official euphemism 'New Australian'- we were called reffos, DPs, wogs, clog wogs, spags, kikes, yids, and poms whatever our background. The demand that we migrants assimilate quickly and totally to some supposedly 'Australian' culture implicitly asserted the superiority of Australian culture over ours. [74]

Although Rikki was only school-aged when she arrived in Australia she resisted becoming an Australian citizen until May 1966 when she discovered she could not become a permanent employee of the government and join their Provident Fund without being naturalised. The rest of Rikki's family - parents and dependent siblings had acquired Australian citizenship at their father's behest when he bought a liquor store - two years before. Migrants had to be naturalised to procure a liquor license. At the ceremony, Rikki was compelled to renounce all former alliances and pledge her allegiance to the British Queen: 'I had already handed in my Dutch passport. I felt bereft - stripped of the last vestiges of identity' and sense of belonging to a specific place.[75] Rikki's experiences as a migrant child underpinned her rejection of official opinion which equated the act of going through a naturalisation ceremony with an emotional, inner approval on her part of all things Australian. 'Accept things Australian when Australians hadn't accepted me? Anyway, I didn't feel

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72. Ibid.

73. Ang, p.16.

74. R.B. interview, 1996.

75. Ibid.

Australian. Not that I was clear about what I did feel. On that I was perplexed and confused'.[76] Her first trip back to the Netherlands in 1961 had also been a source of confusion:

> I felt sure I was going home and my nostalgia for the food, a snow-covered world, real green trees, colourful market stalls in the town square, and antiquated cobbled streets steeped with my genealogical past, where I had taken my first steps and where I used to chase after the 'rag and bone man' with *vodden* (rags), which he would exchange for a whirligig. However, in the 11 years spent in Australia I had become a young adult who had grown up with a foot in two cultures. I no longer fitted the mind-set of my kin. Besides the images I carried were those of a child of five, how could I be the same. A sense of finding a place where I belonged in the world eluded me. [77]

Rikki felt alien there as well as in Australia! Her experience is representative of many migrants who came to here as children. The most pervasive reason for their dilemma is that migrant children rarely had a say in why they were in a foreign land. Moreover, it often took many years to find strategies to help them overcome the disadvantages of the 'other' status that migration had inflicted on them.

Maria, who arrived in 1989 and remains attached to the social clubs established by the recently arrived Dutch - is a Dutch citizen.[78] Maria considered the loss of her Dutch passport - the trade-off for the 'right to a vote' - too high a price to pay to acquire Australian citizenship. So when Marylou, her daughter was naturalised last year, Maria felt ambivalent about it:

> I was definitely not happy, but I didn't want to show that. She made the decision and I didn't want to be any part of that and so when her name was called up, I was just sitting like numb, and I didn't want to have any feelings about it. And so, when the whole thing was done, I was happy to take photos but I didn't want to know anything. I was sitting there stone cold. [79]

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76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.

78. At time of interview Maria was secretary of the Australia Netherlands Chamber of Commerce.

79. Maria. v d K interview, 1996.

In many ways Maria's behaviour at the naturalisation ceremony contradicted the attitudes about Australia, she insists she had been communicating to her children:

> We love the Australian anthem we sing it - it already brings chills. I have done it straight away because I wanted them to get the right feeling for Australia because I wanted them to feel at home here. I just wanted them to feel good because for the kids it was very traumatic leaving all their friends behind. [80]

Marylou was surprised at her mother's reaction considering she had lived most of her life in India and Australia and given that her decision to become a naturalised had been made after much soul searching during a trip back to the Netherlands, made specifically to determine where she felt most at home. She had come to the conclusion that she had more in common with the friends she had made at the private school she attended before going to university than her family in Holland.[81] Clearly, the decision to become an Australian citizen is not without major problems. Each generation hopes the newer generation is having an easier time of it. A more tolerant ideology and more acceptable naturalisation pledge - has made naturalisation less traumatic by the time Marylou became a citizen. Migrants are no longer expected to pledge to 'forsake all other allegiances' and renounce their former backgrounds. Since January 1994 they 'Pledge Commitment as a Citizen of Australia:

> From this time forward, *under God,* * I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people, whose rights and liberties I respect, and whose laws I will uphold and obey.[82]

The first generation elderly Dutch women interviewed all kept-up lifelong connections with extended family and friends back home. This was maintained by letters, cards, photos, home movies, audio tapes, telephone calls and gifts. When funds allowed - in most instances only after 25 years here - they organised a trip home. In the last decade some of their relatives have visited Australia. These connections fostered the maintenance of their 'Dutchness' in Australia. Constructed on the basis of a private and public persona, evidence suggests the

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[80]. Ibid.

[81]. Marylou. v d K., interview, 1996.

[82]. * A candidate can choose to make the pledge with or without these words. *Post Migration*, no. 99, June 1995, p. 3.

two sometimes vie for supremacy. Wilma, a Dutch welfare worker noted that although elderly Dutch will say in public that they are Australians, they are eager to read Dutch literature and above all love to communicate in Dutch. Wilma's

> ... mother always cooked Dutch. Although she had meals on wheels she ate very little of the food. She would never really admit that she disliked it because that would be disloyal. She was an Australian now.[83]

Wilma's parents kept the furniture they had come out with, and like most Dutch went back frequently to pick up Dutch artefacts, which they dotted all around the house. Wilma recalls the sadness she felt when her mother recently passed away, 'towards the end she so desperately wanted her sisters, she wanted Dutch things around her. That is why it was so important for her to die at home.'[84] When Nell's husband died. Her son said: 'why don't you go back? You are still Dutch,' however, Nell explains:

> He was at that time living in NSW, my daughter was living in the South-West, so I was here by myself, "Look", I said, "Once a year I come to NSW and I stay for six weeks and I hop in the car and go to the Geraldton to see Francis. If I was in Holland, I might never see you both again because that is too expensive, so I don't do that.

It is nonetheless a difficult decision to make as Nell, who has a brother in the Netherlands has found, 'Its the atmosphere. I have been there [Holland] a few times ... as soon as you are there you are home.[85] Henny's emotions are similar to Nell's, even after 40 years in Australia when the Dutch soccer team plays here: 'I barrack for the Dutchies:'

> When I went back there I get a nice feeling. My sisters used to pick me up at Schiphol. They all have beautiful homes and cars and go on a trip to Paris or Spain once a year. Once I said to my husband, 'Why did we go to Australia? We had trouble and trouble when we came here.[86]

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83. W.V., 1996.
84. Ibid.
85. A.W., 1996.
86. Ibid.

At 84 years of age Henny has decided she can no longer go back, which means never seeing her only surviving relative a brother of 75 again. These women did not initiate the move to Australia but have had to come to terms with its consequences which, incidentally, intensified when they were widowed. The contradiction is that these same women were often the most ardent pushers of *aanpassen* . They had internalised the myth that growing up in Australia was all that was required to make their children feel Australian. They naively believed that naturalisation would be for their children simply a formality. The facts are of course different from the myth. The majority of first-generation women interpreted and viewed the idiomatic content of public encounters and questions of identity in Australia from their home-based vantage point with reference to the society they had left. Their children, however, were confronted with creating an identity with reference to the private hom- based reality and the public Australian sphere.

This was not very different from another myth frequently superimposed on migrant children who were rarely given a say in matters concerning migration. Moreover, it was assumed that they would suffer few ill effects from the subsequent displacement. In fact, the opposite was true. Schools in the 1950s had a 'sink or swim' policy based on the belief that migrant children's transition to becoming fully fledged Australians, socially and linguistically, would be uneventful. This policy meant that there were no support systems for migrant children and that the specific disadvantages they experienced were ignored. Teachers, ill-prepared for classes in which there were large numbers of migrant children, blamed the migrant child or the immigrant home when problems arose.[87] The lack of help blocked off many migrant children's chances at higher education. A friend of Rikki's had the following experience:

> I was not allowed to sit a public exam [Junior Certificate] because the nuns thought I might not pass English and that would upset their school's image. I sat the exam as an independent and passed but it was a very disturbing time, and I lost a lot of confidence in myself.[88]

The extent to which the system was Anglo-centric or hostile to migrants was never questioned. Since anything not Australian was labelled inferior, the ultimate symbol of success in this climate was to be seen to be a part of the

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87 .cf Ellie Vasta, 'The Second-Generation Italo-Australians: Identity, Culture and Community' Centre for Migrant Studies, *CMDS-UNESCO Workshop on Adaptation of Migrants*, CMDS, UWA Oct 1990.p. 3.

88 . R.B., 1996.

Australian crowd. Jan hated the 'doorstep' sandwiches her mother made for her school lunch. She felt they made it difficult for her to maintain relationships with her Australian peers who ordinarily brought thin sandwiches with the popular spreads vegemite or cheddar cheese.

The practice of teachers anglicising migrant children's names made even more profound the importance of things Australian. Indignation directed at this habit has resurfaced in later life. Many have since reverted to using their original names. Mixing with Australian children after school often increased a migrant child's sense of 'otherness' as they could then in a fight comment on the ethnic family's makeshift home, ethnic mother, ethnic language and ethnic cuisine. Wilma recalls:

> There was a time I was ashamed of it, when I felt that being Dutch was a distinct disadvantage to me. I can remember as a teenager walking in town thinking: "If I keep my mouth shut, nobody will know who I am and then I'll be fine." That was how I felt extremely uncomfortable and inferior.[89]

Many Dutch girls were further hampered in forging a separate identity by the inferior role foisted on them at home. Rikki still smarts when she relates how it was in her family:

> Like all Dutchmen, he [Dad] was arrogant. When he wanted a cup of tea in the morning, he would just push the cup out. He expected me and my sisters to fill it without asking. Nobody accepts treatment like that and I certainly feel that there were many times he went overboard. The boys sat at the table drinking, smoking and having fun, while the girls served the meal and did the dishes. My brother Tony had never washed a dish in his life until he got married, and then he did them voluntarily.[90]

In the 1950s and 60s Dutch girls were also expected to start work as soon as was practicable to help the family 'get on its feet' financially and in some instances to enable males to acquire an education. By the time most working class Dutch girls were 15 they had dropped out of the school system.[91] The subservience expected at home (mainly by working class families) played havoc

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89. W.V., 1996.

90. R.B. 1996.

91. N.Peters, Trading Places: Greek, Italian, Dutch and Vietnamese Enterprise in Western Australia, Ph.D Thesis. Crawley: University of Western Australia.

with their self-esteem especially among their Australian friends. Consequently most Dutch girls felt compelled to hide these aspects of their family life from Australians, who only associated such practices with migrants from middle and southern and not Western Europe.[92] Such oppressive childhood practices also engendered a great deal of conflict in cross-cultural marriages, since the women raised in this manner often felt compelled to subjugate their needs to those of their spouse and children. Inevitably this caused a great deal of resentment.

The women's inferior status was intensified by the social exclusion and prejudice many of these females faced at school and by the Dutch maxim *aanpassen* . The formation of these Dutch children's identities was in part determined by this state of affairs. Not imbued adequately with Dutch socialisation practices they were unable to satisfactorily construct, as their parents did, a separate public and private persona. Never told how this was to be achieved, to be accepted some Dutch children tried to change the way they looked, how they talked or what they did. As a child Jan nominated the food she ate, clothes she wore and 'Ocker accent' she had acquired as notable signifiers of the level of 'Aussie[ism]' she had achieved. She also coerced her mother into buying Weeties, Vegemite and tomato sauce to help her appear more Australian.[93] Feeling deprived of a sense of pride in their background they experienced 'cultural ambivalence'. For Hélèn it manifest, in the following way:

> Who I feel I am depends upon who I am talking with. When I am with an Australian, I feel Australian. When I am with a Dutch person, I feel Dutch. I tried very hard to be an Australian. I demanded that everything at my wedding was done in the Australian way. I fought my parents to the last detail. Now I am sorry but our way [Dutch] was not acceptable then. I lived a dual life. In many ways the lives didn't mix. My parents, especially my father feels like a second-class citizen. 'I'm only a migrant' he says about himself. My mother plays cards at the Dutch club. She also likes talking to the Aussies. But they don't really mix their friends. Their close friends are Dutch from the church and Dutch people we met on the ship coming across. [94]

Hélèn and her husband Peter were recently able to reclaim their Dutch citizenship because they were considered minors by Dutch standards when they

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92. Generally Dutch males rather than females were educated or helped into business. Daughters were often expected to help the family by handing-over all their wages. Such practices made it difficult for them to mix with their Australian peers who had more dispensible cash.

93. Weeties is a breakfast cereal. Vegemite a bread spread.

94. H. M., interview, 1996. Dual citizenship has a ten-year limit. To retain it beyond this limit requires the holder reside in the Netherlands for a specified period of time.

were naturalised. Ten and thirteen respectively when they came to Australia, both became Australian citizens at age 16 in order to become permanent employees of the Australian public service. Hélèn says having her Dutch passport makes her feel good; Hélèn's dual citizenship status is simultaneously symbolic of the dual life she perceives has been her 'lot' as a migrant in Australia.[95]

The human cost associated with acculturation, personal and group adjustment and identity maintenance challenged the migrant family's dynamics. Conflict in the home over differences in beliefs and values between the two cultural milieux increased migrant children's sense of 'otherness'. Some migrant children managed by not having any Australian friends at school, or by leaving school as soon as they could to find a job. Others strove to attain top grades or become the best at sport in the hope that this would gain them recognition as a person. Researchers claim the continual 'absence of a sense of self' had serious results for some children leading to prolonged restlessness, mental disorders, delinquency, or lack of employment stability.[96] Even those fortunate enough to find a mooring in one or other culture were not spared serious conflicts, with parents if they happened to want to fit in with the local scene, or with Australians if they decided to stick with their own. To confront and accommodate these obstacles and develop and maintain an independent identity required ingenuity and determination.[97] Each Dutch child had to find ways of dealing with being different. Jan coped by imitating the admired British:

> I know everything about England. I know almost nothing about Holland. When I was a child, I used to listen to BBC programs to pick up the better-spoken language. I had noticed that it was the middle-class English who were the most accepted. [98]

Probed, Jan admitted that her metamorphosis from Dutch to British identity had been undertaken to be more acceptable; as a consequence, Jan was more than happy to be able to trade her Dutch name for an English one when she married. She found it almost impossible to conceive of anyone wanting to keep their Dutch name. Jan, currently in her mid 50s, now claims to feel like an Australian specifically a Western Australian:

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95. H.M.,1996.

96. See Ruth Johnston, 'The Immigrant Child' in *Immigrants in Western Australia* , Perth, 1979, p. 64.

97. Vasta, 1992.

98. J. P. The province of Friesland in the Netherlands is akin to Wales in the United Kingdom. It has a separate language and culture to the rest of the Netherlands.

> It has been a conscious process though. After I finished teaching, my husband and I travelled around Australia because I believe that when you know places. It's like owning them.[99]

However, like many second generation who survived assimilation by rejecting their backgrounds outright, in her efforts to 'know Australia' Jan, unexpectedly unearthed the need to acknowledge her Dutch background deeply buried inside her:

> In Tasmania, I fell upon the ground and wept as the sight and feel of the countryside, it unearthed memories of my childhood in rural Friesland long hidden by the need to assimilate. I would love to go back for about a year to immerse myself in my background.[100]

The desire to acquire a sense of belonging was eventually satisfied for Jan, Rikki and Wilma by higher education. As university graduates in the areas of Arts and Humanities they had entered a community where gender bias was often more constraining than ethnicity. More importantly education had given them the tools to articulate and share their emotions and despair about their experience as the 'other'. However, the very strategy that finally made this possible inevitably deepened the rifts between them and their still largely uneducated parents and siblings. Acquiring acceptance into a middle-class educated community had unwittingly transformed them into the 'other' among their working-class families.

Since the mid 1970s when multicultural policies replaced those of assimilation and integration, Australian citizens have not had to suppress their backgrounds. As a result, many Dutch have reclaimed their cultural heritage and identity. Wilma explains:

> I don't feel ashamed any more, either. Our society has changed and it is okay, most of the time, to be Dutch, or to be a person from a non-English speaking background. It is more accepted, although, every now and again, I come across someone who doesn't accept me as an Australian citizen. Now, it is more covert and fairly subtle, unlike thirty years ago when people openly referred to us as "bloody foreigners.[101]

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99. J. P. interview, 1996.

100. Ibid.

101. W.V. 1996.

In 1997, a number of the second generation held an open forum at which they formed a committee to handle welfare issues, access funding sources, organise functions and promote the social and cultural welfare of persons of Dutch origin in Western Australia. Wilma and Rikki were among those prepared to muster support to have the Dutch voice heard. Wilma, who completed primary education in the Netherlands, is secretary of the umbrella organisation and Rikki helps co-ordinate the culture and heritage working party, which is collecting oral histories of the Dutch aged for posterity.

Neither Maria or Marylou felt the need to hide their 'Dutchness' in a 'closet'.[102] Having entered a multicultural society these woman, could not imagine having to suppress their ethnicity, which they considered a vital aspect of themselves. Unencumbered thus, both feel at liberty to take pride in their Dutch heritage while simultaneously embracing Australia as their choice of a homeland. Maria puts it this way, 'I will be Dutch for the rest of my life, but I will be living in Australia proudly.[103]

The interpretations in this paper show that perceptions of identity and belonging of the informants are tied to their particular experience of migration (including age at arrival) ethnicity, level of education, social class and immigration policy. Australia's assimilationist ideology made it very difficult for first and second-generation Dutch women to publicly claim their heritage. This did not pose a dilemma for the Dutch who entered a multicultural Australia. Moreover, I reveal how the effort the Dutch put into 'fitting in' to the public domain of school and work resulted in their becoming 'invisible' and appearing compliant. Hence the stereotype of the Dutch as 'model migrants'. Traditional beliefs about Dutch married women's role (making a Dutch home in Australia) kept most first-generation Dutch women's identities and sense of belonging tied principally to the Dutch culture they brought with them. Having not generally themselves made the decision[104] to emigrate these women's most powerful battle has been a periodic, all pervasive longing to return to the homeland. Their daughters' - or the next generation's-conflicts are different. *Aanpassen* and assimilation denied them easy access to their cultural heritage. Gender inequalities in both Australian and Dutch society and changes in the status of women over time added to their predicament. The women among them who broke with tradition by gaining higher degrees or following careers in commerce

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102. Walker-Birckhead 1996.

103. ibid.

104. Jo, Cor and Henny's husbands were the main decision makers in their relationships; Nell who attended MULO was more actively involved in the decision-making processes in her marriage.

have found it easier to gain recognition among non-Dutch Australians than in their Dutch family or the Dutch community. As a result, many of the second generation have had an enduring struggle in regard to their identity. Creating an identity was for them an extremely complex process, '... never singular but multiple, constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions'.[105] Actual identity, as Hall has demonstrated, is more a question of becoming than being; thus, it is less about 'who we are' or 'where we come from', and more about what we might become. As migrant children were less able (than their parents) to appeal to an origin in an historical past, their main effort became concentrated on how they could achieve a positive identity within the confines imposed on them.[106] Hall claims a strategy of self-empowerment requires a shift in emphasis from the un-erased traces of 'where you're from' to the possibilities and limits offered by 'where you're at'. This position in the postmodern world calls less upon tradition and ancestry for its validation and more on an individual's ability to utilise all available resources to renegotiate and reinvent their identity. [107] Rikki went about it in this way:

> Now when I reflect on my life, what comes to me first is [that] the family my husband and I began in Australia live and work in Perth. My grand children were born here. My home is here. Eventually the realisation came that despite the confusion, conflict and yearning that intermittently consume my life that the culture I have been instrumental in creating in Australia now feels most 'homelike'. [108]

Andrew Reimer articulates his experience of the shift from 'where I come from' to 'where I'm at' in the following way:

> Whenever I am away from Australia, my thoughts turn to home. Yet I cannot claim to belong here fully. There is a state of mind beyond fondness, or even love for a country, beyond familiarity or knowledge that you have carved out a life for yourself in these surroundings. That state of mind is indefinable. To say that it is a lack or a vacancy is an approximation approaching the truth, yet not quite touching it. Nor is it a matter of substitutions: I yearn for Europe, but it is a Europe that no longer exists, and may never have existed. The closest I can get to a description of this

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105. Hall 1996, p. 4.

106. Ibid.

107. Ang 1994, p. 18.

108. R.B. 1996.

> condition, dilemma, perplexity, or whatever term may be put upon it, is to say that it is an existence between two worlds.[109]

The women in this study also declare that, the yearning, which intermittently permeates their consciousness - of what could or might have been - remains forever a part of them, and will die with them, not before them.

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[109]. Reimer, p. 277.